

Personality Traits as a Function of Meditation

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ABSTRACT

The level of stress and tension experienced by individuals in a changing ethos has increased and people have been seeking ways of coping with them. It has been observed that those who practice meditation often develop a great sense of empathy, making them more trusting, cooperative, kind, and altruistic. The present study was an attempt to explore the impact of meditation on agreeableness and conscientiousness. The total sample of the study comprised of 100 individuals of 25 to 35 years of age wherein 50 were meditators and 50 were non-meditators from Nagpur city. Neo-PI - Personality Inventory was employed to measure agreeableness and conscientiousness. Analysis of the data concluded that significant difference has been found among Meditators and Non-Meditators with respect to agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Keywords: *Meditators, Non-Meditators, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness*

As we move from 20th to 21st century there appears to be a general improvement in the standard of living in terms of material comforts all over the world. People in general tend to be seized by the development of new technologies, capitalism, consumerism, and globalization. Individualistic tendencies seem to be replacing collectivism, even in Asian cultures. At the same time new challenges in moral, religious, social, economic, ecological and political spheres have emerged. These developments have also altered the traditional life styles and values.

Mounting evidence suggests that our personality traits affect our experience of the world and shape the course of our lives — it determines the information one chooses to focus on. One's reality determines the choices one make in life. Personality traits also play a significant role in meditation. It is well known in the Indian tradition that sattva guna facilitates meditative life better as compared to rajo guna and tamo guna. A sattvic person is described as one who has discriminative intellect; who is self-controlled, serene, equanimous, and steadfast; who is virtuous, generous and gentle; and who is detached and duty bound without expectations, a seeker of self and aware of the unity underlying all diversities.

A rajasic person is one who is driven into action by passion, is restless, is struggling; who has more desires, strong likes and dislikes, and pursues sensory pleasures; who is attached to

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one's social roles; who lacks clear discrimination and has distorted understanding; and who is egotistic.

A tamasic person is depressed, lethargic, disinclined to work, negligent, undisciplined, arrogant, hostile, indecisive, ignorant, inadvertent, uncertain and dull (Uma, 1969). It is to be noted that all the three gunas are present in all the individuals and it is the preponderance of one over the other which leads to the labelling of persons as sattvic, rajasic and tamasic type. According to Indian psychological perspectives, regular practice of meditation will lead to reduction in rajasic and tamasic qualities and increase of sattvic qualities. Further, the way of life we prefer to live also matters. Whether one prefers ways of life, which emphasize solitude, withdrawal, contemplation, and meditation or those that emphasize an active, participating, and social existence determines one's expectations about meditation. However, it is possible that over a period of practice preferences for ways of life may change due to a shift in one's perspective about the nature of life and reality. There are two kinds of people in the world — those with a closed mindset and those who are open-minded to new experiences.

Personality

Personality has been derived from the Latin word 'Persona'. The word 'Persona' first used in Greek for meaning of 'theatrical mask' which the Greek actors commonly used to wear on their face before coming to the stage for acting. In this sense, in the olden days' personality was meant the outward appearance of a person. Today the term personality is explained in various ways. Personality has been defined by different psychologists in different ways.

Following are some of the definitions of personality:

- J.P. Guilford (1897) defined personality as an integrated pattern of traits.
- Kurt Lewin (1935) considers personality as "a dynamic totality of systems."
- Cattell (1950) has defined "Personality is that which permits a prediction of what a person will do in a given situation.
- According to Munn (1953) - "Personality is the whole individual considered as a whole. Personality may be defined as the most characteristic integration of an individual's structures, modes of interests, attitude, behaviour, capacities, abilities and aptitudes."
- According to Allport (1961) - "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychological systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment."

Personality Traits

An individual's behaviour towards others, attitude, characteristics, mindset make his personality. In Psychology, trait theory is an approach to the study of human personality. Trait theorists are primarily interested in the measurement of traits which can be defined as habitual patterns of behaviour, thought & emotion.

Personality traits reflect basic dimensions on which people differ (Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2003). According to trait psychologists, there are a limited number of these dimensions (dimensions like Extraversion, Conscientiousness, or Agreeableness), and each individual falls somewhere on each dimension, meaning that they could be low, medium, or high on any specific trait. There are three criteria that characterize personality traits: (1) consistency, (2) stability, and (3) individual differences.

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1. To have a personality trait, individuals must be somewhat consistent across situations in their behaviours related to the trait. For example, if they are talkative at home, they tend also to be talkative at work.
2. Individuals with a trait are also somewhat stable over time in behaviours related to the trait. If they are talkative, for example, at age 30, they will also tend to be talkative at age 40.
3. People differ from one another on behaviours related to the trait. Using speech is not a personality trait and neither is walking on two feet—virtually all individuals do these activities, and there are almost no individual differences. But people differ on how frequently they talk and how active they are, and thus personality traits such as Talkativeness and Activity Level do exist.

The most widely accepted system to emerge from trait approach was “The Big Five” or “Five-Factor Model” (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & John, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1987). A way to remember these five is with the acronym OCEAN (O is for Openness; C is for Conscientiousness; E is for Extraversion; A is for Agreeableness; N is for Neuroticism).

Openness features characteristics such as imagination and insight. People who are high in this trait also tend to have a broad range of interests. They are curious about the world and other people and eager to learn new things and enjoy new experiences. People who are high in this trait tend to be more adventurous and creative. People low in this trait are often much more traditional and may struggle with abstract thinking.

Extraversion (or extroversion) is characterized by excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and high amounts of emotional expressiveness. People who are high in extraversion are outgoing and tend to gain energy in social situations. Being around other people helps them feel energized and excited. People who are low in extraversion (or introverted) tend to be more reserved and have less energy to expend in social settings. Social events can feel draining and introverts often require a period of solitude and quiet in order to "recharge."

Neuroticism is a trait characterized by sadness, moodiness, and emotional instability. Individuals who are high in this trait tend to experience mood swings, anxiety, irritability, and sadness. Those low in this trait tend to be more stable and emotionally resilient.

Agreeableness is a personality trait that describes a person’s ability to put others needs before their own. Those who are more agreeable are more likely to be empathetic and find pleasure in helping others and working with people who need more help.

Commonly used to describe the level of friendliness, kindness and even politeness a person displays, agreeableness is one of the five traits that make up the big five personality model. Agreeable people are generally well-liked and prefer cooperation over conflict and scoring high in agreeable tendencies also means to have an ability to maintain relationships.

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Characteristics of Agreeable Personality: Following are a few of the sub-traits of both high and low agreeableness.

High Agreeableness:

- **Polite:** Being polite or exhibiting politeness is a common characteristic of agreeableness. This may be from the way one speaks on the phone to someone to engaging in conversation with strangers.
- **Considerate:** Showing empathy and consideration for others is again, a common characteristic. Understanding how someone else is feeling and considering how the actions of others or oneself can contribute to that person or group of people is common.
- **Trusting:** Highly agreeable people are prone to assume that others mean well and have good intentions. They are less likely to judge others or make snap decisions about people choosing to show compassion and kindness in abundance.
- **Cooperative:** Often seen as peacemakers over those that like confrontation and disruption. Highly agreeable people will often compromise their own needs for others.
- **Modest:** This is also very common, where agreeable individuals are very down to earth and humble.

Low Agreeableness:

- **Abrasive:** Showing a lack of patience with people or even snapping on basic requests is common with individuals who score low on agreeableness.
- **Argumentative:** Preferring confrontation over cooperation, someone who scores low agreeableness will even be very aggressive towards others in order to get what they want.
- **Critical:** Rather than taking the time to praise a person's work or someone's home, low agreeability is common with those who like to criticize and single out opportunities to do so as well.
- **Condescending:** Taking little to no time to consider others, when in the company of other people, low agreeableness can come across as condescending in discussion or even directly as a response mechanism.
- **Selfish:** Low agreeable individuals commonly have selfish tendencies. Supporting others is very low on their list of priorities.

Highly agreeable individuals can make great leaders and the characteristics of a great leader are mirrored in the characteristics of high agreeability. When it comes to an agreeable person, they have

- Strong interpersonal skills
- High resilience and are
- Great team workers - liked by co-workers

Conscientiousness is the quality of being careful, thoughtful and thorough. People with high conscientiousness are aware that their actions have an effect on others and feel a sense of duty to other people. They are diligent in their work, wish to do their job well, take their obligations to others seriously and comply with regulations. Conscientiousness is graded on a spectrum, meaning a person may have high, medium or low conscientiousness. Following are few common traits of conscientious people:

- Reliable

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- Follow Work ethic
- Organized
- Punctual

Those who are low in conscientiousness often do not take accountability for their actions or fail to see how they affect the people around them. Through the practice of meditation, people will gain the ability to pay attention to their behaviours and their repercussions. Meditation will also help one to empathize and connect with others, which makes it easier to see how one's words and actions affect other people. Thus, the present study focuses on to explore the impact of meditation on the level of agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Aim: To study the impact of meditation on agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Objectives:

1. To measure the level of agreeableness among meditators and non-meditators.
2. To find the level of conscientiousness among meditators and non-meditators.
3. To compare the level of agreeableness and conscientiousness among meditators and non-meditators.

Significance of the study: Certain meditation practices aim to deepen one's connection with humanity. They teach the core of how to be loving, forgiving, and empathetic, deepening the relationships and making people more enjoyable to be around. Furthermore, it helps to soften the harsher sides of our personalities, such as distrust, competitiveness, and bitterness. It has been observed that those who practice meditation often develop a great sense of empathy, making them more trusting, cooperative, kind, and altruistic.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Fabregat O., Walker, D. et.al. (2020) showed that emotional stability and extraversion traits were the strongest predictors of subjective well-being. Nonetheless, the non-judging facet, which is no evaluative/acceptance awareness of thoughts and feelings, remained a significant predictor of happiness when personality was accounted for. Moreover, mindfulness training did not increase subjective well-being.

Chan, E. & Wang, Y. (2019) that mindfulness may prompt how people process information more broadly.

Zhang Q. and Zheng W. et.al. (2019) demonstrated that 8-week mindfulness meditation training could effectively enhance the level of mindfulness and improve emotional states. Moreover, focusing attention (FA) meditation could partially improve individual levels of mindfulness and effectively improve mood, while open monitoring (OM) meditation could further improve individual levels of mindfulness and maintain a positive mood.

Boyce, Maree & Sawang, Sukanlaya (2014) suggested that conscientious individuals connect with mindfulness through attending to current actions or regulating impulses (act aware) and had an accepting attitude towards thoughts and feelings (non-judge).

METHODOLOGY

Sample: The total sample of the study comprised of 100 individuals of 25 to 35 years of age wherein 50 were meditators and 50 were non-meditators from Nagpur city.

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Tools used: The Neo-PI is a Personality Inventory based on 5 five factors of personality. The Neo-PI is available in 2 forms. Form S is a self-report version and Form R is an observer rating.

Form S consists of 60 items and each of the 5 dimensions is assessed by 12 statements. For each statement the participants rated themselves. The five dimensions – neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness – are the five factors of the NEO-PI instruments. The test-retest reliability reported in the manual of the NEO-PI-R over 6 years was N = 0.83, E = 0.82, O = 0.83, A = 0.63, and C = 0.79.

For the present study two factors Agreeableness and Conscientiousness were studied. There are six facets within each factor.

- Agreeableness is composed of Trust (A1), Straight forwardness (A2), Altruism (A3), Compliance(A4), Modesty (A5 and Tender -Mindedness (A6).
- Conscientiousness includes competence (C1), Order(C2), Dutifulness(C3), Achievement Striving (C4), Self-discipline (C5), Deliberation(C6).

Variables:

- **Dependent Variables:** Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.
- **Independent Variable:** Meditation

Procedure of Data Collection:

Prior appointment was taken from the subject. They were informed regarding the significance of the research. They were made comfortable and rapport was established. They were assured that their responses will be kept confidential and will be used only for the research work. The samples were collected from various meditation centers of Nagpur city.

Hypotheses:

1. There exists significant difference on the level of agreeableness among meditators and non-meditators.
2. Significant difference exists in the conscientiousness with respect to meditation.

Statistical Treatment: Initially mean and SD were calculated and for the inferential purpose one way ANOVA was employed.

RESULT ANALYSIS

The first objective of the study was to assess the levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness of meditators and non-meditators. The results are displayed in the following tables:

Table 4.1: Frequency and Percentage of levels of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness

	Agreeableness		Conscientiousness	
	Meditators	Non-Meditators	Meditators	Non-Meditators
Very Low	12(24%)	21(42%)	23(46%)	41(82%)
Low	18(36%)	17(34%)	27(54%)	9(18%)
Average	19(38%)	9(18%)	Nil	Nil
High	1(2%)	1(2%)	Nil	Nil
Very High	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

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From table 4.1, it is seen that from the group of meditators 40% adults have shown average and high level of agreeableness whereas 20 % adults have revealed average and high levels of agreeableness with respect to the group of non-meditators. It is seen that almost 100% of meditators and non-meditators are revealing low and very low levels of conscientiousness. It was hypothesized that there exists a significant difference amongst meditators and non-meditators with respect to agreeableness and conscientiousness. For this mean and SD was computed. The results are displayed in table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Mean and SD of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness of Meditators and Non-Meditators

	Agreeableness		Conscientiousness	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Meditators	26.52	4.23	22.2	4.61
Non-meditators	24.1	5.72	18.62	5.24

It can be seen from table no 4.2 that the data is normally distributed. It is also seen that there are differences in the mean values of meditators and non-meditators with respect to agreeableness and conscientiousness. However, it cannot be asserted that these differences are significant only on the basis of descriptive statistics and hence the data was subjected to One- way ANOVA. The complete summary of One-way ANOVA is displayed in table 4.3-

Table 4.3: Complete Summary of One-way ANOVA for Agreeableness

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance	P-value 0.018	F-critical 3.93
Meditators	50	1326	26.52	17.92		
Non-Meditators	50	1205	24.1	32.74		
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F- 5.77*		
Between Groups	146.41	1	146.41			
Within Groups	2482.98	98	25.33			
Total	2629.39	99				

**Significant at 0.05 level*

Examination of table no. 4.3 reveals that the computed 'F' value (5.77) for the factor of agreeableness among meditators vs. non-meditators is more than the table value at 0.01 level. Hence it can be confidently asserted that there exists significant difference between meditators and non-meditators on the variable of agreeableness. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

Examination of the mean scores of agreeableness shows that the meditator (M= 26.42, S=4.23) mean score is larger than that of non-meditators. Hence it can be said that the meditators are significantly more agreeable than the non-meditators.

To assess the second hypothesis, whether there is significant difference among meditators and non-meditators with respect to conscientiousness, the data was treated with one- way ANOVA.

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Table 4.4: Complete Summary of One-way ANOVA for Conscientiousness

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Meditators	50	1110	22.2	21.22		
Non-Meditators	50	931	18.62	27.50		
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS			
Between Groups	320.41	1	320.41	F- 13.15**	P-value 0.000458	F critical – 6.9
Within Groups	2387.78	98	24.36			
Total	2708.19	99				

***Significant at 0.01 level*

From the above table 4.4, it is seen that the factor of conscientiousness has yielded a ‘F’ value of 13.15 (for df=1,99) which is more than the table value at 0.01 level. (F= 6.9). Therefore, it can be asserted that factor of meditators and non-meditators influence conscientiousness.

Hence, it can be confidently asserted that there are significant differences between meditators and non-meditators with respect to the variable conscientiousness. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. The mean of meditators for conscientiousness M=22, S=4.61 is larger than that of non- meditators M=18.62, S=5.24. Hence, it can be confidently stated that meditators have revealed significantly more level of conscientiousness than non-meditators.

Meditation when practiced regularly helps an individual to be more accepting, feel relaxed and energetic. Meditation is a way to relieve stress at the mental level and helps in having healthy mind. Meditation gives a sense of calm, peace and balance. Hence, the difference in the personality traits of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness could be seen amongst the two groups.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the present study from the statistical treatment and analysis of the data suggests the following:

- Meditators revealed significantly higher agreeableness than non-meditators.
- Significant meditators exhibited higher conscientiousness than non-meditators.

Suggestions

- The study can be conducted on other age groups as well like adolescents, old age, etc.
- This study can be conducted on a large sample size.

Recommendations

- All the age groups should include meditation in their daily routine so as to enhance their agreeableness and conscientiousness.
- Mental health exercise should be practiced daily.

Limitations

- This study was limited to 100 sample size only.
- Gender difference was not studied.
- A study with ‘before’ and ‘after’ research design could not be included due to time constraint.

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Conflict of Interest

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