

Research Paper

Examining the effects of Big Five Personality Traits and Gender on Emotional Intelligence among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of Big Five Personality Traits and Gender on Emotional Intelligence among young adults. The aim of the study is to find out how the emotional intelligence among youth is influenced by the change in their respective dominant personality traits, and if gender also plays a crucial role in their emotional intelligence. The paper contains data collected from 130 individuals (65 males, 65 females) in the age range of 18 to 25 years, living in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were used to reach out to participants who voluntarily gave data for the purpose of the study. Data was collected using two questionnaires- Five Personality Trait Inventory (FPTI-MKS) and Emotional Intelligence Scale- Situational (EIS-S-SPMK), both demonstrating high reliability and validity. The study adopted a quantitative, nonexperimental research design. The statistical analysis of the study might be done using Multiple Linear Regression and independent t-test. The findings of the study revealed that openness has a positive effect on EI, while extraversion and neuroticism show a negative relationship with EI. The findings also reveal that gender has insignificant effect on emotional intelligence. The findings suggest that personality traits play a more important role than gender in influencing emotional intelligence. The study highlights the importance of individual personality differences in understanding emotional functioning and provides useful insights for psychological research and practice.

Keywords: *Big Five Personality Traits, Gender, Emotional Intelligence, Young Adults*

Emotional intelligence (EI) has gained considerable attention in psychological research due to its role in shaping how individuals perceive, understand, regulate, and express emotions. It is considered a vital component of psychological well-being, influencing interpersonal relationships, decision-making, stress management, and overall life satisfaction. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence are generally better equipped to navigate social interactions, cope with challenges, and maintain emotional balance (Daniel Goleman, 1995; Peter Salovey & John D. Mayer, 1990).

One of the major determinants of emotional functioning is personality. The Big Five model of personality, comprising openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, provides a widely accepted framework for examining

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individual differences (Lewis R. Goldberg, 1993; Paul Costa & Robert McCrae, 1992). These traits represent stable patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, and are therefore closely linked to how individuals experience and regulate emotions.

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated significant associations between personality traits and emotional intelligence. Studies have reported that traits such as extraversion and openness are positively related to emotional intelligence, as they facilitate emotional expression, social interaction, and adaptability. In contrast, neuroticism has been found to be negatively associated with emotional intelligence due to its link with emotional instability and negative affect. Supporting this, research by Konstantinos V. Petrides and Adrian Furnham (2001) highlighted strong relationships between trait emotional intelligence and personality dimensions. Similarly, findings by Moshe Zeidner, Gerald Matthews, and Richard D. Roberts (2004) emphasized the role of personality in emotional processing and regulation.

Further, studies included in the present review indicate that while openness and extraversion tend to show consistent positive relationships with emotional intelligence, the findings for conscientiousness and agreeableness remain mixed, suggesting variability across contexts and samples. These inconsistencies highlight the complexity of the relationship between personality and emotional intelligence and indicate the need for further investigation.

In addition to personality, gender has also been explored as a factor influencing emotional intelligence. Some studies have suggested that females exhibit higher emotional intelligence due to greater emotional awareness and expressiveness, while others report no significant gender differences. For instance, work by Reuven Bar-On (1997) and subsequent research has produced mixed findings regarding gender-based differences in emotional intelligence. The inconsistency in these results suggests that gender may not independently determine emotional intelligence and warrants further examination.

Despite the growing body of literature, most studies have examined personality traits and gender independently in relation to emotional intelligence. There is limited research that investigates their combined effect within a single analytical framework. Additionally, variations in findings across different populations highlight the need for context-specific research.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the effect of Big Five personality traits and gender on emotional intelligence. By analysing the relative contribution of each personality trait along with gender, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing emotional intelligence.

METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a quantitative, non-experimental, predictive correlational research design to examine the effect of Big Five personality traits and gender on emotional intelligence. The study also aimed to assess gender differences in emotional intelligence. The sample consisted of 130 young adults aged between 18 to 25 years, residing in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. Participants were selected using convenience sampling, voluntary response sampling, and snowball sampling techniques. This age group was considered appropriate due to the significant emotional and psychological development that occurs during young adulthood.

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Participants were approached based on the inclusion criteria and were informed about the purpose of the study. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation. They were provided with instructions for completing the questionnaires and were asked to respond honestly. The collected data were used solely for research purposes.

Variables

Independent Variables:

1. Big Five Personality Traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism)
2. Gender

Dependent Variable:

1. Emotional Intelligence

Hypotheses

- **H₀1:** There is no significant effect of Big Five personality traits on emotional intelligence.
- **H₀2:** There is no significant effect of openness on emotional intelligence.
- **H₀3:** There is no significant effect of conscientiousness on emotional intelligence.
- **H₀4:** There is no significant effect of extraversion on emotional intelligence.
- **H₀5:** There is no significant effect of agreeableness on emotional intelligence.
- **H₀6:** There is no significant effect of neuroticism on emotional intelligence.
- **H₀7:** There is no significant gender difference in emotional intelligence.

Instruments

1. **Five Personality Trait Inventory (FPTI–MKS):** Personality traits were assessed using the Five Personality Trait Inventory developed by K. S. Misra. The inventory consists of 50 items, measuring five personality dimensions: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Each trait is represented by 10 items. Responses are recorded on a 5-point scale ranging from “nearly always” to “nearly never.” The inventory demonstrates adequate reliability, with Cronbach’s alpha values ranging approximately from 0.58 to 0.77 across traits. The tool has also shown acceptable levels of validity through concurrent validation methods.
2. **Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS-S):** Emotional intelligence was measured using the Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by P. Srinivasan and K. Murugesan. The scale consists of 40 situational items assessing four domains: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management. The scale has demonstrated satisfactory reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.71) and good validity, with strong concurrent validity reported. Scoring is objective, with correct responses scored as 1 and incorrect responses as 0.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were computed. Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of personality traits and gender on emotional intelligence.

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Additionally, an independent samples t-test was used to assess gender differences in emotional intelligence.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

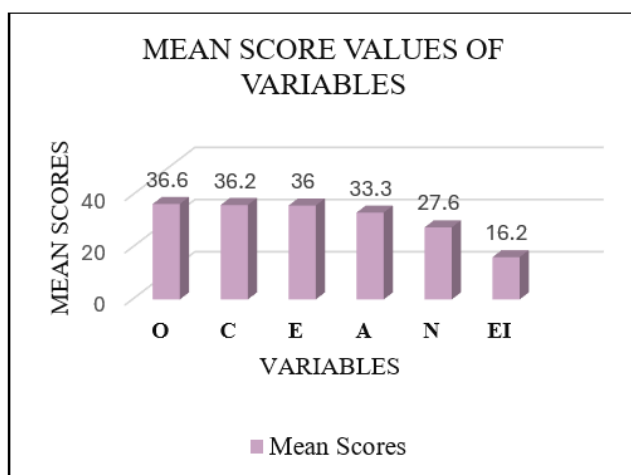
Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the characteristics of the study variables. The mean and standard deviation values for emotional intelligence and the Big Five personality traits are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 The Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
O	36.6	4.54
C	36.2	4.28
E	36	4.70
A	33.3	4.57
N	27.6	6.53
EI	16.24	5

The mean score for emotional intelligence was 16.24 (SD = 5.00), indicating a moderate level of emotional intelligence among participants. Among the personality traits, openness (M = 36.6, SD = 4.54), conscientiousness (M = 36.2, SD = 4.28), and extraversion (M = 36.0, SD = 4.70) showed relatively higher mean scores, while neuroticism (M = 27.6, SD = 6.53) was comparatively lower.

Graph 1 Mean scores of personality traits and EI scores.



The normality of the data was checked using Shapiro-Wilk test to test the normality null hypothesis stating that the data is normally distributed. The null hypothesis was accepted and the normality histograms were obtained.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of Big Five personality traits and gender on emotional intelligence. The results of the regression analysis are presented in the table below, Table 2.

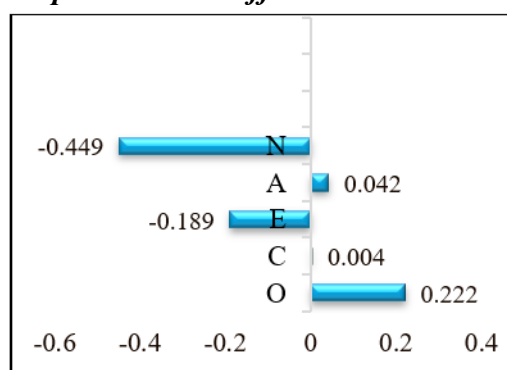
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Table 2 Linear Regression Summary Table

PREDICTOR	B	β	p
O	0.245	0.222	0.023
C	0.005	0.004	0.961
E	-0.201	-0.189	0.032
A	0.045	0.042	0.650
N	-0.344	-0.449	0.000
GENDER	-0.505	-0.051	0.524

The overall regression model was found to be statistically significant, $F(6, 123) = 9.540$, $p < .001$, indicating that the predictors jointly explain a significant proportion of variance in emotional intelligence. The model accounted for approximately 31.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .318$; $R = .564$).

Graph 2 Beta Co-efficient values



Among the predictors, openness was found to have a significant positive effect on emotional intelligence ($\beta = .222$, $p = .023$), suggesting that individuals who are more open to experiences tend to exhibit higher emotional intelligence. In contrast, extraversion ($\beta = -.189$, $p = .032$) and neuroticism ($\beta = -.449$, $p < .001$) showed significant negative effects on emotional intelligence, indicating that higher levels of these traits are associated with lower emotional intelligence. Neuroticism emerged as the strongest predictor among all variables. However, conscientiousness ($\beta = .004$, $p = .961$) and agreeableness ($\beta = .042$, $p = .650$) were not found to be significant predictors of emotional intelligence. Gender was also not a significant predictor ($\beta = -.051$, $p = .524$), indicating that it does not contribute significantly to the prediction of emotional intelligence.

Based on these findings, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant effect of Big Five personality traits on emotional intelligence is partially rejected. Specifically, the null hypotheses for openness, extraversion, and neuroticism are rejected, while those for conscientiousness and agreeableness are accepted. The null hypothesis regarding gender as a predictor of emotional intelligence is accepted.

Independent Samples t-test

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in emotional intelligence. The results are presented in Table 3.

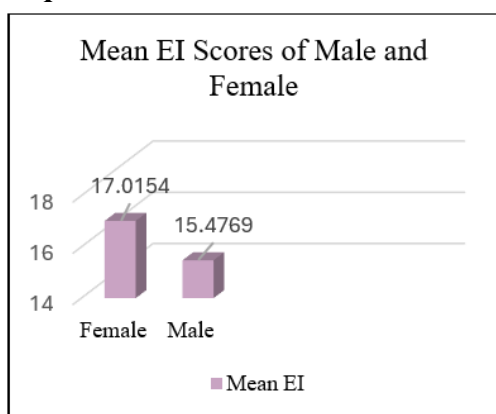
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Table 3 T-test Summary Table

GENDER	N	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
FEMALE	65	17.015	5.22
MALE	65	15.476	4.68

The findings indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in emotional intelligence between males ($M = 15.48$, $SD = 4.68$) and females ($M = 17.02$, $SD = 5.22$), $t(128) = 1.768$, $p = .079$.

Graph 3 Gender-wise mean EI scores



Although females showed slightly higher mean scores, the difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant gender difference in emotional intelligence is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the effect of Big Five personality traits and gender on emotional intelligence among young adults. The findings indicate that personality traits play a more substantial role in predicting emotional intelligence than gender.

Among the five personality traits, neuroticism emerged as the strongest predictor, showing a significant negative relationship with emotional intelligence. This suggests that individuals with higher emotional instability, anxiety, and negative emotionality may have greater difficulty in understanding and regulating emotions. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that neuroticism is inversely related to emotional intelligence.

Openness to experience was found to have a significant positive effect on emotional intelligence, indicating that individuals who are more open, curious, and flexible in their thinking tend to demonstrate higher emotional awareness and adaptability. This supports existing literature suggesting that openness facilitates better emotional processing and understanding.

Extraversion, however, showed a significant negative relationship with emotional intelligence, which contrasts with several previous findings that have reported a positive association. This unexpected result may be attributed to sample-specific characteristics or contextual factors, suggesting that the relationship between extraversion and emotional intelligence may vary across populations.

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Conscientiousness and agreeableness were not found to be significant predictors in the present study. This indicates that while these traits are important for social functioning and behaviour, they may not directly influence emotional intelligence in a measurable way within this sample.

With respect to gender, the findings revealed no significant differences in emotional intelligence between males and females. Although females demonstrated slightly higher mean scores, the difference was not statistically significant. This suggests that emotional intelligence may be relatively independent of gender and more strongly influenced by individual personality characteristics.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of personality traits, particularly neuroticism and openness, in understanding emotional intelligence. The study contributes to the existing body of research by demonstrating that personality factors may have a stronger influence on emotional intelligence than demographic variables such as gender, especially among young adults.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to examine the effect of Big Five personality traits and gender on emotional intelligence among young adults. The findings indicate that personality traits play a significant role in influencing emotional intelligence, with neuroticism emerging as the strongest negative predictor, followed by extraversion, while openness demonstrated a positive contribution. These results suggest that individuals who are emotionally stable and open to experiences are more likely to exhibit higher emotional intelligence. In contrast, conscientiousness and agreeableness were not found to significantly predict emotional intelligence in the present study.

Furthermore, the results revealed no significant gender differences in emotional intelligence, suggesting that emotional intelligence may not be strongly determined by gender, but rather by individual personality characteristics. This highlights the importance of focusing on personality-based differences when understanding emotional functioning.

Overall, the study contributes to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive understanding of how different personality traits relate to emotional intelligence. It emphasizes that personality factors may have a stronger and more consistent influence on emotional intelligence than demographic variables such as gender, particularly among young adults.

Implications

The findings of the present study have several important theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, the results highlight the significant role of personality traits, particularly neuroticism, openness, and extraversion, in influencing emotional intelligence. This suggests that emotional intelligence is not solely a skill-based construct but is closely linked to stable personality characteristics. The strong negative influence of neuroticism indicates that individuals with higher emotional instability may require targeted interventions focusing on emotional regulation, stress management, and coping strategies.

Furthermore, the positive relationship between openness and emotional intelligence suggests that encouraging traits such as curiosity, flexibility, and openness to new experiences may

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enhance emotional awareness and adaptability. These findings can be particularly useful for psychologists, counsellors, and educators in designing personality-based emotional development programs.

The absence of significant gender differences in emotional intelligence implies that emotional intelligence development programs can be implemented without gender-specific modifications. This highlights the importance of focusing on individual differences rather than demographic variables. Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of research emphasizing the importance of personality in understanding emotional functioning and has practical applications in areas such as counselling, education, mental health interventions, and personal development among young adults.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, the present study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the study relied on self-report measures, which may be subject to response biases such as social desirability and inaccurate self-perception. This may have affected the accuracy of the data collected.

Secondly, the sample size was relatively limited and restricted to young adults from a specific geographical region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Additionally, the use of convenience and snowball sampling techniques may have introduced sampling bias, reducing the representativeness of the sample.

The cross-sectional nature of the study also limits the ability to establish causal relationships between personality traits and emotional intelligence. Longitudinal research would be more effective in understanding how these variables influence each other over time.

Furthermore, the emotional intelligence scale used objective scoring, which may not fully capture the subjective and complex nature of emotional experiences. Lastly, the study focused only on personality traits and gender, while other potentially important variables such as socio-economic status, cultural factors, and environmental influences were not considered.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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