

Personality: A Matter Of Multiple Theories

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Abstract: The concept of personality has been explored from a wide range of conceptual viewpoints. This research tries to bring the varied concepts of personality under one roof. The current research explains the concept of different personality theories along with the limitations of those theories, starting with psychoanalytical approach and concluding at cognitive approach. Various implications of these theories, and personality, in general have been discussed. Scope for future research is also mentioned in concluding remarks.

Keywords: Personality, Psychoanalytical approach, Trait theory, Cognitive approach.

I. INTRODUCTION

What sets an individual apart from each other? Is it just the outside of the person that makes a noticeable difference, or is there something to do with the inside also? Everyone has a different set of personality, that determines how one leads his/her life [1]. Being an asset, personality helps in shaping the day-to-day task of any individual [2]. The accomplishments and aspirations of the individual for the future can be impacted not only by one's own personality but also by the personalities of the individuals with whom they connect [3]. So, is an individual born with certain personality traits? Iacono & McGue conducted a study on 350 pairs of identical twins. The findings showed that perhaps the personalities of identical and fraternal twins were very similar to whether or not they were brought up inside the same house or raised apart. They proposed that at least some characteristics of the personality were mainly shaped by genetics [4]. On the other hand, this study found that fraternal twins shared a meager 20 percent of personality traits, while identical twins shared 50 percent traits. Hence, both the genetics as well as environmental factors come into play to make up the personality of an individual [5]. So, what external factors contribute in shaping the personality of an individual? [6] highlighted that somehow the individual's personality builds up in a social environment. A child being born in a particular society, gets used to the customs and ideologies, which have an effect on his/her personality development [7]. Culture and sub-culture factors also influences the personality of an individual. These factors pertain to some traditions, ideologies, and beliefs that are embraced in a particular society [8]. Language is also one of the factors that affect the development of an individual's personality [9]. According to them, an individual's personality is influenced by a process of dialogue with several other members via language. People often identify an individual with either great personality or a bad personality [10]. The topic of personality is far too intricate for such a generalized description because humans are too complicated and vary in their behavior with different individuals [11]. More specificity in the language is required to properly define and explain the personality of an individual. For this reason, researchers have made significant contributions in developing tests to assess or analyze personality [12]. Personality has been so extensively studied that "Personality Psychology" is considered to be a completely distinct discipline of psychology [13]. In fact, there are 2,500 personality tests developed in the U.S [14]. A simpler way to explain personality is to assume that there are two

individuals of similar age, yet they have diverse interests, behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. This implies that there is

something different within them, and therefore that "something within" is personality [15]. In the book *Anatomy of personality*, [16] mentioned that if a person looks at their intentions whenever they use the term "I", they will get a decent understanding of its meaning. "I" as a term identifies one as an individual, which separate one from the others. Personality, as a term is derived from the Latin word *persona*, that pertains to the veil used by the performers in the play. In this sense, personality pertains to external and identifiable aspects of an individual that others can see [11]. On the other hand, according to [17], personality is "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought." Personality can indeed be described as the set of both, intrinsic and extrinsic traits which can often impact the individual's behavior [13]. In order to assess a person's personality, traits or characteristics have a predominant role to play [17]; [18]. Two different aspects of personality's definition, proves that it is a complicated process. Researchers have tried to understand the concept of personality in the past, yet it remains an area of study which can be explored [19]; [20]; [21]; [22]. This research will examine previous studies based on personality, retrieved from authentic and credible database. This review study throws light on the various personality concepts and theories developed in the past. How consistent the concepts are? What conclusions were drawn? What were the inadequacies of all those personality-based studies? What future does the personality study holds, especially in consumer behavior domain. After examining and concluding the outcomes of these studies, this research will provide guidance for future work on this subject.

II. CONCEPT OF PERSONALITY

A. The Psychoanalytical Approach to Personality

In terms of personality, Sigmund Freud, famously quoted to "Turn your eyes inward, look into your own depths, learn to first know yourself." The very first technique for the scientific study of personality has been psychoanalysis [23]. Psychoanalysis is the underlying unconscious forces, biologically determined sexual drives as well as aggression, and inevitable early childhood disputes or conflicts. These have been viewed to be the shapers of an individual's personality [24]. Instincts, a type of energy that converts physiological energy, that links the needs of the body to the wishes of the mind, are the basic building blocks of an

individual's personality (Bettelheim, 1984). According to Freud, humans continuously encounter a considerable amount of instinctive tension, and they must continue to act to minimize it [25]. Sigmund Freud categorized instincts as "*life instinct*" and "*death instinct*". Life instincts fulfill the function of an individual's survival by pursuing to fulfill the needs of air, water, food, and sex. In contrast to life instinct, Freud said individuals have had an unconscious desire to die since all living creatures decay and die, coming back to their inert state [25]. Although, the concept of "*death instinct*" was not well received by the academic fraternity. Frank Sulloway, an American psychologist, wrote on the death instinct to be "*relegated to the dustbin of history*" [26]. Before introducing the basic structure of personality, i.e., the id, ego, and the superego, Sigmund Freud divided personality into three different levels. The first level is the "*conscious*", which comprises almost all of the senses and experiences that an individual is aware of at any particular moment. The third level is the "*unconscious*", which has a huge and dark depth which is the source of instincts. All such wishes and aspirations guide an individual's behavior. Between these two extremes is the second level, viz., "*preconscious*". It is a repository of memories, conceptions, and ideas that an individual is not consciously aware of at the present time, but that an individual can readily summon to consciousness [27]. After identifying the three distinct levels of personality, Sigmund Freud made some revisions in the concept of personality and came out with the basic structure of personality [28]. The personality anatomy contained the famous concept of the id, the ego, and the superego. *The id* component of personality closely aligned with instincts; the repository of psychic energy, the id works as per the principle of pleasure. *The ego* is the logical component of the personality, accountable for guiding and regulating the instincts as per the principle of reality. The superego is the moral component of personality, where the inculcation of familial and sociocultural norms and values is present [27]. This structure is famously known by the tip of the iceberg example [29]. Although, Sigmund Freud's contributions are still revered in the field of psychology, still it is believed that Freud has not presented a positive image of human psychology [30]. He proposed that each individual has been negative, denounces to deal with the inner forces, headed for disaster (anxiety), and encounters continuous strife. The penultimate goal of an individual's life, according to Sigmund Freud is to lower down his/her tension. There is no denying, however, Freud's tremendous effect on Western civilization and afterward on personality theorists, who have either elucidated on [31] or objected his system [32].

B. The Neo-psychoanalytical Approach to Personality

With the passage of time, every theory needs a revision, so did the psychoanalytical approach to personality. Two of the major contributors to the Neo-psychoanalytical approach were former associates of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Alfred Adler. The Neo-psychoanalytical approach was introduced to overcome two of the major shortcomings of Freud's work, firstly, focus on instincts as the prime motivating factor of human behavior and secondly, his deterministic approach towards personality [33]. According to Carl Jung, personality consists of three different systems

[34]. Firstly, "*the ego*" is the focal point of consciousness, the component of the psyche involved with perception, thoughts, emotions, and recalling. Most of the individual's conscious perception and response to the situation is ascertained by opposing psychological attitudes of *introversion* and *extroversion*. Extroverts are receptive, outgoing, socially assertive, and focused on other individuals. Whereas, introverts are quite often self-conscious, usually, focus on themselves and their own emotions and feelings. One of these attributes overpower the other in each individual [35]. [36], further identified eight distinct types of personality on the basis of extroverted and introverted attitude and the functions of thinking, sensation, being intuitive, and emotions. Secondly, "*the personal unconscious*" component of personality is in sync with the preconscious concept given by Sigmund Freud. It is indeed a storehouse of information that was formerly conscious but had been forgotten or undermined as it was insignificant or upsetting. Thirdly, "*the collective unconscious*" is the most interesting and contentious aspect of personality structure. As per Carl Jung, since each individual builds up and records his or her experiences in the personal unconscious, so does mankind, jointly store the human and pre-human species' experiences in the collective unconscious. Whichever experiences have been universal or standardized, and are reiterated comparatively unaltered by each generation, it will ultimately become an aspect of an individual's personality [11]. A major difference between the personality theory given by Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud was that, Freud gave little emphasis on the personality development in an individual after the age of five. However, Jung suggested that personality gets influenced by what individual wishes to be and by what an individual has been in the past [37]. [35] gave a brief description about the personality's development stages. Starting from Childhood, where Jung talked about ego development, which starts once the child tends to make a distinction amongst themselves and others. After this, the stage of puberty and young adulthood comes, where adolescents should confirm to the rising desires of reality. The emphasis is on education, family, and career. The prominence of conscious is visible during this stage. Lastly, the stage of middle age comes, which is a transitional phase when the focus of the individual's personality moves from the outside to the inside in an effort to balance the unconscious with the conscious. Carl Jung is credited for the development of one of the most used personality assessment instrument, i.e., "*Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*" (MBTI). [38] developed this assessment tool after reading Carl Jung's book titled "*The Psychological Types*" [35]. The MBTI is a reflective self-report list of questions that shows different psychological priorities of how individuals perceive things and take decisions. Another psychologist who added to the Neo-psychoanalytical approach was Alfred Adler. He fixated on the individuality of a person and refused the centrality of the biological desires and objectives that Sigmund Freud has assigned. His approach was known as "*Individual Psychology*" [39]. As per Adler, personality is influenced by the distinctive social situations and individual interactions, rather than by their endeavors to meet biological urges [11]. The conscious aspect of personality played a dominant role as compared to the unconscious aspect of personality, because instead

of being propelled by forces that one cannot control, we are consciously involved in forming themselves and guiding their future [39]. Contribution to Neo-psychoanalytical approach was also made by [40], where she modified the psychoanalysis to cover the psychological disputes underlined in the conventional idea of femininity and the women's role. [41], though followed the ideology of Sigmund Freud, but due to his deviations from psychoanalysis, his research is considered as a part of Neo-psychoanalytical approach. Two distinguishing characteristics of Murray's system are the refined view to an individual's needs and the source of data.

C. Trait Theory of Personality

Gordon Allport brought the study conducted on personality into the limelight by emphasizing the role of *traits* in one's overall personality [17]. According to Allport "*Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine . . . characteristic behavior and thought*" [42]. Individual personality is identified as distinct and cyclical, rather than generalizing the concept [19]. By traits, Allport meant the distinct and defining characteristics that direct the behavior of an individual. The traits are assessed in a continuum and are susceptible to social and cultural factors [17]. In his book *Personality: A psychological interpretation*, Allport described traits as actual, which resides within an individual. They are the reason why an individual behaves in the way he does. Traits are interlinked and act according to the scenario [17]. Allport identified two kinds of personality traits, viz., individual traits and common traits [43]. Individual traits are distinctive to an individual and describe their character, whereas common traits are experienced by a variety of individuals, e.g., members belonging to a particular culture. Although, the term "*common trait*" was rephrased as personal disposition, which are the traits that are unique to the person, as compared to traits represented by a number of individuals [11]. [42] observed that, given the presence of certain techniques to assess personality, there had been no single most effective technique. Techniques like self-appraisal, ratings, projective techniques, personal documents and case studies, etc. were suggested [42]. Refining the study of Alfred Allport, an assessment test was developed to study the personality of an individual. The 16PF (Personality Factor) test developed by [44], is based on the 16 sources of personality traits, ranging from reserved/outgoing to relaxed/tense. The test has been designed to be used with individuals of 16 years or older and generates scores for each of the 16 scales. Scales were designed to assess particular facets of personality, like anxiety, depression, and neuroticism, as well as for particular reasons like marriage counseling and employee performance assessment [45]. Hans Eysenck came out with a personality theory which is based on three aspects, which collectively are called "*superfactors*" [46]. The three aspects are "*Extraversion versus introversion*" (E); "*Neuroticism versus emotional stability*" (N); "*Psychoticism versus impulse control*" (P). Traits and dimensions proposed generally remain robust across the individual's life, given the various environmental and social interactions each individual has had [11]. E.g., an extrovert kid grows to

be an extrovert adult.[44] and [46] added to the personality research by stating certain factors which reflects an individual's personality. Psychologists have displayed discontent for both theories, implying that Eysenck has very few dimensions and also that Cattell has far too many factors [47]; [48]. Building on this limitation, [49] determined five broad factors that can identify personality of an individual. The model is famously known as Big Five Factor model of personality. The factors in the model are "*Neuroticism*", which can be described by adjectives like miffed, anxious, and unstable. The second factor is "*Extraversion*", for which adjectives like outgoing, expressive, and talkative can be used. The third factor is "*Openness*", which is expressed by adjectives like self-sufficient, innovative and courageous. The fourth factor is "*Agreeableness*", which is described by adjectives like accepting, polite, and well-behaved. The final factor is "*Conscientiousness*", which is being cautious, dependable, and coordinated [50]. On the lines of Big Five Factor model, [21] developed NEO personality inventory, where NEO denotes Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Openness traits of personality. Later on a revised NEO personality inventory was developed by [51].

D. The Cognitive Approach to Personality

The literal meaning of the word "cognition" is a mental activity or a method of learning. The cognitive personality approach tends to focus on how individuals get to know about their surroundings and how they interpret, assess, understand, and take decisions and deal with issues [11]. George Kelly interpreted personality in terms of cognitive abilities of an individual. The "*personal construct theory*" [52] assume that each individual tends to create a set of cognitive environmental constructs. As a result, a person perceives and orchestrates the incidents or events his or her life in a system or pattern. Through these patterns, individuals predict things about themselves and other people. Moreover, they use these predictions to articulate responses and steer their personalities [53]. The personal construct theory is more inclined towards the scientific view of understanding an individual's personality [52]. Construct is an individual's distinctive take on life, and an intellectual hypothesis designed to highlight or construe certain events. Just like psychological experts, people are continually testing certain hypotheses. They base their personality or behavior on their own constructs and analyze the effects [11]. The theory is based on fundamental assumption or postulate and has eleven different corollaries. The basic assumption is that an individual's psychological functions are guided in the manner we predict situations [54]. The corollaries identified are construction, individuality, organization, dichotomy, choice, range, experience, modulation, fragmentation, commonality, and sociality. Kelly portrayed a positive image of human behavior that portrays everybody as rational human beings with free will, competent in directing their fate. Individuals are not destined by constructs created at a particular phase of life or previous experiences, unconscious conflicts, and biological impulses. Their objective is to identify a set of constructs that will allow an individual to anticipate situations [11]. Individuals scoring high in cognitive complexity seem to better anticipate the behavior of others.

Individuals are far more compassionate, deals in a good way with erratic information in the interpretation of others, and experience significant complexity in adolescence than individuals who have high cognitive simplicity [52].

III. IMPLICATION OF PERSONALITY THEORIES IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

An individual's personality has always been found to play a role in how a consumer behaves [55]. Consumers are buying goods that represent their personality. A customer belonging to a higher class would generally prefer to buy products or services priced premium [56]. Marketers thus create their goods and develop marketing campaigns, taking into account the personalities of the target audience [57]. Not only for goods, individual's personality traits has a direct relationship with how they experience a service offered to them [58]. [58] specified that agreeableness trait shows a direct relationship with a positive change in the display of strong and positive emotions by companies. Agreeableness was found to be a significant factor in influencing the buying decision because the social status of customers affects their purchasing decisions, and they want to thrive in everything they do [59]. A study conducted by [60] found that all of the five factors studied under Big-Five personality model have an effect on experiential consumption, i.e., a consumption from which an individual have a positive experience. Moreover, the openness and conscientiousness traits of an individual helps in determining their behavior towards the product or services offered. Their innovative approach towards fulfilling their needs and behaving in a responsible manner explains the positive relationship between these two traits and consumer behavior [61]. However [62] disapproves the direct relationship between openness and buying behavior of an individual. A probable reason for this contradictory result could be the difference in geographical location of research. Amongst the five personality traits, individual scoring high on conscientiousness are more inclined to spread the word of mouth and stay loyal towards a brand, although the extent may not be significant [63]. Not only planned or expensive purchases, impulsive purchases are also influenced by the personality traits, especially extroversion. The emphasis of extroverts on the surrounding environment is often expressed in their desire to purchase new products [64]. One of the purpose of any theory propounded by researchers in the field of consumer behavior is to understand what would be chosen in the market and what will get sold [65]. Likewise, as per psychoanalytical theory, individuals buy a product as a gratification of their id [66], as the id does not differentiate between what is good for the individual and what is not. A real world example of Carl Jung's "Genetic Memory" concept may help in understanding the term *phobia*. A study conducted in Britain came out with a finding which stated that almost one-third children, by the age of six have a fear of snakes, even though they have never even encountered a snake [67]. This concept is somewhat visible on the pack of cigarette, where a statutory pictorial warning is given of its harmful consumption. Similarly, the application of trait theory is seen by a marketer selling yoga pants. For their extroverted

consumers, they can use a campaign which focuses on the "look that everyone else wants", whereas if they are targeting more conscientious customers, focus must be given on "look that best suits you."

IV. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

After reviewing the available literature, it can be concluded that the study conducted on personality has given diverse answers. Starting from Sigmund Freud [23] who focused more on the controlling powers of the id, to Big-Five personality model McCrae & Costa [49], which limited the personality traits to just 44 statements, the research covered varied aspects of the concept "personality". This study concludes the major findings of different authors who studied personality, building on the limitations of the previous researcher. This helps in a better and refined understanding of individual personality. Although Sigmund Freud started the theoretical concept of personality, with passage of time, the most widely used model of personality is the Big-Five personality model [13]. Most of the studies conducted in the field of consumer behavior support the claim [68]; [69]; [70].

This study can be used to understand relationship between consumer's personality and purchase intention of the customer for different product categories. Personality, being one of the internal factors affecting consumer behavior, it can be studied along with other factors like individual learning and see the total effect on the consumer's purchase intention. To conclude, importance of personality could be understood by the quote given by Sigmund Freud, i.e., "Turn your eyes inward, look into your own depths, learn to first know yourself."

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