

## **Consequences of Introversion**

By Raya Mewborn

### **Abstract**

Personality in the scope of psychology is referring to the differences in an individual's patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. A person's personality affects their entire life, from every choice they make to every relationship they may form and it has been shown to have effects on people's mental and physical health. The purpose of my research was to study both introverted and extroverted individuals and to determine if and how someone's personality can affect their life. My research identifies the disparities between the quality of life of introverts when compared to extroverts and it discusses the strong correlation between an individual's personality and their overall life satisfaction.

*Keywords:* The Big Five, introversion, extroversion, personality, life satisfaction, quality of life, neuroticism, consciousness

### **Consequences of Introversion**

Through decades of research and experimentation psychologists and healthcare professionals have been able to study the connection between someone's personality and life satisfaction. They use what is commonly known as personality theory and through their use of personality theory, these professionals have been able to both predict and observe the extent to which personality affects a person's life. Psychosocial Rehabilitation Specialist Kendra Cherry (2021) defines personality theory as, “ the study into an individual's personality and the way they feel, behave and interact with the world around them. These theories aim to understand the origin of personalities and the summation of a person's traits.” My research highlights the disparities between the quality of life of introverts in comparison to extroverts and it discusses the strong correlation between an individual’s personality and their overall life satisfaction.

### **History of Personality Theory**

How psychologists have interpreted personality has evolved tremendously in the last century and numerous theories have been proposed. Those proposals and evolution have led to the model that many are familiar with today. The purpose of my research was to investigate if introverts were disadvantaged in comparison to extroverts and if they were to what extent. I believed that the most effective research to analyze to come to an unbiased conclusion would be experiments. By examining experiments that were conducted by multiple universities as well as personal accounts, I believe I was able to fully comprehend just how significant and influential our personalities are in our lives. As stated by personality and emotional intelligence expert John D. Mayer (2005):

Personality in psychology is the basis in which we characterize a person's disposition. Personality concerns the most important, most noticeable, parts of an individual's psychological life. Personality concerns whether a person is happy or sad, energetic or apathetic, smart or dull. Over the years, many different definitions have been proposed for personality. Most of the definitions refer to a mental system—a collection of psychological parts including motives, emotions, and thoughts. The definitions vary, but they come down to the idea that personality involves a pattern or global operation of mental systems.

Each trait in a person works alongside our other traits to create and refine our personalities and allow for our mental systems to run properly. Our thoughts, feelings, and motivation can all be attributed to our personalities.

*Definition.* The definition of personality differs based on context and situation, so in my research which focuses primarily on the connection between introversion and extroversion and an individual's personality, personality is defined as, “An individual's pattern of psychological processes arises from motives, feelings, thoughts, and other major areas of psychological function. Personality is expressed through its influences on the body, in conscious mental life, and through the individual's social behavior” (Devadoss & Minnie, 2013).

Personality psychology is a scientific discipline that aims to understand a person's major psychological patterns and how those patterns are reflected in a person's life”. It looks at and studies every element that makes up a person's being. From birth to death personality psychology seeks to understand the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of an individual and how that affects the choices they make.

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The primary audience for my research would be others studying psychology or who have an interest in personality. Those who have a general understanding of basic psychology may also be interested in the information I have collected as well. Also, I believe that my secondary audience would be most people in general. Every person in the world has a personality and my research differentiates and explains the major two personality types (introversion and extroversion), and what life looks like for those people, in addition to highlighting the gap and contrast between their qualities of life.

### ***Biological Influence***

Our personalities are not just a result of our environment, our relationship with others, or our upbringing, aspects of our personalities are predetermined before we are even born. Biology has played a significant role in psychology and in determining potential trends and patterns in a person's life. In a study conducted in Minnesota, psychologists aimed to find the “Sources of Human Psychological Differences” (Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, Segal, and Tellegen 1990):

In the field of behavioral genetics, the Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart—a well-known study of the genetic basis for personality—conducted research with twins from 1979 to 1999... In studying 350 pairs of twins, including pairs of identical and fraternal twins reared together and apart, researchers found that identical twins, whether raised together or apart, have very similar personalities. These findings suggest the heritability of some personality traits.

*Genetics.* Certain traits a person possesses can be attributed to genetics. When someone is born with a certain trait, in some cases regardless of an individual's environment or upbringing these traits can become ingrained and solidify features in a person's personality. When studying a

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subject such as psychology it is important to look at individuals and to recognize the genetic and biological impact, a person's genes, as well as their minds, can affect their psychology. As described by neuroscientist and doctor Saul Leod (2021), "Each aspect of personality (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) can be traced back to a different biological cause. Personality is dependent on the balance between the excitation and inhibition process of the autonomic nervous system (ANS)." Our personalities are a series of actions that takes place in our brains between neurotransmitters in response to external stimuli, and what our personalities become is reliant on the relationship between excitation and inhibition. (American Psychology Association)

*Theory of Personality.* Personality is considered to be a continuum, where most people fall somewhere in between the two extremes. There have been many theories and concepts regarding personality dating back to the 18th century. In recent decades, studies in psychology have changed in favor of a more idiographic view of personality, preferring a more scientific approach. This change in the field has led to a model known as, "The Big Five."

*The Big Five.* Through research, psychologists have determined that five major traits make up an individual's personality. The five traits are openness which features characteristics such as curiosity, imagination, and insight; conscientiousness which focuses on thoughtfulness, impulse control, and goal-directed behavior; extraversion whose designated traits are excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and very emotionally expressive; agreeableness which includes the traits trust, altruism, kindness, affection; and finally neuroticism which is associated with sadness, moodiness, and emotional instability.

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These five traits determine our personalities; each trait represents a scale, and where an individual lies ranges. Where an individual falls for each respective trait will very likely determine what kind of person they are, introverted or extroverted, and where these traits lie can affect a person's physical and mental well-being as well as their relationships. These traits have been proved to be universal, and are backed by their biological origins.

In my research into personality and its effects, I mainly focused on comparing the personalities of introverts and extroverts and showing how someone's personality is reflected in their relationships, mental health, and in their physical health. The concept of introversion and extroversion was first introduced in 1910 by psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, who is credited with founding analytical psychology. His work has since been used and influenced both the fields of psychiatry and psychology. Jung described and formed how personality is thought of today. He defined introversion as an "attitude-type characterized by orientation in life through subjective psychic contents". Simply put this means that people who are considered or consider themselves to be introverts usually prefer and tend to focus on their internal thoughts, rather than what is happening around them or externally.

*Effects on Relationships.* Due to the prevalence of pop culture and the influence of social media, what introversion truly is and what it means has become synonymous with a person being shy, or uncomfortable around others which is not the true definition. But the stigma surrounding introversion has put those who are more reserved at a great disadvantage. The relationships people have are determined primarily by their personalities and the compatibility they have with their partner, and introverts who were in a romantic relationship were studied to see if their personality affected their partners, which it did. In a study conducted by the University of

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California, researchers Jacob S. Gray and Judith J. Pinchot (2017) were able to test and analyze the associations between a person and their partner's personality to their health.

A promising avenue of personality trait research is the consideration of one's relationships and how romantic partners can influence important outcomes of romantic partners. The personality traits of one's partner have been used to predict life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and work performance. The examination of partner personality and individual outcomes has illuminated interpersonal processes and provided evidence that many individual outcomes, such as psychological well-being, are inherently interpersonal.

Through their study, the researchers were able to test and prove their theory that suggests there is a relationship between a person and their partner's personality to their health. Couples who were high in neuroticism were shown to have both lower life satisfaction (including their health) and marital satisfaction, and neuroticism is a trait closely associated with introversion.

### **Introversion**

Introversion is a personality trait characterized by a focus on internal feelings rather than on external sources of stimulation. Introverts and extroverts are often viewed in terms of two extreme opposites, but the truth is that most people lie somewhere in the middle. Those who are considered to be introverted have shown to have higher levels of neuroticism which can lead to a decline in a person's mental health. Neuroticism is a trait that is closely associated with psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression, and those who had higher levels of

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neuroticism were more likely to experience depressive episodes compared to their extroverted counterparts. In a study conducted by the Department of Mental Health, researchers were able to further compare the relationship between introversion, neuroticism, and mental health (Korvenheimo. 2009),

The overall level of neuroticism is somewhat higher in depressive patients than in the general population. Anxiety symptoms and depressive symptoms have a strong influence on neuroticism scores, but only depression has an impact on introversion during a depressive episode.

As the information on personality psychology evolves, research has suggested that underlying personality is a significant factor in depression, anxiety, and suicidality. Introversion having a particularly close relationship to specific mental disorders may be the result of an underlying genetic trait. It is highly theorized that introversion acts alongside other core personality traits, primarily neuroticism to influence depression. (National Library of Medicine)

### **Extroversion**

The second personality type used to describe an individual is an extrovert. An extrovert is defined as, “an individual who prefers to engage with the outside world of objects, sensory perception, and action”(Olivia-Guy-Evans, 2021). Generally, extroverts have been shown to have higher levels of conscientiousness, openness, extraversion, and agreeability, and were less likely to experience symptoms associated with neuroticism. With this information and in combination with the use of preventive medicine, doctors were able to study individual



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personalities, and predict potential risk factors. Those who were extroverted were universally healthier than introverts in both mind and body. In a study conducted by the Duke University Medical Center and executive director of the American Psychological Association Norman B. Anderson (2014), the experiment backed previous theories supporting the use of personality psychology to predict risk factors in a person's health:

Being conscientious appears to be the best bet for good health among traits known as the 'Big Five'. Participants who were more conscientious when they were 26 years old were more likely to be in much better health at age 38 than those who were low in that personality trait, the study found. 'Among the least conscientious, 45 percent went on to develop multiple health problems by age 38, while just 18 percent of the most conscientious group developed health problems,' Israel said. 'Individuals low in conscientiousness were more often overweight, had high cholesterol, inflammation, hypertension and greater rates of gum disease.'

Conscientiousness has been shown as being a trait that is related to extroversion, and those who participated in the study and had lower levels of conscientiousness would then later go on to develop a series of health problems in the future.

The purpose of the study was to verify the validity of using personality psychology as a resource in traditional healthcare. The study went on to confirm information that had been theorized previously, that conscientiousness despite initial belief is a trait more closely associated with extraversion rather than introversion, and those who experienced higher levels of conscientiousness were universally healthier than those who were seen with lower levels, "Conscientious people are more likely to have active lifestyles, maintain healthy diets, and have

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more self-control, so are less likely to smoke or abuse alcohol and drugs, the study noted.”

(American Psychological Association 2014). This could potentially explain the relationship between conscientiousness and better health. Extroverts who were proven to be naturally less neurotic were also seen having more satisfaction from their relationships and subsequently life, this satisfaction was shown to have positive effects on their health and happiness.

Personality characteristics affect their intimate relationships. Relationship satisfaction is important in adulthood. Satisfied individuals in long-term romantic relationships are happier, healthier, and have longer lives. The present study was conducted to find out the relationship between extraversion and general relationship satisfaction, using The Big Five Personality Test and Relationship Assessment Scale. It was found that relationship satisfaction was associated with decreases in neuroticism and increases in extraversion over time (Jain & Singh, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of my research was to compare the lives of introverts to extroverts while mainly focusing on an individual's health and their relationships as a means to analyze their quality of life and overall life satisfaction. I have concluded that introverts are indeed disadvantaged. The traits that define our personalities are a result of both biology as well as the environment in which someone grows up. Those who were higher in neuroticism which is a trait closely related to introversion were shown to be less healthy, live shorter lives, have less satisfying relationships, and were more likely to have anxiety or depression. Whereas extroverts were universally happier and healthy in every regard. With this information, and by showing the

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disparities between the life satisfaction of introverts when compared to extroverts, I hope to find a solution or an idea that acknowledges the difference and makes steps to address and minimize that gap.

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