



Mapping Minds: Exploring How Personality Traits Shape Academic Motivation and Academic Performance in Young Indian Adults

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Abstract

This research explores the impact of personality characteristics on “Academic Motivation” and “Academic Performance” among university students in India. Utilizing the “Big Five Personality Model” as a framework, it analyses the relationship between traits such as “Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Openness” with students' levels of academic engagement and their resultant outcomes. Data were gathered from 320 participants aged 18 to 25 using standardized tools (BFI-10, SAMS, APS). Findings reveal that Conscientiousness positively correlates with higher academic motivation and achievement, highlighting the value of discipline and persistence. Conversely, Neuroticism shows a negative relationship with academic success due to emotional instability. Other traits presented weaker, inconsistent effects. The study emphasizes that academic achievement is not solely based on intellectual ability but also shaped by psychological characteristics. These insights can assist educators and educational institutions in formulating strategies aimed at improving student motivation, resilience, and overall academic achievement.

Key Words - Personality Traits, Academic Motivation, Academic Performance, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Emotional Stability, Higher Education, College Students, Big Five Model, Student Engagement, Learning Behaviour, Psychological Resilience, Academic Achievement, Educational Psychology.

Introduction

Personality traits have long been regarded as key predictors of individual behaviour, motivation, and achievement across various life domains, especially within educational contexts. Personality, often conceptualized through stable patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour, directly influences how students approach learning and performance (Diner & Lucas, 2019). The widely recognized Big Five model—comprising neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience, and extraversion—provides a robust framework for understanding these individual differences (Hudson & Fraley, 2015) (Oshio,

Taku, Hirano, & Saeed, 2018). Recent research emphasizes that traits like conscientiousness and neuroticism have especially potent effects on academic motivation and performance, with conscientiousness consistently linked to positive outcomes and neuroticism often undermining success (Apostolov & Geldenhuys, 2022) (Temizel & Alkis, 2018). Academic motivation, a critical driver of student engagement and achievement, reflects the internal and external forces that stimulate persistence and effort toward learning goals (Trollian, Jach, Hanson, & Pascarella, 2016). Motivation can be intrinsic, where learning itself is rewarding, or extrinsic, driven by external outcomes such as grades or recognition (Malinauskas & Pozeriene, 2020) (Turhan, 2020). In blended and online learning settings, motivation becomes even more crucial, as the autonomy required in these environments can either foster deep learning or exacerbate disengagement depending on personality traits (Temizel & Alkis, 2018) (Berestova, Burdina, Lobuteva, & Lobuteva, 2022). The complex interplay between personality and academic motivation has been studied extensively, revealing that personality traits not only influence the intensity of academic drive but also shape how students respond to challenges and setbacks (Permana, 2020) (Kutserubova & Babarskiene, 2022). Conscientiousness, for instance, has been shown to enhance self-regulation and sustained effort, while traits like openness to experience promote creative problem-solving and intellectual curiosity (Mammadov, Cross, & Ward, 2018) (Parks-Leduc, Feldman, & Bardi, 2015). Conversely, students high in neuroticism often experience heightened stress and anxiety, which can hinder motivation and performance, especially during periods of academic pressure (Frazier, Gabriel, Merians, & Lust, 2019) (Muntean, et al., 2022). Academic performance, typically measured through grades, test scores, and task completion, remains a critical benchmark of student success (Kumar, Agarwal, & Agarwal, 2021) (Kapur, 2018). Scholars have underscored that while cognitive ability is a fundamental factor, non-cognitive factors like personality and motivation are equally influential (Singh, Malik, & Singh, 2016) (Kassarnig, et al., 2018). For example, motivated students who possess high conscientiousness tend to excel even in highly demanding academic settings (Nazar, Toor, & Shahzadi, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted these dynamics, with personality and motivation playing pivotal roles in students' ability to adapt to remote learning environments (Kutserubova & Babarskiene, 2022). Research has also explored how psychological stress impedes academic performance, revealing that stress-induced by perfectionism or fear of failure—often tied to certain personality traits—can undermine motivation and lead to burnout (Frazier, Gabriel, Merians, & Lust, 2019) (Noori Nigjeh, Azad Yekta, & Jomehri, 2025). Interestingly, self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to succeed, mediates these effects by bolstering resilience and sustaining effort even under pressure (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016) (Permana, 2020). High self-efficacy is linked to stronger academic persistence and achievement, offering a protective buffer against the detrimental effects of stress and neuroticism (Hopwood, 2025) (Hudson & Fraley, 2015). The nuanced relationship between personality, motivation, and performance is further complicated by contextual factors such as faculty-student interactions, cultural influences, and gender differences (Trollian, Jach, Hanson, & Pascarella, 2016) (Turhan, 2020) (Apostolov & Geldenhuys, 2022). For example, gender-based analyses indicate that female students often report higher levels of academic motivation but also experience more anxiety related to performance, pointing to the importance of personalized academic interventions (Turhan, 2020) (Nazar, Toor, & Shahzadi, 2024). Additionally, student-faculty engagement has been shown to enhance motivation and performance, underscoring the social dimension of academic success (Trollian, Jach, Hanson, & Pascarella, 2016). In light of these findings, it becomes clear that personality traits, academic motivation, and performance are deeply interwoven, each influencing and amplifying the effects of the other. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing educational practices and interventions that foster student well-being and academic excellence (Sandhu, 2019) (Nauzeer & Jaunky, 2021). By investigating the joint roles of these psychological constructs, contemporary research continues to unravel the complexities of student achievement, offering vital insights for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals alike (Berestova, Burdina, Lobuteva, & Lobuteva, 2022) (Permana, 2020).

This study explores the relationship between personality traits, academic motivation, and academic performance among Indian college students aged 18 to 25. With growing awareness of the influence of non-cognitive factors in education, the research focuses on how stable personality characteristics shape students' motivation levels and academic outcomes. To ensure a comprehensive analysis, three validated tools were used: the Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) to measure core personality traits, the Student Academic Motivation Scale (SAMS) to assess different dimensions of academic motivation, and the Academic Performance Scale (APS) to evaluate students' self-perceived academic success.

A total of 320 students, representing a range of academic disciplines and study levels, were selected from various higher education institutions. The study adopted a mixed-mode data collection strategy, using both online platforms and offline distribution methods to ensure wider reach and demographic diversity. This

approach helped include participants from different regions and technological access levels, ensuring balanced representation.

The research seeks to pinpoint which personality traits contribute positively or negatively to motivation and academic achievement. The ultimate goal is to support the development of personalised academic and psychological interventions that cater to individual student profiles. Such strategies can enhance engagement, foster motivation, and improve overall academic performance in college settings.

Methodology

Aim:

To study the effect of Personality Traits on Academic Motivation and Academic Performance in young adults / college students (in India).

Objectives:

1. To examine the effect of personality traits on academic motivation among young adults / college students.
2. To examine the effect of personality traits on academic performance among young adults / college students.
3. To identify which personality traits most significantly influence academic motivation and academic performance.

Hypotheses:

1. The Personality trait, Conscientiousness, has a positive effect on academic motivation and academic performance.
2. The Personality trait, Neuroticism negatively affects both academic motivation and academic performance.
3. Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Openness show weak and inconsistent effect with academic motivation and academic performance, suggesting their influence is less significant compared to Conscientiousness.

Research Design:

This study employs a **quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational design**, focusing on examining the connections between personality traits, academic motivation, and academic performance in a university student population. Data were gathered using standardized self-report instruments, administered at a single point in time, to identify and analyse patterns and associations among the core variables.

Sampling:

The research involved **320 participants**, ensuring a strong and diverse sample adequate for robust statistical analysis. This sample size was chosen to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings and to provide enough statistical power to assess the relationships between personality traits, motivation levels, and academic outcomes effectively.

Variables:

- **Personality Traits (Independent Variable):** Defined as consistent patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour, expected to impact students' academic motivation and performance.
- **Academic Motivation (Dependent Variable):** Captures students' inner drive, effort, and persistence toward academic tasks, shaped by their personality traits.
- **Academic Performance (Dependent Variable):** Represents the measurable academic achievements of students, influenced by their inherent personality traits and motivational levels.

Data Collection Tools:

1. **Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10):** A brief yet effective instrument designed to assess the five major dimensions of personality—Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism—capturing the core traits relevant to individual differences.
2. **Student Academic Motivation Scale (SAMS):** This scale evaluates various facets of students' academic motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic factors, offering a comprehensive understanding of what drives students in their academic pursuits.
3. **Academic Performance Scale (APS):** A tool developed to measure students' academic achievements and outcomes, providing quantitative data on their academic performance based on defined criteria.

Statistical Analysis:

The study followed a quantitative, cross-sectional design and utilized Pearson's correlation coefficient to assess the relationships between personality traits, academic motivation, and academic performance. To enhance clarity in interpreting these associations, the correlation coefficients (r) were transformed into z-scores using Fisher's R-to-Z transformation, enabling more precise comparison of effect sizes across the different variables.

Presented here is the statistical depiction of the gathered data.

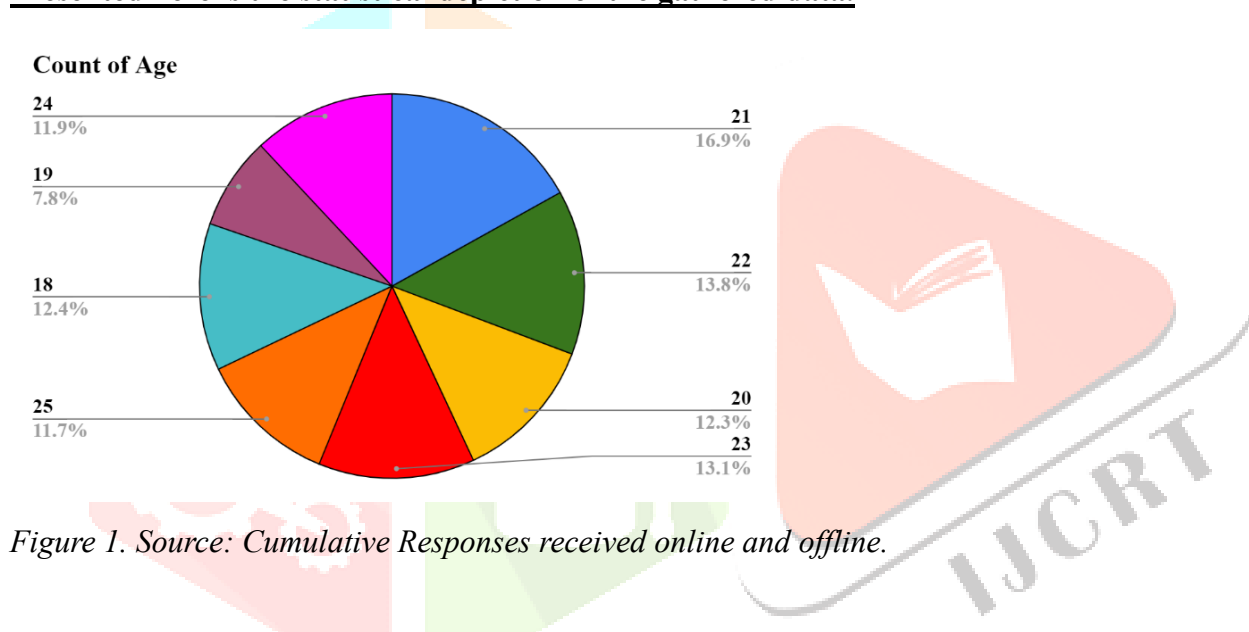


Figure 1. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline.

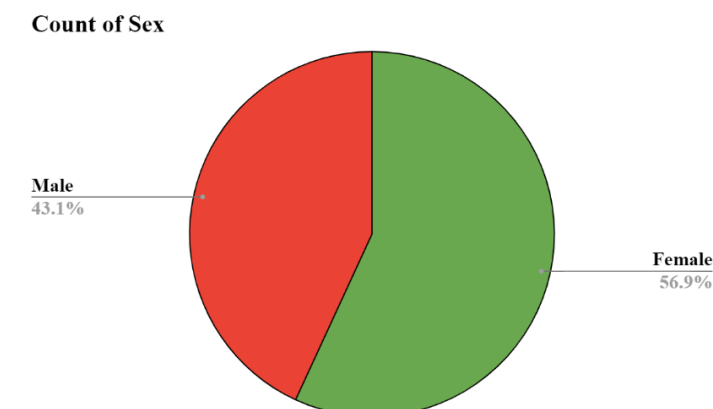


Figure 2. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline.

Count of Education Qualification

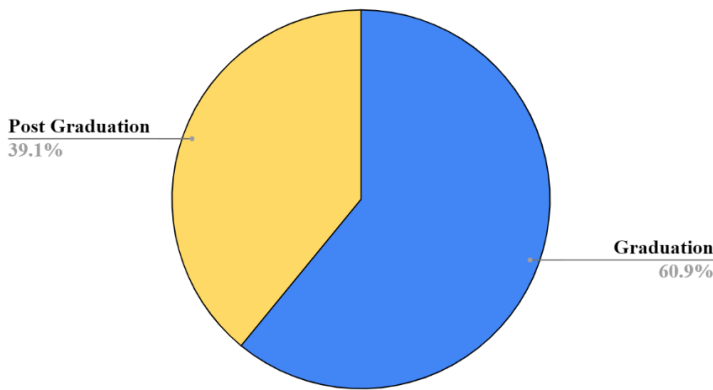


Figure 3. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline.

Results

Result Table-1: Correlation between Academic Motivation, Academic Performance, and Personality Traits

Sr No.	Variables (Personality Traits)	R (Correlation Coefficient) Motivation	Score -	Z (Standard Score) Motivation	Score -	R (Correlation Coefficient) Performance	Score -	Z (Standard Score) Performance	Score -
01.	Conscientiousness	0.1368		0.1377		0.2340		0.2384	
02.	Neuroticism	-0.0264		-0.0264		-0.0674		-0.0675	
03.	Extraversion	0.0955		0.0958		0.0945		0.0948	
04.	Agreeableness	-0.0311		-0.0311		0.0676		0.0677	
05.	Openness	-0.0816		-0.0818		0.0227		0.0227	

The study explored how key personality traits influence academic motivation and performance among university students. The interpretation of the data is summarized below:

Conscientiousness:

The analysis revealed a clear positive relationship between Conscientiousness and both academic motivation ($r = 0.1368$; $z = 0.1377$) and academic performance ($r = 0.2340$; $z = 0.2384$). This suggests that students with higher levels of conscientiousness—typically marked by discipline, organization, and responsibility—are more motivated and achieve better academic results. Even though the correlations are moderate, they firmly reinforce the idea that conscientious individuals are likely to remain focused and excel academically.

Neuroticism:

Neuroticism displayed a weak negative correlation with both academic motivation ($r = -0.0264$; $z = -0.0264$) and academic performance ($r = -0.0674$; $z = -0.0675$). This finding indicates that students with higher neurotic traits, who may struggle with anxiety, self-doubt, and emotional instability, tend to experience slightly lower academic motivation and performance. While the association is not strong, it aligns with the expectation that heightened neuroticism can hinder academic engagement and outcomes.

Extraversion:

The trait of Extraversion was found to have a weak positive association with academic motivation ($r = 0.0955$; $z = 0.0958$) and performance ($r = 0.0945$; $z = 0.0948$). This implies that extraverted students—who are generally sociable and outgoing—may show a minor boost in academic drive and results, though the overall effect is limited. The results support the view that while extraversion might offer some advantages, its direct influence on academic success is minimal.

Agreeableness:

Results for Agreeableness showed a slight negative correlation with academic motivation ($r = -0.0311$; $z = -0.0311$) but a weak positive correlation with academic performance ($r = 0.0676$; $z = 0.0677$). This mixed pattern suggests that while agreeable students, who are cooperative and empathetic, may not feel especially driven in individual academic tasks, their collaborative skills might contribute positively in group-based academic settings.

Openness to Experience:

The findings indicated a small negative correlation between Openness and academic motivation ($r = -0.0816$; $z = -0.0818$), alongside a negligible positive relationship with academic performance ($r = 0.0227$; $z = 0.0227$). This suggests that while students high in Openness—known for creativity and curiosity—do not appear to be strongly motivated by traditional academic demands, there may be a slight positive influence on performance, potentially linked to innovative thinking.

Personality Types in Participants

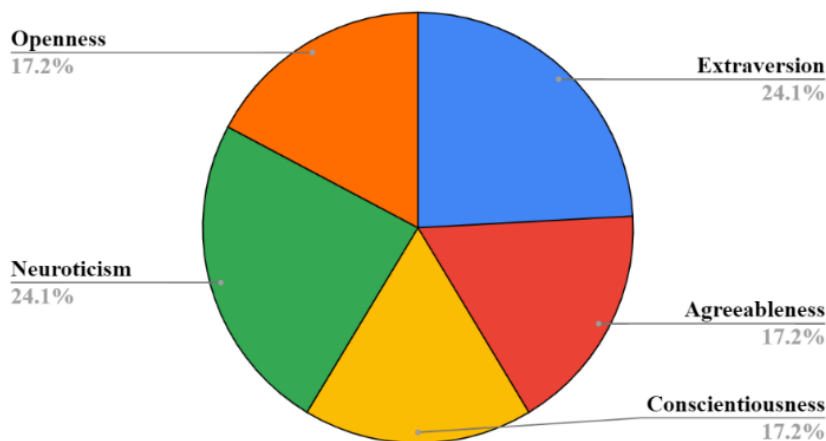


Figure 4. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline.

The figure above (Figure 4) shows the percentage of the “personality traits” of the participants. From the calculated results we can say that even though majority of individuals have Extraversion and Neuroticism as their major personality traits, the levels of academic motivation and academic performance can be seen more in Conscientiousness. This can also be seen in the figures below (Figure 5 and Figure 6).

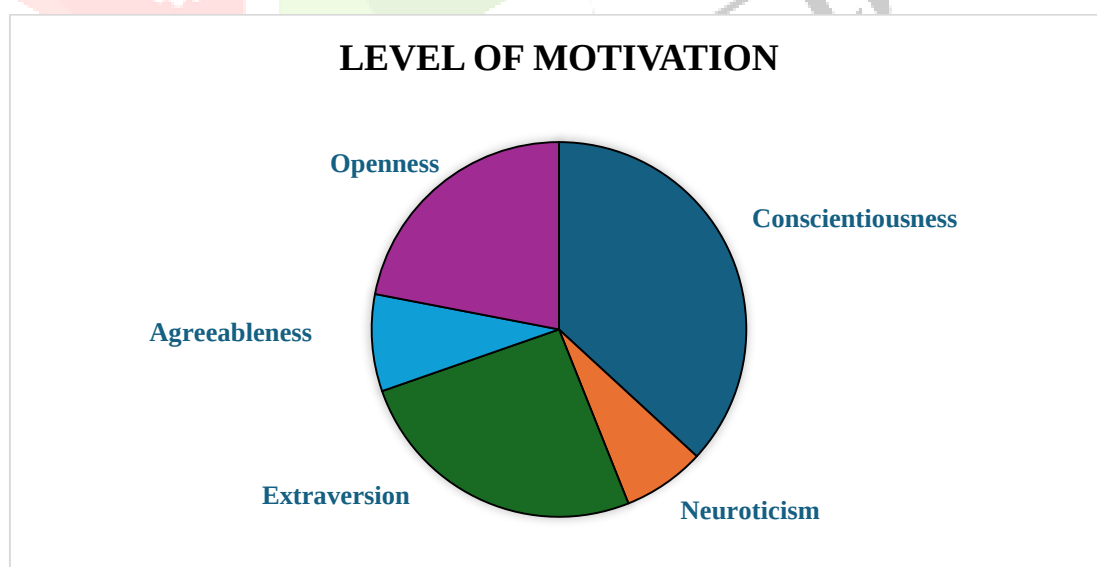


Figure 5. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline.

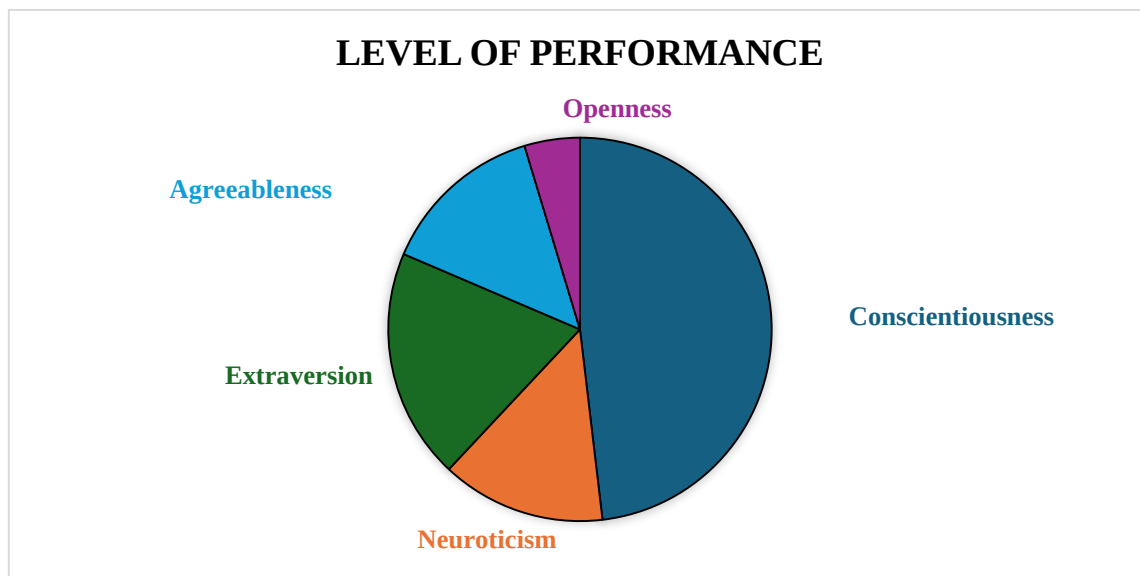


Figure 6. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline.

Discussion

The study titled *"The Influence of Personality Traits on Academic Motivation and Performance among College Students in India"* investigated how specific personality traits—particularly the Big Five: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism—affect students' academic motivation and performance. Personality, defined as the consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving, plays a crucial role in how students approach their studies (Apostolov & Geldenhuys, 2022). The research emphasized that these stable traits shape academic behaviours and outcomes in meaningful ways. Key findings revealed that Conscientiousness stood out as a major predictor of both academic motivation and achievement. Students characterized by high levels of discipline, organization, and responsibility demonstrated greater engagement and superior academic results. This aligns with established theories highlighting Conscientiousness as central to academic success due to its links with persistence and goal-directed behaviours (Mammadov, Cross, & Ward, 2018) (Permana, 2020) (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Statistical analysis supported this, showing positive correlations between Conscientiousness and both motivation and performance. In contrast, Neuroticism, associated with anxiety and emotional instability, negatively impacted students' motivation and academic performance. Individuals with high neurotic tendencies often struggle with stress and self-doubt, which undermines their academic focus and persistence (Permana, 2020). The findings were consistent with the Five-Factor Model's emphasis on emotional stability as a vital component for academic success (Apostolov & Geldenhuys, 2022). Extraversion exhibited a mild positive relationship with academic motivation and performance. Extraverted students, who are typically sociable and energetic, may benefit from collaborative learning environments; however, their outgoing nature did not strongly influence academic outcomes (Nauzeer & Jaunky, 2021) (Mammadov, Cross, & Ward, 2018). This suggests that while extraverts thrive socially, their academic performance remains only slightly enhanced by their sociability. Agreeableness produced mixed results, with a weak negative correlation with motivation but a slight positive link to performance. This indicates that traits like empathy and cooperativeness may enhance group-based academic tasks but don't strongly drive individual academic ambition (Kutserubova & Babarskiene, 2022) (Temizel & Alkis, 2018). Openness to Experience showed a weak negative correlation with academic motivation and a minimal positive association with academic performance. Although openness promotes creativity and intellectual exploration, these qualities don't always align well with the structured demands of formal education (Kutserubova & Babarskiene, 2022). The study also underscored the mediating roles of factors such as self-efficacy and academic involvement in the relationship between personality and academic outcomes (Noori Nigjeh, Azad Yekta, & Jomehri, 2025). The research further highlighted how Conscientiousness helped sustain academic motivation and performance even during external challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Kutserubova & Babarskiene, 2022) (Temizel & Alkis, 2018). Conclusively, the results confirmed that Conscientiousness is the strongest positive predictor of academic motivation and performance, while

Neuroticism has a detrimental effect. The weaker influences of Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Openness validate previous models that recognize their lesser direct impact on academic achievement (Mammadov, Cross, & Ward, 2018) (Nauzeer & Jaunky, 2021).

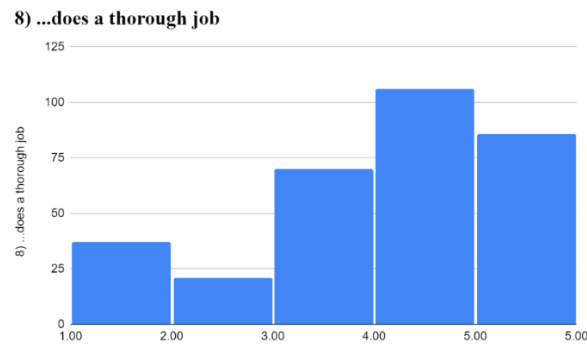


Figure 7. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline

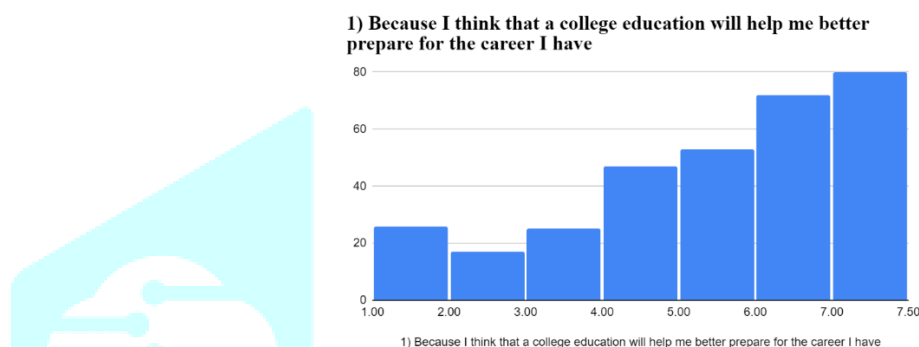


Figure 8. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline

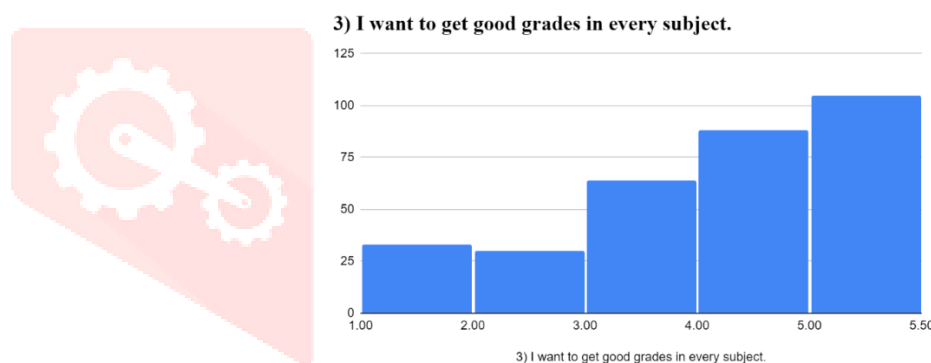


Figure 9. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline

Figures 7, 8, and 9 strongly affirm the first hypothesis, showing that conscientious students—marked by diligence, organization, and reliability—consistently prioritize academic tasks. Despite moderate emotional fluctuations, they maintain motivation and link academic success to future career goals. This underscores conscientiousness as a key driver of sustained academic focus, effort, and achievement.

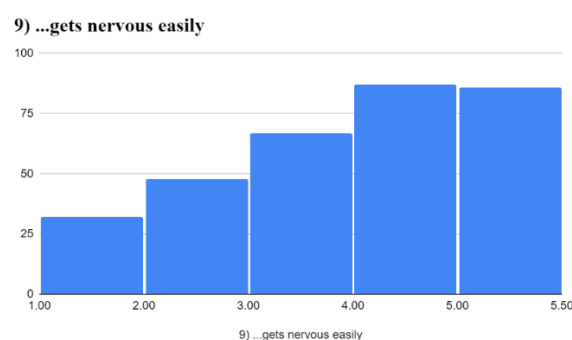


Figure 10. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline

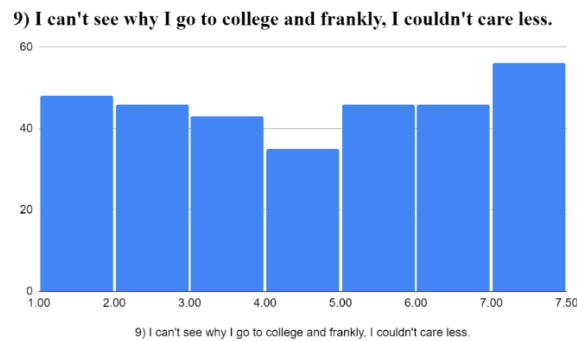


Figure 11. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline

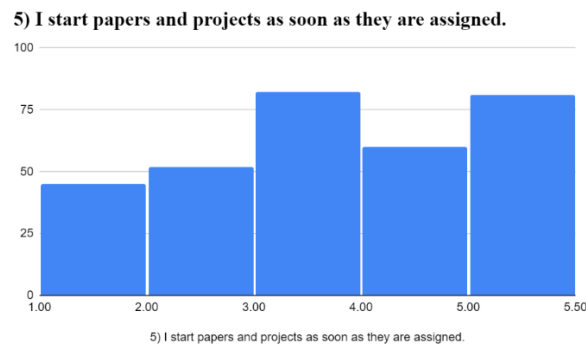


Figure 12. Source: Cumulative Responses received online and offline

Figures 10, 11, and 12 support the second hypothesis, highlighting how neuroticism negatively impacts academic motivation and performance. Emotional instability, poor self-regulation, and procrastination are evident, hindering consistent academic engagement. Despite a desire for success, neurotic students face difficulties maintaining focus and discipline. Overall, the study emphasizes how personality traits, especially conscientiousness and neuroticism, significantly shape academic outcomes, underscoring the need for targeted strategies to strengthen emotional resilience and conscientious behaviours in students.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the relationship between personality traits and academic motivation and performance among college students in India. The research involved 320 participants aged 18 to 25, from various academic disciplines. It specifically focused on the Big Five personality traits—Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience—and examined their impact on academic outcomes. The results revealed that Conscientiousness had a significant positive correlation with both academic motivation ($r = 0.1368$; $z = 0.1377$) and academic performance ($r = 0.2340$; $z = 0.2384$). This suggests that students who exhibit traits such as responsibility, organization, and diligence tend to be more motivated and perform better academically. Conversely, Neuroticism showed a weak negative correlation with both academic motivation ($r = -0.0264$; $z = -0.0264$) and performance ($r = -0.0674$; $z = -0.0675$), indicating that students with higher levels of emotional instability and anxiety generally experience lower motivation and academic achievement. Extraversion demonstrated a slight positive correlation with academic motivation ($r = 0.0955$; $z = 0.0958$) and performance ($r = 0.0945$; $z = 0.0948$), but the relationship was weak. Agreeableness showed mixed results: a slight negative correlation with motivation ($r = -0.0311$; $z = -0.0311$) and a weak positive association with academic performance ($r = 0.0676$; $z = 0.0677$). Openness to Experience exhibited a minor negative relationship with motivation ($r = -0.0816$; $z = -0.0818$) and a negligible positive link to performance ($r = 0.0227$; $z = 0.0227$). These findings align with prior research, emphasizing the importance of Conscientiousness in academic success (Temizel & Alkis, 2018), and the role of academic motivation as a mediator between personality traits and achievement (Permana, 2020). The study highlights the impact of personality traits in shaping academic behaviours and outcomes, underscoring the need for personalized support strategies in educational settings. These findings are particularly relevant in the context of Indian cultural influences, where societal and familial expectations play a significant role in shaping student

behaviours and motivations (Nazar, Toor, & Shahzadi, 2024). In conclusion, this research contributes to understanding the influence of personality traits on academic success, advocating for targeted interventions that enhance conscientious behaviours and emotional regulation to improve student outcomes.

Limitations and Future Implication

Limitations:

The study's findings are subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. The use of a cross-sectional research design restricts the ability to infer causal relationships among personality traits, academic motivation, and academic performance, as it captures data at a single point in time and reflects only correlational patterns. The sample was limited to Indian college students aged 18 to 25, which constrains the generalizability of the results to other age groups, cultural backgrounds, or educational contexts. Additionally, reliance on self-report measures introduces the possibility of response biases, including social desirability and misinterpretation of items. The exclusive examination of the Big Five personality traits may have overlooked other influential psychological factors such as emotional intelligence, grit, or resilience. Furthermore, an uneven gender distribution may have introduced bias, potentially affecting the broader applicability of the findings. Critical contextual variables, including socio-economic status, family environment, and institutional support systems, were not considered. The absence of differentiation between academic disciplines also limits insight into potential subject-specific variations. Lastly, data were collected during a single academic term, failing to account for temporal changes in students' motivation or academic performance.

Future Implications:

To enhance the depth and applicability of future research, it is recommended that longitudinal studies be conducted to better assess causal relationships and track changes over time. Expanding the scope of research to include diverse cultural and age groups would also increase the generalizability of findings. Academic institutions could benefit from implementing personality-informed mentoring and emotional resilience programs to support student development. A more holistic approach should be encouraged by integrating emotional intelligence and persistence training into academic environments. Future investigations should incorporate a broader range of psychological variables to provide more comprehensive insights. Additionally, combining quantitative data with qualitative methods can offer a richer, more nuanced understanding of student behavior and outcomes. Examining external factors such as socio-economic background and institutional support is also crucial for situating academic performance within a wider contextual framework.

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