

Research Paper

Personality and Sociosexuality: Exploring Sociosexual Patterns as Predictor of Big Five Traits in Indian University Students

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ABSTRACT

Sociosexuality or willingness to engage in casual sexual relationships has been widely studied in Western populations but remains underexplored in collectivist countries such as India. The literature review highlights evolutionary psychology and social learning theory as key frameworks with prior studies linking Big Five traits to sociosexuality such as extraversion and openness to experience, which are positively associated (Olivera-La Rosa et al., 2024). Low conscientiousness and low agreeableness are critical predictors of unrestricted sociosexual orientation (Chen et al., 2024). The study investigates how the Big Five personality traits predict sociosexuality among university students in India. The hypotheses predicted H1: Extraversion will be positively correlated with sociosexuality; H2: Agreeableness will be negatively correlated with sociosexuality; H3: Conscientiousness will be negatively associated with sociosexuality; and H4: Neuroticism will be positively correlated with sociosexuality. H5: Openness to experience will be positively correlated with sociosexuality. A quantitative method was employed with a sample size of 100 university students completing the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory-Revised (SOI-R) and Big Five Inventory (BFI-44). Regression analysis revealed only Agreeableness significantly predicted sociosexual desire ($\beta = -0.2633$, $p = .014$), while other predictors were not significant. These findings have implications for culturally tailored sexual health programs and relationship counseling in non-western settings.

Keywords: Sociosexuality, Big Five Traits, Indian Students, Regression, Sexual Health

In the present times, casual sexual experiences have become increasingly common specifically among university students, which encompasses sexual behavior outside the committed romantic relationships and has been linked to risky sexual practices such as reduced condom use which leads to increased sexual infections and undesirable pregnancies (Fernández Del Río et al., 2019). It refers to individual differences in the willingness to engage in uncommitted sexual activity (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). It is influenced by several factors, like cultural background, personality traits, and societal norms. It has been extensively researched in western contexts; studies in collectivistic countries such as India are relatively rare and need to be studied as they differ on certain parameters. Collectivistic cultures emphasize monogamy, marriage, and family honor and sociosexual behaviors here are emphasized by cultural constraints and societal expectations. With rapid modernization

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Received: July 6, 2025; Revision Received: March 27, 2026; Accepted: March 31, 2026

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and shifting social attitudes, young adults in India are increasingly engaging in casual sex. It has been conceptualized as a continuum, ranging from restricted sociosexuality (those who prefer long-term commitment) to unrestricted sociosexuality (those who are inclined towards casual encounters). Penke and Asendorpf in 2008 proposed a three-dimensional structure of sociosexuality, which includes three dimensions: behavior, referring to an individual's past sexual experiences and actions; attitudes towards sex without commitment; and desire involving an individual's arousal or attraction to the possibility of engaging in casual sex (Blasco-Belled et al., 2021). India is a collectivistic society that is deeply rooted in traditional values where sexual behavior is often governed by cultural and religious norms. Indian society has always emphasized the sanctity of marriage and discouraged premarital and extramarital sex. However, with urbanization and increased exposure to Western ideologies, sexual norms among young adults in India are changing. Despite the changing landscape, sociosexuality remains a sensitive topic in India. Public discussions about it are stigmatized; individuals engaged in unrestricted sociosexuality face societal judgement. Such cultural constraints create a unique psychological environment that influences how individuals express their sociosexual tendencies. Research on the interplay of sociosexuality and personality in India is scarce. The present study seeks to fill this gap by answering the research question "How do the Big Five personality traits (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience) predict sociosexuality among university students in India?"

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study recruited 110 university students from urban backgrounds using a convenience sampling method between the ages of 18 and 25 years old who provided informed consent before participating. Participants were recruited through university networks, student organizations and online platforms such as social media. Exclusion criteria included individuals who were not currently enrolled in a university program or who did not provide informed consent.

Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

1. **Sociosexual Orientation Inventory-Revised (SOI-R):** It was developed by Penke and Asendorpf (2008) is a widely used instrument designed to examine sociosexual orientation based on three dimensions: behavior, attitude and desire. The SOI-R consists of 9 items that provide insights into an individual's willingness to engage in casual sexual experiences. The behavior dimension evaluates previous sexual behaviors such as the number of different partners an individual had casual sex with without an interest in a long-term commitment with an example item being "With how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse without having an interest in a long-term committed relationship with this person?" Responses for this factor are rated on a 9-point scale, ranging from 1 (0 or 1 partners) to 9 (20 or more partners). The attitude dimension assesses beliefs regarding casual sex, exemplified by the item "Sex without love is OK," with responses rated from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 9 (Strongly agree). The desire dimension measures the frequency of sexual fantasies about individuals with whom one does not have a committed romantic relationship as illustrated by the item "How often do you have fantasies about having sex with someone with whom you do not have a committed romantic relationship?"

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- 2. Big Five Inventory (BFI):** The Big Five Inventory (BFI), developed by John and Srivastava (1999) is a well-established tool for assessing the Big Five traits. It has 44 Likert-type items with responses on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It measures five dimensions: Neuroticism which includes 8 items assessing emotional stability and the tendency to express negative emotions, Extraversion, consisting of 8 items evaluating sociability and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others, Agreeableness, which measures interpersonal tendencies like cooperativeness; Conscientiousness, assessing self-discipline and organization; and Openness to experience evaluating creativity and curiosity.

Procedure

The Big Five inventory and the Sociosexuality Orientation Inventory-Revised were used to assess personality traits and sociosexuality among young adults. Data collection was carried out through an online questionnaire administered to eligible participants recruited through convenience sampling. Following data collection, responses were screened for missing data. Descriptive statistics (Mean and SD) were computed for personality traits and sociosexuality dimensions. Regression analysis was used to determine the predictive power of the Big Five traits on sociosexuality dimensions.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Regression analysis was used to test how Big Five traits predicted sociosexuality.

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	R ²
Extraversion					0.0283
Behavior	0.1001	0.1679	0.596	0.552	
Desire	-0.1935	0.1152	-1.68	0.096	
Attitude	0.0189	0.0955	0.197	0.844	
Agreeableness					0.0971
Behavior	-0.0634	0.1538	-0.412	0.681	
Desire	-0.2633	0.1055	-2.496	.014*	
Attitude	0.0651	0.0875	0.743	0.459	
Conscientiousness					0.054
Behavior	-0.0484	0.1527	-0.317	0.752	
Desire	-0.1667	0.1047	-1.592	0.114	
Attitude	-0.0064	0.0869	-0.074	0.941	
Neuroticism					0.00943
Behavior	-0.038	0.19	-0.2	0.842	
Desire	0.1039	0.13	0.798	0.427	
Attitude	-0.0813	0.108	-0.753	0.453	
Openness					0.00765
Behavior	-0.1378	0.1661	-0.829	0.409	
Desire	0.0264	0.114	0.232	0.817	
Attitude	0.0545	0.0945	0.577	0.565	

Note. This table demonstrates the relationship between Big 5 traits as the dependent variable and sociosexuality dimensions with significance at $p < .05$.

DISCUSSION

A key finding of the study is that agreeableness is negatively associated with sociosexuality, supporting previous research that highlighted their role in fostering relationship commitment and emotional intimacy. Agreeable individuals prioritize social harmony and interpersonal relationships and are less inclined toward casual sexual experiences. Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience did not significantly predict sociosexuality in the study. This signifies the importance of contextual factors, which shape sexual attitudes and behaviors beyond personality traits. Cultural influences play a pivotal role in shaping sociosexual norms and this study underscores their importance. In India, cultural values surrounding marriage, family honor and modesty create a social environment that discourages unrestricted sociosexuality. The findings suggest that personality alone may not be sufficient to predict sociosexuality, as societal and cultural forces also exert considerable influence. This highlights the need for future studies to integrate cultural variables when examining sociosexuality in diverse populations.

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Acknowledgment

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Singh, P. (2026). Personality and Sociosexuality: Exploring Sociosexual Patterns as Predictor of Big Five Traits in Indian University Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *14*(1), 3315-3319. DIP:18.01.332.20261401, DOI:10.25215/1401.332