



How Personality Traits Shape Adjustment of Students – a Review

Dr. Tapan Biswas, *former Research Scholar, Department of Education, University of Calcutta*

Dr. Soumyajit Roy, *Assistant Teacher, Behala Aryya Vidyamandir (H.S.)*

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Abstract: Students, no matter what course they are pursuing at which level, always have to undergo the process of adjustment which is finding the right balance between the external demands and internal needs. It is quite evident that two students in the same situation adjust to the situation differently. What could be responsible for these different styles? Personality traits can be a major determinant of how a person adapts to his circumstances. Thus the interface between adjustment and personality traits presents an interesting research premise to explore upon. In this paper, the researchers have reviewed available research literature to get a sense of the relationship between adjustment including its various dimensions and personality traits of students based upon the Big Five Factors – Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience. Through analysis, the dominant and inhibiting factors are found, also identifying in the process different environmental factors which modulate the relationship.

Keywords: Adjustment, Personality, Big Five Traits, Emotional maturity, SES

I. Introduction:

Adjustment is a very crucial psychological process where a human being or person maintains a balance between their own internal needs and the external demands in accordance with their environment. Whether it is a student transitioning from one old situation to adapting to a new situation, the success of this transition largely depends on the individual's psychological makeup. Personality traits, mainly the Big Five, act as the primary lenses through which individuals perceive, react to, and navigate their social and academic surroundings, even personal. Previous research has consistently said about adjustment's various dimensions. There is a several-dimensional construct involving home, health, social, emotional, and educational spheres (Tiwari, 2019; Mishra, 2020; Devi, 2011; Tamannaefar & Shahmirzaei, 2019). This paper explores the intricate relationship

between personality traits and adjustment, identifying patterns of adaptation across diverse populations and demographic groups with a focus strictly on the psychological interplay between trait and environment to shape our lives.

The Basics of the Different Constructs:

Adjustment: It is a dynamic process, where a person tries to maintain an equilibrium balance between the needs and the obstacles to fulfil the needs. It is not a single unit but also has several dimensions like - Home, Health, Social, Emotional, and Educational. *Adjustment with home* conditions like home atmosphere, relation with sibling, parent's relation, economic status etc called home adjustment. *Health adjustment* is a physical as well as mental condition of individuals, where physical and mental wealth are very crucial matters. *Social adjustment* means adjustment with other people like neighbours, peer groups, social beliefs and truth, balance between personal and social needs etc. *Emotional adjustment* is the management and control of emotion in stressful situations. And lastly *Educational adjustment* stands on educational perspectives like relation with classmates, relation with teachers, institutional environment etc.

Many researchers divided it in the other ways which include academic adjustment (success and integration in educational settings), social adjustment (interpersonal relationships with other), personal-emotional adjustment (psychological well-being and emotional stability) (Mishra, 2020; Jdaitawi et al., 2011; Chauhan, 2013; Naidu, 2016; Beri & Kaur's, 2020) and educational institutional adjustment (satisfaction with educational environment).

Personality Traits: In psychology, personality refers to the unique and relatively stable patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that make a person who they are. According to Gordon Allport's (1961) definition, personality is the "dynamic organization within the individual of those psychological systems that determine the individual's unique adjustments to the environment" (Mangal, 2012). Personality



cannot be defined as a single quality; it is a group of traits. In the Big Five Factor Model there are five dimensions of group traits like, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. So personality is defined as a combination of those five traits. These traits include:

- Extraversion (EX): The degree of sociability and assertiveness.
- Agreeableness (AG): Tendencies toward cooperation and trust.
- Conscientiousness (CO): Goal-directed behavior and impulse control.
- Neuroticism (NE): Emotional instability and tendency toward anxiety.
- Openness to Experience (OP): Imagination, insight, and broad interests.

Emotional Maturity and Intelligence: These are complementary psychological constructs. Emotional maturity is seen as a determinant that shapes personality and correlates positively with overall adjustment (Sinha, 2011; Lakhani et al., 2017). Emotional intelligence involves the ability to manage emotions, which can mediate the relationship between personality and decision-making styles. (Radwan et al., 2020)

Relationship between Personality traits and Adjustment:

The literature reveals distinct patterns regarding how specific traits either facilitate or hinder the adjustment process across various life stages.

1. Traits that facilitate Adjustment

A predominant pattern in previous studies is the positive influence of Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience on adjustment. These influences or impacts help us to shape our adjustment pattern and answer the question of how to adjust in their life. Research by Luqman et al. (2014) found that these Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience traits are significant positive predictors of college adjustment (Schnuck & Handal, 2011; Luqman et al., 2014; Velayudhan et al., 2016). That means a student, how to adjust in their college can be previously known by their personality. In other words, personality will tell how they adjust in their college environment. As well as Conscientiousness is very vital trait among others because it predicts academic resilience and intrinsic motivation, helping individuals remain steadfast during stressful transitions (Dong et al., 2022; Hakimi et al., 2011;

Tamannaefar & Shahmirzaei, 2019), that is also shape our life.

Generally, it is known that Extraversion trait is consistently linked to positive adjustment outcomes. Because it has been found to have a positive effect on emotional, social, educational, and general adjustment among school students (Devi, 2011; Bhatti et al. 2014). That means extraversion is able to determine or shape the adjustment of emotional, social, educational, and general sections. Individuals high in Extraversion often possess a robust "achievement identity" (Akaka, 2016) which aids in secondary school adjustment. This identity grows up by gradually shaping our success which depends on the adjustment of the educational section. Furthermore, extraversion is a strong predictor of social well-being, largely because extraverted individuals are more likely to seek and receive social support (Dalal et al., 2018) to balance their needs that also help to shape our adjustment pattern.

Agreeableness plays a specialized role to make good social and interpersonal relationships. That is to play an essential character role to adjust in a social atmosphere. It is positively correlated with adjustment styles and rational decision-making (Velayudhan et al., 2016). That means it helps to adjust in different patterns and shape individuals' life in social context. Research indicates that agreeable individuals tend to have higher social well-being (Yanghang et al., 2021) which may make them wealthy. However, while it aids in social harmony, its impact on specific educational aspirations can vary. So, in this case it also varies in different patterns of adjustment to shape individuals.

2. Traits that inhibit Adjustment

In contrast to the positive traits, neuroticism stands on the opposite side or positive adjustment. Neuroticism is almost universally identified as a barrier to successful adjustment. Research indicates that Neuroticism has a significant negative relationship with college adjustment (Luqman et al., 2014). That means it is an obstacle for a well adjusted education of a student. Individuals who have more neurotic dispositions adjust according to their negativity patterns of adjustment or maladjustment through coping. High levels of Neuroticism are associated with increased academic stress, loneliness, and depressive symptoms (Dalal et al., 2018; Velayudhan et al., 2016). That makes individuals stressful, lonely or aggressive. In



specific contexts, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Neuroticism was found to heighten the fear of the virus while simultaneously decreasing psychological resilience (Eroglu et al., 2023) and shape individuals' mind or emotions according to this.

Factors which mediate the relationship:

There are many factors present in the case of personality or adjustment but those are very important who affect the relationship between personality and adjustment. This linear relation is rarely often influenced by external and internal mediators of the following:

- **Family Environment:** Environment is the most powerful factor to attend adjustment, because this is the only variable that is always surrounding us. We don't live a single moment without an environment. In this context the family environment is very crucial because we are born and brought up including family. It stands with the maximum space of our life and helps to adjust any time in any situation. The research expresses evidence that the expressiveness of a family environment significantly impacts how emerging adults adjust to college. Individuals from less expressive families who tend to avoid emotions face greater difficulty in college adjustment (Johnson et al., 2010).
- **Coping Styles:** Personality traits often dictate an individual's coping style, which in turn determines their level of adjustment. Conscientiousness is linked to problem-focused coping, which leads to better resilience, whereas Neuroticism is linked to avoidance, which exacerbates adjustment issues (Tamannaifar & Shahmirzaei, 2019). That's why they are introduced as a mediator to adjust.
- **Social Support:** This is the best thing which helps to establish a good relation with others, with social trust, with social beliefs and cultures. That's why we are able to adjust with social situations. Social support acts as a critical mediator between personality traits and social well-being. For all Big Five traits, the level of perceived social support determines how well an individual adjusts to their community (Yanghang et al., 2021).
- **Emotional Maturity:** A positive correlation exists between emotional maturity and adjustment. Students who are emotionally mature find it easier to navigate the complexities of college life (Sinha, 2011) and easily able to adjust with this

environment. In this angle emotional maturity also plays a mediating factor for adjustment.

Variations with respect to Demographic and Environmental Factors:

The adjustment process is further complicated by some demographical variables. Those are

Gender Differences

The gender as a demographic variable varied to adjust between groups like male, female or other categories. Some studies, such as Babasaheb (2021), suggest that female youths have higher adjustment levels than males. Conversely, Sharma (2015) found that male pre-secondary students were more adjusted than their female counterparts. When looking at specific dimensions, female students have been reported to face higher emotional adjustment difficulties compared to males (Mishra, 2020; Chauhan, 2013), although other researchers found females to have higher emotional adjustment scores in different school settings (Vyas, 2021). As well as in many cases, no significant gender difference was found in social and academic adjustment at the university level (Jdaitawi et al., 2011; Chauhan, 2013) So, it can be said from the evidences that gender is one of the other factors that can vary to individuals' adjustment.

Socio-Economic Status (SES) and Location

SES is a powerful predictor for successful adjustment. Students from low SES backgrounds consistently face more adjustment problems than those from high SES backgrounds (Sangeeta & Chirag, 2012; Kermene & Sharma, 2015). Similarly, the environment plays a role in individuals' adjustment; urban youths often report with higher social and overall adjustment than rural youths (Babasaheb, 2021; Alam, 2016). So as before said this SES and location also play a predictor role to adjust an individual.

Institutional Context

The type of educational institution can also influence adjustment. For example, students under the Central board were found to be more adjusted than those under the State boards (Sharma, 2015). Additionally, students in Arts and Science disciplines have been observed to have higher mean values in all five personality dimensions compared to those in management disciplines (Sripirabaa & Benazir, 2016). In this angle, If personality varies with each other it makes a change to adjust with each other, because personality can change an adjustment pattern that's previously said proven by researchers.



II. Conclusion

Personality traits are the foundational pillars upon which human adjustment is built. Conscientiousness, Openness, and Extraversion emerge as the primary drivers of successful adaptation, fostering resilience, social integration, and academic success (Bhatti et al., 2014; Luqman et al., 2014; Schnuck & Handal, 2011; Dong et al., 2022; Hakimi et al., 2011). On the other hand, Neuroticism serves as a significant vulnerability factor, predisposing individuals to stress, loneliness, and poor coping (Luqman et al., 2014; Velayudhan et al., 2016). These relationships are further modulated by environmental factors such as family expressiveness, socio-economic status, and gender-specific socializations (Johnson et al., 2010; Kermene & Sharma, 2015).

Despite the wealth of research on these individual relationships, the sources identify a significant "lacunae" or research gap: very few studies have simultaneously examined the combined interaction of personality traits and adjustment within a single comprehensive framework. Future research should aim to bridge this gap, providing a more holistic understanding of how the internal psychological landscape interacts with external environmental pressures to define the human experience of adjustment. Such insights are critical for designing psychological interventions that can help individuals high in Neuroticism or from low SES backgrounds develop the resilience necessary for healthy adaptation.

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