

Boredom Proneness and Big Five Personality Traits Among Emerging Adults

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ABSTRACT

Boredom is the unpleasant sensation experienced by an individual which is widespread and impacts an individual's cognition and emotional states. Previous research indicates that the tendency to feel boredom is linked to various psychological aspects including personality traits. Personality traits explain how an individual responds to situations around them. The present study tries to understand how the big five personality traits are linked to boredom proneness among emerging adults. The study employed a correlational research design and used the boredom proneness scale (BPS) and big five inventory (BFI 10) to collect data. The results showed a significant relationship between boredom proneness and the personality traits of conscientiousness and neuroticism. This finding suggests the possibility of considering other factors that may affect personality traits and boredom proneness among the emerging adults.

Keywords: Boredom Proneness, Personality Traits, Emerging Adults

Researchers have conceptualized boredom in different ways. According to Danckert and Eastwood (2020), boredom is the unpleasant sensation experienced when a person desires to participate in an enjoyable activity but is unable to do so. Boredom is a widespread and a universal phenomenon that impacts an individual's cognition, emotions, motivational drive, and behaviour. Thus, it is essential to develop a comprehensive understanding of the origins of boredom and its influence on human behaviour. Westgate and Wilson (2018), state boredom is explained through three main perspectives: (a) environmental theories, which associate it with a lack of stimulation, (b) attentional theories, which link it to difficulties in maintaining attention, and (c) functional theories, which view boredom as an indicator of a task's significance. Though each perspective contributes valuable insights, no single theory fully accounts for boredom. A complete and comprehensive understanding of boredom would need further detailed research. Insufficient stimulation is one major cause for boredom as observed from an environmental perspective. In addition to that lack of choice or constrained choice can also lead to boredom (Westgate & Wilson, 2018). Troutwine and O'Neal (1981) explains that

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Received: June 05, 2025; Revision Received: June 19, 2025; Accepted: June 23, 2025

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boredom also develops from a feeling being trapped where there is a lack of opportunity to change. The environmental theories give more emphasis on the person's surrounding and nature of the task at hand, while, attentional theories emphasize difficulty managing focus (for eg, Eastwood et al., 2012). At the same time, functional theories suggest that boredom is a distress signal that drives change. This subjective element of boredom is further pointed out by how a person responds to boredom.

Recent studies pave light onto how boredom proneness could affect individuals Yadav, et al. (2023) identified that there is a strong link between boredom proneness and problematic smartphone use. In addition to that individual more prone to boredom exhibits slower response time when they're distracted. Malik et al. (2024) explains that boredom proneness a possible pathway through which psychological distress is connected to social media addiction. Thevapriyan and Kasabe (2023) identified there is a gender difference related to boredom proneness as women are more susceptible to boredom than men. Also, boredom proneness could be associated with sadistic tendencies, although the research needs further exploration. These findings give much emphasis on the subjective nature of boredom proneness.

As we focus on the subjective aspects of an individual, the personality factors emerge as the prime variable that could affect how a person develops boredom, as well as, how they respond to it. Allport (1937), had defined personality as a dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to the environment. Personality not only does make a person unique from other but it often dictates how they respond to their day-to-day life events. The development of an individual's personality is influenced by multitude of factors ranging from genetic dispositions to the social situations around them. The extensive research into personality has yielded many valuable insights. The theory of Big-5 personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1985) is now considered the gold standard for personality theories, and gives a very comprehensive and wholistic approach to understanding an individual. The scope of personality psychology is universal in the field of psychology and it affects everything from motivational drives to boredom. Mercer-Lynn et al. (2013) and Culp (2006) has explained that boredom proneness has a link with some of the personality traits, which emphasizes the need for further investigation in the aera of personality and boredom proneness.

The present study attempts to understand the relationship between boredom proneness and Big 5 personality traits among emerging adults. Understanding the intricate connections of traits and boredom proneness could offer valuable insights their underlying psychological mechanisms. Emerging adulthood is a transitional period from being an adolescent to an adult. As a period of transformation this time frame has its own possibilities and challenges. It is identified as a period of identity exploration and self-focus (Arnett, 2000). The reliance of emerging adults on their family members and elders are diminishing but they're not completely involved in the commitments of adulthood. This creates a unique time period that creates a larger radius of changes in a relatively short span of time. Emerging adults take on more tasks and one the factors that could hinder an emerging adult's tasks is boredom. Individuals prone to boredom could exhibit consistent behaviour patterns which could be related to their personality characteristics as well.

The benefit of such as understanding is wide-ranging from educational practices to developing healthy mindsets and working environments. This research holds particular

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significance for mental health professionals seeking to comprehend and effectively address boredom-related issues in emerging adults.

Objective

- The major objective of the study is to understand the relationship between boredom proneness and big 5 personality traits among emerging adults.

Hypothesis

- H1: There will be a significant relationship between openness and boredom proneness.
- H2: There will be a significant relationship between conscientiousness and boredom proneness.
- H3: There will be a significant relationship between extraversion and boredom proneness.
- H4: There will be a significant relationship between agreeableness and boredom proneness.
- H5: There will be a significant relationship between neuroticism and boredom proneness.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample of the study consisted of 140 participants in the age group of 18 to 22. convenience sampling method was used to collect the data. The data collection was conducted after obtaining the consent of the participants. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of the data and that it will only be used for research purposes. After the data collection was complete the participants were appreciated for taking part in the study. The collected data were analysed using SPSS (v.25), and Spearman bivariate correlation test was used to assess the relationship between the two variables.

Boredom Proneness

To measure boredom proneness, the boredom proneness (BP) scale developed by Famer and Sundberg (1986) was used. The BPS is a 28-item tool which assesses a person's tendency to experience boredom. The BPS assess boredom proneness in a range of aspects such as lack of interest in activities, concentration difficulties, feeling restless etc. BPS has a range of 0 to 28 scores in the original format, the higher score indicates higher boredom proneness. The BPS serves is an effective tool to evaluate boredom levels as well as, monitor changes over time. The BPS has good internal consistency, test-retest reliability and has established discriminant validity.

Big Five Personality Traits

The Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) was used to measure the five personality traits namely, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The BFI-10 is a shortened version of the Big Five Inventory-44 (Rammstedt & John, 2007). The participants rate statements about their personality using a 5-point Likert scale. The BFI 10 is useful in surveys, as well as in wide range studies owing to its short form that requires very little time for assessment. The reliability and validity of the BFI 10 has been established.

Research Design

A correlational research design was employed to study the relationship between boredom proneness and big five personality traits among emerging adults.

RESULTS

The results of the data analysis are shown in table 1.

Table 1 Spearman bivariate correlation between Boredom Proneness and Big Five Personality traits among emerging adults.

		Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness to experience
Boredom	r	-.136	-.166	-.325**	.446**	-.153
	value					
Proneness	p	.110	0.51	.000	.000	.071
	value					

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The results of the data analysis show a significant negative correlation between Conscientiousness and Boredom Proneness ($r = -0.325$, $p = .000$). Furthermore, the findings from the correlational analysis indicate a significant positive correlation between Neuroticism and Boredom Proneness ($r = 0.446$, $p = .000$). No significant correlations were found for the other traits.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to understand the relationship between boredom proneness and big five personality traits among emerging adults. Boredom proneness refers to a stable personality trait marked by a tendency to experience boredom both often and intensely, and it is linked to numerous negative consequences. (Mugon et al., 2020). Boredom Proneness can have important implications on a person's thoughts and behaviours. Big five personality traits explain individual's behaviour through the five factors of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The results shows that there exists a significant correlation between boredom proneness and neuroticism, as well as between boredom proneness and conscientiousness. The results show several noteworthy observations that could justify further inquiry.

Boredom Proneness and Conscientiousness

The analysis found that there is a weak negative correlation between boredom proneness and conscientiousness ($r = -0.325$, $p = .000$). Hence the hypothesis “There will be a significant relationship between conscientiousness and boredom proneness” is accepted. Conscientiousness is the degree to which an individual is careful and responsible in their day-to-day life. This suggests that those who are more conscientious are less prone to get bored, whereas people who are less conscientious are more likely to do so. On the other hand, people who are less diligent are probably more inclined to be bored easily, and vice versa. This result aligns with past research, for instance, Culp (2006) found that boredom proneness demonstrated a moderately strong negative correlation with conscientiousness. This highlights conscientiousness as a significant personality trait that is linked to the tendency to experience boredom. The presence of a significant, yet weak correlation coupled with previous research suggests that the trait of conscientiousness has an impact on boredom proneness. Although this finding warrants further exploration that could reveal more subtle aspects between the two variables.

Boredom Proneness and Neuroticism

A moderate negative correlation was found between boredom proneness and neuroticism ($r = 0.446$, $p = .000$). Hence the hypothesis “there will be a significant relationship between

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neuroticism and boredom proneness” is accepted. Neuroticism is the degree or extent to which a person is emotionally balanced or not. The present finding suggests that people with higher levels of neuroticism are more prone to experiencing boredom, whereas those with lower neuroticism are less likely to report such experiences. This result is consistent with past research, emphasizing the significance of neurotic personality traits in the experience of boredom. For instance, Mercer-Lynn et al. (2013) found that elevated scores of boredom proneness linked to increased levels of neuroticism. The consistency of the present findings with previous research emphasizes the impact of neuroticism on boredom proneness.

The results show negative correlations between the traits of openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness and boredom proneness, although the results are statistically insignificant. Therefore, the hypotheses H1, H3, and H4 are rejected. Overall, the findings highlight that both neuroticism and conscientiousness are significantly associated with boredom proneness, emphasizing the role of personality traits in an individual's vulnerability to experience boredom. Individuals who struggle to regulate emotional fluctuations and cope with internal distress appear more prone to experiencing boredom. On the other hand, those who are dutiful, responsible, and cautious—traits reflective of greater conscientiousness—tend to be less susceptible to boredom. Additionally, the other Big Five traits : openness, agreeableness, and extraversion, did not show significant correlations with boredom proneness, indicating that not all personality dimensions contribute equally, with some traits emerging as more relevant predictors than others.

Implications and Future Directions

The observed associations suggest meaningful directions for future research into how personality and cognitive factors interact to influence boredom proneness. Personality traits such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism are generally considered stable, shaping how individuals think, feel, and behave across the lifespan. However, their interaction with boredom proneness may shift due to developmental transitions, life experiences, and environmental factors. Therefore, it is important that future research to be focused on the mediator and moderator variables that could be present between personality traits and boredom proneness. These insights carry practical implications, suggesting that educators and mental health professionals could utilize personality and cognitive assessments to support individuals and implement targeted strategies to address boredom-related difficulties.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to examine whether a relationship exists between boredom proneness and the Big Five personality traits among emerging adults. Based on the outcomes, it can be concluded that a relationship does exist. Specifically, a significant positive correlation was found between neuroticism and boredom proneness, while a significant negative correlation was observed between conscientiousness and boredom proneness. the traits of openness to experience, extraversion and agreeableness showed a weak yet insignificant. The nature of these variables and their underlying possibilities suggests the need for more specific investigations in the future. By addressing these research possibilities researchers can contribute to further understanding about boredom proneness.

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Acknowledgment

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who supported and contributed to the completion of this research study. First and foremost, we are grateful to our institution for providing the necessary resources and support. We express our gratitude to the participants, whose contributions were essential to the successful completion of this research.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Jeevan, R. & Jiss, J., Ashish, J., & Amal, A. (2025). Boredom Proneness and Big Five Personality Traits Among Emerging Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(2), 4098-4104. DIP:18.01.362.20251302, DOI:10.25215/1302.362