



Cattell's Trait Theory of Personality

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Abstract:

The Personality is often understood in terms of being good looking, attractive etc. They go by the impression created by the person concerned. The ability to talk and interact with others pleasantly in addition to being good looking, would make others say that the person concerned has a good personality. Persons who do not have good looks or not well dressed or do not interact adequately are considered to have poor personality, but psychologically this is not a true concept of personality. In fact, psychologists consider any attempt to define personality in terms of social attractiveness inadequate because of two reasons, first it limits the number and types of behavior considered important and worthy for incorporation into the study of personality. Second, such notion carries the absurd implication that some people who have unique abilities and temperament traits are devoid of having a personality.

There are several definitions of personality and several theories of personality have been developed so far to explain its nature. Psychologists have designed studies by employing factorial analysis method to extract the factors of personality. The psychologist R.B. Cattell designed 16 PF of personality.

Keywords: Personality, Theories, Traits, Cattell's Trait.

Introduction:

Personality theories offer systematic explanations of how individuals think, feel, and behave. By studying this theories teacher can design instructional methods, adopt classroom management strategies, and create supportive environments that align with students' needs. Traits are stable and predictable characteristics of a person and reflect a person's ability to respond consistently across circumstances and over time. Cattell's theory of personality is called factorial theory of personality traits and their measurement through factor analysis. This study explores the Cattell's' personality theories and study the 16 PF of person as well as students.

Personality:

Meaning and Definition of Personality: (Kaushik N, Saxena A. (2007) page no. 385):

The word personality has been derived from Latin word 'Persona'. The persona means mask, to speak through. It means personality used to mean the outward appearance of a person. It is very wide concept. Some people who have unique abilities and temperament traits are devoid of having a personality. The term

personality is often understood in terms of social attractiveness good personality is considered to be one who impresses other people and who has the ability to get on well with others. Those who do not possess such ability are said to have relatively poor personality. A scientific point of view, being attractive to others is not a true concept of personality. Every person has different personality. So many factors and dimensions are responsible for developing personality.

According to Boring: “Personality has come to be regarded as the individuality that emerge form interaction between a biological and social, physical world.”

According to Allport: “Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychological system that determine his unique adjustment to his environment.”

“A personality is the product of the dynamic and unique organization within the individual of psychological structure or systems and their actions within the environment.”

Definition of personality by sociologist: (Kaushik N, Saxena A. (2007)):

“**personality** is the integration of all traits which determine the role and status of a person in society.”

“Individuality is the personality” Ideas of perfection is the personality.

According to Stephen P. Robbins: Personality as the sum total of ways in which an individual reacts and interacts with others.

Raymond B. Cattell proposed one of the most systematic and empirically grounded trait theories of personality. His approach emphasized the use of factor analysis to identify the fundamental dimensions of personality. Cattell distinguished between surface traits (observable behaviors) and source traits (underlying personality structures), arguing that scientific measurement should focus on source traits. Through extensive statistical analysis, he identified 16 primary personality factors, which later formed the basis of the **16 Personality Factor (16PF) Questionnaire**.

Cattell’s theory built upon the lexical approach initiated by Gordon Allport and Henry Odbert, who compiled a comprehensive list of personality descriptors from the dictionary. However, unlike Allport’s more descriptive classification, Cattell reduced thousands of traits into a manageable set using multivariate techniques. His work marked a shift from speculative personality theories to objective, data-driven models.

Subsequent research compared Cattell’s 16 factors with the Five-Factor Model (FFM) developed by scholars such as Robert McCrae and Paul Costa. While some researchers argue that the Big Five offers a more parsimonious structure, studies indicate substantial overlap between the 16PF dimensions and the FFM traits, suggesting convergent validity.

Critics have pointed out issues related to factor replication and cultural generalizability. Nonetheless, Cattell’s contribution remains foundational in personality assessment, especially in educational, clinical, and organizational settings. His emphasis on empirical measurement significantly influenced modern psychometrics and trait psychology, establishing personality research on a rigorous scientific basis.

Cattell’s Theory of Personality:

3. Cattell’s Trait Approach:

Raymond Cattell(1950) considered personality to be a pattern of traits providing the key to understanding it and predicting a person’s behaviour . According to Cattell, traits are relatively permanent and broad reaction tendencies of personality . They serve as the building blocks of personality. He distinguished between

- Surface trait and source trait,
- Constitutional and environmental-mold traits
- Ability, temperament and dynamic traits.
- **Surface traits:** Basic, underlying structures which form the building blocks of personality. Exist at a deeper level of personality and determine observed behaviour in human beings.
- **Surface traits:** These are visible qualities or surface-level qualities in human beings. These can include helpfulness or generosity. But surface traits aren't consistent over time and are not as important.
- **Constitutional traits:** They come from the biological and physical conditions.
- **Environmental mold traits:** These arise out of a person's social and physical environment.
- **Ability traits:** These demonstrate a person's skill and effectiveness in pursuing a goal.
- **Temperament traits:** These direct towards emotional qualities – or a person's temperament.
- **Dynamic traits:** Motivational elements that influence human behaviour. These are powerful traits that direct people towards goals they assign themselves.
- **Unique traits:** These are rare traits which are unique to certain individuals or groups of individuals.

4. Cattell 16 PF:

Cattell defined personality in terms of “that which permits a prediction of what a person will do in a given situation.” Cattell found 23 source traits in normal persons and 16 of which he studied in detail. These 16 basic source traits were then used in the construction of the Sixteen Personality(16 PF) Questionnaire popularly known as “16 PF test”. The sixteen factors identified by Cattell include

1. Reserved vs outgoing
2. Less intelligent vs more intelligent
3. Emotional vs stable
4. Humble vs assertive
5. Sober vs happy-go-lucky
6. Expedient vs conscientious
7. Shy vs venturesome
8. Tough-minded vs tender-minded
9. Trusting vs suspicious
10. Practical vs imaginative
11. Forthright vs shrewd
12. Placid vs apprehensive
13. Conservative vs experimenting
14. Group-tied vs self sufficiency
15. Casual vs controlled
16. Relaxed vs tense

Personality Factors:

Factor	Low score description	High Score description
A-Warmth	Reserved tendencies-detached, critical, aloof, stiff	Outgoing-warm, easy-going, participating
B- Intellect	Less concrete though process	More Intelligent, bright, abstract thinking
C- Emotional stability	Affected By feelings, emotionally less stable, easily upset, changeable	Emotionally Stable, mature, calm
E- Aggressiveness	Humble, mild, easily led, docile, accommodating	Assertive, aggressive, stubborn, competitive
F-Liveliness	Sober, low-energy, serious	Happy-Go-Lucly, enthusiastic
H-Social Assertiveness	Shy-timid, threat-sensitive	Uninhibited, socially bold
I-Sensitivity	Tough-Minded, self-reliant, realistic	Tender-Minded, sensitive, clinging, overprotected
L-Paranoia	Trusting, accepting conditions	Suspicious, hard to fool, doesn't trust easily
M-Abstractness	Practical," down-to-earth" mind-set	Imaginative, absent-minded
N-Introversion	Forthright, unpretentious, genuine	Polished, socially aware
O-Anxiety	Self-Assured, Secure, complacent, serene	Apprehensive, insecure, worrying, troubled
Q1-Open mindedness	Conservative, respecting traditional ideas	Experimenting, liberal, free-thinking
Q2- Independence	Group-Dependent, a "joiner" and sound follower	Self-/sufficient, resourceful, trusts oneself
Q3- Pereflectionism	Undisciplined Self-Conflict-lax, follows own urges, careless of social rules	Controlled, exacting will power, socially precise, compulsive
Q4- Tension	Relaxed, tranquil, un-frustrated, composed	Tense, frustrated, driven

All types of personality tests available possess certain difficulties which are both of theoretical and practical in nature. Every approach comes up with certain advantages and disadvantages. Personality measurement research has gained enough importance. Still various devices are in the process of improvement.

Conclusion:

Understanding Cattell's personality theories is essential for educators who aim to nurture holistic development in learners. Teachers can design flexible, empathetic, and student-centred learning environments that enhance motivation, foster resilience, and encourage lifelong growth.

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