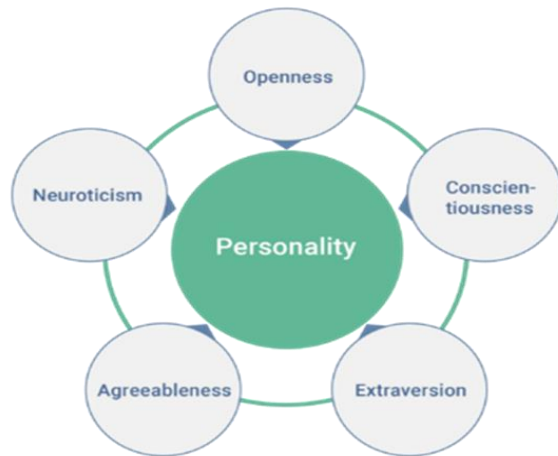


# Trait Theory of Personality

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**Abstract:** Trait theory in psychology rests on the idea that people differ from one another based on the strength and intensity of basic trait dimensions. They purchase goods and services based on their peculiarity. The theory also suggests that people have certain basic traits, and it is the strength and intensity of those traits that account for personality differences. The trait approach to personality is one of the major theoretical areas in the study of personality. Trait theory suggests that individual personalities are composed of broad characters. Personality refers to the permanent characteristics and behavior that comprise a person's way of adjustment to life, his interests, desires, beliefs, what he/she thinks of self, hobbies, interests, values, abilities and emotions.

**Keywords:** Trait Theory, Personality, Allport, Cattell's 16-Factor Personality Model, Eysenck's 3 Dimensions of Personality, Five-Factor Model of Personality, OCEAN, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, Openness.

A trait is a distinguishing quality of a person. For example, someone is inquisitive that seems to be his notable trait. A trait is usually consistent. In general, the ability to compartmentalize behaviors into identifiable categories is the main advantage of Trait Theories of Personality. Objective criteria for placement of traits in categories is also an advantage of this theory.

There are four trait theories of personality: Allport's trait theory, Cattell's 16-factor personality model, Eysenck's three-dimensional model, and the five-factor model of personality.

Allport: Gordon Allport was one of the first researchers who introduced a trait theory. His main idea was that personality came about like a sequences of building blocks; the building blocks of a personality refer to the fundamental components that contribute to shaping an individual's distinct traits and behavior. Allport pioneered research on human personality. At a time when behaviorism held sway in psychology departments in the U.S., and psychoanalytic approaches dominated elsewhere, Allport championed an empirical methodology that considered the influences of current context and conscious motivations, without dismissing the possible contribution of unconscious memories and/or mechanisms to human thought and behavior.

He further believed that personality was biologically determined but could be shaped by someone's environment. Although there is definite evidence for the fact that our personalities are, at least in part, determined by genetics, there's more to it than that. In fact, our environment may shape or alter our personalities as well - not just the social environment but the natural environment around us. For example, people living in mountainous areas are emotionally stable and assertive, which may also likely be beneficial for their secluded lifestyles.

Allport said that there are three classes of trait as following:

Cardinal traits: these are the traits around which someone organises their whole life. They are thought to develop later in life and become synonymous with a person because that is how people primarily see them. For example, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam was characterized by his vision and humility. He believed that leaders should lead by example and inspire their

team members to achieve their full potential. Narendra Modi – our PM is decisive but autocratic. Steve Jobs was known for his attention to details.

Central traits: These refer to major characteristics of someone's personality and lead to its foundation, such as shy, intelligent, deceitful, unkind.

Secondary traits: These refer to traits which refer to patterns of behaviour that only occur under specific circumstances, for example a person who is usually confident becomes nervous when they must talk in public, another example is some people fear height.

Cattell's 16-Factor Personality Model: Raymond Cattell reduced the number of main personality traits from Allport's initial list of over 4,000 down to 171. He did so, mainly by removing uncommon traits and combining common characteristics. Next, Cattell rated a large sample of individuals for these 171 different traits. Using a statistical technique known as factor analysis, he then identified closely related terms and eventually reduced his list to 16 key personality traits. Among them are dominance, perfectionism, reasoning, and self-reliance. They are as follows:

1. Abstractedness: Imaginative versus practical
2. Apprehension: Worried versus confident
3. Dominance: Forceful versus submissive
4. Emotional stability: Calm versus high-strung
5. Liveliness: Spontaneous versus restrained
6. Openness to change: Flexible versus attached to the familiar
7. Perfectionism: Controlled versus undisciplined
8. Privatness: Discreet versus open
9. Reasoning: Abstract versus concrete
10. Rule-consciousness: Conforming versus non-conforming
11. Self-reliance: Self-sufficient versus dependent
12. Sensitivity: Tender-hearted versus tough-minded
13. Social boldness: Uninhibited versus shy
14. Tension: Inpatient versus relaxed
15. Vigilance: Suspicious versus trusting
16. Warmth: Outgoing versus reserved

Eysenck's 3 Dimensions of Personality: British psychologist Hans Eysenck developed a model of personality based on just three universal traits.

Introverts/Extroverts: Introverts direct attention to their feelings and experiences, while extroverts' direct attention outward, onto other people and the environment. A person high in introversion might be quiet and reserved, while an individual high in extraversion might be sociable and outgoing.

Neuroticism/Emotional Stability: This dimension of Eysenck's trait theory is related to moodiness versus even-temperedness. Neuroticism refers to an individual's tendency to become upset or emotional, while stability refers to the tendency to remain emotionally constant.

Psychoticism: Later, after studying individuals suffering from mental illness, Eysenck added a personality dimension he called psychoticism to his trait theory. Individuals who are high on this trait tend to have difficulty dealing with reality and they tend to be antisocial, hostile, non-empathetic, and manipulative. People who have psychotic episodes are often unaware that their misbeliefs or hallucinations are not real, which may lead them to feel frightened or distressed.

Five-Factor Model of Personality: Both Cattell's and Eysenck's theories have been the subject of considerable research. This led to some theorists to believe that Cattell focused on too many traits, while Eysenck focused on too few. As a result, a new trait theory often referred to as the "Big Five" theory emerged. Many contemporary personality psychologists believe that there are five basic dimensions of personality, often referred to as the "Big 5" personality traits. The Big 5 personality traits are extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism.

This five-factor model of personality represents five core traits that interact to form human personality. While researchers often disagree about the exact labels for each dimension, which are described most.

1. Agreeableness: level of cooperation and caring for others
2. Conscientiousness: level of thoughtfulness and structure
3. Extraversion: level of socialness which means seeking and enjoying companionship of others and emotional expressiveness.

4. Neuroticism: is a trait that reflects a person's level of emotional stability. It is often defined as a negative personality trait involving negative emotions, poor self-regulation; an inability to manage urges, trouble dealing with stress, a strong reaction to perceived threats, and the tendency to complain.
5. Openness: means openness to experience, ready to experience new things in life, ready to accept and experience as things come in life, it is one of basic personality trait denoting receptivity to new ideas and new experiences, level of adventure and creativity.

#### CONCLUSION

The Big Five Personality Model explains how employees' behavioral traits can be segmented into certain personalities. An easy way to remember the five traits is to think of the acronym OCEAN. This stands for openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.

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