



## Personality Traits and its Ensuing Variance on Moral Competency in the Indian Youth

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**ABSTRACT:** Moral development is one of the most important events of the process of socialization in life span of an individual and it is through moral development, that an individual becomes an identifiable part of the society. Day to day human interactions and interpersonal activities involves a number of moral decisions and moral information processing in the mind. Moral information processing in the human mind is influenced by various factors and the personality traits are one of the major factors that have a detrimental influence on moral competency. Moral competency is the measure of the consistency of moral behavior of a person and moral behavior is the behavioral response to a moral stimulus or situation which is generally considered as 'right' or 'good'. The big five personality traits are studied to have significant influence on the moral reasoning and moral judgment and the present study explores the relation between each of the five personality traits with moral competency in the selected sample of Indian youth. Present study infers that there is a significant relation between Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness of the big five personality traits with Moral Competency.

**Keywords:** Big Five, Personality Traits, Morality, Moral Competency, Moral Judgment, Moral Reasoning.

### INTRODUCTION

A moral behavior is the desired response to a moral stimulus<sup>1</sup> and a moral stimulus, in the day to day life situation can be a moral scenario or moral dilemma which demands the individual to act morally. Moral competency is the measure of the consistency of moral behavior of a person and moral behavior is the behavioral response in a moral situation which is generally viewed as 'desirable' or 'good'. Moral information processing involves series of intangible cognitive and meta-cognitive events in the human mind. Various researchers have attempted to study morality and the moral apparatus of human mind and has brought into light different aspects of the psychological processes involved in moral information processing. Previous studies in this domain of moral psychology have already established that multifarious psycho-social variables in interaction with the biological and environmental factors determine and influence the morality to a larger extent. Development of morality or ability to make moral judgments or decisions is one of

the most vital psychological events in the process of social development and life span of an individual. It is through moral development that an individual becomes capable of moral judgement and it is as a result of moral development that a child or individual becomes capable of differentiating between right and wrong <sup>2, 3, and 4</sup>. Morality is shaped and structured by various psycho-philosophical, socio-political, biological and environmental factors .

Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual, of those psychophysical systems that determine the characteristic behavior and thought of an individual <sup>5, 6</sup> and the personality traits are one of the most vital psychosocial factors that influence moral behavior. Researches in moral psychology have established that there is a positive relation between morality and personality. According to Athota and O'connor<sup>7</sup> the big five personality dimensions are significant predictors of Moral Reasoning. Researchers conducted by Curtis, Billingslea and Wilson <sup>8</sup> inferred that there are significant associations between Moral Maturity and the two traits empathy (similar to agreeableness) and socialization (extraversion). Moral judgment is connected with an individual's intellectual abilities, empathy and basic dimensions of personality<sup>9</sup>. In a study conducted by Mudrack<sup>10</sup> personality traits were found to be a major indicator of Moral Reasoning. In the context of Indian society, studies related to morality are highly relevant as a paradigm shift is evidently noticed in the societal attitude towards morality which is perpetuating at a faster pace <sup>11</sup>. The present study focused on identifying the influence of Big Five Personality factors on Moral competency in the Indian Youth .

### Sample of the Study

Sample for the present study was identified from the youth population across India between the age group of 20 to 35 years. The sample consisted of 43 males and 36 females selected via online sampling who responded to the mailed questionnaire linked to an identified database, through the social networking portals. The mean age of the samples in this study is 27.3 with a SD of 4.8 .

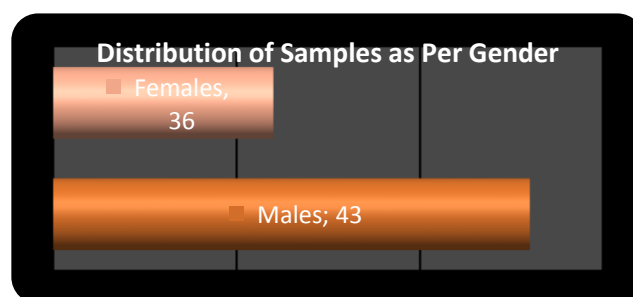


Fig. 1. Shows the distribution of samples in the study as per gender.

### Objectives of the Research

Several earlier researches have convincingly identified and confirmed the role of personality traits on morality and moral behavior. The big five personality traits; Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience, are found to be significant predictors of moral reasoning<sup>5,8</sup>. The present study was conducted with the general objective to explore the relationship between each of the Big Five Personality Traits and Moral Competency in the Indian Youth and with a specific objective to test the hypotheses derived for the research which are as follows:

**H1:** There is significant difference between High MC Group and Low MC Group, on their Big Five Personality Traits.

**H2:** There is significant difference between Males and females in the study, on their Big Five Personality Traits

**H3:** There is significant difference between Males and females in the study, on their levels of Moral Competency.

**H4:** There is significant difference between High MC Group and Low MC Group, on their levels of Extraversion

**H5:** There is significant difference between High MC Group and Low MC Group, on their levels of Agreeableness

**H6:** There is significant difference between High MC Group and Low MC Group, on their levels of Conscientiousness

**H7:** There is significant difference between High MC Group and Low MC Group, on their levels of Neuroticism

**H8:** There is significant difference between High MC Group and Low MC Group, on their levels of Openness to Experience MC: Moral Competency

### Tools for the Study

Data pertaining to the moral competency and personality traits were collected from the identified population using Moral Competency Inventory<sup>9</sup> and Abridged Big Five Inventory<sup>7</sup>.

Moral Competency Inventory is a 40 item tool which measures various aspects of moral personality; including the proclivity to act consistently with principles, values and beliefs; truthfulness; ability to stand up for what is right; keeping promises; taking responsibility for personal choices; admitting mistakes and failures; embracing responsibility for serving others; actively caring about others; ability to let go of one's own and others' mistakes etc<sup>12</sup>. MCI is responded on a five point Likert-like scale with responses ranging from 'Never' to 'In all situations' which remains constant throughout the entire instrument. Summative scores of the responses, refer to the level of moral competency of the individual<sup>13</sup>. Martin reported an acceptable validity for MCI with a Cronbach alpha varying from 0.65 - 0.84 for the 10 subscales<sup>14</sup>. Reliability and validity of the tool has been convincingly established and is been taken as a reliable tool for measuring aspects of moral competency<sup>15, 16</sup>.

Abridged version of Big Five Inventory is a 10 item tool that measures the big five personality factors viz. extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness,

neuroticism and openness to experience. BFI, is responded at a five point Likert scale varying from 'Disagree Strongly' to 'Agree Strongly'. The abridged version of BFI has been extensively used in research settings and the tool has been proved to have adequate reliability and validity<sup>17</sup> for psychological and management researches in multicultural settings<sup>18,19</sup>.

### **Statistical Analysis and Results**

After formulating the criterion groups, the scores obtained from the study were subjected to appropriate statistical analysis as per the nature of data. To test Hypothesis '1' and '2' the data was subjected to one way analysis of variance and hypothesis '3' to '8' were tested using 't' test.

In order to test the hypothesis '1' that, "there is significant difference between the High MC group and Low MC group on their big five personality traits", the scores of the study were subjected to one way analysis of variance. The F ratio relating to the variance between the two groups attained a statistical significance and hence, the hypothesis '1' was accepted. Similarly hypothesis '2' and hypothesis '3' were also subjected to the one way analysis of variance and the subsequent F ratio obtained, relating to the variance between the males and females on big five personality traits attained a statistical significance, adequate to accept the hypothesis '2' that, "there is significant difference between the males and females in the study on their big five personality traits". Whereas the F ratio relating to the variance between males and females on moral competence did not show sufficient statistical significance and hence, the hypothesis '3' that, "there is significant difference between the males and females in the study on their levels of moral competency", was rejected.

Hypothesis '4' through '8', were subjected to 't' test and after analyzing the P value obtained the hypothesis were accepted and rejected accordingly. After analyzing the results of the 't' test, hypothesis '4', that, "there is significant difference between the High MC group and Low MC group on their levels of Extraversion"; hypothesis '5' that, "there is significant difference between the High MC group and Low MC group on their levels of Agreeableness"; and hypothesis '6' that, "there is significant difference between the High MC group and Low MC group on their levels of Conscientiousness", were accepted accordingly with reference to the statistical significance obtained. Whereas hypothesis '7' that, "there is significant difference between the High MC group and Low MC group on their levels of Neuroticism; and hypothesis '8' that, "there is significant difference between the High MC group and Low MC group on their levels of Openness to Experience" were rejected as the P value obtained does not show sufficient difference to identify a variance between the high and low group. Results of the study in detail are represented in the Tables and Figures below.

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### RESULTS

**Table 1.** Shows the One Way Analysis of Variance between the High MC group and Low MC group on their Big Five Personality traits

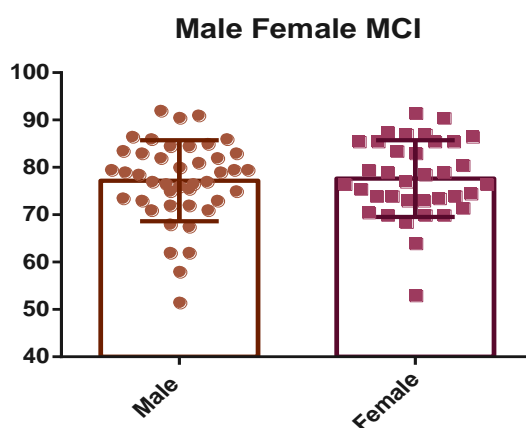
Source of Variation	SS	DF	MS	F	P value
<b>Between the High MC group and Low MC group on Big Five Personality Traits</b>	289.2	9	32.14	10.11	< 0.0001****
<b>Individual Difference</b>	1177	370	3.18		[Significant]
Total	1466	379	-		

**Table 2.** Shows the One Way Analysis of Variance between the Males and Females in the Study, on their Big Five Personality Traits.

Source of Variation	SS	DF	MS	F	P value
<b>Between Males and Females in the Study</b>	325402	11	29582	2080	< 0.0001****
<b>Individual Difference</b>	6571	462	14.22		[Significant]
Total	331973	473	-		

**Table 3.** Shows results of the t Test and the mean difference of the Males and Females on Moral Competency.

	Males	Females	Mean Difference	t	df	P value	Significance Level
Mean	77.174	77.611	0.437	0.2319	77	0.8173	[Not Significant]
SD	8.535	8.093					
SEM	1.302	1.349					
N	43	36					



**Fig. 2.** Mean and Standard deviation of Males and Females in the Study on Moral Competency

**Table 4.** Shows results of the t Test and the mean difference of the High MC Group and Low MC Group on Extroversion.

	High Group	Low Group	Mean Difference	T	df	P value	Significance Level
Mean	7.08	6.03	1.05	2.2361	74	0.0284*	P<0.05
SD	2.17	1.91					
SEM	0.35	0.31					[Significant]
N	39	37					

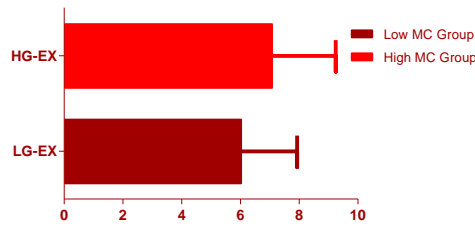


Fig 3. Shows the Mean and SD of the High MC Group and Low MC Group on Extroversion

Table 5. Shows results of the t Test and the mean difference of the High MC Group and Low MC Group on Agreeableness.

	High Group	Low Group	Mean Difference	T	df	P	Sig
Mean	7.14	8.46	1.326	4.1145	74	<0.0001****	P<0.05
SD	1.51	1.29					
SEM	0.25	0.21					
N	37	39					

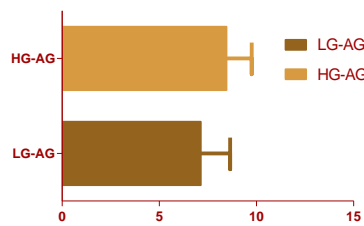


Fig 4. Shows the Mean and SD of the High MC Group and Low MC Group on Agreeableness

Table 6. Shows results of the t Test and mean difference of the High MC Group and Low MC Group on Conscientiousness.

	High Group	Low Group	Mean Difference	T	df	P	Sig.
Mean	8	6.86	1.135	2.7447	74	0.0076**	P<0.05
SD	1.82	1.78					
SEM	0.29	0.29					[Significant]
N	39	37					

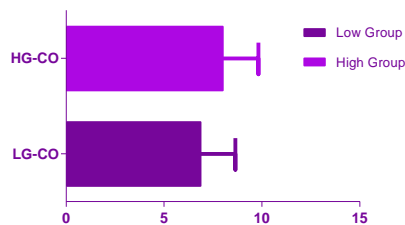
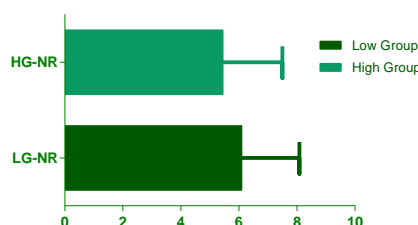


Fig 5. Shows the Mean and SD of the High MC Group and Low MC Group on Conscientiousness

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**Table 7.** Shows the t Test and mean difference of the High MC Group and Low MC Group on Neuroticism.

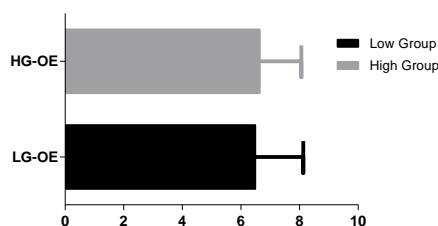
	High Group	Low Group	Mean Difference	T	df	P	Sig.
Mean	5.44	6.08	0.6452	1.3817	74	0.1712	[Not Significant]
SD	2.06	2.01					
SEM	0.33	0.33					
N	39	37					



**Fig 6.** Shows the Mean and SD of the High MC Group and Low MC Group on Neuroticism

**Table 8.** Shows the t Test and mean difference of the High MC Group and Low MC Group on Openness to Experience.

	High Group	Low Group	Mean Difference	T	df	P	Sig.
Mean	6.64	6.49	0.1545	0.4389	74	0.662	[Not Significant]
SD	1.42	1.64					
SEM	0.23	0.27					
N	39	37					



**Fig 7.** Shows the Mean and SD of the High MC Group and Low MC Group on Openness to Experience

## DISCUSSION

On analyzing the results obtained from this study, it is seen that groups higher and lower in moral competency shows significant difference on their Big Five Personality traits. Males and females in the study significantly differed in their Big Five personality traits whereas there was no difference found between the genders on their levels of Moral Competency. On verifying the statistical data of the High MC group and Low MC group and further analysis against each personality trait, it was seen that the high group and low group significantly differ on their levels of Extroversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness whereas there was no significant difference found between the high group and low on their levels of Neuroticism and Openness to Experience. The findings directs towards the understanding that the personality traits; extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness are significant contributors to moral competency .

There has been a discernible movement, in both ethical theory and moral development <sup>21, 22, 23</sup> to draw a tighter connection between moral agency and personality. In earlier studies conducted. The personality traits were found to be significantly related to morality and were referred to as key factors influencing moral reasoning and judgement<sup>24, 25</sup>. Findings of the present study strongly support the conclusions drawn from former researches in the area of Personality and Morality, and further confirm the same in the context of Indian population. The results obtained in this study convincingly deduce with adequate statistical support, that the Big Five Traits have a positive influence on Moral Competency.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study directs towards the conclusion that there is a significant relation between personality traits and moral competency irrespective of gender difference. With reference to the results obtained from this study and consequent testing of the specific hypotheses that guided the study, the following conclusions are drawn.

**a.** Individuals High and Low on Moral Competency significantly differ on their Big Five Personality Traits .

**b.** Men and Woman differ between each other on their Big Personality Traits.

**c.** Gender does not have any significant influence on Moral Competency .

**d.** Extroversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness among the Big Five Traits significantly influence Moral Competency .

**e.** Neuroticism and Openness to Experience does not affect Moral Competency .

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