

Assessing Personality Traits among Adolescents in Secondary Schools: A Comprehensive Inventory Approach

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ABSTRACT

Background: For some young people, their maladaptive personality patterns may become severe enough to be diagnosed as personality disorders. For others, even if their maladaptive personality traits may not reach clinical significance, these problems probably still lead to difficulties in social adjustment and mental health. **Objectives:** Assess personality traits in adolescents and identify their association with demographic variables. **Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 150 purposively selected secondary school students to assess personality traits using the Personality Inventory for the Diagnostic and Statistical manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition – Brief Form (PID-5-BF) among children aged 11–17 years. **Results:** The overall score of the personality inventory is that 66.7% of adolescents have moderate dysfunction, as seen with a mean total score ($M \pm SD = 29.16 \pm 7.019$). There is no evidence of the association between adolescents' personalities and their sociodemographic variables. **Conclusion:** The overall personality inventory score of adolescents has moderate dysfunction. there was no substantial relationship between adolescent personality traits and demographic variables (age, gender, residence, education, occupation, and socio-economic status) in this study, although overall, the lives of adolescents were quite varied. **Recommendation:** These results encourage a shift toward a more individualised approach to understanding adolescent personality development, recognising the complex interplay of various influences beyond demographics. The study also recommends establishing educational programs for families, school administrations, and teachers as well on how to deal with adolescents and explaining this critical period in human life and its impact on shaping the individual's future personality.

Keywords: *Adolescents; Assessment; Personal Inventory; Secondary Schools*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence, often described as a pivotal phase of development, is characterised by dynamic shifts in personality traits as young individuals navigate the complex terrain of self-discovery, identity formation, and emotional growth. Thus, it is during such a transitional period that the development of personality traits and their interaction with sociodemographic factors becomes challenging yet promising for exploration. The present study aims to investigate the complex nature of personality dynamics during the stage of adolescents enrolled in secondary school, as well as the relationship between personality characteristics and sociodemographic factors. The concern of the study is predicated upon a developmental approach that takes into consideration the vast changes that adolescents undergo. As the youth advance in adolescent development, from early to late adolescence, as characterised by psychosocial development where identity is attained (Bogaerts *et al.*, 2021; Ringwald *et al.*, 2025), questions arise as to how these internal processes translate into the observable personality. It has also been posited by studies that personality variables may change significantly at this phase, thus gaining the phase focus and attention as a rather interesting and exciting phase.

The variable of gender, which has been described as having a significant sociodemographic component, influences the manifestation of personality characteristics in the course of adolescence (Crosnoe & Thorpe,

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2022). These gender differences suggest that gender should be taken into consideration in adolescents' life experiences regarding the nature of the potential obstacles they are exposed to in their personality development process. Co-resident siblings' gender is yet another interesting variable that has been considered as a potential predictor of personality traits, birth order being a variable that has been attracting researchers' interest for a long time (Kim, 2022). Furthering the research on the influence of birth order on adolescent personality profiles may provide useful information about the role of family on personality formation. Schooling and achievements are critical areas involved in the development process of adolescents (Bozzato, 2024). It is still being investigated how far these factors coincide with personality traits because an adjustment within the educational environment might have an impact on a character's development. Furthermore, socioeconomic status is a complex and broad category that potentially greatly influences an adolescent's experiences and, therefore, opportunities and overall personality (Li *et al.*, 2024; Ji *et al.*, 2025).

Significance of the Study

In a variety of contexts, including custody examinations, psychological personality testing is utilised to detect new characteristics and coping strategies linked to aggressive conduct as teenage personality development progresses (Sellbom *et al.*, 2015; Geffner *et al.*, 2009). Studies on the extent of Internet addiction in youth are concerning, but they also show a great deal of variation, which is probably caused by the various research techniques and assessment instruments used, as well as by variations within study groups (Deryakulu & Ursavaş, 2014; Müller *et al.*, 2016). Personality traits and excessive online activity have been linked in numerous studies on Internet addiction or excessive use. According to specialised literature, life satisfaction is a significant correlate of Internet addiction (Wang *et al.*, 2013) and self-esteem (Ayas & Horzum, 2013). As well as negative valence, which is shown by needy, demanding attitudes and a desire to impress, and attractiveness, which is shown by concern for one's appearance, being well-groomed, tidy, productive, and highly motivated (Charlton & Danforth, 2010). Internet addiction and agreeableness, a personality attribute that can also operate as a protective factor against problematic Internet use, are found to have a similar association (Randler *et al.*, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This research utilised a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to determine the Personality Inventory of secondary school students.

Study Sample

The target population of the study consisted of 150 purposively (non-probability) selected secondary school students in Al-Basrah City. Data collection took such a lengthy period, starting from 30th October 2022 to 30th April, 2023.

Research Instrument

To achieve the study objectives, the following questionnaires were carefully formulated by the researcher. The following is an account of the questionnaire that was developed after a systematic analysis of relevant literature and other research conducted previously. It played the main role in collecting the data given regarding the personality assessment of secondary school students through personality inventory. The format of the questionnaire was designed in such a way that it was divided into three clear sections. The first part of the study entailed structured questionnaires to the students, and details that were obtained include age, gender, residence, number of days out of the class monthly, and history of failure. The second section was the collection of parent-related information from the students directly, which included aspects of the education standard, occupation, blood relation, and the general economic condition of the parents of the students. The third section was intended to measure the characterising features of the tested students, including 25 questions according to the DSM-Brief form (PID-5-BF) for students from 11 to 17 years old, allowing them to receive a full picture of the personality traits of the subjects under the analysis. The DSM-Brief Form for Personality (PID-5-BF) has become a well-established measure of personality traits in children and adolescents and has been used in many studies (Porcerelli *et al.*, 2019; Dunne *et al.*, 2021; Athar & Ebrahimi, 2023). The PID-5-BF was originally designed for

individuals 11-17 years old; however, several a priori reasons motivated to include adolescents up to 19 years of age. Whereas adolescence is characterised by following its standard process, the said phase of development usually continues beyond 17 years old and contains late adolescence. In this period people affirm more distinctive personality traits, self-orientation, and emotional maturation. Widening the age range to 19 years allowed to get a fuller grasp of which personality traits manifest over this influential developmental period. This choice fits well with the concept that still developing identity and personality development are typical for late adolescence. Additionally, it enhances the generalisability of these findings to a broader age group of secondary school students, ensuring a more holistic understanding of personality traits in this population.

Validity and Reliability

This study was rigorously validated to ensure that the research tool adequately measured desired personality traits among adolescents by being subjected to content validation, expert assessment for face validity, and criterion-related validation. In the item analysis of the questionnaire, internal consistency was established (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) very high for all key constructs, and therefore items in any construction were tapping the same domain. The test-retest reliability indicated that responses were stable over time, and the inter-rater reliability confirmed the consistency of the data collection strategy.

Data Collection

Collecting data was in the form of face-to-face interviews with students so that the research could be highly personalised and interactive to extract invaluable details. The well-trained interview team, also familiar with the objectives of the research and to some extent skilled in what is referred to here as 'interview etiquette,' conducted similar conversations within a high school setting. This then involved the face-to-face administration of a structured questionnaire that was designed with great care to cover a broad range of personality attributes and sociodemographic variables, set Scale items delivered in these interviews. This method enabled real-time question clarification amongst the participants, guaranteeing a comprehensive understanding of statements by rephrasing questions whenever needed, hence decreasing any miscomprehensions as much as possible.

Additionally, face-to-face interviews also allowed interaction between the interviewers and the students; this fostered a friendly environment; hence the interview sessions were able to obtain necessary information in a comfortable and relaxed manner.

Statistical Analysis

Accomplishing the data collection procedures, statistical analysis was done on the data obtained. Simple percentage calculations and use of frequency distributions, standard deviation computations, Chi-square tests, correlation coefficients, spearman rank correlation coefficients, and Bi Serial Point Correlation tests were used. These statistical techniques were selected because they allowed for the overall analysis of gathered data, helping with the investigation of relations between personality characteristics and sociodemographic factors of the adolescent participants.

Ethical Consideration

This study received ethical approval from the University of Warith Al-Anbiyaa, Iraq with reference number 3/4/195 on 5th October, 2022.

RESULTS

The descriptive analysis of Table 1 affords a basic understanding of the demographic attributes of the adolescent participants as part of this study. Age Distribution: However, the largest percentage of the adolescent sample is found in the "17-19" years age category, constituting 52% of the total sample. This observation corresponds to the acknowledged late adolescence, the time at which subjects undergo various cognitive and emotional developments, in addition to the enhancement of the individual's self-identity. Adulthood can also be discussed in terms of several stages and personality development; still, late adolescence can be viewed as especially appropriate for personality development due to the elevated level of exploration that is characteristic of people of this age.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Adolescents

List	Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%
1	Age (Years)	11 – 13	0
		14 – 16	48
		17 – 19	52
		Total	150
2	Gender	Male	78
		Female	22
		Total	150
3	Birth Order	First – Second	44
		Third – Fourth	30
		Fifth – Sixth	18
		Seventh – Eighth	8
		Total	150
4	No. of Days Absent / Month	None	50
		One	28
		Two	10
		Three +	12
		Total	150
5	Failed in School	Yes	16
		No	84
		Total	150
6	Residency	Urban	88
		Rural	12
		Total	150
7	Socioeconomic Status	Sufficient	10
		Barely sufficient	60
		Insufficient	30
		Total	150

f: Frequency, %: Percentage

Gender Balance: Another noteworthy fact demonstrated in the data is the importance of gender distinctions; the respondents' predetermined gender distribution is 78% male. These gender dynamics are in agreement with the research focused on the manifestations of personality traits in adolescents. The differences are supposed to result from biological, social, and cultural factors influencing personality in male and female adolescents.

Birth Order Influence: Another interesting fact, which has been established in the study concerns the birth order of adolescents. Among the participants, 44% were firstborn, which provides an opportunity for studying the birth order effect on personality. This line of research has indicated that the birth order can affect personality because of differences in family environment and roles assigned to a child. Studying these relations may prove useful to understand how the type of family affects the development of personality in teenagers.

School Attendance and Academic Performance: The adolescent reported no absenteeism fifty percent of the time, as evidenced by the study; this underlines that school attendance is crucial during the developmental phase. These results present academic achievement as a critical factor in adolescent development. Thus, academic achievements could be significant for the formation of adolescents' self-esteem and self-conception and, therefore, for personality formation. **Residency:** The study will target mostly participants from the urban setting, as depicted by 88% of the study participants. This urban residency pattern brings certain environmental and social factors that may shape one's personality and adjustment processes during adolescence. Thus, potential and risks in Personality development differ depending on the urban or rural environment. Such antecedent experiences could be the kind of experiences that bombard the child, frequent peer associations, and educational and recreational facilities. **Socioeconomic Status:** Respondents' assessment of their Socioeconomic Status (SES) is relatively low, and 60% of the participants characterised it as 'sufficient only'.

This characteristic applies to the financial situation of many in the sample group. Socioeconomic status constitutes a broad concept that defines a teenager's position regarding resources, opportunities, and stressors

of everyday life. Living with family could mean that young people are still learning to look after themselves, and the different opportunities and challenges that adolescents from diverse SES may encounter about personality development may vary. Thus, the analysis of the connection between the level of socioeconomic status and temperament contributes significantly to the comprehension of numerous factors that shape the development of adolescents.

Table 2: Assessment of Adolescents' Personality Traits Domains

Personality Traits	Min	Max	M± SD	Assessment
Negative affect	0	13	7.01 ± 2.592	Moderate
Detachment	0	12	5.13 ± 2.568	Moderate
Antagonism	0	15	7.56 ± 2.921	Moderate
Disinhibition	0	10	4.53 ± 2.045	Low
Psychoticism	0	11	4.94 ± 2.745	Low

Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum M: Mean for total score, SD: Standard Deviation for total score;
Low= 0 – 5, Moderate= 5.1 – 10, High= 10.1 – 15

As is evident from the analysis of Table 2, there are different personality trait domains among the adolescent participants. According to Watson *et al.* (2022) classification, adolescents in this study are characterised by a moderate level of negative affect, $M \pm SD = 7.01 \pm 2.592$, which means that they occasionally feel anxiety or sadness. They also display the detachment profile ($M \pm SD = 5.13 \pm 2.568$), which has elements of emotional self-sufficiency and distance. Additionally, antagonism traits ($M \pm SD = 7.56 \pm 2.291$) are observed, indicating this profile of this subject, which is characterised by opposition and interpersonal conflict, but these adolescents are characterised with a lesser score of disinhibitions ($M \pm SD = 4.53 \pm 2.045$) and therefore can be regarded as reasonably self-controlled. Furthermore, the findings show that psychoticism traits ($M \pm SD = 4.94 \pm 2.745$) exist, though at a sub-optimal level; this implies that there are people with inventive and erratic characters and behaviours. Such differentiated personality trait pictures offer the most significant theological knowledge concerning the psychological structure of adolescents in this study and, at the same time, reveal that personality change during the period of adolescence is much more diverse and multifaceted than was previously thought.

Table 3: Comprehensive Evaluation of Adolescents' Personality Inventory

Dysfunction	f	%	M	SD	Assessment
Low	49	32.6	29.16	7.019	Moderate dysfunction
Moderate	100	66.7			
High	1	0.7			
Total	150	100			

f: Frequency, %: Percentage; M: Mean for total score, SD: Standard Deviation for total score; Low= 0 – 25, Moderate= 26 – 50, High= 26 – 75

Table 3 presents an overall evaluation of the personality inventory, hence an appreciation of the various aspects of the psychological status of the adolescent participants. As can be observed in the analysis of the overall scores, a large percentage of the adolescents, being 66.7 percent, are inclined to moderate personality dysfunction. About this argument, the mean total score developed within the study indicates a central tendency toward moderate dysfunction in the overall population ($M \pm SD = 29.16 \pm 7.019$).

Table 4: Relationships between Adolescents' Personality and Sociodemographic Traits

Characteristics	Correlation Coefficient		
	R	P-value	Significance
Age	-0.061*	0.458	NS
Gender	-0.066**	0.421	NS
Residency	0.052*	0.524	NS
Father's education	0.015**	0.854	NS
Mother's education	0.067*	0.416	NS
Father's occupation	0.119*	0.147	NS
Mother's occupation	0.017*	-0.836	NS
Socioeconomic status	0.001*	0.988	NS

r = Correlation coefficient (*) = Spearman Rank Correlation coefficient, (**) = Bi-serial Point Correlation, N. S= Not significant

Table 4 summarises the correlation of adolescents' personality traits to different sociodemographic characteristics. Surprisingly, non-significant differences in personality traits are presented in the given table because the results do not indicate that sociodemographic characteristics are significantly related to adolescents' personality traits. It extends age, which earlier has been under discussion regarding changes in personality during adolescence; gender, despite the findings of gender differences; type of living area, which emphasises the stochasticity of the personality development; and level of education, which states the role of individual differences. About these discoveries, there is a need to abandon structured demographics in favour of personally relevant and more context-dependent developmental effects of personalities during adolescence.

DISCUSSION

This study offers insights into different facets of personality traits and their relationship with sociodemographic variables of students of adolescent age enrolled in secondary institutions. The findings from Table 1 established various demographic characteristics of the participants in this study. In particular, it is worth noting the youngsters' age distribution (Meehan, 1993), where the largest age category was 17–19 years, comprising 52% of the participants. This corresponds with the stage of life development of late adolescence, where people are now more aware of their identities (Bogaerts *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, the participants' gender distribution was skewed male (78%), in alignment with other studies that pointed out that males and females may manifest personality traits differently during adolescence.

Notably, the study revealed that 44% of the adolescents in the study were firstborn, leaving room for research on birth order and personality in adolescence. Additionally, the social status of the majority of the adolescents was not affected by their school attendance since 80% of the adolescents had no school absenteeism and 16% of adolescents said they had not made credit in their classes. These outcomes may stem from the values related to adherence to the school attendance and performance during the development of the adolescents (Urbán *et al.*, 2024). In terms of the socioeconomic status of the adolescents, 60% considered the so-defined status as adequate only by the slightest margin. This aspect can therefore support the contention on the notion that there are actual differences in personality as a function of socioeconomic status (Kumar & Voracek, 2022).

Table 2 provides a look at the personality traits of teenagers. It's interesting to note that most teenagers showed levels of emotions, detachment, and antagonism traits. This could suggest a relationship between personality and emotional control during the years (Cattellino *et al.*, 2023). On the other hand, teenagers seemed to have levels of disinhibition and psychoticism traits, indicating some level of emotional strength and resilience in this group.

The overall results from Table 3 indicate that a significant portion (66.7%) of teenagers in the study displayed dysfunction in their personalities. This highlights the importance of delving into what contributes to personality issues during adolescence and how it can impact health and well-being. It also stresses the significance of evaluating personality traits during this stage since these issues can affect health and well-being (Halat *et al.* 2023). It brings up questions about the difficulties and pressures experienced by these teenagers as well as the possible need for tailored interventions to support their psychological growth.

The notion of borderline personality disorder is based on a certain intermediate assessment of the adolescents' personality, indicating that they may encounter problems or difficulties in some of the aspects of their temperamental regulation. This moderate level of dysfunction could be as simple as sometimes having trouble dealing with stress, regulating emotions, or having problems with interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, this result enhances the understanding of personality assessment at the adolescent stage, as the traits might be vital in the determination of mental health or well-being. The process of leaving childhood and entering adolescence is characterised by numerous developmental changes, and thus it is critical to identify the patterns of personality dysfunction during this development stage to provide timely support. For patients with moderate levels of dysfunction, it is recommended that personality traits be targeted by specific interventions, thereby enhancing adolescents' psychosocial functioning.

Contrary to expectations, the study did not find significant associations between adolescents' personality

traits and various sociodemographic variables, including age, gender, residency, level of education, occupation, and socioeconomic status. These results raise intriguing questions about the complex nature of personality development during adolescence and the potential influence of individual differences and contextual factors (Haehner *et al.*, 2024).

Limitation

According to the design and sampling of this study, there is a risk of bias in selecting the study sample. The small sample size is also another limitation of this study. Finally, the influence of confounding factors that may affect the results of the present study is a limitation.

CONCLUSION

The study provides useful insights into the adolescent personality development of high school students. The researchers discovered so many aspects of personality in adolescents. In addition, in the adolescents that was observed, there were moderate levels of negative affect, detachment, and antagonism as well as low levels of disinhibition and psychoticism. Interestingly, there was no substantial relationship between adolescent personality traits and demographic variables (age, gender, residence, education, occupation, and socioeconomic status) in this study, although overall the lives of adolescents were quite varied. This study may suggest the need to understand adolescent personality development less categorically by exploring the nuanced plaques and connections in the larger framework of life rather than focusing solely on demographics. If these results are generalisable, this study may encourage a more personalised view of adolescent personality development, which is relevant for the development of interventions specifically designed to support tolerant psychological growth and development. Future studies may be recommended with a large sample size and randomised clinical trial design.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicting interests related to this research.

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