

# Gender Matters: Extraversion Traits Among Malaysian Undergraduates

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## Abstract

This research study investigates the relationship between extraversion traits and gender among undergraduate students in Malaysia. Understanding the connection between personality traits and gender is essential in educational settings, as it can contribute to a better understanding of individual differences and inform pedagogical approaches. The study involved a sample of 226 undergraduate students enrolled in various higher education institutions in Malaysia pursuing English courses. Data regarding extraversion traits and gender were collected and subsequently the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire was used to gauge extraversion traits among the students. Statistical analysis, specifically the independent t-test, was conducted to examine potential differences in extraversion traits based on gender. The results indicated a significant difference in extraversion personality between male and female students. These findings provide valuable insights into the influence of gender on extraversion traits among undergraduate students in Malaysia. Further research in this area can deepen our understanding of the implications for academic performance, psychological well-being, and the development of tailored educational interventions that account for individual differences related to gender and personality traits.

**Keywords:** *extraversion, extrovert, introvert, personality, gender*

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## Introduction

The connection between personality traits and gender is meaningful in educational settings as it provides valuable insights into individual differences and informs pedagogical approaches (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). In the context of Malaysia, where cultural norms and societal expectations can influence the expression and development of personality traits, investigating the relationship between extraversion traits and gender becomes particularly relevant.

Cultural influences, both societal and institutional, shape the parameters within which gendered expectations for extraversion are expressed. A study by Wood and Eagly (2012) found that cultural norms regarding gender roles strongly impact personality traits. These norms

influence how male and female undergraduates are expected to interact with their peers and instructors, which in turn affects their extraversion expression.

Personality traits, including extraversion, have a significant impact on individuals' behaviour, social interactions, and overall well-being (McCrae & Costa, 1999). Extraversion, specifically, reflects the degree to which individuals seek and enjoy social interactions. Gender, on the other hand, encompasses various aspects, such as biological, psychological, and sociocultural dimensions, that influence individuals' identity and behaviour (Eagly & Wood, 2013). Exploring the relationship between extraversion traits and gender in the Malaysian educational context can provide valuable insights into the complex connection between these factors and their implications for students' academic performance and psychological well-being.

## Literature Review

Gender-specific socialisation processes play a pivotal role in shaping the expression of extraversion traits among undergraduates. According to Eagly's social role theory (1987), individuals learn and internalise behaviours, values, and norms associated with their gender roles through interactions with their social environment. This theory suggests that societal expectations for gendered behaviour are transmitted from childhood and continue to influence behaviour in adulthood. In the context of extraversion, these gendered expectations may lead to different ways in which male and female undergraduates express their extraversion traits.

Research by Suitor and Pillemer (2006) highlights how parents tend to encourage extraverted behaviours, such as assertiveness and outgoingness, more in their male children as compared to female children. This parental reinforcement aligns with societal norms that associate such behaviours with masculinity. Consequently, male undergraduates might feel more socially rewarded for engaging in extraverted activities, leading to a greater expression of these traits.

Educational environments, including classrooms and campus cultures, further contribute to the shaping of gender-specific extraversion expression among undergraduates. In a study by Etaugh and Liss (1992), male students were found to dominate classroom discussions, reflecting the traditional expectation of men as vocal leaders. Female students, on the other hand, often demonstrated more collaborative and empathetic behaviours, aligning with communal aspects of extraversion.

Peer interactions within educational contexts can reinforce or challenge gendered expectations for social behaviour. Research by Smith and Mott (2006) suggests that male-dominated peer groups might encourage extraverted behaviours associated with competitiveness and dominance. Female peer groups, on the other hand, may foster extraversion traits related to nurturing and cooperation.

Numerous studies have explored gender differences in extraversion traits, revealing that, on average, males tend to display higher levels of extraversion than females (Boudreaux et al., 2019; Kajonius et al., 2016). However, it is crucial to recognise that these findings reflect group-level tendencies and do not imply uniformity within genders. Substantial individual differences exist, necessitating a nuanced examination of extraversion and its relationship with gender. Sociocultural factors play a significant role in shaping these gender differences.

Research has emphasised the impact of cultural expectations, societal norms, and gender roles on the development and expression of extraversion traits in males and females (Gurven et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2018). These expectations influence how extraversion is manifested and perceived in different gender groups.

The expression of extraversion traits is also influenced by the social context in which individuals find themselves. Studies have demonstrated that the interaction between gender and contextual factors shapes the manifestation of extraversion. For instance, Almedia et. al (2020) found that gender differences in extraversion were more pronounced in situations that emphasised social dominance and assertiveness. This highlights the importance of considering situational factors and their connection with gender when studying extraversion.

Understanding the relationship between extraversion traits and gender has implications across various domains, including education, workplace dynamics, and interpersonal relationships.

In educational settings, gender differences in extraversion have been found to be relevant, necessitating tailored approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles (Cantarelli et al., 2017; Ouyang et al., 2020). In the workplace, understanding the connection between extraversion and gender is crucial for promoting gender equality and fostering inclusive organizational cultures (Huang et al., 2021; O'Connell et al., 2017). Additionally, gender differences in extraversion have implications for interpersonal relationship dynamics and communication patterns (González-Morales et al., 2016; Hart et al., 2020).

While significant progress has been made in understanding the relationship between extraversion traits and gender, further research is needed. Exploring the underlying mechanisms and processes that contribute to gender differences in extraversion, considering the complex connection of biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors, is crucial. Recent studies have also called for research on the intersectionality of gender with other social identities, such as race and ethnicity, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how multiple identities shape extraversion (Boudreaux et al., 2019; Kajonius et al., 2016).

Research on extraversion traits and gender in Malaysia has provided insights into the relationship between these variables in the Malaysian context. One study conducted by Lee et al. (2018) examined gender differences in extraversion traits among Malaysian university students and found that male students tended to score higher in extraversion compared to female students. This aligns with the general pattern observed in many cultures where males exhibit higher levels of extraversion than females (Lee et al., 2018). Another study by Lim et al. (2020) explored the role of gender in the relationship between extraversion and subjective well-being among Malaysian adults. The results revealed a significant interaction effect between extraversion and gender on subjective well-being, with extraversion having a stronger positive association with well-being among males as compared to females (Lim et al., 2020). These studies emphasise the importance of considering gender differences in extraversion traits within the Malaysian population and call for further research to investigate the underlying mechanisms and cultural factors contributing to these differences.

Understanding the relationship between extraversion traits and gender is crucial in educational settings, as it enables a better comprehension of individual differences and facilitates the development of effective pedagogical approaches. In the context of Malaysia, where cultural norms and societal expectations may influence the expression and development

of personality traits, exploring the connection between extraversion and gender becomes particularly relevant. This research study aims to investigate the relationship between extraversion traits and gender among undergraduate students in Malaysia, contributing to the growing body of literature on personality and gender within the Malaysian educational context.

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

The study involved 226 undergraduate students from Malaysia who were pursuing English courses at various higher education institutions. Purposive sampling was conducted, considering the study's objectives. The age range of all the students included in the study was between 18 and 21 years.

### ***Instruments***

To collect information on extraversion and gender, a student Demographic Questionnaire was administered. Additionally, the Extraversion items in the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ-R) was used to gauge extraversion. Then, data analysis was performed using SPSS.

### ***Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ)***

The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ), developed by H.J. Eysenck in 1975, is a widely utilized self-report personality test that remains relevant today. Its reliability and validity have been confirmed by several researchers, including Dewaele and Furnham (1999) and Berry (2007), making it one of the most popular psychological assessment tools. The EPQ was selected for this study based on four key factors: Firstly, it has been employed in academic research for over three decades and has consistently demonstrated high reliability. Secondly, it is a time-efficient assessment as it does not require excessive completion time. Thirdly, it is particularly suitable for ESL (English as a Second Language) students due to its straightforward yes/no questions and manageable complexity for analysis. Lastly, the questionnaire avoids questions that may confuse or bias students from different cultural backgrounds and also ensures that assessments of extraversion and introversion remain unaffected.

## **Data Analysis and Findings**

The study utilised statistical methods of Skewness and Kurtosis to check for normality. Coakes (2013) states that the assumption of normality is a prerequisite for many inferential statistical techniques. The standard use of Multiple Regression Analysis is based on the basic assumption that the observations are drawn from a continuous and multivariate normal population. In this study, Skewness refers to the symmetry of the distribution, and kurtosis refers to the peak of the distribution (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). Furthermore, Hair et al. (2014) suggests that acceptable values for skewness and kurtosis should range between -1.0 and 1.0. However,

Gravetter & Wallnau (2014) and George & Mallery (2010) claim that the acceptable limits between -2.0 and +2.0 are considered adequate to verify normal univariate distribution.

The normality of the current study was evaluated by examining the skewness and kurtosis values for each item. According to Table 4.1, the skewness values ranged from -0.288 to 0.503, while the kurtosis values ranged from -0.822 to -0.371. These measures indicate that the data does not deviate significantly from a normal distribution, satisfying the assumption for using parametric statistical analysis (Hair et al., 2014).

Alternatively, another method to assess the normality distribution of the data is by examining the kurtosis values. Specifically, for sample sizes larger than 200, kurtosis values falling within the range of -3.0 to +3.0 suggest a normal distribution (Awang et al., 2018). In Table 4.1, the kurtosis values observed were between -0.822 and -0.371, indicating a normal distribution of the data.

Table 1: The Assessment of the Items of the Extraversion Questionnaire

Items	Skewness	Kurtosis
Are you a talkative person?	-0.059	-0.409
Are you rather lively?	-0.079	-0.633
Do you enjoy meeting new people?	-0.248	-0.696
Can you usually let yourself go and enjoy yourself at a lively gathering?	0.105	-0.818
Do you usually take the initiative in making new friends?	0.081	-0.653
Can you easily get some life into a rather dull gathering?	0.503	-0.371
Do you like mixing with people?	-0.189	-0.498
Do you like plenty of bustle and excitement around you?	-0.288	-0.460
Do other people think of you as being very lively?	-0.242	-0.560
Can you get a gathering going?	0.231	-0.659
Do you tend to keep in the background on social occasions?	0.329	-0.822
Are you mostly quiet when you are with other people?	0.337	-0.568

## Reliability Analysis

The questionnaire's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Table 4.2 presents the Cronbach's alpha values used to evaluate the reliability of the items measuring extraversion personality. As displayed in the table, the Cronbach's alpha values for extraversion personality were found to be 0.798, surpassing the minimum threshold of 0.6. This indicates that all the variables used in the measurement demonstrated a reliable level of internal consistency.

Table 2: Reliability Results for the Actual Study

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
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Extraversion Personality	0.798	12
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The independent t-test utilized in this study has identified the significant difference in extraversion personality regarding to their gender. The results of this analysis are shown in the table below:

Table 3: Reliability Results for the Actual Study

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	DF	P (Sig)
Extraversion Personality	Male	65	2.65	0.470	2.261	224	0.025
	Female	161	2.50	0.469			

The table above shows the results of the independent t-test for extraversion personality regarding their gender. Therefore, the p-value for the t-test is 0.025 which is less than the significant level at  $\alpha = 0.05$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). This study indicated that there is a significant difference in extraversion personality regarding to their gender ( $t(224) = 2.261$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Descriptive analysis showed that the mean for the extraversion personality of male students (Mean = 2.65 and SD = 0.470) was greater compared to the extraversion personality of female students (Mean = 2.50 and SD = 0.469). This indicates that the null hypothesis, there is a significant difference in extraversion personality regarding their gender, is accepted because the mean for extraversion personality of male students and extraversion personality of female students was significantly different.

## Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between extraversion personality and gender among Malaysian undergraduates. The results of the independent t-test revealed a significant difference in extraversion personality based on gender. Specifically, male participants demonstrated higher levels of extraversion compared to their female counterparts. These results are parallel with studies conducted by Lee et al. (2018) and Lim et al. (2020), which also reported gender differences in extraversion traits among Malaysian individuals.

In addition, the observed difference in extraversion personality between males and females is unlikely to have occurred by chance. This suggests that gender plays a role in shaping extraversion traits among Malaysian undergraduates. This finding is consistent with the broader pattern observed across cultures, where males tend to display higher levels of extraversion compared to females (Lee et al., 2018).

The acceptance of the null hypothesis indicates that there is indeed a significant difference in extraversion personality based on gender among the participants in this study. These results contribute to the growing body of research on gender differences in personality traits, specifically extraversion, within the Malaysian population.

The findings are consistent with previous research that reported gender differences in

extraversion personality. Studies conducted by Smith et al. (2018) and Boudreaux et al. (2019) also found that male students tend to exhibit higher levels of extraversion compared to females. These consistent findings across different contexts and populations highlight the robustness of the gender differences observed in extraversion personality.

The greater level of extraversion personality displayed by male participants aligns with societal expectations and gender norms. Traditional gender roles often associate extraverted behaviours such as assertiveness, sociability, and outgoingness with masculinity, while emphasising other traits for femininity (Gurven et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2018). These social and cultural factors likely contribute to the observed gender differences in extraversion personality among Malaysian undergraduates.

It is important to note that individual variations exist within gender groups, and the findings should not be generalised to all males and females. Additionally, this study focused solely on the extraversion personality dimension and did not explore other dimensions of personality. Further research is needed to investigate the intricate correlation between gender and various personality traits, considering the influence of sociocultural factors and contextual variables.

## Conclusion

The present study provides evidence of a significant difference in extraversion personality based on gender among Malaysian undergraduates. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on the relationship between extraversion traits and gender. Understanding these differences can have implications for various domains, including education, career development, and interpersonal relationships, highlighting the importance of considering gender-specific needs and characteristics in designing effective interventions and support systems for individuals.

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