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## The Five factor model of personality and stuttering

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### Abstract

The present study investigated the five personality domains of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness, as measured by NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), in a sample of twenty adults who stutter and compared with twenty control group matched to age and gender. Results reveal that mean scores of the personality dimension of Conscientiousness were significantly higher in adults who stutter compared to the control group. Furthermore, male who stutter characterized by significantly higher Neuroticism, than male control group. Following the present results, clinicians might include data on Conscientiousness and Neuroticism to follow an individualized counseling procedure.

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### 1. Introduction

Advanced stutterers' negative feeling and attitudes often need to receive considerable attention in therapy (Guitar, 2006). So, besides classic speech therapy procedures additional psychological based treatment and counseling should address problems possibly linked to the stuttering, e.g. social fears (Guitar, 2010). Here, the speech therapist could also examine the patient's feelings, beliefs and experiences along a focus on the treatment of the speech symptoms. This more broad therapeutic approach requires further input from professionals such as

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psychologists. Diagnosticians and therapists with a psychological background can provide a comprehensive therapeutic package which can help person who stutter to deal with cognitive, affective and behavioral responses relating to stuttering and its affects in different situations of everyday life (Ward, 2006). One essential approach to assess individual differences in the mentioned psychological variables stems from personality psychology. Personality refers to time stable characteristics of a persons resulting in individual differences in cognition, emotion and motivation.

In counseling situations, the self-report questionnaire called NEO-Five-Factor-Inventory (NEO-FFI) can help to characterize the patient (such as persons who stutter) (Haghshenas, 2010). In detail, this measure provides an assessment of the patient's personality based on the Five-Factor-Model (FFM) (Saucier, 1998). This model of personality is a hierarchical organization of personality traits in terms of five basic dimensions: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness (McCrea & John, 1992). Studies on people who stutter and control persons have reported differences in their personality (Iverach et al., 2010; Bleek et al., 2011). Although heterogeneous results were observed in these studies, in particular Neuroticism was elevated in persons who stutter compared to control persons in both studies. Neurotic persons are characterized by being anxious, moody and emotional instable. Interestingly, Iverach et al. (2010) also provided evidence for higher Agreeableness and Conscientiousness in persons who stutter compared to control persons. Higher Agreeableness results in being more kind, sympathetic, cooperative, warm and considerate and Conscientiousness is associated with being reliable, careful and orderly (Thompson, 2008).

Therefore, the present study aims to explore the Five Factor Model of personality among adults who stutter on five personality domains of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness, as measured by NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), which is a shortened version of the NEO PI-R and to compare scores on the five personality domains for adults who stutter with scores of matched control group.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Participants*

Participants included 40 persons ranging in age from 19 to 32 years of age. The experimental group consisted of 20 persons who stutter (mean age: 22.05; SD = 4.19), including 16 men (80%) and 4 women (20%), and a sex and age-matched control group of 20 persons who had no personal history of stuttering (mean age: 22.00, SD = 4.07).

### *2.2. Recruitment of participants*

Eligibility criteria for inclusion in the sample consisting of persons who stutter were (1) age 17 and over, (2) developmental stuttering present before 12 years of age, (3) no more than 10 sessions of speech treatment for stuttering (4) no experience of psychotherapy and (5) a presence of stuttering confirmed by a speech and language pathologist.

The control met the following inclusion criteria: (1) age 17 and over, (2) no personal history of stuttering and (3) no experience of psychotherapy. All eligibility criteria in this study were determined by self-reports. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Tehran University of Medical Sciences. All subjects gave informed consent before participating in the study.

### *2.3. Material and procedure*

40 adult in the present sample, completed the NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The NEO-FFI is a 60-item, self-report measure which provides a comprehensive, global assessment of the five personality domains outlined in the Five Factor Model of personality, including: (1) Neuroticism (e.g., "when I'm under a great deal of stress, sometimes I feel like I'm going to pieces"); (2) Extraversion (e.g., "I like to have a lot of people around everyone I meet"); (3) Openness (e.g., "I have a lot of intellectual curiosity"); (4) Agreeableness (e.g., "I try to be courteous to everyone I meet"); (5) Conscientiousness (e.g., "I have a clear set of goals and work toward them in an orderly fashion"). In this commonly used questionnaire (Saucier, 1998), responses are made on a

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