

Personality Style and its relation with level of Anxiety

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ABSTRACT: “Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychological systems that determine his/her unique adjustments to the environment” (Allport,1937). It includes behavioural characteristics, both inherent and acquired, that distinguish one person from another and that can be observed in people’s relations to the environment and to the social group. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines anxiety as “an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure.” Introverts and extroverts experience the world – and experience anxiety – in markedly different ways. Some studies show that introverts are more vulnerable to anxiety hence at a greater risk of clinical depression. This study aims to find a relation between personality type and anxiety level of an individual. The study was conducted on 100 individuals (50 male 50 female, ranging from age group 20-30 years) in which Eysenck’s Personality Questionnaire (EPQ-R) was used to identify the personality type and Beck’s Anxiety Inventory (BAI), a self-analysis questionnaire was used to measure the anxiety level of the individual. A comparison between the both the test results revealed that individuals who are found to be extroverts indicate mild anxiety on the anxiety scale whereas individuals who are found to be introverts indicate high levels of anxiety on the anxiety scale. The accuracy of this research can however be determined through a more detailed research.

KEY WORDS: Personality, anxiety, EPQ-R, BAI, Extroverts, Introverts.

Date of Submission: 25-02-2020

Date of Acceptance: 11-03-2020

I. INTRODUCTION

“Personality is the distinctive patterns of behaviour (including thoughts and emotions) that characterize each individual’s adaptation to the situations of his or her life.¹ Personality includes the behaviour patterns a person shows across situations or the psychological characteristics of a person that lead to those behavioural patterns.² Anxiety is an uneasy, fearful feeling which maybe a hallmark of many psychological disorders and is often concealed and reduced by defensive behaviours such as avoidance or ritualistic actions.

Hans Eysenck was the leading personality and individual differences theorist of the 20th century. He strove to integrate behaviour genetics, psychophysiology, cognitive psychology, aesthetics, and psychometrics into a unified theory of personality and individual differences.³

- **EXTRAVERSION-** Extraversion is one of the five personality traits of the Big Five personality theory. It indicates how outgoing and social a person is. A person who scores high in extraversion on a personality test is the life of the party. They enjoy being with people, participating in social gatherings, and are full of energy. A person low in **extraversion** is less outgoing and is more comfortable working by himself. Individuals high in extraversion on a career test have a tendency to seek out the company and stimulation of other people.
- **INTROVERSION-** Introversion is a personality trait characterized by a focus on internal feelings rather than on external sources of stimulation. Introverts tend to be more quiet, reserved, and introspective. Unlike extroverts who gain energy from social interaction, introverts have to expend energy in social situations. After attending a party or spending time in a large group of people, introverts often feel a need to “recharge” by spending a period of time alone.

The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire - Revised (EPQ-R) measures three major dimensions of personality: Extraversion/Introversion, Neuroticism, and Psychoticism or Tough-mindedness. The EPQ-R is an excellent assessment tool to measure the personality domain. High E scores indicate extraversion, and individuals who score high tend to be outgoing, impulsive, uninhibited, have many social contacts, and often take part in group activities. High N scores indicate strong emotional liability and overactivity. People with high scores tend to be emotionally over responsive, and encounter difficulties in calming down. High P scores display tendencies to developing psychotic disorders while at the same time falling short of actual psychotic conditions. This scale is included to determine the validity of responses. A high score demonstrates the tendency to “fake good”.

A feeling of apprehension and fear, characterized by physical symptoms such as palpitations, sweating, and feelings of stress is called as Anxiety. Anxiety disorder is an umbrella term that includes different conditions:

- **Panic disorder**- You feel terror that strikes at random. During a panic attack, you may also sweat, have chest pain, and feel palpitations(unusually strong or irregular heartbeats). Sometimes you may feel like you're choking or having a heart attack.
- **Social anxiety disorder**- Also called social phobia, this is when you feel overwhelming worry and self-consciousness about everyday social situations. You fixate about others judging you or on being embarrassed or ridiculed.
- **Specific phobias**- You feel intense fear of a specific object or situation, such as heights or flying. The fear goes beyond what's appropriate and may cause you to avoid ordinary situations.
- **Generalized anxiety disorder**- You feel excessive, unrealistic worry and tension with little or no reason.

Anxiety disorders can be effectively treated with psychopharmacological and cognitive-behavioural interventions.⁴

Anxiety was defined by Freud as "something felt," an emotional state that included feelings of apprehension, tension, nervousness, and worry accompanied by physiological arousal. He observed that anxiety was adaptive in motivating behaviour that helped individuals cope with threatening situations and that intense anxiety was prevalent in most psychiatric disorders.⁵

The Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) consists of 21 items with a Likert scale ranging from 0 to 3 and raw scores ranging from 0 to 63. It was developed in 1988 and a revised manual was published in 1993 with some changes in scoring. The BAI scores are classified as minimal anxiety (0 to 7), mild anxiety (8 to 15), moderate anxiety (16 to 25), and severe anxiety (30 to 63)⁶

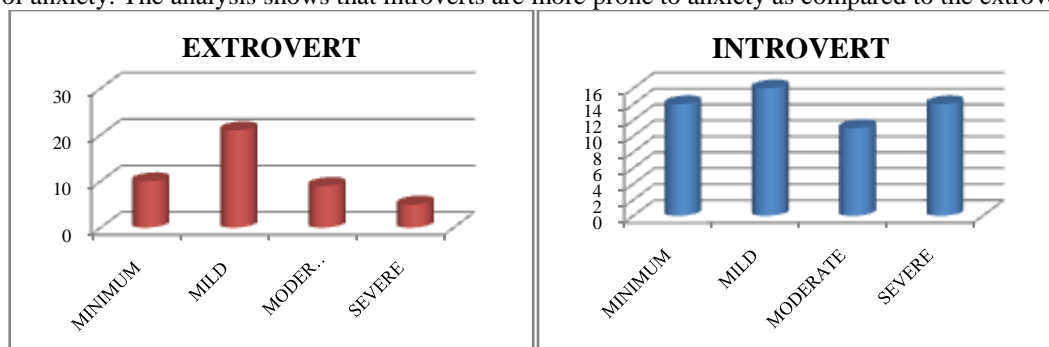
Several studies have shown that there is a relation between personality and anxiety. But no research has focused on the direct relation of an individual's personality to his/her level of anxiety. So this study aims to find whether the anxiety level of an individual is dependent of his personality type or not.

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study was carried out on 100 individuals (50 male, 50 female) ranging from the age of 20-30 years. Each individual was asked to solve the Eysenk Personality Questionnaire (EPQ-R) and Beck's Anxiety Inventory (BAI). The subjects were informed about the study and requested to follow the given instructions. In EPQ-R, the subjects had to answer a total of 90 questions wherein they had to read each statement and answer in either Yes or No. In BAI, the subjects had to read a total of 21 symptoms and they had to mark for each symptom whether they felt anything like that in the past week on the range of Not at all, Mildly, Moderately and Severely. The marked answers were calculated with the help of the scoring manual. All those tests showing a higher score on the lie scale for EPQ-R were discarded.

III. RESULTS

The statistical analysis of the obtained data justify that there is a relation between the personality types and the anxiety level. Majority of the subjects who were found to be extroverts scored minimum on the scale of anxiety, whereas subjects who were found to introverts on the EPQ-R scale scored high levels on the complete range of anxiety. The analysis shows that introverts are more prone to anxiety as compared to the extroverts.



IV. DISCUSSION

In the 1920s, noted psychologist Carl Jung coined the terms "introverted" and "extroverted" in his 1920s work, *Psychologische Typen*⁷In his model, differences between the personalities basically boil down to energy: Extroverted people are energized by social interactions, whereas those same engagements are energetically taxing for introverts. So after attending a party or other social gathering, introverts need time alone to "recharge."Extroverts are typically thought of as those people who are outspoken, outgoing and

predominately concerned with what's going on with the outer world. Introverts, by contrast, are quiet, reflective and focused on the inner (mental) world.

One major difference between the brains of introverts and extroverts is the way they respond to the neurotransmitter dopamine. Dopamine is a chemical released in the brain that provides the motivation to seek external rewards like earning money, climbing the social ladder, attracting a mate, or getting selected for a high-profile project at work. It's not that introverts have less dopamine present in their brains than extroverts do. In fact, both introverts and extroverts have the same amount of dopamine available. The difference is in the activity of the dopamine reward network. It is more active in the brains of extroverts than in the brains of introverts.

Introverts prefer to use a different neurotransmitter called acetylcholine. Like dopamine, acetylcholine is also linked to pleasure; the difference is, acetylcholine makes them feel good when they turn inward⁸. Acetylcholine is linked to the parasympathetic side of the nervous system, which is nicknamed the "throttle down" or "rest-and-digest" side. When they engage the parasympathetic side, their body conserves energy, and they withdraw from the outer environment. Their muscles relax; energy is stored; food is metabolized; pupils constrict to limit incoming light; and their heart rate and blood pressure lower. Basically, their body gets ready for hibernation and contemplation—two of the things introverts like the most.

Both introverts and extroverts use both sides of their nervous systems at different times, just like they use both neurotransmitters. But extroverts tend to favour the opposite side of the nervous system: the sympathetic side, known as the "full-throttle" or "fight, flight, or freeze" system. This side mobilizes them to discover new things and makes them active, daring, and inquisitive. The brain becomes alert and hyper-focused on its surroundings. Blood sugar and free fatty acids are elevated to give them more energy, and digestion is slowed. Thinking is reduced, and they become prepared to make snap decisions. While extroverts thrive on the dopamine-charged good feelings created when they engage the sympathetic side, for introverts, it's too much.

Anxiety is a health condition that causes the feelings of worry, fear or tension in an individual. These responses can be triggered by some non-threatening sources like excessive caffeine, skipping meals or public performance stress, whereas some worrisome factors like excessive stress, certain medications, conflicts, financial concerns could also be trigger for anxiety. The symptoms for anxiety are- uncontrollable worry, fear, muscle tension, fast heartbeat, restlessness, tingling and so on.

A personality type of a person, as in whether he/ she are an Extrovert or an Introvert may have an effect on the level of anxiety, a person experiences. The effect of anxiety on personality measures has been studied less than that of depression. Personality factors in anxiety disorders seem important for the diagnosis and prediction of treatment outcome.⁹ Studies have shown that the relationship between work load and anxiety was greatest for Type A persons (hard driving, persistent, involved in work), and a similar but non- significant trend appeared for the effects of anxiety on heart rate.¹⁰ Studies have shown that research on how normal personality and personality disorders traits may relate to anxiety disorders as predisposing factors, complications and common underlying etiologies.¹¹

Personality traits and most anxiety disorders are strongly related. Personality traits such as high neuroticism, low extraversion, and personality disorder traits (particularly those from Cluster C) are at least markers of risk for certain anxiety disorders; Remission from panic disorder is generally associated with partial "normalization" of personality traits. Anxiety disorders in early life may influence personality development.¹²

In a study conducted with 466 young participants primarily undergrad students indicate that an interaction between neuroticism and extraversion predicted both generalized anxiety and depression about three years later. Findings indicate that the combination of high neuroticism and low extraversion, plays an etiological role for anxiety.¹³

This study was conducted with the aim to find whether personality types and anxiety are related. For this study 100 individuals (50 male, 50 female) were selected ranging from the age group of 20-30 years. EPQ-R and BAI were the two paper-pencil tests used for this study. After a thorough analysis of these solved tests, it was observed that extroverts showcase mild anxiety on the scale of anxiety whereas the introverts range from mild to severe anxiety. These results indicate that all introverts experience anxiety even though it is in low levels and also are an indicator that extroverts have low levels of anxiety.

This difference in the levels of anxiety might be due to the difference in techniques of handling a situation by extroverts and introverts. Extroverts are out-going individuals, hence when they are stressed, they act out. They tend to get difficult and at times obnoxious but this is their way of handling anxiety. Their different approach to a situation could be the reason of their low levels of anxiety. It is not that extroverts experience less anxiety, but it is their approach that helps them cope up naturally.

As compared to extroverts, introverts are the kind of people who like to be in their shell. When introverts are stressed out they withdraw. They do this to recharge themselves, and not to avoid a situation. An introvert instead of discussing openly about his/her problem might tend to over think or over analyse a situation or problem by himself/herself. This creates a loop in his/her thinking and hence might trigger anxiety.

V. CONCLUSION

The results obtained from the present study indicate that personality type of an individual plays a major role in the level of a person's anxiety level. It is not just the type of personality but the approach of an individual towards a particular life-event or situation, is an important factor to consider while studying the level of anxiety of an individual. However this study cannot be applied for clinical examination of an individual. To take this study further one could use clinically approved scales for the exact identification of anxiety level in an individual rather than finding a range. Event Related Potential, an intrusive technique can be used further to localise the anxiety and to record the triggers in individuals with different personality types.

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