Big Five Personality Traits and Proenvironmental Attitudes and Behaviors

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Abstract

The big five is the most widely used model of individual personality trait differences. This quantitative research study is being completed to discern if the big five personality traits of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism are correlated with proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors.

Problem

There is a vast amount of research that investigates how the big five is related to work place behaviors, political affiliation, and dream recall, but there is a lack of research associated with environmentally sustainable behaviors.

Purpose

The purpose of my quantitative is to discern if the big five traits are correlated with proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors. Previously, Hirsh (2010) had found that there is a relationship between proenvironmental attitudes and the personality traits of openness and agreeableness. I aim to replicate the findings of proenvironmental attitudes correlated with openness and agreeableness. I also wish to discover if personality traits of the big five are correlated with proenvironmental behaviors.

Relevant Literature

Costa, P.T. & McCrae, R.R. (1990). *Personality in adulthood.* New York, NY: Guilford.

Fleeson, W. & Gallagher, P. (2009). The implication of big five standing for the distribution of trait manifestation in behavior: Fifteen experience-sampling studies and a meta-analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 97(6), 1067-1114. doi: 10.1037/a0016786

Gifford, R. (2011). The dragons of inaction: Psychological barriers that limit climate change mitigation and adaptation. *American Psychologist*, 66(4), 290-302. doi: 10.1037/a0023566

Hirsh, J.B. (2010). Personality and environmental concern. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30, 245-248. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2007.04.015

John, O.P. & Srivastava, S. (2009). The big-five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives. Retrieved from http://pages.uoregon.edu/sanjay/pubs/bigfive.pdf

Research Questions

RQ1- Are personality traits, as measured by the Big Five Inventory, positively correlated with proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors?

RQ2- If there are personality traits associated with proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors, as measured by the Big Five Inventory, which trait or traits is/are most correlated with proenvironmental attitudes and proenvironmental behaviors.

Procedures

The study is posted in the Walden Participant Pool. The participants are asked to complete the Big Five Inventory to measure personality traits. The participants are also asked to complete the Self-Reported Proenvironmental Behavior scale, the General Environmental Behavior scale, and Environmental Concern Scale. All scales will be scored seprately and multiple regression will be performed.

Data Analysis

To test the hypothesis that big five personality traits are correlated with proenvironmental attitudes the scores from the Big Five Inventory and the Environmental Concern Scale will be entered into SPSS.

Then the scores from the Big Five Inventory will be entered with the scores from the Self-Reported Proenvironmental Behavior Scale to discover if there is a correlation between personality traits and behaviors.

Last, the scores of the Big Five Inventory and the General Environmental Behavior scale to determine if there is a correlation between personality traits and proenvironmental behaviors.

A hierarchical regression with also be conducted to determine which personality trait has the most effect over proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors.

Findings

I expect to replicate the findings of Hirsh that the traits of openness and agreeableness with be positively correlated with proenvironmental attitudes. I also expect these traits will be correlated with proenvironmental concern.

Limitations

This study is exploratory in nature and will provide to provide an initial line of research on personality and proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors. Further studies will need to be conducted to establish generalizability for populations beyond this study. This study is a convenience sample of 100 participants. Results from this study should be viewed as an initial step for further analysis of personality traits and proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors.

Conclusions

Personality can be used to predict proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors. Deeper knowledge of personality traits can lead to a better understanding of how traits manifest themselves in behaviors.

Social Change Implications

Psychologists have played a role in describing consequences of environmental damage and how to motivate people to change behavior to lead to conservation of the environment. Even with this knowledge it is still a challenge to motivate many to develop and implement environmentally responsible behavior, A study was performed that showed personality was linked to a proenvironmental attitude. What is not understood is how personality traits present themselves in behavior. When psychologists better understand how traits are related to behavior, focus can then be put upon changing behavior for the good of the environment.