

Cultural and Economic Influences: How Society Shapes Our Identity

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the complex interplay between cultural factors, socioeconomic status (SES), and personality traits, particularly among young adults. Through a comprehensive literature review, this study synthesizes findings from diverse academic resources published from 2018 onwards, employing theoretical frameworks such as individualism-collectivism and the reciprocal causal relationship between personality and environmental factors. The Big Five personality traits, neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, were examined in relation to cultural dimensions and SES. Collectivist cultures, characterized by close ties and shared responsibilities, foster agreeableness and conscientiousness, while individualistic cultures promote openness and extraversion. SES was positively associated with conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability, openness, and extraversion. Conscientiousness has emerged as a significant predictor of financial success. This study highlights the need for culturally sensitive methodologies and the dynamic nature of cultural contexts to understand personality development. It also identified potential pathways for future research, emphasizing the importance of nuanced cultural analysis, alternative methodological approaches, longitudinal studies, and interdisciplinary perspectives. By providing insights into the multifaceted relationship between culture, SES, and personality traits, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of youth behavior, decision-making, and interpersonal interactions in the context of rapid societal changes.

Keywords: *Personality Traits, Culture, Socioeconomic status, Big five*

Personality refers to behavior that though not necessarily be right or wrong, is pleasing and offensive to other people favorable or unfavorable to individuals standing with their fellows. Personality can be broadly defined as the total quality of his/her attitudes or interests in his/her manner of acting and his/her personal philosophy of life". (2) Personality encompasses enduring and distinctive traits or characteristics of an individual. Numerous psychologists have elucidated behavioral variations among individuals as well as the consistencies observed within a single individual through several theoretical frameworks and methodologies. The delineation of personality facilitates the anticipation of behavior in specific contexts and enhances the efficacy of interpersonal interactions in a morally

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responsible manner. There are many types or categorizations possible within personality, and one such category or theory that has been introduced is the Big 5 or Five-Factor Model by Paul Costa and McCrae. They identified five robust factors: Neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. (3) Understanding personality traits is crucial for addressing the unique challenges and opportunities faced by today's youth, as it influences their behavior, relationships, and decision-making processes. Personality is a pivotal area of interest throughout history. Attempts to understand personality and its development have spanned centuries and continue to this day. Variations in personality among individuals are so vast that even after years of research, much more is yet to be known. Goldberg(1). India's youth (aged 15–30 years) are a demographic force driving economic growth and societal change. However, rapid urbanization, digital transformation, and shifting value systems have created unique psychological challenges. With 66% of its population below the age of 35, India has the world's largest youth population, which is crucial for the nation's progress and success. This demography is not just a number; it is a vibrant tapestry of aspirations, dreams, and transformative potential. (4). Scholarly investigations have consistently demonstrated that personality characteristics undergo significant and consequential transformations over the course of an individual's lifespan (Roberts and Yoon 2022; Bleidorn et al. 2022). In particular, during the transition from young adulthood to middle adulthood, personality traits exhibit alterations indicative of psychological maturation, such that notable increases in extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness, along with reductions in neuroticism, have been documented (Bleidorn et al., 2019, 2022; Lucas & Donnellan, 2011; Roberts et al., 2006). (12,13)

There is a limited body of research exploring the specific personality traits that are most commonly exhibited by youth. Understanding these traits is crucial for gaining insight into developmental trends, psychological well-being, and social behaviors among young individuals. However, existing studies either focus on broad personality constructs, or lack updated empirical data on generational patterns. This review focuses on the most commonly possessed personality traits and how these traits are influenced by culture and society.

By analyzing existing research on personality development, including the Five-Factor Model, this study aimed to explore the psychological challenges and opportunities faced by young individuals in the context of rapid urbanization, digital transformation, and evolving value systems. Furthermore, it seeks to address the gaps in empirical studies by highlighting the need for updated research on generational personality trends, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of youth behavior, decision-making, and interpersonal interactions.

METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW

The current investigation encompasses an extensive analysis of the prevailing literature, scrutinizing a broad spectrum of studies conducted internationally to investigate the correlation between cultural factors, socioeconomic status, and personality traits, particularly among Young Adults. This meticulous literature review employed a multidimensional analytical framework to analyze the intricate interactions among culture, personality, and socioeconomic status. The process commences with a systematic review of the literature, incorporating studies published from 2018 onwards and integrating a diverse array of academic resources, including empirical investigations, theoretical constructs, and conceptual discourses. The review synthesizes and incorporates fundamental themes, concepts, and findings from selected literature. It achieves this by utilizing theoretical frameworks such as individualism-collectivism and the reciprocal causal relationship between personality and environmental factors, thereby providing deeper insights. This manuscript offers a critical

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assessment of the limitations and voids present in contemporary research, with a focus on the importance of employing culturally sensitive methodologies and the remaining cognizance of the dynamic nature of cultural contexts. Moreover, the research methodology applied in this study seeks to identify potential pathways for future investigation. This underscores the necessity for more nuanced cultural analyses, alternative methodological approaches, longitudinal studies, and interdisciplinary perspectives. By integrating these components, this study aims to enhance our understanding of how cultural and socioeconomic status influence personality traits, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of this intricate relationship.

Cultural Influence on Personality Development

The interplay between culture and personality is multifaceted and contributes to a person's behavior, attitudes, and beliefs (8,9). Many researchers are inclined to accept the premise that personality is made from a malleable substance that can be shaped and molded by external forces, including those that spring from culture (e.g., Bleidorn et al., 2019)

A recent wave of renewed interest in exploring the relationship between personality and culture has put forward the notion that personality can be influenced by culture, although there is debate over how deeply and which parts of personality are most affected (Allik et al., 2023). People's socialized culture can impact their personality traits directly or indirectly, as emphasized by McCrae and Costa (1997), who point out the culture's role in shaping social norms, practices, and institutions, thus influencing personality development.

Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group of people from another (Hofstede, 2001, p.9) (Hofstede, 2001).(5) African and Asian nations align more closely with collectivism, in which people identify societal interdependence and communal benefits (Hofstede 1980; Sinha 2014). Triandis (1994, 1995) suggested that collectivism tends to be prevalent in both simple- and tight-knit cultures. Carpenter (2000) found empirical evidence that supports the link between collectivism and cultural tightness. In societies characterized by collectivism, individuals are closely connected to their in-groups, such as the family, tribe, or nation, and prioritize the interests of these groups. Their behavior is largely influenced by the norms of their in-groups, leading to communal actions (Mills & Clark, 1982). Collectivist cultures can vary significantly, with a key distinction between vertical collectivism, as seen in countries like India, and horizontal collectivism, exemplified by Israeli kibbutz. Vertical collectivist cultures are traditional and emphasize the importance of in-group unity, adherence to group norms, and authority directives (Bond & Smith, 1996b). For example, vertical collectivism is associated with right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer 1996), which involves submission to authority and support for conventionalism. Both vertical collectivism and right-wing authoritarianism correlate positively with age and religiosity, and negatively with education and exposure to diverse persons (Pettigrew, 1999; Triandis, 1995). Horizontal collectivist cultures emphasize empathy, sociability, and cooperation (Triandis and Gelfand 1998). Gabriel & Gardner (1999) recently found another variation of collectivism between genders. According to their research, male collectivism is derived from group memberships (e.g., "I am an American"); female collectivism is derived from specific relationships (e.g., "I am Amanda's best friend").

Openness refers to willingness to engage in new experiences, ideas, and perspectives. Individuals with high openness are often more creative, curious, and open-minded, which can influence their cultural interactions and adaptability. Different cultures have different levels of openness. For instance, cultures that emphasize collectivism may prioritize group harmony

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over individual expression, potentially leading to lower levels of openness among individuals. By contrast, individualistic cultures often encourage personal expression and exploration, fostering higher openness. (Hamamura & Bettache, K. (2019).

Conscientiousness, a key personality trait characterized by diligence, carefulness, and a strong sense of responsibility, varies across cultures and can significantly influence youth behavior and development. Different cultures emphasize various values that shape the development of conscientiousness. For instance, collectivist cultures may promote group harmony and responsibility toward the family and community, fostering a sense of duty and conscientious behavior among youth. By contrast, individualistic cultures may encourage personal achievement and self-reliance, which can also enhance conscientiousness in different contexts.

The extraversion trait is framed because of individual differences in sensitivity to rewards. This means that both internal (such as an individual's sensitivity to rewards) and external (such as the rewarding nature of social situations) factors play a role in shaping extraversion. (7)

McCrae and Terracciano (2005) investigated the relationships between the Big Five personality traits and culture and found that individualistic countries (i.e., North Americans and Europeans) scored higher in extraversion than collectivistic countries (i.e., Africans and Asians).

Triandis and Suh (2002) theorize that collectivist cultures, characterized by close ties between individuals, shared responsibilities, and group harmony, often foster personality traits, such as agreeableness and conscientiousness. Conversely, cultures that score high on uncertainty avoidance, which reflects society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, can lead to higher levels of neuroticism. These are examples of the relationships between cultural dimensions and personality traits. Neuroticism was higher among collectivists than among individualists. (Ireland et.al.2015)

A brief summary of the information is provided in Figure .1.

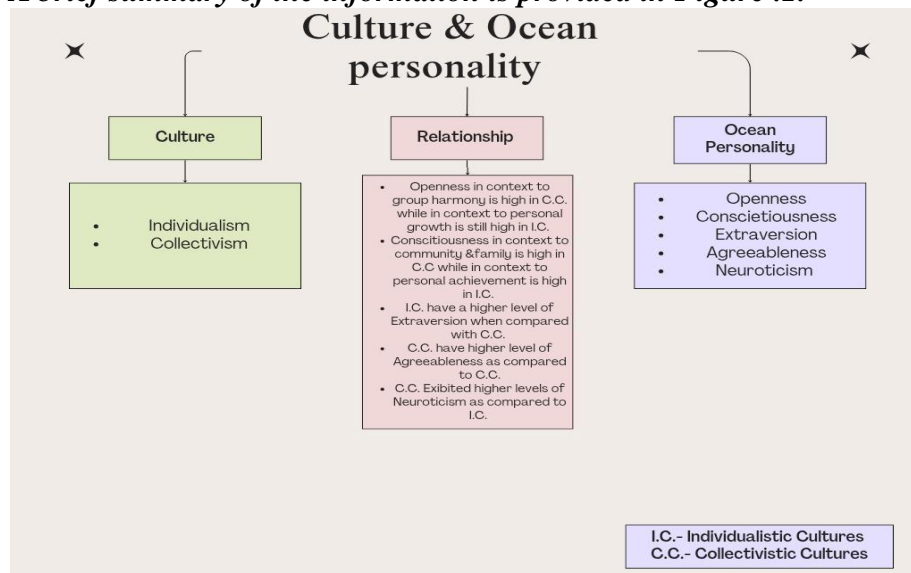


Fig:1

Socio-economic Influence on Personality

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Socioeconomic status (SES), which denotes the possession of socially and economically esteemed resources by individuals (Antonoplis, 2022). Furthermore, both theoretical frameworks and empirical investigations have indicated potential correlations between SES and personality characteristics (Hughes et al. 2021; Roberts and Nickel 2021). Relationships between SES and the Big Five traits have been reported in multiple studies. Positive associations have been observed between SES, agreeableness, emotional stability, openness, and extraversion (Jonassaint et al., 2011). However, the bulk of evidence to date has centered on the association between SES, conscientiousness, and neuroticism.

Prior research has provided empirical evidence indicating fluctuations in conscientiousness as a reaction to various work-related experiences, including the progression from secondary to tertiary education, the initiation of professional employment, and periods of unemployment (Bleidorn et al., 2018). Experiences related to educational and occupational settings encompass the methodologies of strategic planning and goal-oriented behaviors, which may facilitate alterations in conscientiousness through cumulative influences. Consequently, elevated levels of socioeconomic status, particularly those associated with education and occupational attainment, are anticipated to correlate positively with the enhancement of conscientiousness. (14) The financial behaviors and psychological traits established in young adulthood have general implications because they extend throughout adulthood into later life and set the stage for lifelong financial outcomes (Eccles, Ward, Goldsmith, & Aarsal, 2013)

In a comprehensive meta-analysis of prospective longitudinal research, the personality traits of conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness were found to be significant predictors of elevated salary levels, whereas neuroticism and agreeableness were correlated with diminished salary outcomes (Heineck, 2011). A comparable pattern of correlations was identified within the Household, Income and Labor Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) dataset when forecasting household income (Boyce, Wood, & Powdthavee, 2013). Furthermore, conscientiousness was positively associated with enhanced wealth accumulation in the context of the Health and Retirement Study (Duckworth et al., 2012). By contrast, several dimensions of the Big Five personality traits exhibited prospective correlations with unemployment patterns. Specifically, conscientiousness is linked to more rapid re-employment following job loss and a reduced duration of unemployment, whereas neuroticism is predictive of an extended unemployment period (Uysal & Pohlmeier, 2011). The relationship between openness and unemployment appears to be more nuanced; one study indicated a shorter unemployment duration for individuals willing to relocate (Uysal & Pohlmeier, 2011), while another suggested that individuals exhibiting greater openness to experience faced higher cumulative unemployment rates, potentially due to their pursuit of less stable employment types, such as careers in the arts (Viinikainen & Kokko, 2012). The relationship between personality traits and economic outcomes is complex and multifaceted, as evidenced by several longitudinal studies and meta-analyses. Conscientiousness consistently emerges as a positive predictor of financial success, associated with higher salaries, increased wealth accumulation, and shorter periods of unemployment. This trait, characterized by organization, diligence, and goal-oriented behavior, likely contributes to career advancement and financial stability. Extraversion and openness also correlate with higher salary levels, possibly because of enhanced networking abilities and adaptability to new situations, respectively. (Letkiewicz & Fox, 2014).

On the other hand, neuroticism and agreeableness were negatively correlated with salary outcomes. Neuroticism, marked by emotional instability and anxiety, is linked to extended unemployment periods, potentially because of decreased resilience in job searches or reduced

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performance under stress. Agreeableness, while socially beneficial, may hinder salary negotiations or competitive career advancement. The impact of openness on unemployment is particularly nuanced, with some studies suggesting shorter unemployment for those willing to relocate, while others indicate higher cumulative unemployment rates, possibly due to preferences for less-stable career paths. These findings underscore the importance of considering personality traits in understanding individual economic trajectories and labor market dynamics.

CONCLUSION

The intricate interplay between culture, personality, and socioeconomic status (SES) forms a complex web of influences that shapes human behavior and life outcomes. Culture, as a pervasive force, molds not only individual personalities, but also the broader social and economic contexts in which people operate. This cultural influence extends to shaping the values, beliefs, and norms that guide behavior and decision-making processes. Simultaneously, personality traits, which are partly shaped by cultural factors, play a crucial role in how individuals navigate their social and economic environments, influencing their career choices, social interactions, and ultimately their socioeconomic status. The reciprocal nature of these relationships adds complexity to this dynamic. While culture and SES significantly impact personality development, an individual's personality traits can influence their cultural adaptations and socioeconomic trajectories. For instance, certain personality traits may predispose individuals to pursue specific career paths or educational opportunities that can directly affect their SES. Moreover, SES can influence how personality traits are expressed and valued in a given cultural context. This intricate interplay underscores the importance of holistically considering these factors when studying human behavior and social outcomes, as they are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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