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Research Paper

Impulsivity Through the Triguna Lens: "A Correlational Study in Modern Contexts"

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ABSTRACT

The whole universe is made up of three aspects: Sattva, Rajas,Tamas. These gunas are called trigunas. According to the Sankhya philosophy sattva refers to light, awareness. Rajas refer to movement and Tamas means heaviness, stillness, Laziness. Triguna theory is Indian theory of personality and this theory was propounded thousands of years ago in Bhagvad Gita covering major concepts of psychology like perception, Motivation and emotion (Yadav et.al., 2016). Indian psychology has defined personality with the help of Triguna theory or three gunas (Singh,2008). Objective of our study is to find out the correlation between the triguna and impulsiveness among college students. Sample consists of 80 people (40 male and 40 female) by convenience sampling method. The questionnaire used for the study are The Vedic Personality Inventory developed by Dr David wolf, is the most validated psychological assessment tool for trigunas and the impulsiveness scale developed by Dr S.N. Rai, Dr Alka Sharma. Findings of the study are 1) Sattvic Personality has negative correlation with impulsivity 2) Rajsic personality has high correlation with impulsivity 3) Tamsic personality has correlation with impulsivity. This study is important for understanding nature, and it helps the individual to focus on their gunas to achieve their goals in their personal life.

Keywords: *Sattva, Rajas, Tamas, Impulsiveness, Indian Theory of Personality, College Students*

The knowledge of ancient philosophical systems with modern psychological studies provides significant insights into human personality and behavior. The Triguna theory, originating from Samkhya philosophy and detailed in the Bhagavad Gita, suggests that three core qualities (gunas)—Sattva (purity and clarity), Rajas (activity and passion), and Tamas (inertia and darkness)—form the foundation of human nature and affect psychological processes. While personality traits and impulse actions have been studied in western psychology but there is currently few or less systematic research on triguna theory in relation to certain behavioral patterns. Understanding this connection could offer culturally relevant frameworks for personality assessment and intervention, especially in Indian settings. when we see the Impulsivity through the lens of Triguna, described in the Samkhya philosophy that Nature is triguna, in which all three qualities - (sattva, rajas, tamas) can be understood as a manifestation predominately linked to the Rajsic and Tamsic gunas. Trigunas prevalent in nature are different. Sattva guna is associated with the

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calmness, stillness, and divine component, Sattva Guna has qualities of doing good, being good, and feeling good. Such people see no bad things in others, their perspectives are optimism see positive side than negative, in this world, if a man develops sattva guna, and he will become more intelligent than other human beings. Rajas guna involves too much activity, and along with that, tending to get attached to materialistic things and very energetic towards getting things. Tamas guna associated with the evil component related to the taking up wrong acts, inertia, and decay. Impulsivity is closely seen with the two gunas that are Rajas and Tamas because rajas leads to hyperactivity to gain sensual gains while Tamas leads to wrong decisions due to lack of right wisdom.

THE TRIGUNA FRAMEWORK

According to Samkhya philosophy, Prakriti (nature) consists of three gunas that exist in a dynamic balance. These Gunas are seen through external senses but these guans are observed by their impacts on the living beings' cognition, emotion and behavior.

Sattva: In Hindu religion texts sattva correlates with the lord Vishnu because lord Vishnu is seen as the deity of protector, goodness and purity and balancer of the world. Sattva represents the (good knowledge) Vidya which means knowledge that transcend the person from materialistic world so if the person has more sattvic qualities than he can reach the self-actualization stage given by Maslow hierarchy of needs. People with sattvic qualities are calm, focused, clarity in mind and their decision making is excellent because they don't take decision impulsively. Food is also divided into these gunas because there is a quote that describe our food determines our nature internally, so sattvic food are spices free, includes fruits and vegetable given by the nature (prakriti), sattvic food not satisfies our sensual pleasure but gives satisfaction to our senses. Sattvic person does not bear the pain of physical and emotional sufferings of the world, this does not mean the problems do not come into the person's life but the person has resilience to face the problems by their inner strength and wisdom.

Rajas Rajas in Hindu mythologies are related to the lord Brahma who is considered the creator of the world or universe. Rajas represent the materialistic component, drive for materialistic success, energy, passion, dedication towards work. Rajas lead to the attachment to the outcomes. It believes in the input and output theory. Those people have high Rajas guna they seem more action oriented and sometimes they take actions in so much hurry that increase their impulsiveness. Rajas food is high spices, fast food, garlic etc. Rajas guna have attraction tendency between male and female.

Tamas**:** Tamas denotes the lord shiva - destroyer of the world. Tamas is considered the opposite of the Sattva. Sattva is the lightness or ray of hope while tamas is the shadow or darkness. Tamas guna increases the restlessness or procrastination, delayed into the work, sleepiness so when the person has high tamas their works or goals are not fulfilled and when the deadlines comes they react impulsively, thinking too much or doing work in hurry. Tamasic person has no true purpose of their life. Tamas food is decayed or frozen food like packet food.

Impulsiveness: Conceptualization

When we understand this word impulsiveness it signifies extreme in something or high and when this word is considered in psychological terms it represents doing actions without proper mental processes or in so much hurry that cognition can't take place accurately, don't think about the consequences of the actions. For example - a corporate employee cannot

fulfill his weekly goal due to tamas increases then the person leaves the job impulsively without thinking of the consequences or not trying to solve the problem or better ways to deal with. Psychological theories attribute impulsivity to various factors. From a psychodynamic perspective, Freud emphasized that childhood experiences and inadequate development of self-regulation leads to impulsivity.

Theoretical Integration and Research Objectives

Clinically, impulsivity is a fundamental feature of a number of psychopathologies, including bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder (BPD), and forensic psychiatric populations. It frequently manifests as problems with motor inhibition, planning, and attention control. Rapid and unplanned reactions, emotional instability, and dangerous behaviors, such as suicidal attempts with varying degrees of lethality, are all correlated with elevated impulsivity (Hochhausen et al., 2002; Jacob et al., 2010; Swann et al., 2005). These characteristics highlight the predominance of both tamasic obscuration of clear judgment and rajasic agitation. According to the triguna model, enhancing sattva may also lessen impulsivity by fostering calmness, clarity, and reflective awareness—qualities linked to improved self-regulation in people who are less impulsive. It is possible to think of interventions that use self-reflection, mindfulness, and cognitive-behavioral techniques as ways to enhance sattvic qualities, which would improve inhibitory control and lessen impulsive tendencies (Bakhshani, 2014). From a neurocognitive standpoint, impulsivity is associated with deficiencies in self-control and behavioral inhibition mechanisms, which are correlated with reduced activity in executive function-related prefrontal brain regions. For instance, research indicates that people with high levels of impulsivity rely less on top-down regulation and more on habitual, model-free behavioral control than goal-directed model-based control (Deserno et al., 2015).

Rajpurohit and Satpathy (2018) mentioned the Triguna theory in the context of personality and described how these balance between these trigunas contributes to mental clarity and emotional well-being, and more imbalance leads to psychological distress.

Tania Chandra, Nasreen Ansari, and Shali Misra (2024) examine the trigunas to understand personality and use the triguna theory in treating personality disorders.

Hypothesis of the Research

- **Ho1-** There is negative correlation between Sattvic and impulsiveness.
- **Ho2-**There is positive correlation between Rajasic and impulsiveness.
- **Ho3-** There is positive correlation between Tamasic and impulsiveness.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In order to investigate the connections between impulsivity and personality traits (gunas), this study used a quantitative correlational research design. The correlational method was chosen as suitable for examining relationships between variables that occur naturally without the need for experimental manipulation.

Participants

Convenience random sampling was used to select 80 college students (40 males and 40 females) between the ages of 18 and 25 (M = 21.5, SD = 2.1) from Uttaranchal University.

Participants came from a variety of geographical backgrounds, including international students from Nigeria, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar, and Uttarakhand.

Inclusion Criteria

College enrollment, being between the ages of 18 and 25, and having a sufficient understanding of the questionnaire's language were the inclusion criteria. All the research ethics or principles were followed and kept as a primary concern, like taking informed consent from the participants.

Exclusion Criteria

Previous completion of comparable tests, formal psychology training, and trouble comprehending the questionnaire's language were among the exclusion criteria. Individuals with psychological backgrounds.

Tools Employed

- **Vedic personality Inventory**: The three gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—are evaluated by Wolf's Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI) the 56 items in the inventory are divided into three subscales: Tamas (22 items), Rajas (19 items), and Sattva (15 items). Respondents indicate whether or not they agree with statements that describe typical attitudes, actions, and preferences. Prior studies have shown that the VPI has sufficient validity and reliability for evaluating Vedic personality dimensions.
- **Impulsiveness Scale**: The Impulsiveness Scale, created by Dr S.N Rai and Dr Alka Sharma uses 30 statements to gauge a person's tendency for rash decisions, their inability to control their behavior, and their disregard for the consequences of their actions. To improve validity, the scale offers distinct scoring standards for men and women. Greater impulsivity is indicated by higher scores. In samples from India, the scale has shown satisfactory psychometric qualities.

RESULTS

Table No. 1: Correlation of Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic with Impulsiveness.

MEASURES	IMPULSIVENESS
Sattvic	-0.288
Rajasic	0.445
Tamasic	0.447

Significant at 0.01.

The result came out with several findings with the relationship between personalities. Traits (Sattvik, Rajsik, Tamasic) and impulsive behavior. First finding shows that sattvic has a negative correlation with impulsivity with a coefficient of -0.288. People with higher Sattvik scores generally show rare instances of impulsivity. This is consistent with the theoretical assumption that individuals with Sattvik personality traits have clarity, calmness and self-control. Second findings are Rajsic correlation: shows a positive correlation with impulsivity r=0.445 as the Rajsic score increases, the chance for impulsivity also increases. This finding is consistent with theoretical models that suggest that Rajasic traits are associated with activity, enthusiasm, and dynamic behavior. Tamasic correlation has the highest positive correlation with impulsivity with a coefficient of 0.477. Higher Tamsic scores appear to be significantly associated with increased levels of impulsivity. This is consistent with the theoretical concept that Tamasic traits lead to confusion, disorder, lack of self-control.

DISCUSSION

Results indicate a significant and positive correlation between Rajsic and tamasic scores with impulsiveness, with a score of 0.445 and 0.48 respectively. Typically, Rajasic characteristics are viewed as attachment towards work, dedication, passion, too much involvement in worldly things and tamasic refers to indicative of inertia, disorganization, and a tendency towards slowness or lack of focus. Psychologically and behaviorally, a strong positive correlation suggests that when tamasic characteristics predominate, there may be a substantial impairment in self-regulation mechanism controlling impulse, possibly leading to significant difficulties with impulse control. Further inquiry into tamasic traits and impulsiveness is warranted due to the observed correlation between tamasic characteristics and high impulsivity levels, suggesting a need to explore underlying cognitive or emotional impairments in individuals with elevated tamasic scores. Future research can be which component rajasic or Tamsic leads more impulsiveness still there is lot of confusion about that some researches show that only rajasic leads to impulsiveness not tamasic and some shows both Gunas leads to impulsiveness.

The analysis of the data encompasses three key scores: Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic which can all impact an individual's degree of impulsiveness. The dataset contains 80 observation with characteristics defined by individual scores and an impulsiveness assessment. An analysis of three scores variables reveals that the Sattvic score averaged approximately 76 and displayed relatively low variability compared to the Rajasic and Tamsic score, which have mean values of roughly 74 and 64 respectively, The Rajasic and Tamsic scores show wide range of value, suggesting a greater degree of variations among the individuals. Those with moderate or below average impulsiveness levels typically have higher sattvic scores. In cases where impulsiveness is rated as High or above average, the patterns of Rajasic and Tamisic scores often differ, implying that higher impulsiveness may be associated with a lower level of Sattvic scores. Specifically, within certain subgroups, inidviduals with moderate impulsiveness exhibit particular high average Sattvic scores coupled with neutral trends in rajasic and Tamsic scores. Earlier studies link the impulsiveness to personality disorders and aggression also shows the rule of Rajasic and Tamasic guna in such pathologies (Edwards et.al.,2003). Further, mental states like boredom or feeling of meaninglessness, can increase the impulsiveness by Rajsic and Tamsic dullness, promoting impulsive behavior to get relief or out of the situation. (Moynihan et al.,2017).

Sattvic Traits and Impulse control

In this study we found that sattva guna has negative correlation with the impulsiveness which supports that sattva guna is related to stillness, focusing on the present moment making the present moment happily. In the modern or technical world, people stuck with the future or past regrets, they think about future uncertainty. Taking the real world example –A Student constantly takes stress about the job not enjoying the process of learning, student worry about the AI consequences that Artificial intelligence will take all jobs but if a student has sattva guna more he can focus how I can use AI to enhance my skills, see the positive effects of AI. Sattva traits also leads to stability in the emotions, sattvic people have emotional intelligence, self-management, social awareness, relationship management and these components given by Daniel Goleman.

Rajasic traits and Impulse control

Studies show that there is positive correlation of rajas traits and impulsiveness because rajas tendency to see out exciting experiences. Theoretically, this could be due to an imbalance in their reward systems, resulting in a drive for hyper activeness.

Tamasic traits and impulse control

Tamasic characteristics are viewed as indicative of inertia, disorganization, and a tendency towards slowness or lack of focus. Psychologically and behaviorally, a strong positive correlation suggests that when tamasic characteristics predominate, there may be impairment in self-regulation mechanism controlling impulse, possibly leading to significant difficulties with impulse control.

CONCLUSION

The research results clearly declared that rajasic and tamasic Gunas lead to impulsiveness and sattvic does not lead to impulsiveness people who got high score on Rajas guna are generally impulsive in their actions like speaking without think, prioritize self-interests, easily reacts to situations, always need for urgency which are features of impulsiveness. People who got high score in the tamsic guna have tendency to poor self-management, confused mindset, and lot of tiredness, lack of planning, time management issue, and not meet work deadline properly. One Guna cannot be found fully in one person; rather one person has three Gunas but dominated by one guna. If the person wants to balance or higher self in the life there must be balance of these Gunas, person can increase their Sattva guna by yoga, meditation, spiritual path, sattvic way of life like eating fruits and vegetables and good thought and actions not harming any living creature then he can connect with the higher self.

In summing up, this research supports the idea that impulsiveness is not a characteristic that occurs by chance, but instead closely linked to the underlying personality structure, as outlined in the Triguna theory. Research indicated that rajasic and tamasic gunas contribute to the development of impulse behavior, whereas sattvic guna functions as a safeguarding and balancer of mind and soul. Our comprehension of human psychology is enhanced by the integration of timeless knowledge with contemporary scientific studies. Understanding the dynamic relationship between the gunas provides not only a method for evaluating one's psychological state but fostering individual growth and change.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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