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Personality Traits and Achievement Motivation

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Abstract

130 undergraduate students were administered NEO Five-Factor Inventory by Costa, and McCrae, and Sentence Completion Test by Mukherjee. The study was aimed at measuring strength of association between n Ach and five factors of personality-neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. It was hypothesized that n Ach is negatively and strongly related to neuroticism, while remaining four factors are positively related with n Ach. Data were treated by Pearson's r and percent variations were computed. Results supported all the five hypotheses. The best predictor of n-Ach was agreeableness, whereas neuroticism was found relatively less accurate predictor of n-Ach.

Keywords: Achievement motivation, women, psychology, personality traits.

Introduction

History of psychology reveals that several thinkers were interested in personality. However, scientific theories of personalities did finally come along at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was Sigmund Freud who first developed the first of those theories. Since then, considerable effort had been expended in conducting research on personality and in developing additional theories. Each of the major personality theorists assumes that behaviour is heavily influenced by traits. Trait is believed to be stable, consistent internal characteristics. From the known history it is learned that concept of trait was introduced and popularized by Gordon Allport (1961). Allport believed that every personality is made up of a set of traits and that these traits shape behaviour and cause it to be consistent over time and across situations. He strongly emphasized the uniqueness of each individual's personality. Cattell (1994) has also long held that personality consists of a set of traits. Cattell used factor analysis, a multivariate statistical technique and derived 16 important traits dimensions, and developed a well standardized 16-PF Test of personality. However, Cattell believed that traits alone cannot predict behaviour.

He hypothesized that the behaviour you are likely to display at a given moment can best be predicted by knowing both your standing on relevant traits and the nature of the situation in which you find yourself (see Cattell, 1992; 1996). Trait approach attracted the attention of Costa and McCrae (1989, 1997). Cattell isolated first 16 traits and then 23 traits (Cattell & Cattell, 1995). Test developed to measure these traits were lengthy, still most researchers used them in their studies. Costa and McCrae have done extensive work and isolated five central and universal factors in personality. Relationship between the big 5 and achievement motivation were studied by many researchers. A uniquely human drive, achievement motivation striving to overcome challenges, improve oneself, attain excellence and accomplish more than others, is clearly visible among some, while many others lack these characteristics. Can these characteristics be predicted on the basis of Big 5? Present study is a small attempt to seek answers to this question.

Judge & Ilies (2002) carried out meta-analysis of the relationship between 5 factor model of personality and theories of motivation.

They found neuroticism and conscientiousness were the strongest and most consistent correlates of performance motivation. Bipp, Steinmayr & Spinath (2008) studied big five domain and achievement goals. Personality and achievement goals were related. Association between personality and learning was examined by Ariani (2013). Regression analysis showed that extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness were positively associated with intrinsic motivation, while neuroticism was positively associated with extrinsic motivation. In a study Daitkar (2017) found that high achievement motivation students had predominance of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness. Low achievement motivation and neuroticism were closely related. Kumar *et al*. (2018) in their study found personality has a little role to play in shaping the aspiration of the adolescents. Ude and Akintunde (2020) examined the relationship between personality traits and achievement motivation. Positive significant relationship was found between personality traits and achievement motivation. Ljubin-Golub, Petricevic & Rovan (2019) explored the role of personality dimension in self-regulation of motivation. The big five traits explained from 6% to 17% variance of individual motivational strategies.

It was observed that individuals with high achievement motivation prefer moderate levels of challenge. The achievement motive (abbreviated "nAchievement" or "nAch") is the tendency to seek excellence. In laboratory setting they choose tasks that provide opportunities to test their abilities. In the real world, they choose careers that provide challenges and feedback about success. However, they do not show higher achievement on all tasks (Mc Clelland, 1980).

Present study is aimed at measuring strength of association between achievement motivation and five personality traits – Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, agreeableness, Conscientiousness- and search the possibility of predicting achievement motivation on the basis of five personality traits.

Assuming that other factors are kept constant, it is hypothesized that:

- Strength of association between achievement motivation and neuroticism is negative, high and significant; with high accuracy achievement motivation can be predicted on the basis of neuroticism.
- Correlation coefficient between achievement motivation and extraversion is positive, high and significant; achievement motivation can be predicted with high accuracy on the basis of extraversion.
- Achievement motivation and openness are positively and strongly related, achievement motivation can be predicted with moderate accuracy on the basis of openness.
- There is positive and strong relationship between achievement motivation and agreeableness; achievement motivation can be predicted with moderate accuracy on the basis of agreeableness.
- Strength of association between achievement motivation and conscientiousness is positive, moderate and significant; achievement motivation can be predicted with moderate accuracy on the basis of conscientiousness.

Sample
Undergraduate students studying in a metropolitan city in Maharashtra participated in the study. Sixty-three girls and 67 boys were included in the final sample of study. Age range of the 130 Ss was 18 to 21 years.

Tools Used for Data Collection
Two well standardized scales were used for collecting data.

NEO FIVE-Factor Inventory
This inventory was constructed and standardized by Costa and McCrae. It consists of 60 statements related to varied kinds of behaviour. Each statement is provided with five alternatives-strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. The S had to read each statement carefully and decide to what extent he/she agree or disagree with the statement. Accordingly, he/she has to fill in the response. Several reliability coefficients are available, the highest one is 0.88, and validity is 0.70.

Sentence Completion Test
This is a forced choice test of achievement motivation. It was constructed and developed by Biswa Nath Mukherjee (1964) first in Indiana University, USA. It was adapted in India in 1965. The test consists of 50 incomplete sentences. Each incomplete sentence was provided with three choices to complete the sentence. The S has to select one of the three choices to complete the sentence. Using different samples, reliability indexes were computed. The lowest test-retest reliability was 0.71 and highest was 0.83. Concurrent validity is high.

Results
Means and SDs were computed for the whole data for each factor. Achievement motivation (nAch) was above average (M=32.00±5.97). The neuroticism was within the range of average (M=23.77±7.11). Extraversion characteristics was also average (M=29.19±5.28). On openness measure the group has a mean of 29.62±5.67, which is within the range of average category. Agreeableness of the group was low (M=29.42±5.39). Even on conscientiousness characteristics of personality the group has shown low category (M=27.88±4.11). Thus, there is absence of extremity. Scatter plots showed that the relationships between nAch and the five personality characteristics were more or less linear. Even distribution of scores in each of the six measures was more or less normal.

To measure the strength of association between nAch and five personality characteristics, Pearson's r were computed. Correlation coefficient between n-Ach and neuroticism was moderate (r= -0.527, p<0.01) according to criteria suggested by Guilford (1956). Negative relationship denotes neuroticism is not favourable for n-Ach. Extraversion and n-Ach were moderately related to each other (r=0.67, p<0.01). This relationship is positive and indicates that to some extent extraversion is helpful in predicting n Ach.

Relationship between openness and n-Ach was positive and high (r=0.72, p<0.01). Obviously openness characteristics are favourable to n-Ach. It seems with good accuracy n-Ach could be predicted on the basis of openness.

Personality trait agreeableness had shown a strong positive relationship with n-Ach (r=0.769, p<0.01). This high positive relationship points out that with good accuracy n-Ach could be predicted on the basis of agreeableness.

The last relationship measured in the study is depicted in correlation coefficient between conscientiousness and n-Ach. The value of correlation was r=0.744 which is significant at 0.01 level. This positive relationship is favourable to n-Ach. On the basis of conscientiousness n-Ach could probably be predicted with good accuracy.

Discussion

In this study, the criterion variable is n-Ach. It is also treated as dependent variable (DV). If the variance is considered as an indicator of prediction, then it is found that neuroticism is a poor predictor of n-Ach. In the relationship between neuroticism and n-Ach only 27.80% variation could be explained. In other words, only 27.80% variation in n-Ach could be explained on the basis of neuroticism. Relationship between extraversion and n-Ach is moderate, still around 45% variation in n-Ach could be explained on the basis of extraversion. Openness characteristics is still better predictor of n-Ach. Around 52% variation in n-Ach could be predicted on the basis of openness. Among the five personality traits, the best predictor of n-Ach was agreeableness. It can explain 59% of variance in DV.

Conscientiousness was also a good predictor of n-Ach. On the basis of it 55.30% variation could be explained in n-Ach. On the whole it seems that personality traits are good predictors of n-Ach, however among them some are good and some are moderate predictors of n-Ach.

Conclusion

Personality characteristics and n-Ach are closely associated to each other. Relationship between n-Ach and neuroticism was negative and moderate. Extraversion was positively and moderately related to n-Ach. Openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were positively and highly related to n-Ach. The best predictor of n-Ach was agreeableness.

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