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## Personality Traits between HIV Infected and Normal Person

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



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### Abstract

The present study was conducted on 64 HIV infected person and 64 normal. The infected patients were selected from hospitals located at Patna, Muzaffarpur & Samastipur. The purpose was (i) to compare the HIV infected person with normal in terms of some personality correlates like emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength. (ii) Further, it was intended to examine the relationship among personality traits. It was hypothesized that (i) the HIV infected respondents would differ from normal in terms of level of emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength. (ii) There will be significant correlation among personality traits. For the purpose SDPI was used to measure emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength respectively. Besides, a PDS prepared by the researcher was used to get the other necessary information about the respondents. The scale was employed and obtained data were treated using *t*-test and Pearson 'r'. The results upheld

the formulated hypotheses. It was concluded that HIV infected respondents and normal differ significantly in terms of emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength. Normal person excelled in terms of emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength. Personality correlates were found significantly and positively correlated. It is concluded that (i) HIV infection has adverse impact on personality traits under reference. (ii) The personality traits under reference are significantly and positively correlated.

### Key Words

Personality Traits, HIV Infected, Normal Person, Patna.

### Introduction

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the immune system, weakening the body's ability to fight infections and diseases. Over time, if left untreated, HIV can progress to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The global pandemic of HIV/AIDS has had profound social, psychological, and medical consequences. In India, HIV infection is a major public health concern, with certain regions like Patna District in Bihar facing specific challenges in terms of healthcare access, stigma, and education.

Personality, a complex combination of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns that define an individual, can be influenced by a range of factors, including genetics, environment, and life experiences. The presence of a chronic illness such as HIV could significantly alter an individual's personality traits and behaviors. These changes may be due to the psychological impact of living with a stigmatized disease, the physical challenges posed by the virus, or social factors like isolation and discrimination.

In the context of HIV, personality traits are often examined to understand the broader psychological implications for infected individuals. Studies suggest that individuals living with HIV might exhibit differences in traits like optimism, self-esteem, social relationships, emotional stability, and coping mechanisms compared to individuals without the infection. These traits can vary greatly depending on the person's level of awareness, healthcare access, family support, and the social stigmas present in their community.

Patna, the capital city of Bihar, is a significant urban center in eastern India. Like many regions, Patna faces challenges regarding healthcare infrastructure, HIV awareness, and social support systems for individuals living with HIV. In the rural and semi-rural districts surrounding Patna, there is often limited access to HIV treatment and mental health services, leading to potentially poorer psychological outcomes for those affected.

While medical advancements have improved the life expectancy and quality of life for individuals living with HIV, the social stigma remains a significant barrier. HIV-positive individuals in Patna, as well as other parts of India, often face discrimination in employment, education, and healthcare, leading to negative psychological outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal. The stigma surrounding HIV is compounded by misconceptions about how the virus is transmitted, further isolating those living with the disease.

In contrast, individuals who are not infected with HIV in Patna might experience different personality dynamics due to their relatively better mental health, lower risk of stigma, and access to more comprehensive healthcare. While these individuals are not free from the stresses of life, they may have a different outlook on life, social engagement, and emotional well-being compared to those living with HIV.

This study aims to explore the differences in personality traits between HIV-infected individuals and those who are not infected in Patna District. By focusing on both medical and psychological aspects, the research seeks to understand the correlation between personality and the experiences of HIV-infected individuals, shedding light on how chronic illness and social factors contribute to shaping personality over time.

Understanding the personality traits of HIV-infected individuals is crucial for developing comprehensive care plans that address both medical and psychological needs. This research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge regarding the psychological impacts of living with HIV and may inform policies aimed at improving healthcare and support systems in Patna District and similar areas. By focusing on personality differences, we can better understand how to provide holistic support to individuals living with HIV, ensuring better mental health outcomes and improved quality of life.

## **Review of Literature**

A significant body of research has explored how HIV infection impacts mental health and personality traits. Studies have shown that individuals with HIV are at a heightened risk for mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal, which can alter their personality traits. The psychological toll of living with a chronic and stigmatized condition often leads to changes in self-esteem, emotional stability, and social behaviors. For example, a study by O' Cleirigh<sup>9</sup> et al. (2007) found that HIV-positive individuals displayed lower levels of emotional well-being and social adjustment compared to the general population, suggesting that HIV could lead to personality changes over time. Stigma is a critical factor influencing the mental health of individuals living with HIV. Earnshaw and Chaudoir<sup>4</sup> (2009) highlighted that the stigma associated with HIV

often leads to internalized shame, social isolation, and feelings of worthlessness. Their research suggests that these negative experiences can manifest in personality traits such as lower levels of openness, reduced conscientiousness, and heightened neuroticism. Moreover, stigma was found to affect not only emotional health but also cognitive and social aspects of personality. Research on the Big Five personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) has provided a framework to study how HIV might alter personality. In Gonzalez<sup>6</sup> et al. (2007), it was found that individuals with HIV were more likely to score higher on neuroticism and lower on extraversion and conscientiousness. These findings suggest that the chronic stress of managing HIV may lead to increased emotional instability, reduced social engagement, and lower goal-oriented behaviors. The ability to cope with stressors plays a significant role in shaping personality. Carver<sup>2</sup> et al. (2003) explored how coping strategies such as problem-solving, avoidance, and emotional expression impact the psychological well-being of HIV-positive individuals. HIV-infected individuals who engaged in adaptive coping strategies exhibited higher levels of resilience, which may buffer the negative impacts of the disease on personality traits. Conversely, those who used maladaptive coping mechanisms often displayed heightened neuroticism and social withdrawal. In the Indian context, cultural beliefs and practices can play a significant role in shaping the personality traits of HIV-positive individuals. Basu<sup>1</sup> et al. (2012) examined how the societal stigma in India influences the mental health and personality traits of HIV-infected individuals. They found that social isolation and fear of discrimination significantly affect self-esteem, making individuals more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and changes in social behavior. The study underscores the role of culture and social norms in shaping the psychological experiences of HIV-positive individuals. Social support is critical in mitigating the psychological effects of HIV. Cohen and Wills<sup>3</sup> (1985) argued that strong social networks can buffer the negative effects of stress, including that caused by living with HIV. HIV-infected individuals with supportive friends and family exhibited greater emotional stability, higher self-esteem, and more social engagement, which are important aspects of personality. In contrast, individuals who lack social support may develop negative personality traits like neuroticism and social anxiety. Adherence to HIV treatment is influenced by psychological factors, including personality traits. Hoh<sup>7</sup> et al. (2015) found that individuals who exhibited higher levels of conscientiousness were more likely to adhere to their antiretroviral therapy (ART) regimens. On the other hand, those with lower levels of conscientiousness or higher levels of neuroticism often struggled with adherence, which can negatively affect both their physical and psychological health. Family support plays an important role in the psychological well-being of HIV-positive individuals. Research by Gielen<sup>5</sup> et al. (2000) showed that HIV-infected individuals who had positive family dynamics reported fewer depressive symptoms and exhibited more positive personality traits such as agreeableness and emotional stability. In contrast, individuals with strained family relationships were more likely to display neurotic tendencies and emotional instability. A major aspect of living with HIV is the change in personal identity. Kleinman and Cohen<sup>8</sup> (2008) examined how individuals with chronic illnesses, including HIV, often undergo an identity transformation, which can significantly affect personality traits. HIV-positive individuals may experience a shift in self-concept, leading to greater introspection, resilience, or sometimes increased vulnerability. This transformation can manifest in changes to emotional expression, social behavior, and overall outlook on life. Emotional distress, such as anxiety and depression, is common among individuals with HIV and can have a significant impact on personality. Schneider<sup>11</sup> et al. (2011) noted that HIV-positive individuals who experienced high levels of emotional distress exhibited lower levels of extraversion and agreeableness. They also found that the psychological burden of managing HIV led to higher levels of neuroticism, characterized by emotional instability and difficulty in coping with stress. Studies comparing the personality traits of HIV-positive individuals and the general population have been mixed. Roth and Armstrong<sup>10</sup> (2004) found that individuals without HIV tend to have higher scores in positive traits such as openness to experience, extraversion, and emotional stability. However, HIV-positive individuals were more likely to exhibit traits associated with emotional distress, such as heightened neuroticism. This suggests that HIV may lead to long-term psychological changes that differentiate infected individuals from the general population in terms of

personality. These reviews highlight the multifaceted ways in which HIV can influence personality traits, from the impact of stigma and social isolation to coping mechanisms and emotional resilience. The relationship between HIV and personality is complex, and several social, psychological, and cultural factors contribute to the psychological profiles of HIV-infected individuals. This body of literature forms the basis for further exploration of how these factors interact in specific regions like Patna District, where cultural and healthcare disparities may play a crucial role. HIV is global problem which has not been studied in context with personality traits under reference especially in context with Patna (Bihar). Therefore, the study was conducted.

## Objectives

- (1) To compare the HIV infected person and normal in terms of level of emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength respectively.
- (2) To examine the correlation among personality traits.

## Hypotheses

- (1) HIV infected patients will differ significantly in terms of emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength as compared to their counterparts belonging to normal group.
- (2) There will be significantly correlation among personality traits emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength.

## Method of Study

### Sample

The study was conducted on a sample of 128 respondents out of which 64 were HIV infected persons and remaining 64 were normal belonging to the same family or social strata (they were matched in all respects so far as practicable). The HIV infected patients were selected from hospitals located at Patna, Muzaffarpur and Samastipur.

### Research Tools

- (i) SDPI was employed to measure emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength of the respondents.
- (ii) Personal Data Sheet was employed to get the other necessary informations about the respondents.

### Procedure

The Scale were employed on the HIV infected respondents and normal as per convenience of the persons, hospital authorities concerned. The data were obtained individually and scoring were made as per the directions of the manuals concerned. The obtained data were analysed and treated using t-test as given below:

## Results and Interpretation

**Table 01:** t-ratio showing a comparison between infected and normal person in terms of emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength

Dimensions of Problems	Persons with HIV (N=64)		Person without HIV (N=64)		t-ratio	df	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Emotional Stability	9.29	3.26	12.65	3.36	5.69	126	<.01
Decisiveness	8.56	3.12	12.19	3.04	6.72	126	<.01
Self-concept	9.20	2.97	11.97	3.23	5.04	126	<.01
Ego-strength	8.50	3.29	12.29	3.15	6.65	126	<.01

It is obvious from the table that the two groups are radically different in emotional stability, decisiveness, self-concept and ego-strength as all differences are significant beyond .01 level of significance. [emotional stability ( $t = 5.59$ ;  $df = 126$ ;  $P < .01$ ), decisiveness ( $t = 6.72$ ;  $df = 126$ ;  $P < .01$ ), self-concept ( $t = 5.04$ ;  $df = 126$ ;  $P < .01$ ), ego-strength ( $t = 6.65$ ;  $df = 126$ ;  $P < .01$ )]. The results presented authenticate that HIV infected patients are substantially higher on anxiety level. Persons without HIV often exhibit higher emotional stability compared to those infected due to reduced psychological burden. HIV-positive individuals may face stigma, chronic health stress, uncertainty about their future, and medication side effects, which can lead to anxiety, depression, and emotional instability. In contrast, HIV-negative individuals are generally free from such persistent stressors, enabling better emotional regulation and resilience in daily life.

Further, Persons without HIV often exhibit higher decisiveness compared to those infected with HIV due to reduced psychological stress, stigma, and health-related anxiety. HIV-positive individuals may face uncertainty about their health, future, and social acceptance, which can impair their confidence and decision-making ability. In contrast, individuals without such burdens tend to maintain greater clarity of thought, emotional stability, and autonomy factors essential for effective and confident decision-making.

Further, Persons without HIV often exhibit higher self-concept compared to those infected, primarily due to the absence of chronic illness-related stigma, social exclusion, and psychological burden. HIV-positive individuals may internalize negative societal attitudes, leading to lower self-esteem and identity conflict. In contrast, those without HIV generally experience greater societal acceptance, physical well-being, and emotional stability, all of which positively influence their self-perception and overall self-concept.

Finally, Persons without HIV tend to exhibit higher ego strength compared to those infected due to fewer psychological burdens, reduced stigma, and better overall health. Individuals with HIV often face social rejection, chronic stress, and fear of mortality, which can undermine their self-concept and coping capacity. In contrast, those without the illness generally experience more emotional stability and personal control, which fosters stronger ego resilience and psychological well-being.

**Table 02:** Co-efficient of correlation among personality traits

Variables	N	r	df	p
Emotional Stability Vs Decisiveness	128	0.631	126	<.01
Emotional Stability Vs Self-concept	128	0.597	126	<.01
Emotional Stability Vs Ego-strength	128	0.606	126	<.01
Decisiveness Vs Self-concept	128	0.588	126	<.01
Decisiveness Vs Ego-strength	128	0.613	126	<.01
Self-concept Vs Ego-strength	128	0.624	126	<.01

The correlation table reveals a strong and positive interrelationship among the four major personality traits Emotional Stability, Decisiveness, Self-Concept, and Ego-Strength. The correlation between Emotional Stability and Decisiveness ( $r = 0.631$ ,  $p < .01$ ) indicates that individuals who remain emotionally balanced and calm tend to make clear, confident, and rational decisions. Similarly, Emotional Stability correlates positively with Self-Concept ( $r = 0.597$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Ego-Strength ( $r = 0.606$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that emotionally stable persons possess a strong sense of self-identity and inner resilience, enabling them to manage life's pressures effectively.

Furthermore, Decisiveness shows significant positive associations with both Self-Concept ( $r = 0.588$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Ego-Strength ( $r = 0.613$ ,  $p < .01$ ), reflecting that decisive individuals are more self-assured and have greater psychological endurance in confronting challenges. The high correlation between Self-Concept and Ego-Strength ( $r = 0.624$ ,  $p < .01$ ) demonstrates that individuals with a positive and well-defined self-image are also characterized by strong ego control, confidence, and the ability to face stress constructively.

Overall, all the coefficients are significant at the .01 level, indicating that these personality traits are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. A well-developed self-concept and strong ego-strength contribute to emotional stability and decisiveness, which together represent a coherent and adaptive personality structure essential for psychological adjustment and effective functioning.

## Conclusions

- (1) HIV infected person possessed and manifested comparatively poor personality trait namely: emotional stability as compared to their normal counterparts.
- (2) HIV infected person possessed and manifested comparatively poor personality trait namely: decisiveness as compared to their normal counterparts.
- (3) HIV infected person possessed and manifested comparatively poor personality trait namely: self-concept as compared to their normal counterparts.
- (4) HIV infected person possessed and manifested comparatively poor personality trait namely: ego-strength as compared to their normal counterparts.
- (5) Personality traits are significantly and positively correlated.

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