Research Paper

A correlational study on personality factors and emotional well-being in university students during the course of their study

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ABSTRACT
Personality is the biological blueprint of collection of motivators and conflicts (and emotions related to them) that influences how the person navigates through life. Emotional well-being is a safe and nurturing space of vitality and growth that underpins good mental health. This paper aims to assess the significant relationship in personality factors and emotional well-being of university students during the course of their study. This will help us understand why "one size does not fit all". In this study emotional well-being and personality were assessed with SPANE and Brief Big 5 Inventory using a purposive sampling of five hundred and eighty-five full-time university students. Some students tend to be significantly more impacted by day-to-day challenges, on account of their own personality rather than the nature of the challenges faced. Scientifically understanding the relationship between personality factors and emotional well-being is beneficial and important for all stakeholders in education, mental health and policymakers. Based on the findings, personality factors can be deemed as the biopsychosocial bricks of emotional well-being.
Objective of the study: To determine the effect of the big five factors of personality on the emotional well-being of the university students.
Results: The present study shows that factors of personality have a significant effect on emotional well-being. While Neuroticism is inversely related to emotional well-being, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness are seen to have positive relation with the same. The Extraversion and Openness factors did not significantly predict emotional well-being.
Keywords: Personality, Emotional Well-Being, Big-5 Factors, University Students, SPANE

I. INTRODUCTION

Emotional well-being (EWB) is commonly defined as the emotional quality of daily events, including the positive and negative effects that make one's life pleasant or unpleasant (**Kahneman, 2010**). Emotional well-being is that personal space which makes every individual feel that the positives in their life outweigh the negatives. This scientific trail of thought is very beneficial, especially, in the present times when mental health and well-being issues in university students are on the rise. Terms like inability to cope with academics, messy personal life, addiction, rage, stress, lack of resilience, increased vulnerability to stressors, self-harm behaviours, suicide ideation, narcissism, unsafe sex, high anxiety, depression etc. intersperse most conversations by or related to students. Knowing the significance of personality facets on emotional well-being can help stakeholders in university students to address these issues in a proactive manner. Further research in this field can help devise strategies and interventions to build resilience, motivation, team spirit, goal setting and other areas which directly take a nose dive, due to poor mental health care (**Diener, 2004**; **Gärling, 2016; Misherva, 2016**).

Contentment in one's life is a conscious cognitive process. As a result, it necessitates an assessment of one's quality of life in accordance with his chosen criteria (i.e., how life is, compared to how life should be). Also known as hedonic well-being or perceived happiness, it refers to an individual's content of everyday experience—the frequency and intensity of experiences of joy, fascination, anxiety, sadness, anger, and affection that make

one's life pleasant or unpleasant. Environmental influences, relationships, physical health, self-awareness, and stress all have an impact on emotional wellness (**Kokkonen, 2001**; **Bogg, 2004; Berdufi, 2013; Judge, 2014**).

An emotionally healthy person appreciates and copes up with the full bouquet of emotions. An individual does not chase happiness as the only desirable outcome. In fact, someone who does not appear to experience negative emotions may be suppressing them. Depending on the circumstances, both positive and negative emotional responses may be appropriate. Individuals who are emotionally healthy exhibit appropriate feelings, which can help them avoid danger, reduce stress, and communicate with others (**Costa, 1989; Cohen, 1983; Berdufi, 2013; Datu, 2020**).

Personality traits are persistent attitudes to life that provide information about motives, influence behaviours in specific ways and in certain situations (**McCrae, 1997**). They provide cognitive frames for evaluating events The Big Five personality traits include openness to new experiences (O), conscientiousness (C), extraversion (E), agreeableness (A) and neuroticism (N). The popular acronym for these personality facets is OCEAN (**Costa, 1989**).

An open person displays openness to new experiences and tends to be open to new ideas, feedback as well as sensory, aesthetic stimulation. An agreeable person tends to be trustworthy, direct, altruistic, compliant, humble, and tender-hearted. Extroverts demonstrate warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, and are thrill seekers. Individuals that are conscientious are competent, dutiful, goal-oriented, self-disciplined, and deliberate in their actions. Finally, Neurotics tend to get disturbed easily and find it difficult to regulate their emotions. They are prone to anxiety, depression, worry and aggression and have susceptibility to stress. Enduring personality facets are innate qualities which are viewed as the most powerful elements impacting EWB or life satisfaction.

II.   METHODOLOGY

Sample
Five hundred and eighty-five full-time university students of these colleges, namely, St. Xaviers College (Autonomous), Nopany Institute of Health Sciences, and University of Engineering and Management (UEM),within the age group of 18-25 years (Mean=22.5), enrolled in this study. The Purposive Sampling method was employed.

Measures
Two measures were used in this study:
1.   **The Big-Five Inventory (brief):** The brief version of measuring personality in one minute or less is a 10-item short version of the Big Five Inventory in English and German. A version of the Big Five Personality Test (B5T) was developed in 2010 with the aim of measuring the five fundamental personality dimensions of Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Conscientiousness (C), Agreeableness (A) and Openness (O). With a convincing factorial structure and high reliability (Cronbach's alpha), it was shorter than previous inventories (**cf. McCrae & Costa, 2004**) and was suitable for use in a professional context. The scales achieved convincing psychometric parameters for reliability (Conrbach's alpha between .76 and .90).
2.   **The Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE):** It is a brief 12-item scale asking respondents to rate how often they experience various states. For example, the measure asks about physical pleasure, engagement, interest, pain, boredom etc. he SPANE performed well in terms of reliability and convergent validity with other measures of emotion, well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction. The three subscales had high Cronbach's alpha and temporal stability over one month: SPANE-P .87, .62; SPANE-N, .81, .63; and SPANE-B, .89, .68. We have used SPANE-B which measures affected balance as the criteria for measuring EWB in this study.

Procedure
With informed consent of the participants, demographic information sheet, Brief Big 5 Inventory and SPANE were administered, under normal testing conditions. Students were assured confidentiality of their responses. Data collection was done on the spot with google form, in a single session. After data analysis, correlation between the variables, namely factors of personality and EWB, was established with the help of IBM SPSS v26.

Statistical Analysis:
Regression analysis was done.
Data and Results:

Table 1: The descriptive statistics of the variables

Variables	N	M	SD	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional Well Being	585	2.684	8.802	77.477	-24	24
N	585	6.145	1.983	3.933	2	10

E	585	6.015	1.638	2.683	2	10
O	585	6.668	1.592	2.534	2	10
A	585	6.986	1.732	3.000	2	10
C	585	6.362	1.641	2.694	2	10

The above table shows the descriptive statistics for the variables across the sample size of 585. The mean, SD, variance and range for each of the variables have been reported.

Table 2: The regression analyses involving big five factors as predictors and Emotional Well Being as criterion

						95% C.I.	
Predictor	b	SE	β	t	p	Lower	Upper
N	-1.459	0.174	-0.329	-8.402	0.000**	-1.800	-1.118
E	0.159	0.222	0.030	0.717	0.474	-0.277	0.596
O	0.302	0.229	0.055	1.320	0.187	-0.147	0.751
A	1.170	0.205	0.230	5.714	0.000**	0.768	1.573
C	1.125	0.217	0.210	5.181	0.000**	0.699	1.552

*$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$ Criterion: Emotional Well Being

III.   Discussion:

The above table shows that only the N, A and C factors of personality have significant effect on emotional well-being ($p < 0.01$). While N is inversely related to emotional well-being, A and C are seen to have positive relation with the same. The E and O factors did not significantly predict emotional well-being (p = n.s.).

Personality factors are predictors of EWB as found in the current study and can be deemed as the biopsychosocial bricks of emotional well-being. Several studies show that personality factors are a robust construct to explore various criteria of wellbeing like EWB (**DeNeve, 1998; Diener, 2000; Diener, 1999; McCrae, 1991; Steel, 2008**).

Personality predicts well-being, EWB and other constructs of well-being. Similar findings were found by the findings by other researchers show that EWB can be predicted on the basis of personality factors as wellbeing tends to be relatively stable in people due to their individual differences in personality (**Syren, 2020; Womick, 2020; Lamers, 2012**).

Similar to the findings of the current study, studies show Neuroticism was consistently negatively associated with EWB; it contributed to low life satisfaction, less happiness and high negative affectivity (**De-Neve, 1998; Anglim, 2016**; **Steel**, **2008**). A 2012 study found that good mental health is defined by feelings of emotional well-being as well as absence of psychopathology. The study found that personality factors were differentially related to psychopathology. Neuroticism was found to be positively related to psychopathology and inversely related to emotional well-being (**Lamers, 2012**). A 1998 meta-analysis study reported that Neuroticism (as denoted by lack of positive affect) was negatively correlated to EWB (**DeNeve,1998**).

In the present study, it is found that conscientiousness predicts EWB in college students. Similar to the findings of this study, weak but positive and significant relationships between conscientiousness and EWB have been found. (**Steel., 2008; Lucas, 2008**). A 2022 study points that conscientiousness is a reliable and robust predictor of well-being. However, there was no indication of a reciprocal relationship between the two (**Ho, 2022**).

Agreeableness has high positive predictability of EWB, according to the current findings. Studies by other researchers have reported significant and positive association of Agreeableness with EWB, in concurrence to the present study. (**Gawali, 2020; Steel, 2008, Lucas, 2008**). However, a 2020 study found Agreeableness and EWB (as a construct of well-being) as negatively related (**Juneja, 2020**). The difference in the finding could be due to differences in methodology in data collection as there was a lack of usage of standardized measures in that study.

Extraversion predicts EWB according to the current study. This is supported by research studies which show a similar trend. Extraversion was found to be positively correlated with well-being and EWB (as denoted by positive affect). Further, the findings said that personality predicts EWB in terms of life satisfaction, happiness, and positive affect equally, but considerably less predicted negative-affects (**Hu, 2021; Lamers, 2012; DeNeve, 1998**). A 2008 study showed a negative relationship between extraversion and EWB whereas the present study showed a positive but not significant relationship between the two. This difference in findings could be because the 2008 study used a poll, whereas in the present study, on the spot, scientific scales were used to collect data

(**Stevenson, 2008**). There is a discrepancy in the findings of another study, where Extraversion and EWB are significantly correlated (**Juneja, 2020**).

The current study found an association between openness to new experiences and EWB but it was not significant. A 2021 study reports significant positive correlations between openness to new experiences and well-being. The reasons could be crisis time, different samples, differences in methodology like utilized questionnaires, and the difference in time frames (**Hölscher, 2021**). Adding to that line of thought, interestingly, during times of pandemic, openness to new experiences was found to be a particularly strong predictor of mental health deterioration which showed a lack of EWB. This difference from our study could have been due to the unprecedented crisis time frame (**Pronto, 2022**).

Results from a 2004 study reported that changes in well-being constructs like positive affect which denote EWB were not significant and could not be predicted, beyond a certain economic level. (**Diener, 2004**). This did not match the findings of the current study, which says that EWB is predictable and can be significant. It is highly possible that these differences in the findings are due to lack of proper methodology in that study, as reflected by the absence of formal statistical evidence in that study.

The findings of this study are replicable and generalizable and have the potential to benefit a large number of students, across geographies (**Gawali, 2020; Cohen, 1983**).

All in all, a good number of researchers have elucidated that personality factors share a robust relationship to EWB, an important well-being criterion (**Womick, 2020).**

Implications:

Many studies target undergraduate students on a range of arenas and topics. However, criterion for well-being and EWB have not been covered, sufficiently, leading to a research gap.

A strong foundation of EWB is rudimentary to experience the accolades and goals of all aspects of higher education as elucidated by UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs) and National Education Policy (**NEP, 2020**). Yet, lack of sufficient scientific literature on what impacts EWB, makes designing and implementing of interventions and policies, an uphill task for governments, educationists and authority figures at various levels (**Kokkonen, 2001; Garling, 2016**).

In light of the burgeoning mental health crisis, researchers recommend focusing on improving criteria of individual well-being on the basis of stable psychological constructs as a starting point for tackling this problem. In this way, the effects of individual improvements, visible as EWB of the person, will expand to all levels of society, as elucidated in socio-ecological model by Bronfenbrenner (**Micheals, 2020**).

IV.   Conclusion:

Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness are factors of personality which have a significant effect on emotional well-being. While Neuroticism is inversely related to emotional well-being, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness are seen to have positive relation with the same. The Extraversion and Openness factors did not significantly predict emotional well-being.

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