

# A Conceptual Research Framework for Understanding Student Psychology: The dynamics of Big Five Traits and FIRO-B Needs:

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## Abstract

The study analyses Big five personality traits and Fundamental interpersonal needs among University students. This study aims to illustrate the levels of Big Five personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism) and fundamental interpersonal needs (Inclusion, Control, Affection) in a sample of university students, by using descriptive statistics to establish a core attributes and understand social, personal development. According to the five factor model (FFM), personality is composed of five broad areas, “Extraversion (E, being sociable and active), agreeableness (A, being soft-hearted and trusting), conscientiousness (C, being organized and reliable), emotional stability (being calm and relaxed), and openness (O, being curious and creative) (Costa and McCrae, 1992)”. “The social nature of human beings gives rise to certain interpersonal needs, which they must satisfy to some while avoiding threat to themselves”. And it's divided into three categories: issues surrounding inclusion, issues surrounding control, and issues surrounding affection. The sample contained 200 University students. The tools are used in “The Big Five Personality Test (BFPT) by Lewis Goldberg, Paul Costa Jr. & Robert McCrae, and Warren Norman, and Swann and “Fundamental Inter-personal Relations Orientation” (FIRO) by Schutz (1958).

**Keywords:** Big five personality traits, Fundamental interpersonal needs.

## Introduction

The Big Five theory is most suitable psychological research that became a model for understanding more about personality. The origins of this theory was made up by the scientists like Gordon Allport and Raymond Cattell back in mild century, and they looked to categorize human traits. And then the model was later refined by psychologists “Paul Costa and Robert McCrae”, they determined the five dimensions of personality “Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism”. This Test act a significant role in personal development by giving individuals insights into their core personality traits. One of the theories of interpersonal behaviour, Fundamental Inter-personal Relations Orientation (FIRO) was propounded by Schutz (1958). This instrument FIRO-B, which provides valuable insight into one's interpersonal relation orientation and behaviour that's why I did selected this particular instrument. The basic core belief of this approach is “that people need people. Every human

being”, because we live in a society, must establish balance between us and the physical world. These interpersonal needs may be divided into three that are :“ issues surrounding inclusion, issues surrounding control, and issues surrounding affection”. Each individual has different needs, and different mechanisms for handling people. The three basic interpersonal needs are common. This study explains the need to understand the core personality in the real world social lives of university students. And understand personality traits abstractly, lack a clear profile of how they coincide with specific interpersonal desires and behaviors in this critical population. This research bridges that gap.

### **Background and need for the concept**

University students are at a critical developmental stage where their personality and social needs directly impact their “academic success, mental health, and social adjustment”. The Big Five Personality Model, FIRO-B Theory of Interpersonal Needs. The big five personality traits are a universal taxonomy that describes core personality traits, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. These traits influence how students approach learning, stress, and social interactions. “The Theory of Interpersonal Needs explains fundamental social behavior through three needs, Inclusion, Control, and Affection and each with wanted components”. This determines “ how students form relationships, work in groups, and seek support”. So it gives incomplete pictures , this study helps to understand the full psychological profile. University is a suitable environment like highly social, structured yet independent, and stressful. And also it makes understanding this meet point key to supporting student well-being and success.

### **Review of Literature**

Melissa C O’Connor, Sampo V Paunonen (2007) studied the recent empirical literature on“ the relations of the Big Five personality dimensions and post secondary academic achievement”, and the result shows Conscientiousness to be most strongly and that consistently associated with academic success.

Li-Fang Zhang (2002), studied “the relationship between thinking styles and the big five personality traits”. Results show particular thinking styles and certain personality traits, claim that a personality measure, or to measure thinking styles.

Takuma Nishimura, Takashi Suzuki ( 2016) investigated “ Function of satisfaction and frustration of the basic psychological needs” ,that contribute to subjective well-being results that show that satisfaction of psychological needs represents a critical element for healthy functioning across cultures.

John M Mahoney, Mark F Stasson (2005), measures the personality and interpersonal resources, students at an urban university . Results support a two dimensional model of Interpersonal Control and Emotional Tone in relationships. Found the personality dimensions suggest that Extraversion is a pervasive aspect of relationships.

Ömer Faruk Şimşek, Selda Koydemir (2013), tested a structural model to investigate “ the differences in well-being and ill-being of individuals “by examining the mediating effects of autonomy, relatedness, and competence on the extent ,checks Stability and Plasticity, They are linked to life satisfaction and depression.

Yuping Liu, Joshua D Miller, Donald R Lynam et al (2025,) found the nomological network addresses the over-reliance on Western convenience samples. It Underscores the utility of interpersonal frameworks in distinguishing AT constructs.

Tess Byrd O’Brien, Anita DeLongis (1996) examined the role of personality and situational factors in

three forms of coping responses. They find the model of coping that considers both agentic and communal dimensions of stressful situations.

David Antonioni (1998), examine “the relationship between the Big Five personality factors and five styles of handling interpersonal conflict”. Found extroversion, conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness have a positive relationship with integrating style. Extroversion, openness, and conscientiousness have a negative relationship with avoiding, and agreeableness and neuroticism have a positive relationship with avoiding.

Kisook Kim, Hyohyeon Yoon (2023), studied relationship between depressive symptoms, attitude toward aging, sense of community, and interpersonal needs, identify factors that affect the interpersonal needs of older women aged over 60 years, findings provide to support the expansion of depression prevention interventions, successful aging programs, and community-based social activities for older women to prevent frustrated interpersonal needs.

### Conceptual Development

The personality can be meaningfully described along five broad, firm dimensions: “Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism” and these traits represent enduring dispositions that influence an individual's general patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior across situations. Here it employs Schutz's FIRO (Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation). It proposes that human interaction is driven by three core social needs that are Inclusion it explains the need to establish and maintain a satisfactory relationship with people in terms of interaction and association, Control, it explains need to establish and maintain a satisfactory relationship with people in terms of power and influence, and Affection it explains need to establish and maintain a satisfactory relationship with people in terms of love and intimacy. The FIRO theory further separates between expressed behavior like what the individual initiates toward others and wanted behavior like what the individual wants from others for each need, creating a dynamic framework like Expressed/Wanted versus Inclusion/Control/Affection. The conceptual development of this conceptual paper arises from the integration of these two frameworks. While the Big Five describes their dispositional tendencies, FIRO-B describes their characteristic interpersonal behavior patterns. It is theorized that broad personality learnings manifest in, or are channeled through, specific interpersonal strategies and needs. This study is conceptually developed to map the ground where dispositional personality and interpersonal needs blend within a university population. It proceeds from the theoretical proposition that these two levels of analysis are meaningfully connected, and therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the student population requires their simultaneous description. The resulting dual-profile is conceptualized as a necessary and valuable foundational dataset for both practical university applications and the advancement of scientific inquiry into person-situation dynamics.

### Definitions of Key Concepts and Dimensions

#### 1. The big five personality traits

The five-factor model of personality is a hierarchical organization of personality traits in terms of five basic dimensions: “Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience”.

- **Openness** : “define openness as an individual's inclination to favor activities, visual appeal, imagination, emotions, concepts, and principles that are new or unfamiliar”.

- **Conscientiousness:** “The propensity to follow socially prescribed norms for impulse control, to be goal directed, to plan, and to be able to delay gratification and to follow norms and rules”.
- **Extraversion :** “extraversion as a focus of energy and interest on external objects and people, driven by the outer world”.
- **agreeableness :** “it reflects our ability and interest in getting along, meeting common goals, and having positive relationships, with facets like trust, straightforwardness, and altruism”.
- **Neuroticism :** “Integrated it into the Big Five model as a disposition to experience negative affect, anxiety, depression, and impulsiveness”.

## 2. FIRO-B Interpersonal Needs Definition:

FIRO-B was created during “Will Schutz’s” work on group dynamics for the U.S. Navy. “Schutz aimed to understand how individuals’ interpersonal behaviors affected group cohesion and performance (Schutz, 1958)”. Schutz’s foundational premise was simple yet profound: “people need people.”

- **The need for inclusion:** This is the need to maintain a satisfactory relation between the self and other people with respect to interaction or belongingness.
- **The need for control:** This is the need to maintain a satisfactory relation between oneself and other people with regard to power and influence.
- **The need for affection:** This is the need to maintain a satisfactory relation between the self and other people with regard to love and affection

## Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by a descriptive, dual-construct framework designed to map two foundational psychological domains within a university student population. The framework is intentionally non-relational, meaning it does not propose or test causal links between its components. Instead, it positions the Big Five personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism) and FIRO-B interpersonal needs (Expressed/Wanted Inclusion, Control, and Affection) as parallel, co-existing constructs that together form a comprehensive psychological profile. The framework begins with the university student sample as the central context, recognizing this group is in a critical developmental stage where both personality dispositions and social needs are salient. From this population, data flows into two independent measurement streams. The first stream employs a full-scale Big Five inventory , to capture the enduring, dispositional "what" of the students, their characteristic ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. The second stream uses the FIRO-B questionnaire to capture the interpersonal "how" their characteristic patterns for initiating and receiving social behaviors related to belonging, influence, and closeness.

## Implications

### Academic Implications

This framework provides the significant scholarly implications for the fields of personality psychology, educational psychology, and higher education research, advancing academic discourse through its methodological approach, theoretical integration, and foundational contributions.

### Practical Implications

This study delivers concrete, actionable implications for university administration, student support services, faculty, and the students themselves. By providing a data-driven psychological profile of the

student body, it transforms abstract personality theory into practical strategies for enhancing the university experience.

### **Future Research Relevance**

This descriptive study is explicitly designed as a foundational platform for subsequent research. Its primary scholarly value lies in generating specific, data-driven pathways for future investigation. The relevance for future research spans multiple domains, methodologies, and theoretical questions. This study does not conclude a line of inquiry but rather inaugurates one. Its future research relevance is best visualized as a roadmap.

### **Conclusion**

This conceptual paper has articulated the rationale, design, and anticipated value of a descriptive study profiling the Big Five personality traits and FIRO-B interpersonal needs within a university student population. The study is grounded in the recognition that while extensive research exists on personality or social dynamics in students, an integrated, foundational profile of these two major psychological constructs is often lacking for specific university cohorts. The proposed study is explicitly designed as an exploratory, non-correlational investigation. Its core aim is not to test relationships or causality but to establish a precise, data-driven dual-aspect glimpse mapping both the dispositional landscape and the interpersonal behavioral landscape of the student body. This snapshot will be enriched by disaggregating the data by gender, providing a more layered descriptive picture. The significance is threefolded. Theoretically, it bridges trait and interpersonal theory by documenting their co-manifestation in a real-world context, providing an empirical reference point for theoretical integration. In conclusion, this conceptual framework advocates for the intrinsic value of rigorous descriptive science. In an academic climate often focused on explanation, this study reaffirms that careful, systematic description is not a preliminary activity but a core scholarly contribution. It creates the foundational knowledge required for meaningful inference and application. By providing a comprehensive psychological map of a student cohort, this research aims to enhance immediate institutional practice while simultaneously charting a course for future discovery in the psychology of student development and educational excellence.

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