

Understanding Suicide Cases in Nepal: A Comprehensive Analysis of Personality Traits

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Abstract

Understanding the intricate relationship between personality traits and suicidal tendencies is crucial for effective suicide prevention strategies. This paper delves into the influence of the Big Five personality traits - Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (OCEAN) - on susceptibility to suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Through a comprehensive review of the literature and analysis of relevant cases, it explores how various personality traits intersect with suicidal ideation. Findings reveal that high neuroticism, characterized by emotional instability and negative affectivity, significantly correlates with suicidal intentions. Additionally, lower levels of agreeableness are associated with elevated suicide rates, suggesting a lack of empathy and cooperation may contribute to suicidal thinking. The paper underscores the importance of considering personality factors in suicide risk assessment and intervention strategies. By recognizing the role of personality traits in shaping individuals' responses to distress, tailored interventions can be developed to mitigate suicide risk and promote mental well-being.

Keywords: OCEAN, Personality Traits, Suicide

Background

Personality traits describe individuals' peculiar thoughts, feelings, and behavior patterns. These characteristics greatly influence how people view the world, relate to others, and make decisions. It defines the perspective of a person; and how they react to certain things. Suicide is a fatal self-injurious act with some evidence of intent to die (Turecki & Brent., 2015). It involves a person intentionally taking their own life, frequently motivated by intense sentiments of despair, hopelessness, or emotional anguish. Tragically, suicide harms families, friends, and communities and affects people of all ages, genders, and origins. Some of the key risk factors for suicidality include personality features. The distribution of personality qualities varies with age, therefore certain age groups might exhibit certain relationships between personality traits and suicidality (Na, et al., 2020).

Objectives

- To investigate the relationship between personality traits and suicidal thoughts or tendencies.
- To examine the impact of Big Five personality traits on susceptibility to suicidal thoughts.
- To analyze the cases of suicide relating to Big Five personality traits.

Limitation

Sample Size: The analysis is limited to cases registered in the district courts of Nepal during 2020/21, which may not represent the entire population of suicide cases in the country.

Scope: The study solely focuses on the Big Five personality traits and their association with suicidal tendencies, excluding other potential factors.

Generalizability: Findings may not be generalizable beyond the context of Nepal or to populations outside the specified time frame.

Literature Review

Overview of Psychological Traits

The foundation of trait psychology is the assumption that individuals differ from one another based on where they stand on a set of fundamental trait dimensions that hold over time and in various contexts. The Five-Factor Model is the most extensively utilized system of attributes. This approach contains the five broad attributes of Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism, which can be recalled by the abbreviation OCEAN (Diener, Lucas, & Cummings, 2019).

- **Openness**

The Five Factor Model classifies openness to experience as a significant personality attribute that includes curiosity, open-mindedness, and a desire to investigate novel concepts. Numerous

considerable findings have emerged from research on its function in stress management. People who have high levels of openness typically adapt to changes more successfully and see stressful situations as chances for personal development. Their improved capacity for problem-solving and emotional expression facilitates coping with stress and emotions. Additionally, people with high levels of openness are more inclined to turn to others for help when things get tough, which strengthens their social networks. Their penchant for proactive coping mechanisms like research and preparation encourages efficient stress management.

Additionally, openness has been linked to resilience, which enables people to overcome adversity by viewing difficulties as chances for growth. In general, openness to experience affects adaptation, problem-solving, emotional expression, social support-seeking, coping techniques, and resilience in the face of stress, which all affect coping responses.

In a sample of 62 healthy young female individuals, the study investigated the relevance of the personality characteristic "openness to experience" in cardiovascular responsiveness during stress exposure. In contrast to conventional practice, when stress responses are averaged into a single measurement, this study used continuous cardiovascular data that was reduced to mean readings every 10 seconds, with phases identified by alterations in responsiveness between each pair of 10 seconds. Systolic blood pressure and cardiac output showed a strong linear relationship for openness during the entire exposure, according to the studies. Throughout the stress exposure, those with the highest openness showed an evolving myocardial hemodynamic response profile. Less open individuals, on the other hand, exhibited decreased responsiveness (O'Suilleabhain, Howard, & Hughes., 2018).

- **Conscientiousness**

One characteristic that is frequently linked to awareness is conscientiousness. Conscientious people are typically organized, show self-control, and have excellent time management skills. They are renowned for being hard workers and excellent team members (Koutsoumpa, 2023). In a survey, 366 participants from various ethnic backgrounds reported daily stressors, coping strategies, and their positive affect levels over five days. They also assessed the participants' personality traits based on the Five-Factor Model, with a specific focus on Conscientiousness. The findings revealed that individuals with higher Conscientiousness tended to use more problem-focused coping strategies, which, in turn, were associated with higher positive affect (Bartley & Roesch., 2011).

However, negative consequences include perfectionism and excessive self-criticism as a result of exceptionally high conscientiousness. In some cases, pursuing greatness can lead to tension and anxiety, particularly when things do not go as planned. Furthermore, extremely high levels of conscientiousness may cause rigidity or a reluctance to delegate work, which may end in

burnout. On the other hand, those with low conscientiousness may have trouble organizing themselves, have trouble managing their time, and tend to act more impulsively or carelessly. They could struggle to follow through on commitments or finish assignments on time.

- **Extraversion**

One of the main personality characteristics in the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality is extraversion, which measures how extroverted, gregarious, and socially seeking a person is. Very extroverted people are animated, chatty, and sociable; they obtain their energy from interacting with others. They are frequently regarded as outgoing, confident, and open to new things. Contrarily, introverted people who exhibit low levels of extraversion prefer loneliness and may find large social gatherings exhausting. By valuing and acknowledging each person's distinctive qualities, extraversion understanding aids in accepting varied personalities, enhancing teamwork, and building better interpersonal interactions. Extraversion is usually associated with active, social, and optimistic ways of dealing with stressful situations (Costa Jr., Somerfield, & McCrae, 1996).

- **Agreeableness**

A psychological attribute known as agreeableness is characterized by a propensity to be cordial, helpful, considerate, and sensitive toward others. High agreeableness people are sympathetic, and dependable, and prioritize harmony in their interpersonal relationships. They frequently have kind hearts, are giving, and are eager to assist those in need. To sustain positive connections, agreeable people are more likely to be tolerant, compromise, and avoid conflict. Highly agreeable people are frequently regarded as being outgoing, approachable, and friendly. They work well in teams and frequently put the needs of others above their own. However, they may occasionally have trouble being forceful and setting boundaries, which makes them more prone to being taken advantage of in particular circumstances.

People who score poorly on the agreeableness scale, on the other hand, tend to be more competitive, forceful, and less self-conscious. They could be more forthright in their beliefs and come out as distant or reticent in social situations. Low agreeability can be advantageous in negotiations or when making difficult decisions, but it can also cause interpersonal problems and strained relationships. Regarding coping with stress, they do not enter into personal conflicts which keep them away from stress.

- **Neuroticism**

A personality trait known as neuroticism is characterized by emotional instability and a propensity to feel unfavorable emotions including worry, fear, sadness, and impatience more frequently and strongly. People with high neuroticism tend to be more sensitive to stimuli and may struggle to control their emotions, which can cause mood swings and make them more

vulnerable to psychological distress. They frequently worry excessively and could be prone to overanalyzing and dwelling on unfavorable situations or incidents. Individuals with low levels of neuroticism, on the other hand, are more emotionally stable and robust, have stronger coping skills, and are generally more level-headed.

Hart et al. (2020) have also concluded that there is a correlation between neuroticism and a tendency to lie. Neuroticism has a big impact on how someone feels and how psychologically healthy they are as a whole.

People who score highly on the neuroticism scale have been shown to have more acute emotional and physiological responses to stress and to perceive it as extremely dangerous. These people rely on emotion-oriented coping or disengagement to lessen unpleasant effects like anxiety, melancholy, or depression. That gives them a momentary reprieve from bad feelings, but it keeps them from contributing to the solution. Another tactic employed by those with high neuroticism levels is to seek out social assistance for emotional needs like venting (Leszko, Iwanski, & Jarzebinska., 2020).

Association of personality traits and suicide

Personality traits in an indirect manner aid various events of life. It impacts the decision one takes; personal or professional. It is the trait entailed in a person which has its effect on everything a person does. Suicide is the ultimate event in life. It leaves the suspicion of the causes leading to ending one's own life. The primary basis to dig in is the personality of a person which later gets associated with why it led to taking such step.

- **Neuroticism and susceptibility to suicidal thoughts**

Data from 389,365 persons between the ages of 40 and 69 who took part in the UK Biobank Project were utilized in the study. Men died by suicide at a higher rate than women during the follow-up period. Suicide was linked to high neuroticism, younger age, unemployment, residing in a low-income neighborhood, and daily smoking among men. Contrarily, having a spouse as a confidante and residing with them were negatively connected to suicide. Only extremely high neuroticism scores were linked to suicide in women. Neuroticism remained strongly related to suicide in women but not in men when mood disorder diagnoses were taken into account. In addition to highlighting the gender-specific elements of this association, the study shows the significance of neuroticism as a risk factor for suicide (Peters, John, Bowen, Baetz, & Balbuena., 2018).

In a survey done among Japanese juvenile delinquents concerning the association of Big Five Personality traits and suicide-related behaviors, neuroticism was highly proportional to the risk factor of suicidal behavior (Takahashi, Imahara, Miyamoto, Myojo, & Yasuda., 2024).

Neuroticism consisting of the elements of depression, low management, and coping skills, and short temperament accounts for suicidal tendencies. An analysis of the UK Biobank Database shows that depressive symptoms and neuroticism notably conciliate the result of psychological traumatic events on suicidality (Lee, Kim, Hyun, & Jung., 2024).

- **Extraversion and suicidal thoughts**

Strong social ties and active problem-solving abilities of extraverts may help lower the incidence of suicidal thoughts, but their impulsivity, which can be related to some extraverted traits, may also encourage them to act on these impulses without fully contemplating the repercussions. Gender, age and the existence of other mental health issues can also have an impact on how extraversion affects suicide ideation. In a study done with secondary school students in Kenya, a significant negative relationship between extraversion personality and suicidal behavior was encountered (Aomo, 2019).

- **Openness and suicidal thoughts**

Curiosity and open-mindedness are major personality traits that are linked to openness to experience. High degrees of openness encourages adaptive coping, problem-solving, and emotional expression, which all contribute to improved stress management. People who are open are more likely to look for social support and use proactive coping mechanisms. This quality, which sees challenges as chances for improvement, is also linked to resilience. High openness was linked to a robust cardiovascular response to stress in a study of young women, whereas lesser openness demonstrated diminished reactivity. In general, openness promotes many coping mechanisms, increasing people's adaptability and resilience to stress. In a survey done amongst suicidal patients, there was no significant difference between the personality traits of attempting suicide and those of normal individuals in terms of openness (Mousavi, Sheakhli, & Rezaei., 2015).

- **Conscientiousness and suicide**

In a study done with a sample of 313 depressed older adults, when taken alone, conscientiousness had no discernible influence on the presence of either current suicidal ideation or lifetime suicide activity.

Conscientiousness and severe physical sickness, on the other hand, had a substantial negative interaction effect on the presence of current suicidal ideation in interaction models. In other words, those with lower levels of conscientiousness were more likely to have suicidal thoughts when they were experiencing severe physical sickness, whereas people with greater levels of conscientiousness seemed to mitigate the negative effects of severe physical illness on suicidal ideation (Szucs, et al., 2023).

- **Agreeableness and suicide**

Kindness, empathy, and cooperativeness make up the personality attribute of agreeableness, which may have some protective effects against suicidal tendencies. Higher levels of agreeableness are associated with more robust social support networks, which can act as a deterrent to suicidal thoughts. They may be more likely to call out for support when things go tough because of their willingness to ask for assistance and express their emotions. Additionally, because of their lower aggression and higher empathy, they may be more conscious of the effects that suicide has on loved ones, which may lessen their propensity to kill themselves. In a survey conducted, suicide rates correlated negatively with neuroticism and agreeableness where agreeableness accounted for a final 16.3%, with lower agreeableness being linked to higher suicide rates (McCann, 2010).

Methodology

Research Design: This paper employs a doctrinal approach to analyze the relationship between personality traits and suicidal tendencies in Nepal. The study focuses on analyzing existing cases of suicide in Nepal, particularly those registered in the district courts during the period of 2020/21. The analysis is grounded in the Five-Factor Model of personality traits, commonly known as the Big Five (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism).

Data Collection: Cases of suicide registered in the district courts of Nepal during the specified time frame (2020/21) were identified for analysis. The Five-Factor Model (OCEAN) was utilized to assess the personality traits of individuals involved in the analyzed cases. This assessment was based on the descriptions and behaviors exhibited by the individuals as documented in court proceedings.

Data Analysis: Each identified case was thoroughly examined to understand the circumstances, events leading to the suicide, and any relevant interactions or relationships. The behavior patterns and characteristics exhibited by individuals in the cases were analyzed in relation to the Big Five personality traits. Patterns or trends relating to specific personality traits and their association with suicidal tendencies were identified and analyzed.

Analysis

The study made use of the Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (OCEAN) scale from the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality. Three demographic variables were inserted as a block in the first step of the hierarchical multiple regression. The finding that these demographic controls explained 19.6% of the variation in suicide rates suggests that demographic factors have an impact on suicide risk.

The state of depression variable was introduced in the second step. An additional 9.7% of the variation in suicide rates could be attributed to state depression. According to earlier research

connecting depression to suicidal thoughts and behaviors, this shows that depression is a strong predictor of suicidal tendencies.

The Big Five personality traits were incrementally included in the regression model in the last stage. It was discovered that neuroticism made a considerable contribution, accounting for an additional 32.0% of the variation in suicide rates. This suggests that those with high levels of neuroticism, who are characterized by emotional turbulence and unfavorable emotions, are more prone to suicidal ideation.

Additionally, Agreeableness was a significant predictor of suicide rates as well, explaining a total of 16.3% of the variance in suicide rates. Lower levels of Agreeableness were linked to higher suicide rates, indicating that those who lack compassion, empathy, and cooperation may be more prone to suicidal thoughts. Overall, the research points to the importance of personality factors in understanding suicide risk, notably Neuroticism and Agreeableness. Higher levels of Neuroticism, which is associated with emotional instability, and lower levels of agreeability, which is associated with less empathy and collaboration, seem to make people more prone to suicidal ideas and actions.

- **Analysis of Nepal Government v. Ambika Devi Basnet et.al** (Abetment to Suicide, 2021)

In this case, police constable Om Prakash Khatiwada shot the gun himself with the pistol he had, being the constable. He was declared dead while under treatment. He was married to Ambika Devi Basnet who was not solely accepted by Khatiwada's family as she belonged to another caste. Hence, she was living in a separate house. They also had a son.

Ms. Basnet was having an affair with her neighbor Bishal Moktan. People around were also aware of their relationship including Mr. Khatiwada. He had even seen the messages exchanged. He further warned his wife not to get involved in such as it is immoral and a matter of insult, but, their relationship was woven more stronger. So, she tells him about her decision to get divorced from Mr. Khatiwada and get married to Bishal Moktan. Mr. Khatiwada returns to his workplace, calls his wife, and tells her about ending his life. He even calls Mr. Moktan, threatens him, and requests to take good care of both his wife and son further informing him about ending his life. In this regard, Mr. Moktan even consoles him by saying that they will talk about this matter in detail tomorrow.

As per the deposition of witnesses and defendants, Om Prakash Khatiwada had a suspicious nature. Further, it also shows that he was fearful and exhausted with life. He could not even optimistically picture life, rather thought that ending the marital relationship with his wife also ended the purpose of his life.

Connecting it with personality traits, his personality does not align with openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness because he did not manage to cope with the new aspect of divorce from his wife as it could have opened different dimensions of his life to explore with. He also did not share his thoughts with his colleagues in the barrack rather it seems like he was in his zone of calculation regarding how his life would be purposeless when he divorced.

Hence, his personality aligns with the high neuroticism trait in which the person is emotionally unstable, fearful, sad, sensitive, impatient, and vulnerable. Even though Mr. Moktan had consoled him for not taking such a decision, and to talk about the matter in detail, however, Mr. Khatiwada could not positively process the aftermath. Further, he is more concerned about society; the way society would characterize the scenario as an 'immoral act' where he consoled his wife on how it would be insulting if she continued her relationship with Mr. Moktan. It shows that he was worried about his portrayal in society. Additionally, when he called Mr. Moktan he first threatened and abused him and later requested to take good care of his wife and son. This statement depicts emotional instability as he has switched from pole apart action of 'threatening and abusing' to 'requesting' within a short period.

- **Analysis concerning Nepal Government v. Ambar Prasad Dhungana** (Incest rape and abetment to suicide, 2020)

Dilasha Dangal had said to sleep early on 2020/05/27, she did not have dinner as well. On the 28th of May, she was found hanging in her room, while her parents went to wake her up at around 4 am. Dilasha was the victim of mental health and had been under medication since January 2020. She had also written a suicide note mentioning that she was raped by her maternal uncle Ambar Prasad Dhungana and she could not tell that to her parents because of the fear of loss of dignity. While connecting her personality to the traits discussed, it is equivalent to high neuroticism as she has mentioned in her suicide note that she could not break the news to her parents of getting raped because of fear of loss of dignity. Here, the sense of fear has suppressed her way out of dealing with the scenario through legal proceedings. Additionally, the fact that she was the victim of mental health corroborates the outcome of people with high neuroticism.

- **Analysis regarding Nepal Government v. Ruku Karki et. al** (Abetment to suicide, 2020)

In this case, Shalikram Pudasaini was discovered dead, hanging in a hotel room in Chitawan. He was having an affair with Asmita also known as Ruku Karki, but his girlfriend was unaware that he was already married. She insisted on parting after learning he was married. But he kept contacting her, threatening to send screenshots of their conversations to her relatives. Ms. Karki also informed this to Anil Dhungel, Rabi Lamichhane and Yubaraj Kandel expecting help as

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Mr. Pudasaini worked with them in 'News 24' channel earlier as reporter. Later, there were found 2 videos on Pudasaini's mobile claiming he was abetted to suicide by Ruku Karki, Rabi Lamichhane, and Yubaraj Kandel.

Ruku Karki in the deposition mentioned that Mr. Pudasaini had a skeptical nature because of which he used to fight with her even on small issues. Further, as per the deposition of Rabi Lamichhane, he had lied about leaving the channel upon being offered one lakh (1,00,000) from Mountain T.V. for marketing, but he operated the mission news program instead of marketing. Also, as per the deposition of Pramila Sharma Bhusal, he had said to her that his girlfriend was trying to trap him with the help of the staff of News 24 after knowing about his ex. Here, he lied about him being married rather stated the relationship as 'ex'. Additionally, he also lied about his relationship with Asmita (claimed her as his wife) to Anil Dhungel (while he used to work in 'News 24') and to the staffs of hospital where Asmita worked. To some others, he said that there was a medical issue with begetting a child from his wife, so he is marrying Ms. Asmita.

As per the wife of Mr. Pudasaini, he had said that Ms. Ruku Karki had been causing mental tension to him and he also went to the Teaching hospital for a check-up. He was given the medicine for depression.

Based on the facts of the case, Shalikram had a neurotic personality trait as he created a scenario where his activity would be broadcasted on television, he did not think of the situation in a dignified manner as it could have been sorted mutually. Furthermore, he was impatient as he regularly messaged her. This shows that he was emotionally unstable. It depicts his emotions of worry, fear, sadness, and impatience that were prone to overthinking and overanalyzing. Additionally, he lacked the coping skill which is the prominent feature of neuroticism. While proportionating the character with the trait, it is directly proportionate to neuroticism as he is described to be skeptical in nature and to have a tendency to lie. The fact that he was given the medicine for depression further clarifies the trait of a neurotic personality in him.

Conclusion

The study of personality factors and their relationship to suicide risk yielded substantial results. Neuroticism appeared as a substantial predictor of suicidal intentions, showing that those who experience emotional instability and negative feelings are more likely to consider suicide. Furthermore, lower levels of Agreeableness were associated with greater suicide rates, implying that those who lack empathy and collaboration may be more prone to suicidal thinking. These findings emphasize the need to take personality traits into account when assessing suicide risk.

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