Individual Differences – Personality Characteristics

Temperament

*Psychological qualities that emanate from inherited physiological potentials and processes*

- Temperamental dispositions are inherited

Personality

*Stable patterns of thoughts, emotions, & behavior that characterize people across time and situations*

- Traits affect selection, evocation, manipulation, & persistence in situations

- Big Five Personality Factors
  - OCEAN

Extraversion- Introversion

*Whether energies are directed toward the inner world of one’s own thoughts and feelings, or toward the outer world of objects and other people*

- Three facets

  - Are Extraverts more happy?

  - Behavioral Activating System
Neuroticism – Emotional Stability
*Tendency to experience negative affect and to feel chronically dissatisfied and unhappy*

- Are Neurotics unhappy?
  - Behavioral Inhibition System

Arousal

- Represents a variety of processes that govern alertness, wakefulness, and activation

- Physiological state that is reflected by the activity of the brain, skeletal muscular system, and ANS

Inverted-U Curve: Yerkes-Dodson Law

Heron’s Sensory Deprivation Study
Key Implications

- The brain & nervous system prefer at least a moderate amount of arousal

- People are motivated to counteract underarousal and insufficient stimulation, (e.g., dreams and visions)

Excessive Stimulation & Overarousal

- Caused by sources of stress such as major life events, daily hassles, & chronic circumstances

- Results in emotional, cognitive, and physiological disruption

Sensation Seeking

*The seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take risks for the sake of such experience.*

- Conceptualized as a set of related components (SSS)
  - Thrill & Adventure Seeking
  - Experience Seeking
  - Disinhibition
  - Boredom Susceptibility

- Associated with low levels of MAO

Sensation Seekers’ Goals
• New experiences

• Risk taking

• Volunteering for unusual activities

Affect Intensity

• The strength in which we experience our emotions

• Affect-intense individuals show intensified emotional reactions

• Affect-intense individuals seek out opportunities for emotional arousal

Perceived Control

The beliefs and expectations people hold that they can interact with the environment in ways that produce desired outcomes and prevent undesired outcomes.

• Perceived control leads to perceived competence, perceived ability, and self-efficacy.

Self-Confirming Cycles

Perceived Control

Engagement

Performance

Attributions
Expectations of Control

**Desire for Control**

*The extent to which we are motivated to establish control over the events in our lives.*

High DC individuals:

1. Perceive control over chance outcomes
2. Attempt to establish control over interpersonal communication
3. Persist longer on difficult tasks
4. Have higher aspirations and standards
5. Use self-serving bias
6. Are more vulnerable to Learned Helplessness when control is not attainable