

Gender Differences in Personality Traits and Emotional Intelligence Among Management Students

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Abstract

This study examines gender differences in personality traits and emotional intelligence (EI) among 150 graduate-level management students in Punjab. By utilizing the Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI) and the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), the research investigates how personality traits affect EI across genders. The findings reveal significant differences in specific personality traits and EI components, particularly in agreeableness, neuroticism, empathy, and interpersonal relationships. These results highlights the need for gender-specific approaches in management education to improve the development of leadership and emotional skills in both male and female students.

Key Words

Gender Differences, Personality Traits, Emotional Intelligence, Big Five Personality Inventory, Emotional Quotient Inventory, Management Students.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in effective leadership and organizational success, especially in dynamic and people-centered professions such as management. EI involves the capacity to perceive, understand, and, regulate emotions — both in oneself and in others (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). It encompasses key components such as empathy, emotional regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and self-awareness, which play

a vital role in motivation, conflict resolution, decision- making, and teamwork.

Parallel to EI, personality traits offer a foundational understanding of how individuals behave, react emotionally, and interact with others. The Five-Factor Model of personality — comprising openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism — is one of the most widely accepted frameworks for analyzing personality structure and individual differences (Costa and McCrae, 1992). These traits influence not only behavior in social and professional contexts but also significantly affect one's emotional capacity and leadership tendencies.

Previous research has highlighted notable gender differences in both emotional intelligence and personality traits. Studies have shown that women tend to score higher in empathy, emotional responsiveness, and interpersonal sensitivity, while men generally exhibit higher levels of extraversion, assertiveness, and self-confidence (Petrides and Furnham, 2000;

Schmitt, Realo, Voracek, and Allik, 2008). These differences may translate into varied leadership styles and emotional functioning in organizational settings.

Understanding such gender-based variations becomes essential in the context of management education, where emotional and interpersonal competencies are crucial for future leadership roles. Investigating the relationships between personality traits, emotional intelligence and gender differences provides a pathway to develop targeted educational strategies that address diverse student needs and promote balanced leadership skills.

The present study aims to examine gender differences in personality traits and emotional intelligence among post-graduate management students. Additionally, it seeks to explore the relationship between specific personality dimensions and components emotional intelligence. The findings are intended to inform gender-sensitive training programs and contribute to the effective development of emotionally intelligent leadership in academic and professional environments.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To Examine Gender Differences in Personality Traits

This study aims to analyze how male and female management students differ across the five dimensions of personality as defined by the Big Five Personality Inventory (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism).

To Explore Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence (EI)

This objective investigates the variation in emotional intelligence components, including empathy, interpersonal relationships, and emotional self-regulation, among male and female management students.

To Identify the Relationship between Personality Traits and Emotional Intelligence

This part evaluates how personality traits influence specific components of emotional intelligence across genders.

To Provide Insights for Gender-Specific Educational Interventions

Offer practical recommendations for management training programs to address gender-based strengths and challenges in personality and EI.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) was first conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others, and later popularized by Goleman (1995) as a critical skill for success in both personal and professional domains. It is widely recognized as essential for effective leadership, decision-making, and interpersonal communication, as it enables individuals to navigate complex social environments and foster collaborative relationships. Numerous studies have demonstrated that higher EI is associated with better management and leadership abilities, as well as enhanced conflict resolution and team-building skills (Goleman, 1995; Schutte *et al.*, 1998).

Recent research further underscores the significance of EI in leadership contexts. A study in 2023 highlighted that leaders with high EI are more adept at fostering trust and engagement within their teams, leading to improved organizational outcomes.

Personality Traits

The Big Five Personality Traits — openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism — are considered fundamental dimensions of human personality (John *et al.*, 2008). These traits significantly affect emotional responses and social behaviors, including the ability to manage emotions and interact with others. Recent studies have further emphasized the interaction between these traits and emotional intelligence (EI). For instance, researchers have found that high conscientiousness and low neuroticism are

positively correlated with EI, suggesting that individuals with a strong ability to regulate emotions are typically more conscientious and less emotionally reactive (Liu *et al.*, 2023).

Additionally, a study by Roberts *et al.* (2022) shows that extraversion and agreeableness are strongly linked with higher levels of EI, particularly in interpersonal situations that require empathy and social skills.

Gender Differences in Personality and Emotional Intelligence

Gender differences in personality traits have been well-documented, with women typically scoring higher in agreeableness and neuroticism, and men scoring higher in extraversion (Schmitt *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, studies on gender differences in EI suggest that women tend to exhibit higher empathy, emotional sensitivity, and interpersonal skills, while men are often more confident in emotional regulation (Petrides and Furnham, 2000).

Recent research further supports these patterns. For example, a study by Gänslér *et al.* (2021) explored emotional intelligence and found that women tend to score higher in areas such as empathy and emotional perception, while men show more confidence in managing emotional expressions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design : This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional design to examine gender differences in personality traits and EI among management students. A cross-sectional design allows for the simultaneous measurement of variables at a single point in time and is well-suited for identifying differences across gender groups.

Sample : The sample consisted of 150 post-graduate management students (75 males and 75 females) enrolled in a reputed college in Punjab. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure equal representation of both genders in the study. This method facilitated the inclusion of a balanced proportion of male and female participants, thereby enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

Data Collection Tools

Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI) : This standardized tool assesses the five major personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (John *et al.*, 1991).

Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) : This self-report tool evaluates various components of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal relationships (Bar-On, 1997).

Data Analysis : Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were calculated for personality and EI scores. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the means between male and female participants. The Shapiro-Wilk test for normality and Levene's test for homogeneity of variance were performed to ensure the assumptions for t-tests were met. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to explore relationships between personality traits and EI components.

RESULTS

Personality Traits

- **Agreeableness :** Women scored significantly higher in agreeableness ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.45$), with a t-value of $t(148) = 5.21$, $p < 0.01$.
- **Neuroticism :** Women exhibited higher scores in neuroticism ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.40$), with a t-value of $t(148) = 2.35$, $p < 0.05$.
- **Extraversion :** Men scored significantly higher in extraversion ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.42$), with a t-value of $t(148) = 2.76$, $p < 0.05$.
- **Openness:** No significant gender differences were found in openness ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.48$ for males; $M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.46$ for females; $t(148) = 0.45$, $p > 0.05$).
- **Conscientiousness :** Both genders scored similarly in conscientiousness ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.44$ for males; $M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.47$ for females; $t(148) = 0.48$, $p > 0.05$).

Emotional Intelligence

- **Empathy :** Women scored higher in empathy ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.40$), with a t-value of $t(148) = 6.45$, $p < 0.001$.
- **Interpersonal Relationships :** Women also scored higher in interpersonal relationships ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.43$), with a t-value of $t(148) = 4.89$, $p < 0.01$.
- **Emotional Self-Regulation :** No significant gender differences found in emotional self-regulation ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.50$ for both genders; $t(148) = 1.12$, $p > 0.05$).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated gender differences in personality traits and emotional intelligence (EI) among post-graduate management students and examined the relationships between these psychological dimensions. The findings

are discussed in the context of the four stated objectives.

Objective No. 1 : To Examine Gender Differences in Personality Traits

The analysis revealed statistically significant gender differences in three of the five personality traits :

- **Agreeableness** : Female students scored higher than males, indicating a stronger tendency toward kindness, cooperation, and sensitivity to others' needs. This may reflect a greater orientation toward harmonious interpersonal functioning in female students.
- **Neuroticism** : Higher scores among females suggest a greater emotional reactivity and sensitivity to stress. While this could imply vulnerability in high-pressure environments, it may also reflect deeper emotional awareness.
- **Extraversion** : Male students scored significantly higher, indicating stronger sociability, assertiveness, and a preference for external stimulation. This may translate into greater outward confidence or enthusiasm in group settings or leadership roles.

For Openness and Conscientiousness, no significant gender differences were observed. This suggests that both male and female students in this study shared similar levels of creativity, curiosity, and openness to new experiences, as well as comparable degrees of self-discipline, reliability, and goal-oriented behavior. These neutral findings are important because they point toward areas where both genders can be trained and supported using similar strategies.

Overall, these personality trait differences and similarities suggest that gender plays a role in shaping certain interpersonal and emotional characteristics, while other traits appear more equally distributed.

Objective No. 2 : To Explore Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence (EI)

EI was assessed across multiple components, with notable gender-related findings :

Empathy and Interpersonal Relationships : Female students scored significantly higher, indicating a natural ability to understand and respond to others' emotions, as well as maintain supportive social relationships. These abilities are critical in collaborative academic and professional environments and may influence communication styles and team dynamics.

Emotional Self-Regulation : No significant gender differences were observed. This finding suggests that both male and female students are equally capable of managing their emotions under stress or conflict, indicating a shared

capacity for emotional control within challenging or unpredictable circumstances.

These patterns point to the possibility that while women in this study showed greater emotional atonement and social bonding, men demonstrated equivalent strength in self-control, making both genders well-equipped for emotionally demanding roles but in different ways.

Objective No. 3 : To Identify the Relationship between Personality Traits and Emotional Intelligence

This objective was explored through correlation analysis, which showed meaningful relationships between specific personality traits and emotional intelligence components :

- **Agreeableness** showed a strong positive relationship with empathy and interpersonal relationships, suggesting that individuals who are more cooperative and warm are also more emotionally aware of others' feelings and needs.
- **Conscientiousness** correlated with emotional self-regulation. Students with high conscientiousness were better at managing their emotional responses and maintaining focus during emotionally charged or stressful situations. This highlights the role of discipline and internal structure in emotional control.
- **Openness** was associated with self-awareness, adaptability, and flexibility in emotional contexts. Students who were open to new experiences appeared more emotionally reflective and capable of adjusting to dynamic interpersonal scenarios.

These findings indicate that emotional intelligence is not a standalone ability but is influenced by an individual's underlying personality traits. Understanding this relationship helps explain how personality forms a foundation for the development and expression of emotional skills in academic and leadership settings.

Objective No. 4 : To Provide Insights for Gender-Specific Educational Interventions

Based on the gender differences and personality-EI correlations found in this study, several tailored strategies for educational and leadership training programs can be proposed :

- **For Female Students :** Their higher scores in empathy and interpersonal sensitivity can be seen as emotional strengths. However, training programs can focus on enhancing assertiveness,

decision-making confidence, and stress tolerance to balance their emotional expressiveness and help prepare them for high-stakes leadership roles.

- **For Male Students :** With their higher levels of extraversion, male students may naturally excel in public engagement and external communication. Educational efforts should aim to foster empathy, emotional sensitivity, and active listening skills to promote emotional balance and improve relationship-building capabilities.
- **For All Students :** Since conscientiousness and openness were positively related to emotional intelligence, all students can benefit from activities that promote reflective thinking, creativity, goal-setting, and disciplined emotional practice. These skills support overall academic performance and professional readiness.

By recognizing individual strengths and addressing specific developmental areas, gender- responsive training programs can better equip students to function effectively in team environments and take on emotionally intelligent leadership roles.

CONCLUSION

The study highlighted clear gender differences in personality traits and emotional intelligence among management students. Female students scored higher in agreeableness, neuroticism, empathy, and interpersonal relationships, while male students showed higher extraversion. No significant differences were found in openness, conscientiousness, or emotional self- regulation. Positive correlations between certain personality traits and emotional intelligence components indicate that personality influences emotional functioning. These findings support the need for gender-sensitive educational strategies to enhance emotional intelligence and leadership development in students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Design Gender-Sensitive Leadership Programs :** Educational institutions should develop training modules that address gender-based strengths and challenges. Female students may benefit from assertiveness and stress-management training, while male students could benefit from enhanced empathy and interpersonal skill-building.
- **Integrate Personality and EI Assessment into Curriculum :** Regular

assessments of personality traits and emotional intelligence can help students understand their strengths and areas for growth, enabling more targeted personal development.

- **Promote Emotional Intelligence Workshops for All Students :** Regardless of gender, workshops focusing on self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and relationship management can enhance leadership readiness and team collaboration.
- **Encourage Reflective and Experiential Learning :** Activities that enhance openness (e.g., creative problem-solving, role-playing) and conscientiousness (e.g., structured goal- setting, self-monitoring) should be integrated into management programs to foster emotionally intelligent behavior.
- **Provide Mentorship and Peer Support Systems :** Pairing students with mentors or emotional learning groups can reinforce emotionally intelligent behaviors and offer personalized guidance in leadership development.
- **Incorporate Personality-EI Training into Career Services :** Career counselling services should incorporate findings from personality and EI assessments to guide - students toward roles that align with their emotional and interpersonal strengths.

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