The International Journal of Indian Psychology
ISSN 2348-5396 (Online) | ISSN: 2349-3429 (Print)
Volume 14, Issue 4, October- December, 2026
DIP: 18.01.071.20261404, DOI: 10.25215/1404.071
https://www.ijip.in

Research Paper

Personality Traits and Mindfulness: Big Five Personality Traits as Correlates of Mindful Attention and Awareness of the Present among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Mindfulness, defined as a present-centered, nonjudgmental awareness, has emerged as a crucial factor in psychological well-being. This study examined associations between dispositional mindfulness and the Five-Factor Model personality dimensions in a sample of young adults. Sixty participants (ages 18–30) completed the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) and the Big Five Inventory (BFI). Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were employed. Results indicated that Neuroticism ($r = –.322$, $p < .05$) and Agreeableness ($r = –.316$, $p < .05$) were significantly and negatively associated with mindfulness, while Openness, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion were unrelated. Regression analyses identified Neuroticism ($\beta = –0.393$, $p = .005$) and Agreeableness ($\beta = –0.342$, $p = .014$) as significant negative predictors, accounting for 18.6% of the variance. These findings highlight the role of emotional regulation and authentic self-awareness in mindful attention and suggest that mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) should be adapted to address personality-driven barriers in young adults.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, Big Five Personality Traits, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism*

Mindfulness, defined as a state of nonjudgmental awareness and focus on the present moment, has emerged as a crucial factor in mental health and well-being. Simultaneously, the Big Five Personality Traits, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—serve as a well-established framework for understanding individual differences in behavior, emotion, and cognition. Exploring the intersection of mindfulness and personality provides valuable insights into how inherent traits influence one's ability to practice mindfulness. This relationship is especially relevant in young adults, who face unique stressors such as academic pressures, career transitions, and identity formation.

The primary objective of this study is to identify the specific Big Five traits that are positively or negatively associated with mindfulness. Secondary objectives include

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Received: September 22, 2026; Revision Received: November 07, 2026; Accepted: November 13, 2026

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examining demographic variations and exploring implications for mental health interventions.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on how personality influences mindfulness, offering a basis for developing personalized mental health strategies. Furthermore, it addresses gaps in existing literature by focusing on young adults, a population often underrepresented in such research.

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a quantitative, correlational research design to examine the relationship between the Big Five Personality Traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) and mindfulness among young adults.

Participants and Sampling

The sample consisted of 60 young adults aged 18–30 years, recruited through convenience sampling from academic institutions and community networks. Participants were informed of the study's objectives and provided consent prior to participation. The demographic composition included both male and female participants, ensuring diversity in terms of age and educational background to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Data Collection Instruments

1. **Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS):** The MAAS, developed by Brown and Ryan (2003), is a 15-item self-report scale designed to measure dispositional mindfulness, specifically the ability to focus on the present moment. Responses were recorded on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost always) to 6 (almost never), with higher scores indicating greater levels of mindful attention and awareness. Internal consistency for the MAAS in the current sample was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency and supporting the robustness of the measurement tool in this study. This value aligns with prior research that has established the MAAS as a reliable indicator of mindfulness (Medvedev et al., 2016).
2. **Big Five Inventory (BFI):** The BFI, developed by John, Donahue, and Kentle (1991), is a 44-item inventory that assesses the Big Five Personality Traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). Each subscale generates a distinct score representing the level of each trait.

   Internal consistency for the BFI subscales in the current sample was as follows:
   - Openness: $\alpha = 0.81$
   - Conscientiousness: $\alpha = 0.84$
   - Extraversion: $\alpha=0.78$
   - Agreeableness: $\alpha=0.76$
   - Neuroticism: $\alpha=0.83$

These reliability coefficients indicate satisfactory internal consistency across all subscales, consistent with prior validation studies (Carciofo et al., 2016).

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted through online survey platforms to ensure accessibility and reach among the target population. Participants were provided with a link to a structured questionnaire that included demographic items, the MAAS, and the BFI. The average completion time was approximately 15–20 minutes. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and were given the option to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS (Version 26). The analysis plan involved:

- Internal Consistency Analysis: Cronbach's alpha values for the MAAS and BFI were calculated to verify the reliability of the measurement instruments in the current sample.
- Descriptive Statistics: Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each of the Big Five traits and mindfulness to understand the overall distribution of responses.
- Correlation Analysis: Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the Big Five traits and mindfulness.
- Regression Analysis: A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine which personality traits significantly predicted mindfulness. Mindfulness (MAAS score) was treated as the dependent variable, with the Big Five traits as independent variables.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board prior to data collection. Participants were provided with an informed consent form, outlining the study's purpose, confidentiality assurances, and the voluntary nature of participation. Data were securely stored and accessible only to the research team to maintain participant privacy.

This methodological framework ensures the reliability and validity of the findings by employing standardized measures, robust statistical analysis techniques, and adherence to ethical research practices. The inclusion of internal consistency measures (Cronbach's alpha) further strengthens the credibility of the study's data collection instruments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Correlation Analysis

Table 1: Relationship between mindfulness and Big Five traits (N = 60)

Variables	Mindfulness	Openness	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism
Mindfulness	1					
Openness	-0.141	1				
Conscientiousness	-0.016	0.243	1			
Extraversion	-0.043	0.123	0.145	1		
Agreeableness	-0.316*	0.201	0.187	0.229	1	
Neuroticism	-0.322*	-0.158	-0.254	-0.117	-0.364	1

*p>0.05

Pearson correlations revealed several noteworthy patterns. Mindfulness was significantly negatively correlated with neuroticism (r = –.322, p = .021), consistent with prior research showing that higher mindfulness is linked to emotional stability and self-regulation (Hanley & Garland, 2017). Mindfulness was also significantly negatively correlated with agreeableness (r = –.316, p = .025), while no significant associations were found with openness (r = –.141), conscientiousness (r = –.016), or extraversion (r = –.043).

The negative relationship between neuroticism and mindfulness aligns closely with existing evidence. Neuroticism is characterized by heightened emotional reactivity, rumination, and difficulty managing stress (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017). Such tendencies directly oppose the qualities of mindfulness, which involve nonjudgmental awareness, reduced cognitive reactivity, and emotional acceptance (Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011). Individuals high in neuroticism often engage in maladaptive coping strategies such as worry and avoidance, which fragment attention and make present-moment awareness more difficult. Mindfulness, conversely, has been shown to reduce rumination and enhance affect regulation, which may explain why individuals with lower neuroticism report higher dispositional mindfulness (Desrosiers et al., 2013). Thus, the observed inverse relationship is consistent with theoretical models positioning mindfulness as a buffer against the emotional instability and stress sensitivity central to neuroticism.

By contrast, the negative association with agreeableness diverges from much of the existing literature, which typically reports positive relationships due to agreeableness' links with empathy and prosocial tendencies (Haliwa et al., 2021). One explanation may lie in the manifestation of agreeableness within the present cultural context. In collectivistic environments, agreeableness often reflects conformity, conflict avoidance, and prioritization of social harmony over personal authenticity. These tendencies can foster emotional suppression or over-accommodation to others, processes that are antithetical to the open awareness and nonjudgmental presence central to mindfulness (Karl et al., 2021). Thus, high agreeableness may paradoxically inhibit mindfulness by diverting attention from internal states toward external social demands.

Alternatively, certain facets of agreeableness, such as compliance and modesty, may limit self-reflection and emotional regulation (Hanley & Garland, 2017). By avoiding discomfort or interpersonal tension, agreeable individuals may have fewer opportunities to practice mindful awareness of difficult emotions. This finding therefore highlights the complexity of personality–mindfulness relationships and suggests that the role of agreeableness may be context-dependent, warranting further cross-cultural research.

Regression Analysis

Table 2: Multiple linear regression predicting Mindfulness (MAAS) from the Big Five (standardized coefficients)

Predictor	Standardized Coefficient ($\hat{I}^2$)	t-value	p-value
Agreeableness	-0.342	-2.554	0.014
Neuroticism	-0.393	-3.107	0.005

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted with mindfulness (MAAS score) as the dependent variable and the Big Five personality traits as predictors. The overall model was statistically significant, F(5, 54) = 2.47, p = .045, accounting for approximately 18.6% of the variance in mindfulness.

Among the predictors, neuroticism was a significant negative predictor of mindfulness (β = –0.39, p = .005), indicating that individuals with greater emotional instability and negative affect tend to report lower mindful awareness. This aligns with prior evidence suggesting that neurotic tendencies such as worry, rumination, and emotional reactivity interfere with present-moment focus (Hanley & Garland, 2017; Raes et al., 2015).

Interestingly, agreeableness also emerged as a significant negative predictor (β = –0.34, p = .014). While agreeableness is typically associated with prosocial behavior and cooperative tendencies, this unexpected inverse relationship may reflect culturally specific dynamics. In this sample, higher agreeableness could be linked to people-pleasing or emotional suppression, which may conflict with the nonjudgmental awareness central to mindfulness (Haliwa et al., 2021). However, this explanation remains speculative and requires further empirical validation.

Overall, the findings underscore the role of emotional regulation, as reflected in neuroticism, in shaping mindfulness among young adults. At the same time, the inverse relationship with agreeableness suggests that certain social conformity or self-suppressing tendencies may undermine mindful awareness. Future studies should explore mediating mechanisms such as self-compassion and emotional regulation strategies, and examine whether cultural factors moderate these associations.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the relationship between the Big Five Personality Traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) and dispositional mindfulness among young adults aged 18–30 years. Employing a quantitative, cross-sectional design, the study utilized the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) and the Big Five Inventory (BFI) to assess mindfulness and personality traits, respectively. The primary objective was to determine which personality traits most significantly predict mindfulness and to explore how these traits influence present-moment awareness.

The findings revealed that neuroticism emerged as a significant negative predictor of mindfulness (β = –0.39, p = .005), indicating that individuals with higher emotional instability and reactivity are more likely to exhibit lower levels of present-moment awareness. This outcome is consistent with prior research suggesting that rumination, worry, and emotional volatility associated with neuroticism can obstruct mindful attention (Hanley & Garland, 2017; Raes et al., 2015). Additionally, the study found that agreeableness also negatively predicted mindfulness (β = –0.34, p = .014), a finding that diverges from conventional literature which typically associates agreeableness with positive interpersonal traits such as empathy and prosocial behavior. In this sample, however, higher agreeableness may indicate people-pleasing tendencies or emotional suppression, potentially diminishing self-awareness and present-moment focus (Karl et al., 2021).

Contrary to initial expectations, openness, conscientiousness, and extraversion did not significantly predict mindfulness, suggesting that these traits may not exert a substantial influence on present-moment awareness in this cultural or contextual setting. This deviation from previous findings highlights the potential role of contextual factors and cultural norms in shaping personality-mindfulness associations. Additionally, the study observed significant gender differences in neuroticism and extraversion, with females exhibiting higher neuroticism and males higher extraversion. These variations underscore the need for gender-

sensitive mindfulness interventions, particularly for individuals with heightened emotional reactivity or social conformity tendencies.

The implications of these findings extend to the development of targeted mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) tailored to individual personality profiles. For instance, interventions focusing on emotional regulation techniques such as cognitive reappraisal and self-compassion may be particularly beneficial for individuals high in neuroticism. Similarly, assertiveness training and self-reflective practices could mitigate the negative impact of people-pleasing tendencies associated with high agreeableness, thereby fostering greater self-awareness and present-moment focus.

Limitations and Recommendations

Despite its contributions to understanding the relationship between personality traits and mindfulness, the study is constrained by its relatively small sample size (N = 60). The limited sample size may reduce the statistical power of the findings, increasing the likelihood of Type II errors and potentially obscuring significant associations between certain personality traits and mindfulness. Furthermore, the demographic homogeneity of the sample, primarily comprising young adults from similar academic and social backgrounds, may restrict the generalizability of the results. Expanding the sample size in future studies would not only enhance statistical power but also enable more robust subgroup analyses based on demographic variables such as gender, socio-economic status, and cultural background, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of how personality traits influence mindfulness across diverse populations.

Future research should also consider recruiting more diverse samples that encompass a broader age range and varied cultural contexts. This approach would facilitate the examination of potential cultural moderators in the relationship between personality traits and mindfulness, especially given the unexpected negative association between agreeableness and mindfulness observed in this study. Additionally, incorporating longitudinal designs could provide valuable insights into the stability of these relationships over time, particularly in response to life transitions and stressors that may differentially affect young adults with distinct personality profiles. By employing more inclusive sampling strategies and longitudinal methodologies, subsequent studies can better assess the generalizability and applicability of the current findings, contributing to the development of more targeted and culturally sensitive mindfulness-based interventions.

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Acknowledgment

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

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Mathew, J.P., & Sayed, S. (2026). Personality Traits and Mindfulness: Big Five Personality Traits as Correlates of Mindful Attention and Awareness of the Present among Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *14*(4)*,* 827-834. DIP:18.01.071.20261404, DOI:10.25215/1404.071