

# The Relationship Between Big Five Personality and Depression

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## ABSTRACT

From the perspective of personality traits, this study combines depression with big five personality, discusses the similarities and differences of personality structure model theory, distinguishes the commonness and characteristics of different personality traits in more detail, and summarizes the rules. From the perspective of the big five personality, this study discusses the relationship between general personality and depression susceptibility and further defines the structure and characteristics of depression and personality. This study confirmed a close relationship between depression and the big five personality traits. People with higher extraversion were less prone to depression, and individuals with lower conscientiousness were more likely to submit to others in interpersonal relationships, showing weak and unreliable behaviors. People who scored high on agreeableness tended to have a more positive and friendly attitude toward others, like to cooperate with others and talk about things and are therefore less prone to depression. The results of this study provide enlightenment for promoting individual mental health.

**Keywords:** Big Five Personality, Depression, Measurement

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Depression itself has long been a question that scientists used to be interested in because of its inundation and lethality. According to the report of "prevalence level, trend and release of death and its risk factors in Chinese population" and relevant research, over 100 million people in the world suffer from depression, and the number of affecting keeps increasing drastically as time increases. However, its seriousness for investigating does not only due to its prosperity, but also due to its high suicide risk. In this case, researchers have seriously studied the relationship between depression and other factors for a long time, but yet the relationship between depression and big five personality is new to this field. The reason for the author to start looking into the big five personality is that people who are affected by depression vary a lot and this concept concludes all variety of people. In the past, although it is indeed very traditional, the survey methods and questionnaires that are commonly used by/for the subjects are still useful. Thus, researchers have also newly adopted the big five personality questionnaire for evaluating the standard affection level of depression and the advantage of this

newly appeared questionnaire is that it includes a broader scale of the population into the measurement and it also splits the population into more specific categories for the sake of studying the exact personality's relationship with the level of depression [1].

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Depression

#### 2.1.1. Connotation and Measurement

Depression here refers to a kind of negative emotional experience or subjective feeling of a person. Measurement part: Depression was measured mainly by the patient's main self-report using scaled evaluation. Scale evaluation mainly includes the following parts: Self-Rating Depression Scale; Self-Rating Anxiety Scale; Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory; Egma Minnen av Bardndosnauppforstran; Olson Enrich Marital inventory and so on. Either way, participants must answer the questions carefully and honestly, so that psychologists can accurately analyze the data and

postulate a new relationship between big personality and the level of depression [1].

### *2.1.2. Current Situation*

The actuality of depression: According to the report Depression and Other Common Mental Disorders published by World Health Organization in 2017, it estimated that more than 3 hundred million people suffer from depression worldwide, with a global average rate of approximately 4.4 percent. In terms of geography, age, and gender, the report also found the incidence is higher in women than in men. Also, the incidence increases as people get older. What's more, the incidence in low-income countries or regions is higher than in other countries or regions. Currently, there are more than 95 million depression patients in China, with a woman making up 65% and the incidence of depression in the student population was 23.8%. The suicide rate of depressive disorder is 4.0% to 10.6%. It would be a serious potential problem that needs the psychologist to take action immediately.

### *2.1.3. Importance of Reducing Depression*

Depression is a kind of mental disease that is widely spread across the world. Every day there is an increased amount of people who get depression in this modern world, and not only the patients themselves suffer from depression but also their family members and potentially all human beings in the world. This is due to depression patients will injure themselves but also others physically, and the extreme ones will even commit suicide. On the other side, depression can also bring heavy economic and psychological burdens to families and in the long run, also cause a big potential burden to the society since, to fully treat depression, requires long-term treatment and also a great amount of care toward the patient. Involving this process will also mean the individuals who have a family member that is depressed will pay less attention to their work automatically which reduce the economic growth in society; raising depressed patients would mean "wasting" the limited resource because they can't produce desirable outcome when they are affected strongly by their emotions. Having a family member will also mean a psychological burden to the family because even most people in society understand fully depression is not obtained due to the patient did some wrong deeds, the family will still face many judgments by people in the society which would increase the family members' likelihood to obtain some psychological diseases as well. It is reasonable to conclude that if more people get depression today, it will cause more people to be depressed in the future since we are closely related to each other. The depression itself just seems like an endless cycle. Thereby, it is very momentous to reduce the rate of depression in the world. Depression will do prodigious harm to individuals, society, and the world. Depression patients will injure not only themselves but also others physically, and the extreme ones will even commit suicide. On the other side, depression can also

bring heavy economic and psychological burdens to families since it needs long-term treatment and a great amount of care toward the patient as well for the sake of successfully curing the patient.

## **2.2. The Big Five**

### *2.2.1. Concept*

The Big Five Personalities are divided into the following five categories. Openness: the open-minded person tends to have a wide range of interests, full of creativity and imagination. This kind of personality has the highest aesthetic and rich inner world. At the same time, they are against conservatives. Conscientiousness: conscientious people are organized in doing things, can complete everything on time, self-discipline, and careful. And they have a sense of responsibility for everything. Extraversion: they are active members of the crowd, and like to be lively and social. When communicating with people, they always maintain an optimistic attitude, in the meantime, they are more eager for stimulation. Agreeableness: these people have a good temper and a soft heart. They are willing to help others. The disadvantage is easy to obey and trust others. Neuroticism: they are always anxious about anything, nervous, uneasy, and emotional. People with this personality often feel lonely, can't stand pressure, and easy to produce depressed emotions. It can be considered that they cannot have the ability to maintain emotional stability [2, 3].

### *2.2.2. Measurement*

Generally, it is measured by the Big-Five Factor Inventory, including the following five latitudes respectively: openness, due diligence, extraversion agreeableness, and neuroticism [2, 4-6]. Examples in the big five personality questionnaire include: extraversion: "Is talkative?", agreeableness: "Is helpful and unselfish with others?", conscientiousness: "Tends to find fault with others?" neuroticism: "Is reserved?", openness: "Is curious about many different things?". Openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism are those five personalities that have many scales of marks. For example, low mark for the first is the people who have traditional thoughts and it is very secure. While people who have many interests in every field are in the high mark. The second one is for conscientiousness, its high mark is people who are hard working and organize the things in an organized way. However, in the low mark, it says they became more careless. For the extroversion, high mark means a person likes to talk with others. The low mark correspond to people who are introverts that keep quiet during most of the time. The last two respectively describe people as helpful and uncooperative in the high mark and low mark at the agreeableness. In addition, neuroticism means one has

many negative emotions, and another one can maintain calm [2, 6].

### ***2.3. The Relationship Between Big Five Personality and Depression***

#### ***2.3.1. Empirical Research***

In the past studies, it is discovered that the more extroverted the people are, the less likely they are going to be depressed. In contrast, individuals with low conscientiousness prefer to obey others in interpersonal relationships, and show weakness and unreliability. Being in low-status situations will more likely contribute to depressive syndromes. Secondly, people with a high agreeableness personality will exhibit more positive and friendly attitudes towards others. Also, they would like to cooperate and communicate with others and the heavy social interactions will lead them to have a lower tendency for depression [7]. What's more, the neuroticism in the Big Five is strongly related to the five dimensions of depression susceptibility. Sensitive and competitive individuals are prone to perform self-esteem injury for the sake of escaping from the reality that they have done something wrong when they feel depressed and pessimistic about their mistakes. This is due to people who are neuroticism having two dimensions that strongly correlate with depression: they are high sensitivity and low emotional stability. In this case, they are prone to negative emotional development due to failure events that happened in their life.

What's more, individuals with emotionally closed defensive personalities are usually prone to tension and anxiety [8]. Also, they lack a sense of trust toward people around them, so it would be harder for those individuals to adjust their negative emotions. Individuals with self-focused personality traits pay more attention to the controllability of events, and individuals with low emotional stability are prone to excessive worry and anxiety due to uncontrollable events. Individuals who are rigorous and serious pay attention to their own words and deeds, but also pay attention to the self-evaluation of others, so they are easy to have low emotional stability. Individuals with submissive characteristics are submissive and depressed. Like neurotic individuals, they tend to have thoughts of psychological pressure and have a low sense of personal security. All in all, those traits can be explained by the Big Five personality indeed have close relationships with depression. Therefore, it is reasonable for us to further discover the relationship between other traits in the Big Five personality with depression. Among the study investigated, they share a similarity which is they are all measured by scales of life satisfaction or similar evaluation. Life satisfaction is the degree to which one will characterize their quality of living as a whole positively. Life satisfaction is later put into four categories and here it is presented through a

chronological relationship that the theory is discovered by the researchers. The first theory is the happiness gained through chasing people's dreams through their hard work. The second kind of it is simply the surface happiness gained through having fun. The third kind of happiness is social happiness which can be numbered through considering and evaluating self-satisfaction toward society as a whole. The last kind of happiness is the happiness we label ourselves have through self-justification. We most often talk about the fourth kind of happiness and it is composed of self-acceptance, personal goal, the strength of relationship with others, the controlling over the environment, and the ability to be independent these six dimensions [9, 10].

#### ***2.3.2. Theoretical Support***

It is found out the first ones to pay specific attention to the big five personalities and depression are Costa. By previous study/review of five personality dimensions, we concluded that extroversion is a positive predictor of life satisfaction, and neuroticism is a negative satisfaction predictor. At last, preciseness is positively correlated with life satisfaction. The three dimensions mentioned above are consistent with the existing conclusions abroad. However, the relationship between openness, agreeableness obtained from other various studies did not verify the conclusions of Costa and McCrae. What we further gained through reviewing another study is that life satisfaction was associated with self-esteem toward controlling one's life. Students with internal control are more likely to believe in their own life isn't determined by luck thus more satisfied with their life. Yet the second discovery is focusing on the Big Five personality dimension and subjective happiness [10].

## **3. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATION**

There is no empirical research data for this study, so future studies can use the data collected in the questionnaire for clearer analysis. In the paper, people do not accurately analyze data, which means in the future we hope researchers can make more efforts to analyze the figure. The most important thing is people should gather more experience on doing a study no matter what majors they take. That can help people easily and quickly finish their paragraphs and do not waste too much time. For psychology, everyone needs to learn about how to use software to analyze data. If you learn about some statistics knowledge that will help people get accurate data through analysis. We hope everyone can do more practice on the research which can help people grasp the required application knowledge. We wish people who are interested in psychology can learn more professional knowledge that will help them study in the university. Just try their best to finish every assignment. Pay more attention to how to assign the paper, do not communicate

with the teacher directly. If the group members can not help you solve problems, you need to tell the teacher on time. Ask professionals or teachers for advice. You will gain a lot of knowledge and broaden your horizons. Do not reject the communication with others that will help you finish work on time. Be careful when people assign tasks, but at the same time, you also need to manage your time properly. In a word, having a good mood will help you get more energy. Everyone should pay more attention to his major like psychology, which needs people to master some statistics skills. For example, people need to know how to use related programs to analyze data. I suggest that future researchers can try to learn more useful knowledge by themselves to save time. There are more interesting things you can study by yourself or find professionals to help you. You always need to remember you are not bad, just try your best to do everything and you will have fun. Even though people do not know much scientific breakthrough, they can still try to find something to learn. It can help you open your eyes, and enrich your experience. Do everything you like and you will find a wonderful world. Make more kindred spirits, you will find your life is full of meaningfulness every day. Remember to do yourself and challenge yourself no matter what happens. That's very important and can make you get improvement. Future scholars can read more literature reviews to learn more relevant knowledge.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Big Five Personality shows people have different traits for different characters. In various aspects of personality, people can know it will bring a different feeling to others. On different occasions, it will illustrate different phenomena that they treat others with different images. The personality will tell people the nature of everyone and their properties. It is an interesting and funny pattern. Depression is a mental illness which means it will bring bad or negative emotions to your families and friends. It will make your life a mess. Some people can not lead a wonderful life like normal ones do. But the bad news is everyone does not pay more attention to it, which causes a bad consequence, such as slashing wrist committing suicide and other radical behaviors. All these facts show we should take care of ourselves no matter where we are. They can find some useful means to help others or themselves. Individuals with higher nervousness traits are more likely to become depressed. But the most important is the people around them need to keep an eye on their status and behavior. Both will bring an awful end for people's life. The most important thing people need to know is that no matter what happens, they should maintain a good mood every day. Even though it will bring a bad end for people, just adjust your state and then you will have fun. Everyone should know having a good mood equals to having a nice life. The relationship is easy to understand, just keep reading and recall

anything that can help to adjust your state. Keeping calm down and awake will make people learn about the truth early. Try to know what should people do, and then you will have fun. Remember mental illness has the same terrible consequences as other diseases. Do not neglect it, just keep in mind how to solve that is what people need to think. Do yourself and try to challenge yourself. Be brave and stick to thinking every second.

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