

Association Between the Big Five and Trait Emotional Intelligence Among College Students

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Purpose: Personality traits are relatively stable and may influence various aspects of human behavior. Trait emotional intelligence (Trait EI) presents the non-cognitive element of intelligence. Trait EI also enables individuals to deal with different stressors of life. Thus, understanding the relationship between personality traits and Trait EI can be beneficial. The current study explores the role of the big five personality factors in influencing Trait EI.

Methods: The study included three hundred and twenty university students from a multidisciplinary Indian university. They were administered the Trait EI questionnaire-short form (TEIQue-SF) and the big five inventory (BFI-44). A cross-sectional design with non-probability sampling was used for the current study.

Results: Findings of the study show that the big five have a significant relationship with global Trait EI, as the big five traits contributed to a 42.7% variance in predicting global Trait EI. Neuroticism was the foremost predictor of global Trait EI. Concerning Trait EI factors, neuroticism, and conscientiousness contributed to all except emotionality. All big five traits except agreeableness influenced well-being and sociability. Neuroticism and conscientiousness predicted self-control. However, agreeableness and extraversion predicted emotionality.

Conclusion: There is a close association between personality traits and Trait EI. However, the relationship is incremental as the big five traits jointly influence the global Trait EI more than individually on the four factors. The study's findings may enable psychologists, counselors, and other mental health professionals to develop training programs for college students to enhance emotional stability and the ability to deal with stress.

Keywords: TEIQue-SF, personality, students, neuroticism, TEI

Plain Summary

The existing research studies revealed a significant relationship between the big five personality traits and the global Trait EI. However, few studies show the relationship between the big five factors and components of Trait EI. The current manuscript presents the findings of a cross-sectional study conducted on a sample of Indian university students. The results support the previous studies, which indicated that the big five factors jointly predicted global trait EI. It also reiterated the earlier findings that neuroticism is the most important predictor of Trait EI out of the five personality dimensions. However, the study also revealed that the same was not the case when sub-factors of Trait EI were predicted. Thus, the current study adds to the existing scientific knowledge regarding the relationship between personality and Trait EI. Further, the study findings may enable psychologists, counselors, and other mental health professionals to develop personality development programs to enhance emotional stability. Thus, this can enable college students to deal with and manage stressful situations effectively.

Introduction

Intelligence and personality are often considered the cornerstones of the human capacity to adapt and evolve.^{1,2} The utility of intelligence to survive, adapt and thrive in social situations can never be ignored.³ In the 1990s, emotional intelligence (EI) was

conceptualized as an ability-based construct like general intelligence.⁴ It was promoted as a construct that measures an individual's mental capacity and knowledge to perceive, identify, and understand emotions rightly.⁵ Thus, the ability model of EI is related to cognitive intelligence, which was considered universally adaptive.⁶ However, later, two theoretically distinctive EI forms or models evolved. One was termed Trait emotional intelligence (Trait EI), and the other was a 'mixed model of EI'.^{7,8} Trait EI has been defined as "a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies."⁹ The mixed model of EI considers EI as a combination of the individual's traits, social skills, and competencies.⁸

Contrary to the other models of EI, the Trait EI model does not consider any one way to be the best or right. It is more concerned with cross-situational consistencies in the behavior.¹⁰ Trait EI is the self-perception of how an individual would perceive and respond in an emotionally aroused situation. Trait EI also demonstrates the non-cognitive nature of intelligence that allows an individual to be flexible and adapt, particularly in social situations, which is essential for an individual's growth and overall well-being. Therefore, trait EI seems pertinent in enhancing individuals' quality of life across the different aspects of health and well-being and personal and professional adjustment.¹¹⁻¹⁴ For example, trait EI has revealed a steady relationship with happiness in young adults,¹⁵ leadership behavior and skills,¹⁶ work engagement,¹⁷ job satisfaction and flourishing,¹⁸ and maintaining positive relations among coworkers.¹⁹ Trait EI has also been found to be a good predictor of positive mental health,¹² lower cortisol secretion levels in stressful conditions,²⁰ and helps to deal with stressful situations.²¹ Similarly, it enhances prosocial behavior among schoolchildren,²² and academic performance.²³ It has great relevance in education and youth development as Trait EI influences academic performance and related variables across different levels of education.¹⁴ It also equips the students to meet present-day academic challenges and competitions and good health status.^{24,25} Thus, Trait EI can be an important facilitator for college students in building the capacity to deal with the various stressors of life. Therefore, understanding the association between personality factors and Trait EI can be significant.

Literature Review

An individual's personality reveals how a person deals with positive or negative emotions, stressful life events, conflicts, and personal relationships while trying to achieve one's goals. These are aspects that are also influenced by EI and, more so, Trait EI. Various models of personality like the general factor of personality (GFP)^{26,27} big two,^{28,29} giant three,³⁰ big five,³¹ as well as the big six factors³² have been used to assess personality. The big five and big six personality assessment models have been used more in contemporary times. The big five consists of five factors, namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. The big six, or the HEXACO personality theory had an additional factor of honesty and humility besides the big Five traits. Thus, the literature indicates the relationship between personality traits and Trait EI across various nations.

Petrides et al⁶ examined the Dutch population's relationships between personality traits and Trait EI. A significant relationship between the two was reported in the study. Neuroticism had the strongest association with Trait EI. Extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness followed it. Furthermore, they reported a 50% overlap between the personality factors and Trait EI. Another study examined the relationship between the big five factors of personality and Trait EI in a large sample of Spanish university students. Alegre et al³³ reported moderate to high linkages, with the trait of neuroticism showing the highest and openness indicating a low degree of association with the Trait EI in Spanish students. All the big five traits were significant predictors of Trait EI, and they jointly predicted 59.1% variance.³³ In a recent study on Spanish children, Lopez et al³⁴ reported that only agreeableness and neuroticism were found as predictors of Trait EI. Similarly, Hjalmarsson and Daderman³⁵ reported that the global Trait EI had a positive association with extraversion and a negative with neuroticism among the adult Swedish population. Agreeableness was significantly related to sociability, well-being, and emotionality. Conscientiousness was associated with self-control. Openness was associated with factors of emotionality and sociability. They used the HEXACO model of personality,³² which is also known as the Big six factors of personality. Besides, the Big six jointly contributed 48% variance in predicting Trait EI.

Avsec et al³⁶ examined the role of the big five in predicting Trait EI in university students of two nationalities (Croatian and Slovene University). They reported that 32% of the variance in Trait EI could be attributed to the big five traits. As they did not use a single score of Trait EI, the relationship with the sub-scales indicated that extraversion and openness emerged as strong predictors for two of the three factors. In contrast, neuroticism contributed to only one factor, ie, managing and regulating emotions scale.

Other researchers have indicated that Trait EI has the strongest association with personality factors of neuroticism and extraversion. The other three personality factors have shown lesser and weaker associations based on one of the first behavioral genetic investigations.³⁷ Further, they stated that the big five and Trait EI associations are strong, replicable, and genetically influenced. Similarly, other studies have found a significant but negative relationship between neuroticism and Trait EI.^{6,37–39} Some studies demonstrate a positive relationship between extraversion and Trait EI.^{37,39,40}

Japan has a collectivistic culture but is highly industrialized. Abe et al⁴¹ in a study on Japanese medical students, indicated that Trait EI had a strong positive association with extraversion. However, it had a negative correlation with neuroticism. Besides, all four personality traits except agreeableness were significant predictors of Trait EI. Neuroticism had a maximum negative contribution, while others had small positive contributions. The study indicated findings that corroborated the results from other industrialized nations.

The studies in developing nations indicated slightly different findings. A study on Malaysian university students⁴² reported that all four personality traits were significantly related to overall Trait EI except neuroticism. Conscientiousness was the strongest independent predictor of Trait EI. However, neuroticism as a predictor was the weakest in Malaysian university students. It is contrary to the findings in industrialized and developed nations. Another study on Nigerian teachers reported that only agreeableness and extraversion significantly predicted Trait EI. The big five traits jointly contributed 17.6% variance in predicting Trait EI.⁴³ Similarly, Alghamdi et al,⁴⁴ examined the relationship between Trait EI and personality traits in a sample of university teachers at a Saudi Arabian university. They found that agreeableness, extraversion, and openness contributed significantly to the variance in Trait EI. In a study on Pakistani university teachers, Atta et al⁴⁵ reported that emotional intelligence had a positive linear association with extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience and a negative linear relationship with neuroticism. Agreeableness did not show a significant relationship with Trait EI.

The existing research^{8,10,33,46} indicates that Trait EI correlates with personality traits like neuroticism (inversely) and extraversion (positively). Notably, the studies from developed nations like Japan,⁴¹ Netherlands,⁶ and Sweden³⁵ indicated neuroticism as the major significant negative factor predicting Trait EI. However, studies done in developing countries like Nigeria,⁴³ Saudi Arabia,⁴⁴ Malaysia^{36,42} have reported no significant relationship between neuroticism and Trait EI. The available studies have used different measures (Schutte's Self-report Emotional Intelligence test, Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence test, or Emotional Skills and Competences Questionnaire)^{47–49} based on various alternative models of Trait EI.^{47–49} Each model has its domains.⁵⁰ The factors of these different models have shown moderate to high degrees of associations with personality dimensions.⁵¹ However, Trait EI was the only measure that could be located on giant three and big five personality traits.⁵¹ Thus, Petrides's model of EI seems closest to the big five personality domains and corroborates the fact that TEIQue is indeed the measure of choice for trait EI.⁸ However, only a few researchers have examined the relationship between the big five traits and Trait EI using Petrides⁵² constructed scale of Trait EI.^{35,41} Moreover, there is a scarcity of studies focusing on Trait EI, as introduced by Petrides⁵² in developing countries.⁵³ Further, only a few studies^{6,36} have assessed the relationship between the big five factors and sub-factors of Trait EI.

The Present Study

The literature review has indicated that, like the big five, Trait EI plays a significant role in determining various aspects of human behavior. Yet, as an independent construct, its relationship with the big five personality factors has demonstrated inconsistent results across groups. Moreover, this inconsistent relationship seems evident in developing nations. Thus, there is a need for further examination of the relationship between the big five factors and Trait EI based on Petrides's Trait EI⁵² model in developing nations. Furthermore, the measure of Trait EI by Petrides is considered a comprehensive and psychometrically sound measure of Trait EI.⁵⁴ Thus, the current study examined the association between the big five personality traits and Trait EI (Petrides Model)⁵² among young Indian adult students pursuing a college education. Finally, the study aimed to determine which of the big five traits are the strongest predictors for global Trait EI and its four factors and to obtain estimates of variance and overlap.

Materials and Methods

Participants and Procedure

A cross-sectional study design was followed. Participants were students pursuing different undergraduate and postgraduate programs at an Indian multidisciplinary university. The participants were selected using non-probability convenience sampling. All the students were well-versed in the English language. The data were collected in a group setting, and informed consent was taken from the students. The students were apprised of the nature of the study. No personally sensitive information was taken from the participants. The study was conducted as per the declaration of Helsinki. Overall, 342 students consented to participate in the study voluntarily. The sample was collected between January 2022 and March 2022 in face-to-face mode. For encouraging honest responses, the participants were told that the data collected would only be used for research purposes.

Similarly, to reduce social desirability in responses, it was also mentioned to the participants that there were no correct or incorrect responses. Further, the assessment tools used in the study contained both positive and negative items to reduce acquiescence. Thus, common method bias was reduced by encouraging honest responses and reducing social desirability and acquiescence effect.⁵⁵⁻⁵⁷ After the data collection, incomplete response forms with more than ten percent unanswered questions were discarded. It led to the elimination of 22 responses. Thus, the total sample consisted of responses from 320 university students comprising 149 males and 171 females with a mean age of 19.37 (SD = 1.31) in the age range of 18 to 24. Participation in the study was restricted to students with a minimum age of eighteen years and who were pursuing a regular college degree. The participants were pursuing various courses, namely engineering (34.1%), management (10.9%), law (11.6%), humanities and social sciences (20.6%), and journalism (22.8%).

Measures

Socio-Demographic Details

The survey was initiated with five questions related to background variables: age, gender, educational qualification, the branch of study, and consent to participate in the survey study.

Measurement of Trait Emotional Intelligence

Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form⁵² is a 30-item short form of the Trait EI questionnaire. The short form yields five scores: a global score and four sub-scales scores for the factors of - well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability. A total global Trait EI score was computed, considering all 30 items, while only 26 items were assigned to calculate the scores of its four subscales. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the scale and the sub-factors have been illustrated in [Table 1](#).

Measurement of Big Five Personality Traits

Big five Inventory⁵⁸ is a well-known measure of personality and consists of 44 short phrases describing the different traits. It assesses the personality on the big five traits: agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness. Higher scores on each trait indicate high levels of the respective trait. Cronbach's alphas of the five factors for the study sample are presented in [Table 1](#).

Data Analysis Procedure

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 21 and AMOS version 28. Firstly, for the assessment of common method bias in the data set, Herman's single factor test was assessed. Then AMOS 28 was used to assess the multivariate normality using Mardia's coefficient.⁵⁹ Then, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance value were computed to assess the problem of multicollinearity. A VIF value of less than five and a tolerance value greater than 0.10 indicates that the problem of multicollinearity does not exist among the predictor variables.⁶⁰⁻⁶² Then *t*-test was computed to assess the difference between males and females on global Trait EI. As the *t*-test revealed no significant difference between the two genders on global Trait EI (see [Supplementary Tables 3](#) and [4](#)), all the other analyses were conducted on the whole sample rather than separately for males and females. Next, SPSS 21 was used to assess the bivariate correlations. Cohen's criteria for effect size (small = *r* value around 0.1, medium = *r* value around 0.3, and large = *r* value larger than 0.50) were used to assess the size of correlation coefficients.⁶³ The

next analysis step involved regressing the big five personality variables onto global Trait EI and its sub-domains. Enter method was used for the regression analysis in SPSS 21.

Results

The Herman single-factor test indicated that the total variance explained by a single factor was 10.773% ([Supplementary Table 1](#)). It was significantly lower than the threshold of 50%, indicating that no serious issue of common method bias exists with the data. [Table 1](#) demonstrates the descriptive statistics for the variables under study. The results showed a kurtosis coefficient of 2.728 with a critical ratio of 2.490 for the data assessed ([Supplementary Table 2](#)). It indicated acceptable multivariate normality.^{64,65} The variance inflation factor and tolerance value for predictor variables range between 1.096–1.175 and 0.851–0.912, respectively ([Supplementary Table 3](#)). $VIF < 5$ and tolerance values greater than 0.10 indicate that the problem of multicollinearity does not exist among the predictor variables.^{60–62} Similarly, the correlations indicated no multicollinearity issues ([Supplementary Table 4](#)). Further, the *t*-test ([Supplementary Tables 5 and 6](#)) revealed no significant difference in global Trait EI [$t(318) = -1.033, p = 0.302$] between males ($M = 4.68, SD = 0.61$) and females ($M = 4.76, SD = 0.71$). These results corroborate the earlier findings of Siegling et al⁶⁶ who reported that the global Trait EI was similar for both men and women.

[Table 2](#) demonstrates the bivariate correlations. It reveals that the associations between the personality traits and global Trait EI are significant and range between 0.336 to -0.455 , indicating a moderate effect of the big five factors.⁶³ Thus, the correlations reveal the significant association of the big five factors with the global Trait EI. A similar relationship with its sub-factors was found (well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability). The correlations ranged between 0.114 and -0.503 . It indicated a low to large effect size.⁶³

Thus, regression analysis was conducted to study the influence of the big five factors on the global Trait EI and its factors ([Table 3](#)). All the personality traits significantly predicted the global Trait EI. Neuroticism was the foremost predictor of global Trait EI. It was followed by conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and agreeableness. Overall, the big five factors explained the 42.7% variance of global Trait EI.

Further, with respect to the factors of Trait EI, [Table 3](#) indicates that all the big five traits except agreeableness influenced well-being and sociability. Extraversion was the strongest predictor, followed by openness for well-being and sociability. Self-control was predicted by neuroticism and conscientiousness, respectively. Similarly, agreeableness, followed by extraversion, was the strongest predictor of emotionality. Thus, the big five factors

Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis for the Study Variables

| Variables | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|--------------------------|--------|-------|----------|----------|
| Age | 19.370 | 1.306 | 0.820 | 0.001 |
| Extraversion (0.73) | 3.335 | 0.724 | -0.113 | -0.163 |
| Agreeableness (0.62) | 3.762 | 0.555 | -0.419 | 0.217 |
| Conscientiousness (0.67) | 3.404 | 0.615 | 0.055 | -0.117 |
| Neuroticism (0.70) | 3.020 | 0.698 | -0.062 | -0.270 |
| Openness (0.52) | 3.608 | 0.488 | -0.235 | 0.043 |
| Global TEI (0.81) | 4.723 | 0.663 | -0.072 | 0.252 |
| Well-being (0.62) | 5.252 | 0.909 | -0.441 | 0.186 |
| Self-control (0.50) | 4.218 | 0.911 | -0.228 | 0.041 |
| Emotionality (0.55) | 4.694 | 0.909 | -0.149 | -0.084 |
| Sociability (0.52) | 4.600 | 0.906 | -0.222 | -0.041 |

Note: N = 320. Internal consistency coefficients are in parentheses.

Table 2 Bivariate Correlations Between the Trait Emotional Intelligence and Big Five Factors

| Variables | TEI | Well-Being | Self-control | Emotionality | Sociability |
|-------------------|----------|------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Extraversion | 0.386** | 0.368** | 0.162** | 0.223** | 0.294** |
| Agreeableness | 0.336** | 0.246** | 0.250** | 0.306** | 0.114* |
| Conscientiousness | 0.413** | 0.327** | 0.299** | 0.216** | 0.266** |
| Neuroticism | -0.455** | -0.341** | -0.503** | -0.207** | -0.270** |
| Openness | 0.370** | 0.369** | 0.175** | 0.213** | 0.272** |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3 Regressions of the Big Five Traits on the Global and Four-Factor Scores of the Trait Emotional Intelligence

| Dependent Variable | R ² | Adj R ² | F (df) | TEI | β | t |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----|---------|-----------|
| Global Trait EI | 0.436 | 0.427 | 48.595 ** (5, 314) | E | 0.233 | 5.247** |
| | | | | A | 0.106 | 2.302** |
| | | | | C | 0.252 | 5.596** |
| | | | | N | -0.285 | -6.274** |
| | | | | O | 0.208 | 4.637** |
| Well-being | 0.321 | 0.310 | 29.670** (5, 314) | E | 0.249 | 5.115** |
| | | | | A | 0.044 | 0.869 |
| | | | | C | 0.192 | 3.893** |
| | | | | N | -0.191 | -3.823** |
| | | | | O | 0.245 | 4.987** |
| Self-control | 0.301 | 0.290 | 27.012** (5, 314) | E | 0.012 | 0.251 |
| | | | | A | 0.077 | 1.500 |
| | | | | C | 0.170 | 3.395** |
| | | | | N | -0.435 | -8.587** |
| | | | | O | 0.056 | 1.118 |
| Emotionality | 0.156 | 0.143 | 11.624** (5, 314) | E | 0.140 | 2.582** |
| | | | | A | 0.209 | 3.717** |
| | | | | C | 0.107 | 1.936 |
| | | | | N | -0.081 | -1.450 |
| | | | | O | 0.100 | 1.826 |
| Sociability | 0.199 | 0.186 | 15.573** (5, 314) | E | 0.208 | 3.930** |
| | | | | A | -0.058 | -1.055 |
| | | | | C | 0.180 | 3.363** |
| | | | | N | -0.167 | -0.3080** |
| | | | | O | 0.188 | 3.519** |

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

Abbreviations: E, Extraversion; A, Agreeableness; C, Conscientiousness; N, Neuroticism; O, Openness.

explained a 31% variance in well-being, 29% variance in self-control, 18.6% in sociability, and 14.3% in emotionality.

Discussion

The current investigation aimed to assess the relationship between the big five personality traits and Trait emotional intelligence (Trait EI). It also aimed to determine which of the big five traits are the strongest predictors for global Trait EI and its four factors

and to obtain estimates of variance and overlap. The results indicate that the big five factors, neuroticism, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience, acted as predictors of global Trait EI. In addition, neuroticism was the strongest predictor of global Trait EI, followed by conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and agreeableness. The findings are similar to those in nations like Japan,⁴¹ Netherlands,⁶ and Sweden,³⁵ indicating neuroticism as the majorly significant negative factor in predicting Trait EI. However, some studies in developing nations like Nigeria,⁴³ Saudi Arabia,⁴⁴ and Malaysia^{36,42} have reported no significant relationship between neuroticism and Trait EI. It may be because culture, values, or environmental factors may influence personality patterns across nations. Various cross-cultural studies on the big five personality traits across countries have revealed the differences.^{68,69} Thus, these differences in personality structure may influence the relationship between personality traits and Trait EI of individuals across various nations. However, it may also be that all these studies on Trait EI used psychometric assessment tools other than the Trait emotional intelligence tool developed by Petrides.⁵² Siegling et al⁶⁶ have reported that the measure used for personality assessment also influences the relationship between the two constructs, irrespective of gender.

The positive relationship of conscientiousness with global Trait EI indicates that people who are responsible, organized, hard-working, self-directed, and adhere to norms and rules are high on Trait EI. The personality trait enables them to observe and understand the emotions of self and others minutely. It allows them to demonstrate higher personal management skills while interacting with others, thus enhancing individuals' well-being, sociability, and self-control and, in turn, leading to higher Trait EI. Similarly, the positive relationship between extraversion with global Trait EI indicates that extrovert people have good social skills and relationship management, which is also an attribute of high Trait EI. Openness trait within individuals enables them to be open-minded, imaginative, creative, and insightful, empowering them to reason from different perspectives, thus enhancing well-being. It also allows them to be assertive, socially aware, and higher in emotional management. However, in the present study, agreeableness emerged as the weakest predictor of global Trait EI compared to the other four traits. Individuals who are high on agreeableness value acceptance and approval of others. They are generally understanding, caring, large-hearted, trusting, reliable, accommodating, and ready to sacrifice their welfare for others. Thus, they may or may not demonstrate higher Trait EI as it makes them wary of hurting others or overriding other people's needs for their well-being.

Among the four components of Trait EI, well-being and sociability were influenced by all the big five traits except agreeableness. Extraversion was the strongest predictor, followed by openness for well-being and sociability. Thus, being enthusiastic, gregarious, imaginative, and open-minded to explore enhances an individual's well-being and sociability. The degree of association of agreeableness with well-being and sociability is low for this sample. That is why it is not a significant predictor of these factors. In addition, sociability as a factor of Trait EI requires a person to be assertive, which is not one of the traits of highly agreeable people. Possibly due to this, agreeableness does not have a strong association with sociability. Self-control was influenced by neuroticism and conscientiousness. As expected, conscientiousness predicts the self-control factor positively, and neuroticism predicts it negatively. Self-control deals with emotional regulation, stress management, and impulse control, which is very much the characteristic of conscientiousness and thus tends to influence the factor of self-control positively. Neuroticism is a lack of self-control over impulses and thus lowers self-control. Its contribution is the maximum to self-control.

On the other hand, agreeableness has the strongest association with emotionality, followed by extraversion. It is because relationships and interactions with others are important markers of emotionality. Thus, for people high on agreeableness, happiness means satisfaction with relationships. Thus, agreeableness has influenced emotionality the most in comparison to other traits. The factor of emotionality is also significantly influenced by extraversion. The factor of emotionality is a measure of emotional perception and expression along with relationship management. Thus, these facets are similar to both traits, which rightly indicates overlap with them. These findings are comparable to the findings of Petrides et al.⁶

A major advantage of Trait EI theory is that it links the construct to conventional scientific models in differential psychology, such as the Big five personality traits,³¹ the Giant Three,³⁰ the Big two,^{28,29} or even the GFP.²⁶ Personality includes the fundamental attributes of thinking, feeling, and acting out in day-to-day life, and Trait EI focuses on emotion-related traits, a subset of this personality domain.^{27,46,67} Thus, as it has been built on the traditional concept of

individual differences, personality factors and Trait EI can overlap and influence each other. Nevertheless, the distinctness and relevance of Trait EI are also present, as it can function as a buffer to deal with emotional distress and instability beyond the big five traits.⁵⁰ Emotional instability is incompatible with Trait EI.

Thus, the findings indicate a close association between the Big five personality traits and Trait EI. However, the relationship is incremental as the Big five traits jointly influence the global Trait EI more than individually on the four factors.

Limitations

A cross-sectional design with non-probability sampling was used for the current study, restricting generalizations of the findings. In addition, as self-report instruments were used, social desirability bias affecting the findings could not be ruled out. Further, the data was collected from a multidisciplinary Indian university, where students from all over the country come to study. These students generally belong to the middle class and urban cities. Therefore, a larger representative sample representing the rural and other socio-economic strata can enable more generalizable results. Similarly, the role of gender as a moderator should also be assessed using a larger representative sample. Also, a cross-cultural study comprising data from different nations would be required to confirm the findings. Also, the low internal consistency for certain factors was a limitation. Another limitation could be that the short versions of Trait EI and personality were used for this study. Future studies could use the full versions and confirm if similar relationships emerge. Thus, the findings must be interpreted in the context of these methodological limitations.^{55–57}

Conclusion

The current study indicates a close association between personality traits and Trait EI. However, the relationship is incremental as the Big five traits jointly influence the global Trait EI more than individually on the four factors. The study also indicated that neuroticism was a negative and the most significant predictor of Trait EI. Thus, emphasizing the role of emotional stability. The present study's findings are like those of other industrialized nations like Japan,⁴¹ the Netherlands,⁶ Sweden,³⁵ and Spain.³³ However, these findings differ from those in developing countries like Malaysia,⁴² Saudi Arabia,⁴⁴ and Nigeria,⁴³ where neuroticism was not a significant predictor of TEI. Thus, further exploring the role of culture, values, and environment in determining personality and its relationship with Trait EI seems significant. The findings also indicate an overlap as Trait EI is a dispositional trait-like personality. At the same time, it is also distinct from personality as there is enough research evidence regarding its utility beyond the big five personality domains. Therefore, it can be considered an additional independent factor for the emotion-related aspects of personality and making predictions about human behavior. With respect to the subfactors of Trait EI, extraversion was the strongest predictor of well-being and sociability. Neuroticism was the strongest predictor of self-control. However, agreeableness was the significant predictor of emotionality. Thus, the current findings can be valuable to understanding the relationship and overlap between personality factors and Trait EI. In addition, the study's findings may enable psychologists, counselors, and other mental health professionals to develop training programs for college students to enhance emotional stability to deal with stress.

Data Sharing Statement

The data can be made available on reasonable request from the corresponding author.

Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

The study was conducted in accordance with the declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants. The study was non-interventional and was approved by the Manipal University Jaipur Directorate of Research.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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