

**RESEARCH PAPER****The Effect of Personality Traits and Learner Engagement on L2 Motivated Behavior of Undergraduate Students****¹Tabeer Khalid, and ²Muhammad Islam**

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to see the effect of Personality Traits and Learner Engagement on L2 Motivation of 600 undergraduate students from Lahore, Pakistan, Using a quantitative method and an ex post facto design. The data was collected through an adapted questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics findings have shown that both Personality Traits and Learner Engagement effect L2 Motivation significantly. The Personality Traits have shown a 26% variance and Learner Engagement has shown a 58% variance with L2 Motivation. Further, the Personality Traits of 'Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness' significantly effect L2 Motivation. Similarly, all three forms of learner engagement used in this study show a significant effect on L2 motivated behavior of participants. Future studies may focus on younger students, e.g. higher secondary-level, to analyse how personality traits and engagement of these children may be useful in predicting their L2 motivation.

Keywords: Big Five Model, L2 Motivation, L2 Motivational Self-System, Learner Engagement, Personality Traits

Introduction

Personality traits are a prominent factor of language learning. Many researches have proven that different traits in learners show variability in their personalities and with this difference in personality, researchers concentrated on students' goals in learning a second language (Mulalic & Obralic, 2017). Personality is an eternal attribute of an individual involves special adjustments to life, e.g. thoughts, behaviors, and interactions with people (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2018). Moreover, personality traits are permanent patterns of perceptions, attitudes, and emotions that differentiate one individual from another (Bleidorn et al., 2016, p. 83). The foundation of scientific awareness regarding personality traits dates back in the 19th century when social psychologists tried to disclose its complexities. The field of personality traits got formal recognition in 1930s through Alport and Odbert's work. Their thorough study, in which they opted 18,000 words from Webster's dictionary and found 4500 adjectives that explained non-visible features of an observable behavior. This creative work leads to sequential research concluded in the establishment of the Big Five Trait Model of Personality, which was first introduced by Fiske in 1949 and later broadened by Norman in 1967, Smith in 1967, Goldberg in 1981, and McCrae & Costa in 1987 (Darby, 2023). The model includes openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism as five autonomous traits (Lim, 2023).

Learner engagement is also an important aspect of second language learning. It needs active involvement and determined behavior to acquire a second language because learning a language learning requires time and learners needs to be determined towards their goals for a long time (Mercer & Dornyei, 2020). Dixson (2015) defined it as the efforts that a learner makes to boost her/his psychological dedication to keep involved in the learning procedure to gain knowledge and enhance critical thinking. Learner engagement

plays a crucial part in meaningful learning and teaching (Henrie et al., 2015; Trowler & Trowler, 2010, as cited in Deng et al., 2019). Effective engagement is generally linked with beneficial educational outcomes (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Lee, 2013). Whereas, disengagement leads to major behavioral problems (Henry et al., 2011; Wang & Fredricks, 2013). Learner engagement has been studied broadly since the 1980s (Appleton et al., 2008, as cited in Deng et al., 2019).

For effective language acquisition, motivation is a key factor, as it is a process that begins, leads, and keeps a determined behavior (Goyal, 2015, as cited in Leslie, 2022). If a learner wants to learn a second language, he must have a specific goal, e.g. going abroad, to talk with people outside his country or he wants to get a good job and make a successful career. These goals motivate one to learn a second language (Alhmdawee, 2022). Researchers, e.g. Gardner and Dörnyei have presented many types of motivation by emphasizing its various factors and important role in language learning. The influential work of Gardner and Lambert set high standards in research and advancement in L2 research (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 3, as cited in Alhmdawee, 2022).

Literature Review

Personality means how someone interacts with others, acts or concentrates on different situations, or senses something. The word 'personality' originated from the Latin word "persona" which means the face masks that artists used in early Greek plays, and it used to be called a person's public image (Cervone & Pervin, 2013, as cited in Lampropoulos et al., 2022). Personality qualifies as someone's ability to recognize individual differences (Beutler et al., 2011, as cited in Krishnamurthy et al., 2021).

Trait theory in psychology has three dimensions that categorized personality traits: consistency, stability, and individual differences. Consistency is when an individual keeps the same behavior in every situation. Stability is when an individual shows consistent behavior as s/he ages. Individual differences occur when individuals are different in behavior with one another having a trait (Diener et al., 2019).

The Five Factor Theory of Personality

Costa and McCrae in 1987 admitted that the essential part that Eysenck in 1966 performed when he recognized extraversion and neuroticism as broader dimension personality components. His wife Sybil was the one to include psychoticism but Costa and McCrae have a conflict on the addition of psychoticism. Therefore, they developed a new factor of openness and when they explained openness to Eysenck, he claimed that this factor is contrary to psychoticism, but McCrae and Costa assured them that both factors were different (McCrae & Costa, 1986, as cited in Kelland, 2022). Afterward, Costa and McCrae added a third factor of openness and included two other broader factors: agreeableness and conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1989; Costa & Widiger, 1994; McCrae & Allik, 2002; McCrae & Costa, 2003, as cited in Kelland, 2022).

Openness (O)

People with this trait welcome new happenings in their lives (Feldman, 2014, as cited in Porter, 2022). Research shows that the openness trait is an important indicator of L2 learning (Öz, 2014; Zhang et al., 2018).

Conscientiousness (C)

People with this trait are goal-oriented, decent, and follow rules (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2014; Roberts et al., 2009). Most of the studies revealed that conscientiousness trait is useful in learning a second language (Cao & Meng, 2020).

Extraversion (E)

People with this trait have a propensity to be societal. They are impressed by the world's materiality. They are communicative, positive, and assertive sentiments (John et al., 2008, p. 120, as cited in Huang, 2019). This extrovert personality has a great level of achievement through their interpersonal skills and they develop language proficiently by reducing communication anxiety (Krashen, 1985; Zafar & Meenakshi, 2012, as cited in Chen et al., 2021).

Agreeableness (A)

People with this trait are sympathetic, innocent, fair, and humanitarian (Goldberg, 1990; Kalshoven et al., 2011; McCrae and Costa, 1987, as cited in Simha & Parboteeah, 2019).

Neuroticism (N)

People with this trait are moody, afraid, absent of decisive power, have uncontrolled sentiments, aggression, and blame themselves (Feldman, 2014; Judge et al., 1999, as cited in Porter, 2022).

Some studies have concentrated on personality traits and language anxiety. For example, people who are extroverts have less language anxiety while communicating English as a second language (Dewaele, 2002). Openness, conscientiousness, and extraversion proved to be highly motivated personality traits for learning while neuroticism as a personality trait results in negative outcomes in terms of learner motivation (Major et al., 2006; Colquitt et al., 2000, as cited in John et al., 2020).

Learner Engagement

Learner engagement as a construct was developed in the 1980s to realize learners' lack of interest and withdrawal from learning activities and to minimize students' dropout rate (Finn, 1989). Engagement means the learner's active contribution to the learning environment and understanding of the whole learning experience (Teravainen-Goff, 2023). Engagement is a link between a person and his favorite task (Russell et al., 2005, as cited in Lang, 2015). On the contrary, disengagement means learners' lack of interest in the classroom and institutional activities, not utilizing cognitive abilities in learning, and being disconnected from school (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

Dewey's Theory of Progressivism

By the end of the 19th century, different pedagogues from the USA and Europe started to argue that children were not passive learners. Progressives summed up the phrase 'child-centered' by finding a comprehensive view of a child's growth and his interaction within the institute and the world. They support freedom, individuality, inner growth, and self-realization (Selleck, 1972, p. 58, as cited in Barclay, 2021). According to Dewey, teachers are not supposed to teach only subject knowledge but they are also responsible to teach social norms (Simpson & Jackson, 2003). This theory sets students in a mutual learning environment to solve real-life problems (Webb et al., 2010, as cited in Perez, 2022).

Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory

From Dewey's academic viewpoint, a student can only learn by interacting with his environment. Progressive education includes the significant facet of learning by doing. Dewey's theory suggested that individuals' hands-on experience provides the best learning method. Dewey's philosophy pointed out that the procedure of learning can only be helpful

if students provide enough learning chances to relate their previous knowledge with the current one. Dewey stated that teachers must create a classroom environment that motivates students to be independent, innovative, and critical thinkers. He considered that the goal of education is to teach the student what he wants to learn instead of what society wants him to learn. Hands-on learning is a method in which a student participates actively in his favorite task or activity. It engages students in problem-solving situations (Main, 2023).

Engagement in language learning is in social, cognitive, or affective positions where a learner enjoys language as a communication skill (Svalberg, 2009). Fredricks et al. (2004) proposed three major types of engagement: behavioral (social), affective (emotional), and cognitive engagement.

Behavioral (social) engagement

It relates to the gestures of the body, and how well the learner participates in the classroom activities and tasks given to him (Oga-Baldwin, 2019). Research shows that learners' behavioral engagement results in achieving learning goals and maintaining classroom discipline (Hattie & Anderman, 2012).

Cognitive engagement

Cognitive engagement requires a learner's extensive grip on educational activities to build knowledge (Zepke, 2017). Cognitive engagement requires the learner to be thoughtful and able to expertise in the subject and skills (Kuh, 2001). Research suggests that using diverse methodologies helps to create a more student-centered learning environment and less teacher-centered (Cummings et al., 2017).

Affective (emotional) engagement

Affective engagement is about the learner's emotions towards the learning environment, peers, and teachers. The learner is having positive or negative thoughts about his surroundings (Pagán, 2018). Affective engagement can be explored to observe the learner's expressions over challenges, does he react positively or negatively? (Christenson et al., 2012).

L2 Motivation

Motivation is concerned with the facets of human actions, how an individual behaves, or what he imagines (Dörnyei, 2005, as cited in Islam, 2013). In the opinion of Gardner and Lambert in 1959, motivation is most importantly recognized through a learner's goal of learning a second language (Seven, 2020).

The L2 Motivational Self-System

Dörnyei widened the scope of L2 motivation research in 2005 to investigate "possible selves" and proposed a renowned theory "The L2 Motivational Self-System" (Saleem, 2014). There is an advancement of a parallel idea 'Self-Discrepancy Theory' proposes that learners are motivated by a wish to lessen the difference between learner's actual self-concept and ideal self and their ought self. Practicing these ideas to L2 qualities, the L2 motivational self-system recognizes two L2 self-guides: the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self (Higgins, 1987). The concluding reconceptualization of integrativeness was defended on the basis that the aspect of motivation represented is not so much connected to any real, symbolic, integration into an L2 society represented main recognition process within the learner's self-concept (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002, p. 453, as cited in Oakes & Howard, 2019).

Within the domain of L2 motivation research, a motivated behavior shows students' keen desire to invest their efforts in the process of language learning. It has been used extensively as a criterion measure in the quantitative traditions on L2 motivation research. Overall, it is considered to be an influential construct in L2 motivation research (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, as cited in Martinović & Burić, 2021).

Material and Methods

Overall, the study was quantitative in nature. Two tiers of sampling have been used in the study. At the first stage, a simple random sampling technique was used by the researcher to select four different universities (two public and two private) from Lahore district. Then, at the second stage, the data was collected from 600 BS-level students by using convenience sampling. The sample size was 600. The researchers distributed 600 questionnaires in these university themselves. Out of 600, 538 completely filled in questionnaires were selected for the analysis.

The researcher has adapted questionnaires from four different sources for the study. For the first variable, which is personality traits, the researcher has adapted items from John & Srivastava (1999) questionnaire. For the second variable, which is learner engagement, the researcher has adapted items from Hart et al. (2011) questionnaire. For the third variable, which is L2 motivation, the researcher has adapted items from Islam (2013) and Kim & Kim (2016) questionnaires. The final questionnaire consists of a total of 67 items which were further used for the data collection and analysis.

After collecting the data, the researcher started coding the data by putting it into SPSS version 15. The researcher discarded all those questionnaires that were empty or filled carelessly to make it manageable and ready for further analysis. In addition to descriptive statistics, Pearson's *r* correlation and simple linear regression analysis were conducted for the final analysis.

Results and Discussion

The trait that shows a high mean in the table is agreeableness ($M = 3.77$). Most respondents of the study seem to possess agreeable trait which means they are cooperative, helping, and friendly learners and create friendly and supportive learning environment by making good relation with peers and teachers.

Table 1
Mean Score and Standard Deviation of English Language Learners' Personality Traits

Factors	M	SD
Extraversion	3.28	.816
Agreeableness	3.77	.801
Conscientiousness	3.55	.789
Neuroticism	3.05	.951
Openness	3.64	.806

The above table shows that all personality traits scored high except neuroticism which is an emotionally unstable trait that generally cannot motivate learners in learning. But still, it is not an unimportant trait. The respondents having neuroticism as a personality trait can face stress and anxiety in learning a language which creates hurdles in their learning outcomes. But people with this issue can help themselves by engaging them in stress reduction techniques and teachers can focus on them by leveling up their confidence in language learning.

The type of learner engagement that shows a high mean in the table is cognitive engagement ($M = 3.54$) which indicates that most respondents of the study may want to engage themselves in English language classrooms through cognitive engagement.

Table 2
Mean Score and Standard Deviation of English Language Learners' Engagement

Factors	M	SD
Affective Engagement	3.32	.937
Behavioral Engagement	3.44	.786
Cognitive Engagement	3.54	.834

Cognitive engagement generally involves a learner's cognition, critical thinking, and prior knowledge. The learners can put themselves in an interactive learning environment where they can participate in debates and discussions and ask questions that will increase their critical thinking process.

Difference Between Urban and Rural Participants

The following table shows that the t-test was conducted to compare the means between two groups - Rural (R) and Urban (U). The p value of the factors 'Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Cognitive Engagement' is statistically significant. Overall, only two factors of personality traits (extraversion and agreeableness) and a single factor of learner engagement (cognitive engagement) have shown statistical significant effect on the basis of background (rural/urban)

Table 3
T-Test on the Background (Rural/Urban) of Participants

Factors	B	N	M	SD	t-value	Df	Sig.
Extraversion	R	185	3.23	.751	-0.987	536	.05
	U	353	3.31	.848			
Agreeableness	R	185	3.68	.829	-1.841	536	.05
	U	353	3.81	.783			
Conscientiousness	R	185	3.46	.836	-1.800	536	.13
	U	353	3.59	.760			
Neuroticism	R	185	3.00	.925	-0.800	536	.21
	U	353	3.07	.965			
Openness	R	185	3.49	.778	-3.086	536	.61
	U	353	3.71	.811			
Affective Engagement	R	185	3.22	.934	-1.642	536	.62
	U	353	3.36	.937			
Behavioral Engagement	R	185	3.37	.790	-1.636	536	.91
	U	353	3.48	.782			
Cognitive Engagement	R	185	3.39	.890	-3.066	536	.01
	U	353	3.62	.792			
Motivated Behavior	R	185	3.33	.833	-1.527	536	.63
	U	353	3.44	.812			

Extraversion ($p = 0.05$) shows that the mean score of group R is lower than group U, which implies that learners with urban backgrounds may be more social and learn language through interacting with people. Agreeableness has also shown that the mean score of group R is lower than group U and ($p = 0.05$). According to the results, learners from urban areas seem to be more agreeable and cooperative, which would like to work with people in groups. In this way, they always motivate their fellow learners to build a positive social interaction with them and may encourage others to participate in different activities resulting in a positive outcome of learning.

The factor of Cognitive Engagement ($p = 0.01$) also indicates that the mean score for group R is lower than the mean score for group U, which means that learners from urban backgrounds want to engage cognitively in their English language classrooms as they may be more aware of modern opportunities and they want to keep themselves up-to-date.

Correlation and Regression Analysis – Effect of Personality Traits and Engagement on L2 Motivated Behavior

Correlation and regression analysis were conducted to see the relationship between major variables (Personality Traits, Learner Engagement, L2 Motivated Behavior) and the possible effect of Personality Traits, Learner Engagement on the motivated behavior of participants.

Table 4
Correlation between English Language Learners' Personality Traits, Engagement and L2 Motivation

Variables	1	2	3
Personality Traits	-		
Learner Engagement	.632	-	
L2 Motivated Behavior	.489	.758	-

The table 4 shows that the correlation between Learner Engagement and L2 Motivation is (.758), which means that they are strongly correlated. This explains that people who score high on Learner Engagement tend to also score high on L2 Motivation, and vice versa.

Personality Traits and Learner Engagement also show a strong correlation of .632. Similarly, the correlation (.489) between Personality Traits and L2 Motivation is also reasonable.

If the relationship among the variables are higher than $r=.9$, the issue of multicollinearity exists (Pallant, 2016), which may not be the case in this study.

Table 5
Effect of the English Language Learners' Personality Traits on their L2 Motivated Behavior

Factors	B	Std. Error B	B	P value	Zero-order	Partial	Part
Extraversion	.091	.042	.09	.03	.284	.093	.080
Agreeableness	.063	.056	.06	.25	.400	.049	.042
Conscientiousness	.217	.058	.20	.00	.445	.160	.140
Neuroticism	.050	.034	.05	.14	.149	.064	.055
Openness	.241	.056	.23	.00	.460	.185	.162

R^2 .26

The table 5 above shows the linear regression between English language learners' personality traits and their L2 motivation. The p value shows 'Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness' have significant contributed to the motivated behavior of participants. The R^2 above shows a .26 value which means 26% of the variance has been explained in the final model.

Table 6
Effect of the English Language Learners' Engagement on their L2 Motivated Behavior

Factors	B	Std. Error B	B	P value	Zero-order	Partial	Part
Affective Engagement	.334	.035	.38	.00	.266	.402	.696
Behavioral Engagement	.338	.043	.32	.00	.253	.424	.686
Cognitive Engagement	.158	.037	.16	.00	.085	.231	.593

R^2 .58

The table 6 shows the results of linear regression analysis which reveal that all three aspects of English language learners' engagement significantly affect their L2 motivation. Affective engagement has the strongest contribution to the L2 motivation of participants,

which is followed by behavioral and cognitive engagements. The value of R^2 above is .58 which means that the model explains 58% of variance.

Discussion

The results of this research have provided an understanding of the combination of three variables, (Personality traits, Learner Engagement, and L2 Motivation) and how they are related to each other. To understand this, the researcher ran multiple tests and the results have shown that both personality traits and learner engagement are important for the motivation of Pakistani second language learners.

The findings of this study can be compared with other studies in international contexts. For example, Chen et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of studies, spanning 40 years (1980- 2020), about the relationship between personality traits and L2 learning achievement. The results revealed that openness and conscientiousness were strongly related to L2 learning achievement, whereas, extraversion and agreeableness had a moderate relation and neuroticism did not relate to L2 learning achievement. Similarly, the findings of another study, Ghorbani and Semiyari (2020), with 654 Iranian university students (305 females and 349 males), revealed that the openness trait proved to be highly positively related to intended learning efforts while the conscientiousness trait had a moderate effect on intended learning efforts. These findings are similar to the results of this study as personality traits of Openness and conscientiousness have also affected the L2 motivated behavior of participants here. The contribution of extraversion into participants' motivated behavior may be explained by the argument that extroverts may be motivated by the social factors of language learning, such as the opportunity to communicate and interact with others in the target language. In comparison, neuroticism can be counterproductive for L2 motivation as it may negatively affect students' vision toward academic achievement and, if it is not controlled, it may take a learner to a permanent state of demotivation (Apostolov & Geldenhuys, 2022).

The findings about the motivational contribution of affective learner engagement are also similar to those of Dincer et al. (2019), which investigated the motivation process of 412 EFL University students (65% men) in Turkey focusing on their engagement in the class and predicted that affective (emotional) and agentic engagement are likely to engage students in English classrooms.

Therefore, teachers may play a crucial role in providing a supportive and positive emotional environment to their students in the classroom. They can create language learning tasks which may multiply the interest of the learner in classroom activities.

Conclusion

This quantitative study was conducted to find out which kind of personality trait and learner engagement may contribute to the motivation of a sample of second language learners. The study concludes both personality traits and learner engagement may affect the L2 motivation of Pakistani students participated in this study. However, three, out of five, personality traits 'Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness' significantly contributed to the L2 motivated behavior of participants. Whereas, all three aspects of learner engagement, included in this study, significantly contributed to their L2 motivation. In addition, learner engagement has explained more variance in the criterion measure, which may lead us to argue that it may have a stronger contribution to L2 motivation as compared to personality traits. Learner engagement also showed a higher correlation to L2 motivated behavior, whereas personality traits showed a weak correlation with it. Both personality traits and learner engagement may be aligned differently with L2 motivation, which needs a further and in-depth qualitative investigation. Effective teaching methodologies and engaging language tasks, focusing on individual preferences, may lead to a high level of motivation in language learners.

Recommendations

It is suggested that future studies may focus on agreeableness and neuroticism personality traits with L2 motivation concentrating on stress reduction techniques and agreeableness socializing of learners to boost their confidence. Language teachers may promote their students' autonomy and diminish their anxiety by developing effective language learning strategies.

It is also recommended to investigate the effect of learner engagement on L2 motivation at the higher secondary level. They are younger and may have a different classroom/institutional environment than a university. Their motivation and engagement within the class may also differ from mature university students. This study is limited to students; more studies should include teachers who are well trained about the individual differences of the learners as teachers may better understand how they can engage their students in the classroom according to their diverse needs.

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