

Personality and Gratitude of Higher Secondary Students in Mizoram: A Gender Perspective

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Abstract

This paper examines the gender differences and relationship between personality and gratitude in respect of a sample of 200 higher secondary school students in Mizoram, a small state in Northeast India. The Government Mizo Higher Secondary School was selected with the target population in mind – adolescents. Demographic information was collected, along with data through the use of Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-R) and the Gratitude Test (GT). Psychometric adequacy and parametric statistic assumptions were checked for the selected population. Pearson correlation and one-way ANOVA were applied. The results show the gender differences and significant correlations between the variables. This study contributes to an emerging understanding of the relationship between different personality dimensions and gratitude. Further, the study is expected to contribute to greater understanding of the gender differences on the selected variables among the adolescents, to provide foundation for designing preventive and intervention measures.

Key words: Personality, Psychoticism, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Gratitude.

Introduction

Personality refers to the characteristics and unique ways in which an individual responds to the environment. Personality is the dynamic organization within the person of the psychological and physical systems that underlie that person's patterns of actions, thoughts, and feelings (Allport, 1961). Eysenck (1947) initially conceptualized personality as two biologically based independent dimensions of temperament, namely Extraversion/Introversion, and Neuroticism / Stability, measured on a

continuum, but then extending this to include a third dimension, Psychoticism/ Socialisation (P) (Eysenck, 1966).

(i) Extraversion/Introversion

(E): Extraversion is characterized by being outgoing, talkative, high on positive affect (feeling good), and in need of external stimulation. Extraverts, according to Eysenck's theory, are chronically underaroused and bored and are, therefore, in need of external stimulation to bring them up to an optimal level of performance.

(ii) *Neuroticism/Stability (N)*: Neuroticism or emotionality is characterized by high levels of negative affect such as depression and anxiety. Neurotic people — who have low activation thresholds, and unable to inhibit or control their emotional reactions, experience negative affect (fight-or-flight) in the face of very minor stressors — are easily nervous or upset. Further, research demonstrated the need for a third category of temperament.

(iii) *Psychoticism/Socialisation (P)*: Eysenck (1966) added third trait/dimension called Psychoticism which is associated not only with the tendency to have a psychotic episode (or break with reality), but also with aggression. Psychotic behaviour is rooted in the characteristics of tough mindedness, non-conformity, inconsideration, recklessness, hostility, anger and impulsiveness. The physiological basis suggested by Eysenck for psychoticism is testosterone, with higher levels of psychoticism associated with higher levels of testosterone.

A fourth dimension, the *Lie scale (L)* was introduced by Eysenck later in an attempt to measure to what extent subjects were deliberately attempting to control their scores. The study of personality is based on the essential insight that all people are similar in some ways, yet different in others.

Hills and Argyle (2001) found that happiness and gratitude were significantly correlated with extroversion. Previous research has shown that individuals higher

in neuroticism react more strongly to events and stimuli (Longua, et al 2009). Studies done by Lynn and Martin (1997) showed that women obtained higher means than men on neuroticism in all the countries they studied, covering more than 40 countries and men obtained higher means than women on psychoticism in 34 countries and on extraversion in 30 countries.

‘Gratitude’ is derived from the Latin word ‘gratia’, which, depending on the context, translates as ‘grace’, ‘graciousness’, or ‘gratefulness’. These terms all derivatives from the Latin root referring to “having to do with kindness, generousness, gifts, the beauty of giving and receiving, or getting something for nothing” (Pruyser, 1976). It is the appreciation experienced by individuals when somebody does something kind or helpful for them. It has been defined more specifically as “a sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift, whether the gift be a tangible benefit from a specific other or a moment of peaceful bliss evoked by natural beauty” (Emmons, 2004). Gratitude has been conceptualized as an emotional trait, mood, or emotion (McCullough, et al 2002). Trait gratitude, or the disposition toward gratitude, is a “life orientation toward noticing and appreciating the positive in life” (Wood, et al 2010).

In one study, based on a country-wide essay assignment assessing gratitude in children, girls expressed more gratitude for social relationships, whereas boys felt more grateful for materialistic possessions

(Gordon et al., 2004). Furthermore, grateful feelings in social situations appear to be more frequently observed in young girls compared to boys (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938). In a study of cross-cultural differences, older American men evaluated gratitude as less useful than other positive emotions such as love, enthusiasm, hope, compassion, and pride (Sommers and Kosmitzki, 1988). A number of older American men (at least 35 years of age) reported an explicit preference for concealing rather than expressing gratitude.

One study using multiple regression analyses indicated that gratitude partially mediated the relationship between the personality characteristic of Extraversion. Gratitude is found to be most significantly related with Extraversion as compared to Psychoticism and Neuroticism (Choing, 2010). More recently, a few studies have examined personality, gratitude, and well-being in concert, gratitude serve as a mediator between personality and psychological well-being. Gratitude was also found to fully or partially mediate the relationships between Extraversion and Agreeableness and some of the dimensions of PWB (Angela, 2010).

Research has found that grateful people had better social connections with others (Algoe et al., 2010; Bartlett et al., 2012), which helped individuals build social resources (Fredrickson, 1998; 2001.) In this regard, gratitude may build and strengthen the interdependent

relationships that may have contributed to optimal performance (Jowett, 2005; Jowett and Cockerill, 2003). People who practised gratitude in everyday life are found to have higher well-being than those who do not (Wood et al., 2010). Taken together, concern for the role of gratitude would open a new avenue for understanding psychological functioning and contribute new knowledge for positive psychology. Through this study, the researchers intend to contribute to a better understanding of the directional relationship between gratitude and personality. According to the corresponsive perspective of personality and gratitude, life experiences might shape each other (Caspi et al., 2005). To our best knowledge, only a few studies have examined the directionality between gratitude and related constructs (Froh et al., 2010; Lambert et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2008). Moreover, the directionality between personality and gratitude among the adolescents is unknown, and this issue is essential for practitioners in developing efficacious interventions for school students to reduce psychological problems. The focus is on adolescent (higher secondary school students), because adolescence is a critical stage of life development (Arnett, 1999) and might experience chronically psychological problems all the time.

Objectives

- To examine gender differences in personality dimensions of neuroticism, extraversion and psychoticism among the higher secondary school students in

Mizoram, a small state in Northeast India.

- To examine the gender differences in gratitude among the selected sample.
- To examine the relationship between personality dimensions of Psychoticism, Neuroticism and Extraversion and gratitude among the selected sample.

Hypotheses

Based on the objectives, the following hypotheses were set forth for the present study:

- It is expected that there will be gender differences on personality dimensions of neuroticism, extraversion and psychoticism among the selected sample.
- It is expected that females will score higher on gratitude than their male counterparts.
- It is expected that there will be significant relationship between the psychological variables viz. personality and gratitude of the selected sample.

Methods and Procedure

- *Sample:* 200 (100 males and 100 females) students from the higher secondary school students from the Government Mizo Higher Secondary School were sampled using the random sampling procedure. Their age ranges between 14 to 16 years. This school has been selected because it is the largest higher secondary school in Mizoram in terms of the student strength and diversity, and it is therefore expected to be

representative of the adolescent students of that group.

- *Design of the study:* The sample incorporates 100 males and 100 females, with 100 participants under each of the main cell of the design, for the comparison of gender on the psychological variables.

- *Psychological Tools Used*

i) *Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-R; Eysenck, H.J. & Eysenck, S.B.G., 1980a):* The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-R) is a scale designed to give rough and ready measure of three important personality dimensions: Psychoticism, Extraversion, and Neuroticism which are measured by means of 90 questions. The Lie scale is also measured, EPQ-R is a 2-point scale anchored by the terms 'Yes' or 'No'. The raw scores should be converted into sten scores from Table 9a and 9b of the manual, and the sten scores are distributed over ten equal intervals of standard scores point from 1 to 10. In Table 10 of the EPQ-R Manual, conversion of stens to percentile is presented.

ii) *The Gratitude Test-GQT (McCullough et al., 2002):* The GQ is a six-item tool initially developed by McCullough, et al., (2002). It is a 6-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (6). High score indicates high gratitude.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive analysis shows mean differences of the two groups (males and

females) on the psychological variables. (M=8.58) whereas Females depict higher mean scores on Neuroticism (M=8.10) and Gratitude (M=28.5) Males depict higher mean scores on Psychoticism (M=6.39) and Extraversion

Table1: Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis, Reliability, Pearson Correlation, Levene's Test and One-Way ANOVA of the Scales/Subscales of the behavioural measures (EPQR-P, N, E and GQT) for the whole sample of students (males and females)

Gender	Stats	Variables				Reliability			Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
		EPQR-P	EPQR-N	EPQR-E	GQT	Variable	Alpha	Split-Half			
Boys	Mean	6.39	4.23	8.58	26	EPQR-P	0.52	0.8	EPQR-P	0.02	-0.74
	SD	3.03	2.4	2.71	2.61	EPQR-N	0.58	0.8	EPQR-N	-0.02	-0.72
Girls	Mean	5.83	8.1	5.21	28.5	EPQR-E	0.54	0.83	EPQR-E	0.04	-0.74
	SD	3.02	2.34	2.53	2.57	GQT	0.57	0.58	GQT	0.1	-0.77
Total	Mean	6.12	6.1	6.95	27.3	Pearson Correlations					
	SD	3.01	3.06	3.11	2.86	Variance	EPQR-P	EPQR-N	EPQR-E	GQT	
Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance						EPQR-P	1	0.2	0.22	0.13	
Variables	EPQR	EPQR-N	EPQR-E	GQT		EPQR-N	1		-0.41**	-0.27*	
Sig.	0.96	0.84	0.6	0.84	EPQR-E				1	0.28*	
					GQT					1	
One-way ANOVA											
Variables		Sum of squares		Df	Mean Square		F		Sig.	Eta Square	
EPQR-P		4.69		1	4.69		0.51		0.48	0.06	
EPQR-N		225.29		1	225.29		40.07		0	0.41	
EPQR-E		170.54		1	170.54		24.83		0	0.3	
GQT		92.08		1	92.08		13.72		0	0.19	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

The reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha and Split Half Reliability) was computed on all behavioural measures. Results revealed substantial item-total coefficient of correlation for the scales/sub-scales and order of reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha was .52 with Split half .80 for EPQR-Psychoticism, Cronbach's alpha was .58 with Split half .80 for EPQR-Neuroticism, Cronbach's alpha was .54 with Split half .83 for EPQR-Extraversion and Cronbach's alpha was .57 with Split half .58 for GQT. This shows the applicability of the scale to the

present population. The Pearson Correlation table shows significant positive correlation between extraversion and gratitude ($r = .28$; $p < .05$) indicating that when extraversion is high gratitude is high. There was significant negative correlation between neuroticism and extraversion ($r = -0.41$; $p < .01$) and neuroticism and gratitude ($r = -0.27$; $p < .05$), this indicates that when neuroticism is high, extraversion and gratitude are low or the other way around. Levene's Test shows insignificant results, therefore allowing us to proceed to the analysis of variance. One-way ANOVA tables show

significant effects of gender on Neuroticism, Extraversion and Gratitude. The result of One-Way ANOVA indicated significant effects of gender on the subscales of EPQR- Neuroticism, EPQR- Extraversion and Gratitude (GQT). The mean difference on Neuroticism, Extraversion and Gratitude of the two gender groups were found to be statistically significant – EPQR- Neuroticism ($F=40.07$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.41$), EPQR- Extraversion ($F=24.83$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.30$) and GQT ($F=13.72$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.19$) indicating a significant variance in participants' Neuroticism, Extraversion and Gratitude caused by Gender differences.

Conclusions

The results, therefore, prove our hypotheses showing gender differences on Personality dimensions of Psychoticism, Extraversion and Neuroticism showing higher neuroticism and gratitude among females and higher psychoticism and extraversion among males. The results also show females to be higher on gratitude than males. We also observed a significant relationship between the psychological variables, extraversion and gratitude shows significant positive correlation whereas significant negative correlation is seen between neuroticism

and extraversion and neuroticism and gratitude. The findings of this research have been confirmed by existing literature, for example, Lynn and Martin (1997) found women to be higher in neuroticism and men to be higher on psychoticism and extraversion. Baumgarten-Tramer (1938) found girls to show more gratitude behaviour than boys. Argyle and Lu (1990) found that the trait of extraversion was positively and significantly correlated with happiness leading to gratitude, as measured by the Oxford Happiness Inventory.

Limitations: Although it was designed to be the systematic and authentic research, the present study is not free from limitations. Possible limitation of the study is that the present study was conducted on adolescents aged between 14-16 years, which raise a number of methodological issues concerning the external validity of the findings for all age categories and all socioeconomic groups.

Suggestions for further research: It would be worthwhile to test the present findings generalizing to different groups of the same population and other population. Further, extended studies by incorporating larger sample size and more repetitive measures of the psychological variables are desirable.

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