

**Psychology of Personality and Individual Differences: Theory and Applications**

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**Week 10**

**Lecture 21: Stability and change of personality**

I welcome you all to Module 10 of this course. Module 10 is about personality development and change. This is the first lecture of this module, and it is overall lecture number 21. Today's lecture will focus on the concept of stability and change in personality. Before we discuss today's lecture, let me give you a brief recap of the last lecture, which was part of Module 9.

In the last lecture, we discussed the impact of culture on personality. We talked about how culture can influence personality and so on. We studied various aspects of how culture can be connected to personality in terms of shaping personality and more. We discussed various approaches to studying personality and cultures. We discussed various anthropological and psychological approaches that examined how culture can shape personality and more.

We also discussed the importance of cross-cultural differences and why it is important to study these differences. So, those were the factors we discussed. We also discussed approaches to understanding the relationship between culture and personality. Finally, we discussed cultural differences in self-construal as a construct—how we define ourselves in relation to others and how the concept of self-construal varies across cultures. These are some of the topics we covered in the last lecture.

So, let us start today's lecture. So, today's lecture will be based on the concept of stability and change in personality. To what extent the personalities are stable and to what extent there can be changes within the personality. So we will be discussing the concept of stability of personality and causes of personality stability. Then we will be talking about personality change and what are the causes of personality changes.

We will also look at some of the historical perspectives in terms of how personalities change with the passage of time. We will also be looking at some self-initiated personality change, and at the end we will be talking about obstacles in changing personality. So the concept of stability of personality—when we talk about personality, by definition, personality is relatively permanent aspects of behavior. So, when we talk about certain traits, certain personality traits, we are talking about those traits that are relatively permanent. They don't change overnight or in a few days. You know, these are like relatively stable characteristics, patterns of behavior of human beings. So stability is included in the definition of personality itself. It has been found that personalities generally stays stable even across a long period of time. So, people show a strong tendency to maintain their this distinctive patterns of behavior throughout life.

So, generally people have a tendency to maintain once their personality once it set up. For example, a child who exhibits more extroversion compared to their peers is likely to remain more extroverted than others. Research shows that a child who is extroverted in terms of behavior during childhood is more likely to remain extroverted even during adolescence or adulthood later and even in old age. So there is a quite you know long term stability of personality traits. Similarly a child who displays varying levels of neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness or openness compared to their peers is likely to maintain this distinction over time.

This is known as rank order consistency. It means that people maintain their rank or position of personality traits. If somebody is higher than people on a particular trait, they are likely to maintain that difference in the long term with the passage of time. So that is called as a rank order consistency. So there is a rank order consistency which has been established in personality traits.

So if somebody is higher on a trait as compared to their peers, they are likely to maintain the difference even in later stages of life. So that is called rank order consistency and it has been established in the context of personality traits.

So this rank order consistency basically refers to individual's relative placement within a population, the relative position in terms of other people around you or your peer group,

whether you are higher in a particular trait or lower in a particular trait as compared to other people. So people tend to maintain that difference. So that's called rank order consistency. However, it does not mean that people do not change over the years.

Now this rank order consistency automatically doesn't mean that people don't change. It only says that rank or relative position is maintained. There can be absolute changes in terms of mean value changes in terms of traits. But that relative position is the position people generally maintain. So it just means they tend to maintain the ways in which they are different from other people of the same age.

So just because that relative position is maintained doesn't mean people don't change at all. They can change in terms of absolute values of the trait but relative position or rank order consistency seems to remain same. Now what is the evidence of this stability? So let us look at some of the evidences.

The evidence for the stability of the traits over time is extensive and compelling. A lot of evidences are there. For instance, one study found that personality trait score measured 10 years apart shows correlation ranging from 0.60 to 0.9 indicating high stability. So some study shows even after 10 years people tend to maintain their personality traits in terms of correlation as it remains quite high. 0.60 to 0.90 in some cases which is very high.

So that means they tend to remain same in terms of personality traits even after 10 years. Another study observed that elementary school children described as adaptable by their teachers continue to display cheerful and intellectually curious behavior in middle age too. So, even during elementary school whatever characteristics are described by the teacher for a particular child it seems to remain same even in the middle age. Conversely, children who are rated as impulsive were found to talk more and in a louder voice as adults. So, some of the traits which were there during the childhood, they seem to be there even during adulthood.

Additionally, individuals who experience natural disaster such as earthquake often maintain their core personality trait despite the trauma which demonstrates significant resilience. So even after very traumatic incidences which can shatter one's life, people seem to maintain their personality even in the context of those traumatic events also. That shows

personality is quite stable. It is not so easily changed. Research also indicates that personality rating in childhood can predict adult life outcomes.

So, whatever personality people have during childhood, a lot of these characteristics can even predict adult life outcomes. For instance, children aged 4 to 6 rated as more inhibited were slower to find a stable romantic partner and first job 19 years later compared to their less inhibited peers. So, inhibited basically means children with behavioral inhibition who are often quite shy and avoid new people and situations. Therefore, children with these characteristics were slower to find a stable romantic partner and first job even at the age of 19 years later compared to children who are less inhibited peers. So that means their characteristics seem to remain even much later in their life.

So these are some of the evidences which show that personality traits could be quite stable. So generally, children with extreme trait ratings or those described as difficult tend to encounter problems as adults. So children, who during childhood show certain extreme kinds of behavior which are difficult in terms of management, tend to encounter a lot of problems even during adulthood. So that means that trait seems to be maintained even in adulthood. On a more positive note, children rated high in traits like mastery, motivation, and agreeableness at ages 8 to 12 were found to have greater academic and work achievement, exhibited less antisocial behavior, and had better relationships 20 years later. So this shows that even some positive traits related to motivation and agreeableness they also seem to impact later achievements in life and so on. So, that means those traits seem to be maintained even later, even 20 years later. So, these are some of the many evidences which show that personality traits could be quite stable.

Now, what are the causes of this stability of personality? Why is personality so stable? So, let us see some of the evidences and causes behind such stability. So one cause is the concept of temperament. So temperament, we have already discussed while talking about the biological aspects of personality, which refers to behavioral traits exhibited by infants after birth. Certain temperamental characteristics are determined by genetic predisposition. Children are different even after birth; certain temperaments in terms of emotional reactivity differ. Some children are more active, some are less, you know, and so on. So these are, to a large extent, determined by our genetic setup.

So that is what temperament is all about. It is more of a biological aspect of personality. So the many aspects of an individual that affect personality remain constant over the years, including physical attributes and DNA. So the initial personality or temperament in childhood is mostly determined by inherited genes, so a lot of temperament or emotional reactivity is determined by the genes in childhood, so that means that temperament is one of the reasons that also influences one's personality, so this fundamental behavior and emotional tendencies rooted in early life can persist throughout life, although their manifestation changes with age.

So this tendency or this temperamental characteristic can persist even from childhood to the later part of life. Obviously the manifestation of this temperament could change from childhood to adulthood, but the impact remains. For example, a shy child might hide behind a parent at a school gathering, while a shy adult might avoid conversing with strangers. So, it is the same trait, but the behavior or manifestation may change depending on the age of the person. Similarly, an aggressive child might kick a playmate, whereas an aggressive adult might engage in verbal arguments, and so on.

So, the manifestation may differ, but that underlying trait remains the same. So a lot of the stability in personality could be attributed to the initial temperamental characteristics of the child, which are to a large extent determined by the genetic setup, which is not easy to change. So that influence remains. So that is why a lot of personality characteristics are quite stable. A recent analysis identifies three basic aspects of childhood temperament.

So, childhood temperament has three major aspects- Some research indicates that to what extent the child has positive emotions, to what extent they are more like cheerful and display positive emotions could be part of temperament. Second, negative emotions, some child may display lot of negative emotions. They cry all the time and so on. Third is effortful control, to what extent they are able to control their behavior and so on. Now these are three important aspects of temperament which can impact personality later.

So this positive emotionality in childhood may evolve into adult traits of extroversion. So, the child who has a lot of these positive emotions or displays positive emotions during

childhood may translate into the adult trait of extroversion. So, they may become much more extroverted, where they could express a lot of these positive emotions.

This negative emotionality can turn into neuroticism traits in adulthood. Neuroticism and emotional instability are those aspects that could manifest from the negative emotionality. And effortful control into conscientiousness and agreeableness. And to the child who has more effortful controlling ability, they are more likely to show traits of conscientiousness and agreeableness in adulthood, and so on. So these emotional or temperamental characteristics of a child could manifest into different traits in adulthood. So basically the emotional tone remains the same. So that is one of the reasons why it is quite stable. The second important reason why personality traits show stability is because of the physical and environmental factors. So beyond genes and internal biology, physical and environmental factors significantly influence personality.

So we have already discussed that personality is determined by both biological aspects and environmental aspects. So biological aspects we have already discussed in the context of temperament. Now, a lot of environmental factors can also influence personality and cause this instability. The visible attributes, such as gender, height, and adherence to cultural standards of attractiveness, impact the experience of individuals and thus shape their personality. Can some of the aspects of the physical environment or the physical aspects of one's person, like gender, height, and the extent to which somebody adheres to the cultural norms and standards impact their experience as well as impact their personality traits? These attributes are largely unchangeable and persists throughout one's life. So this could be one aspect of the physical environment which could impact personality and maintain its stability.

Additionally, consistent influences come from one's social environment. So many aspects of the social environment can also influence personality and affect its stability. Such as socioeconomic status—what is your socioeconomic status, whether you come from the upper class, middle class, lower class, whatever it is. Urban area, rural area, what is your family size—all these can influence personality also. These are all aspects of the social

environment. Now, these factors, often beyond an individual's control, continuously affect thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and impact's personality.

So your socioeconomic environment, where you are born and brought up—whether you are living in an urban setup or rural setup—will influence your thought processes; it will influence your personality. People may differ in terms of those who stay in urban areas and rural areas because of the difference in the environment. What kind of family size? Is it a small size or a larger size? All this can influence and impact one's thought processes, behaviors, and feelings which ultimately can influence their personality.

Since these things generally remain the same most of life, they can change obviously, but their impact on personality remains quite stable. So that is why personality also remains stable because of the constant impact from these environmental factors. The third important reason or cause behind personality stability is childhood experiences or early experiences. Early experiences can have long-lasting consequences on personality and well-being.

This is what a lot of theories actually say that childhood experiences are very important in terms of what kind of person you become as an adult. Especially if you look at psychoanalysis or Freud's theory, he emphasized very strongly ON the importance of childhood experiences. According to him, childhood experiences shape your personality, and it becomes fixed thereafter. After a certain age, it then almost remains stagnant. So childhood experiences play a very important role in defining your personality characteristics.

Adults who recall being rejected by parents often struggle to form relationships throughout their lives. For example, what one experiences during childhood—like what kind of parenting they received— what kind of relationship they had with their parents during childhood—can impact their mindset and thought processes, which can remain or linger even into their adulthood. For example, if somebody has very rejecting parents and not a very cordial relationship with them, this could manifest even in adult life, in terms of not being able to form healthy relationships with other people.

Childhood stress, such as growing up in poverty or experiencing maltreatment, can lead to lifelong patterns of chronic biological inflammation, resulting in frailty, fatigue, and poor health. These chronic inflammations can also cause strong emotional reactions to everyday stress. So, what kind of childhood experiences—such as stressful environments like poverty, experiencing maltreatment from others, or becoming a victim of traumatic experiences during childhood—can have lasting effects? All this can impact the child's entire personality in a certain direction and that can persist into adulthood as well. So, all of these experiences play a very important role. They shape what kind of person a child becomes later on.

Interestingly, too little stress in early life can leave individuals unprepared for future challenges. So sometimes, some level of challenges—facing challenges during childhood—during early life—can also have a positive impact in terms of preparing the child, making them stronger for future challenges. So, a moderate degree of early adversity can provide the best buffer against adult challenges.

So, all kinds of experiences—negative experiences, positive experiences, the intensity of the experiences, particularly traumatic events—all this can impact the child, particularly in terms of shaping the personality, which can remain even in adulthood. The next factor which could explain this stability of personality is person-environment transaction.

So, we discussed that biological factors within the person can determine personality. We also discussed that environmental factors can determine personality. Now, we will be talking about personality. How this interaction between the person and environment, what kind of transaction one does, and what kind of response and reaction one has in terms of environmental factors can also influence one's personality and can explain the stability of personality.

So, another cause of stability in personality is the tendency of people to respond to, seek out, and create environments compatible with their traits. People generally tend to seek out environments that are compatible with their traits. So, they are more likely to go into environments that are suitable for their traits, whatever characteristics they have. So, that is how the transaction happens with the environment.



People prefer to go to certain kinds of places and certain kinds of situations because it is comfortable for their traits. And they will avoid other kinds of situations because it is uncomfortable for their traits in terms of the expression of traits. So, this person-environment transaction determines what kind of places people will choose and what kind of situations they will choose to go to and approach. So, there are several types of transactions that can happen. In an active person-environment transaction, an aggressive person might be attracted to similarly aggressive friends, leading to environments where conflicts and delinquency are common. For example, if somebody has an aggressive kind of trait, a trait with a lot of aggression, this person will naturally seek out other people or a peer group who are similar in terms of aggression. Because they will feel comfortable, as that other person is also similar to them.

And then collectively, they will seek out environments where they can express their aggression. Like, they will go to places where there will be a lot of conflicts and fights and a lot of delinquent behavior, criminal behavior, and those kinds of things. They will probably seek out and go into those kinds of situations. Because they find their trait is getting more naturally expressed in those environments. So this is an example of how a personal-environment transaction happens. Conversely, let us say a scholarly person may prefer the library, fostering academic success.

Somebody who is more oriented towards, let us say, scholarly pursuits, such a person will prefer going to places like the library, bookshops and so on, which can help them succeed in terms of academics and so on. So, what kind of person you are will determine the kind of environment you seek, and that is how personal-environment transaction happens. So, these environments are not always chosen freely. Many times, people are not completely free to choose those environments. Sometimes, they just find themselves in certain situations.

So those uncontrollable factors can also play a role. For instance, being arrested and sent to jail can significantly impact personality, as can failing to gain admission to a desired college. So sometimes you want to get admission to certain colleges, but everything is not

in one's control. You cannot just decide and you will get admission because a lot of other factors can play into it.

Maybe you want to appear for an entrance test where you fail, and so on, because many other students are there. So many times we may prefer certain environments, but we may not get to interact or go into those kinds of environments simply because of other uncontrollable factors. So environments are not always freely chosen. Many situations we can choose, and many situations we are not able to choose. And many other factors can play a role there. So generally, people seek environments compatible with their traits. Generally, people prefer to go into places and situations that are congruent with their traits. And they avoid situations that are incongruent with their traits. So that they can avoid discomfort and so on. For example, an extrovert is likely going to be unhappy sitting quietly. So a person who is very extroverted will seek those kinds of situations where he can talk more and can socialize with people. He will feel uncomfortable in a situation where he or she has to be quiet and so on. While an introvert will struggle in noisy parties and so on. So such a person will avoid those kinds of situations, let us say party, which is very loud and noisy because it is against the characteristics of that person or traits of that person. He does not feel comfortable in those situations. So this is called a reactive person-environment transaction. So depending on the situation, it will come, and you will react to that situation. If it is in alignment with your trait, you will feel happy. If it is not in alignment with one's trait, you will feel unhappy, and so on. So, that is called, you just react to situations that sometimes come into your life.

So, that is called a reactive person-environment transaction. However, sometimes people change the environment as per their wish. So, they do not just react; they change the environment. So, this is called an evocative personal environment transaction, or one can say even proactive. For example, emotionally positive and uninhibited parents are more responsive to their children, while emotionally positive and self-controlled children evoke better responses from their parents. So this is a kind of two-way transaction. So sometimes the people who are emotionally positive and uninhibited parents, they will respond differently according to the nature of the child. So if a child is also emotionally positive and more of a self-controlled nature, then generally much better compatibility will happen

and more responses will happen. So, this two-way interaction between parent and child magnifies the effect of child development over time.

So, it will kind of magnify and go into positive loop and so on. So, that will also accelerate the development of child over time. So, similar person-environment transactions occur at every stage, affecting both individuals and the surroundings. So what kind of transaction happens?

Sometimes the environment changes, or sometimes we change the environment, and so on. So sometimes it is a much more active transaction. Sometimes it is reactive. You just passively encounter certain situations and react accordingly. So that is kind of reactive. A more active and proactive kind of transaction is where you actively impact the environment, or the environment, you know, also impacts you. So, more active involvement is there, then it becomes more evocative or proactive kind of transaction. So, the fifth reason for the stability of personality is cumulative continuity and maturity. So, that is something which is very important.

So, a major summary of this literature indicates that the correlation coefficient for personality consistency is 0.31 in children, 0.54 in college years, and 0.74 between the ages of 50 and 60. So that means if you look at this correlation coefficient with the progress of age, the personality is much more stable in the later stages of life. It is still much more malleable in early childhood. One can change and shift but as we progress in age, our personality becomes much more stable and fixed. So, the correlation coefficient increases with the progress of age. While all these figures demonstrate impressive stability, they also show that individual differences in personality become more consistent with age. A concept known as the cumulative continuity principle.

So, as we age more, the stability of our personality becomes much more consistent. You know, stable or much more consistent. This principle posits that not only are personality traits relatively stable across the lifespan, but their consistency increases over time or with age. So, that is also another phenomenon. Consistency and stability increase with the progress of age.

When one trait changes, another trait also changes in tandem. And when one trait remains stable, particularly in older adults, other traits also change. So, the increasing stability of personality with age is largely attributed to the stabilization of one's environment. So, as people age, they are more likely to have settled down in terms of where they live, their living arrangements, their careers, and so on.

So the environment becomes much more stable. So the impact of the environment is also very consistent, and their personality also remains stable because in the later part of life, everything becomes much more stable, and changes are very few. During early childhood, things change, and one has to do a lot of things—school, environment, so many things—so the impact of the environment keeps changing very rapidly. So the possibility of change also happens more.

So stability is also linked to psychological maturity. With the progression of age, people become much more psychologically mature which refers to traits that help fulfill adults' roles, such as being a spouse, parent, or worker. All these roles we understand, and we become much more mature and settle down. These traits include self-control, interpersonal sensitivity, and emotional stability.

All of this becomes much more stable. So adolescents with more mature personalities in this respect tend to change less over the subsequent years. So these more mature personality traits are not changed since these traits are helpful in settling down in life and have positive outcomes. For example, your ability of self-control, interpersonal sensitivity, and emotional stability.

So the more we become mature psychologically, the less change is needed because these mature characteristics help you adapt to life, they are much more resistant to change. You know, there is no need for change because they are helpful. So with the progress of age we become much more mature, and this maturity also increases stability.

Now let us come to the concept of personality change. Now we have seen a lot of evidence related to personality stability. So the personality remains stable, but can personality also change? What are the possibilities, and what are the research findings? Let us see.

So the research reviewed so far—whatever we have discussed—shows significant continuity in personality, especially in middle and later adulthood, and provides multiple explanations for this stability. So we have seen that personality becomes much more stable in the later part of life, particularly from adulthood to old age, and we have tried to see various reasons for this stability. However, this concept of stability is much more nuanced than it initially appears and exists in different forms. So, when we talk about this stability, there are certain nuances in it also. So, since the retest correlations reflect rank-order stability.

So, one thing is very clear: this rank order has stability—no doubt about it—in terms of relative position. If somebody is more extroverted than the peer group, then that characteristic, the relative position, more or less remains stable. So, that is what is called rank order stability, which we discussed—it measures the extent to which individuals maintain this rank order relative to others over time. This high rank order stability means that individuals who rank high at the start of a study continue to rank high at the end also. So, that rank order consistency is maintained—this is what we have seen the evidence for. However, this rank order stability involves only relative positioning. So, relative positioning is maintained, indicating how individuals compare to others only.

So, it is possible for individual ranks on a personality trait to remain stable even when the group's overall level on that trait changes. Now, research shows that, even though this relative position is maintained—there is stability—the overall actual trait characteristics or the scores of those characteristics could change in absolute terms. So, in relative terms, it remains stable. But actual characteristics, or the intensity or the score of these traits, can change.

Thus, while some individuals might rank high or low relative to their peers consistently, the absolute level of the trait within the group can shift over time. This absolute level or the score of the trait, for example extraversion or neuroticism can change in terms of scoring with the passage of time.

But the relative position may remain the same. So that shows there is a possibility of some changes. So we are trying to see the evidence of what is the possibility of changes in personality. Personalities are very stable. We have seen all the evidence.

Now let us see what are the scopes of changes in personality, where it is possible. So this research on adult personality reveals not only significant rank-order stability but also notable changes in the average level of personality traits over time. So there is also a possibility of changes in the average levels of personality traits over time. So the actual level of change in personality from childhood to adolescence to adulthood and old age—that scores and the level of certain traits could change. Even though the rank order may be maintained.

So, studies such as those by Srivastava and colleagues have shown that while there is stability in how individuals rank relative to their peers, there are also systematic changes in the average level of personality across adulthood. For instance, some of the evidence is like this- traits of conscientiousness tend to increase from age 21 to 30 and continue to rise, albeit at a slower pace thereafter. So, traits like conscientiousness, the research shows, tend to increase from age 21 to 30. So as the age progresses after the young adulthood phase at 21, then it goes to 30. These scores tend to change for individuals. This is what research shows. So that means it is not fixed. It can change. Although this increase may become much slower with the passage of time. Another trait of agreeableness shows a faster increase after age 30 compared to earlier years. So after the age of 30 traits like agreeableness changes very fast. So this agreeableness increases among people after the age 30. Before that it does not change that fast.

Trait like neuroticism generally declines steadily over adulthood, particularly among women, while openness declines much more sharply after age 30. So trait like neuroticism decreases generally during adulthood. Particularly among women it decreases much sharply. While openness, the trait of openness decreases sharply after age 30. People become less open. So this is a kind of general finding from different populations. So it shows that there is a possibility of change in terms of personality traits. It is not that completely fixed. So there is nothing like a completely fixed trait.

But the relative positioning remains somewhat. So somebody who is high on a trait will maintain that high trait as compared to another person. Because if there is a change, change is happening for both. So the relative position remains same but absolute values can change.

So this developmental trajectory suggests that with increased age, individuals tend to become more self-controlled, prudent, and socially warm. While also becoming less emotionally volatile and less open to new experiences and ideas. So these are some of the possible changes that research shows—with the increase of age, people become much more self-controlled. They become much more prudent and socially warm. They also become less emotionally volatile, meaning their emotional stability increases, and their openness to experiences and ideas decreases because their worldviews become much more fixed and rigid.

In similar terms, there is a tendency for adult development—a narrower emotional range—becoming more socialized over time. So there is a tendency for adults to develop a narrower emotional range. So emotional range becomes low. From childhood to adolescence, the range of emotions people experience is much higher. When they become adults, the range decreases.

So fewer varieties of emotions are experienced. However, we also become more socialized over time and so on. So this shows certain changes are possible, and certain changes happen among people. While one might describe these changes as making people duller, it underscores the normalcy of gradual personality change throughout adulthood. This challenges the view that personality is completely fixed or only changes significantly in width.

So this whole idea of a completely fixed personality is not what the evidence shows. It is not so because there are a lot of traits that actually change with the passage of time and age. So research on rank-order stability of personality traits across the life course not only highlights the normal gradual changes in average levels of traits but also reveals evidence of individual changes in personality over time. So this is what we have already discussed. So despite this general stability of broad personality traits in adulthood, Rutter's correlations

do not reach perfection because if you see the correlations across different time periods, they are quite high for a lot of personality traits, but they are not perfect.

So that means there are changes—certain minor or small changes—that happen in the traits. So this means that some individuals experience significant shifts in their personality traits over the years. Even in late adulthood, a small but notable fraction of people undergo some degree of personality change. So personality change can happen, and a lot of people actually experience some significant personality changes. This finding challenges the notion that personality becomes completely fixed.

So that is not what is shown here. So personality change in adulthood is recognized as a phenomenon that, while not common on a large scale for everyone, is entirely feasible. So at least the evidence shows personality change can happen in many dimensions. Although it may not be very common or may not be very sharp in terms of changes, it is entirely possible. So the stability of personality traits varies significantly across different stages of life.

Many longitudinal studies show a similar trend in terms of their findings. For example, Roberts and colleagues in 2000 reviewed 152 such studies and found that for adults aged 30 to 73, retest correlations ranged about 0.67 over a span of approximately 7 years. Young adults from 18 to 21 showed an average retest correlation of 0.57. Children and adolescents had a lower average retest correlation of 0.5.

So that means, again, this is what we have already discussed: with higher ages, the stability of personality is much stronger. So in the higher age group, if you see, the correlation is very high. So that means the personality stability is much higher. But at lower ages, the correlation is less, meaning there is more possibility of change. In infants and toddlers, the correlation is only 0.3, which means much more change is possible at lower ages.

So in childhood or even in early adolescence, this gives much more scope in terms of personality change. Change becomes less possible with let us say, late adulthood or old age and so on. Because in those stages, research generally shows personality change happens very little. It can happen, but the correlation shows people generally change less in those age groups.



So this correlation indicates that personality stability decreases as we move closer to early childhood. So the more early in our age group, the more chances of possibility of changes. Traits assessed in early childhood generally do not provide strong indications of personality in middle childhood, let alone adulthood. So childhood, obviously there can be impact of childhood experiences, but there is also possibility of more malleability in childhood. So you can shape yourself in certain ways and obviously with the passage of time that possibility of changing and shaping oneself, it becomes much more difficult.

This finding challenges the proverb that child is the father of man, suggesting that childhood disposition do not strongly predict adult personality all the time. There can be certain changes also. So this gives some reassurance to parents of challenging children and caution against assuming too much of continuity between childhood. So it is a positive thing in the sense that we can mold children and shape their personality particularly in the early childhood period or even in adolescence. So this is in a sense are certain positive aspects that research shows.

Some research shows that even certain psychotherapies and drugs can change personality too. For example, in 1980s, a comprehensive literature review confirmed that psychotherapy can lead to long-term changes in one's behavior.

A lot of people can change their personality traits. Especially people who go for psychotherapies because there are certain problematic aspects of their behavior they want to change which may later become part of their personality.

Research shows that a lot of the psychotherapies are aimed at changing people toward more adaptive behavior when something is problematic, or they are not able to adapt, and certain emotions are causing problems. So psychotherapy aims to correct that in the right direction. And a lot of research shows that there can be long-term changes in behavior because of psychotherapies. In this context, long-term behavior change means it is synonymous with change in personality.

Recently, psychotherapy has increasingly involved the prescription of some medications such as Prozac. Many psychiatrists prescribe medicines for certain psychological disorders,

and research shows that some of these drugs could change personality. For example, drugs like Prozac, which are given for the treatment of depression can also effect certain changes in individuals, making them more extroverted and less anxious. So that means they can also make certain changes in personality.

People after taking these drugs are more likely to become more extroverted and less anxious. So their impact can be quite stable. So certain drugs could also stimulate certain personality changes. Moreover, a single dose of hallucinogenic drugs like psilocybin, administered in a controlled medical setting, has been shown to increase openness to experiences for up to one year or more. Some other drugs could also impact certain changes in personality, like openness to experiences.

However, in these approaches, the only problem is, despite this option, drugs have potential side effects. A lot of these drugs that are used for treatment can have many other negative side effects. So, they are not something you can just use for changing personality. They will have other impacts. So, they are used only for the treatment of certain disorders.

And psychotherapy is obviously an important option, but the problem is it is not effective, not so easily accessible for a lot of people, and it may cost a lot and so on. Certain targeted interventions can also change personality, like interventions related to, let us say, openness to experience. Openness to experience tends to decrease in old age, which is what we have found in the research. However, a study involving a 30-week training program for men aged 60 to 94 demonstrated that this tendency can be changed using some very targeted interventions to alter certain mental perspectives, even in very old age. Research shows that people can change their mindset in terms of certain traits like openness to experience. So this program, which included the practice of inductive reasoning and activities like crossword and Sudoku puzzles, led to increase openness among the participants who were in very old age groups. So this is one of the first studies that shows that personality traits can change even later in life without drug interventions and so on. So certain specific targeted interventions can be helpful in terms of changing personality. In the context of self-control, research also shows it can also be changed and improved, which can be an aspect of personality.

Some literature reviews surveyed aimed at children younger than 10 years old based on the presumption that after this age it may not be so easy to change certain personality traits. So certain targeted interventions were used that included exercise to help develop self-control, like meditation, relaxation, and learning to think differently about temptations and frustrations. So these are some of the targeted interventions that were designed to increase the self-control ability. The result consistently showed that children who received such training experienced less delinquency and problematic behavior during adolescence.

So the impact of these childhood session programs remains even in adulthood also. So in the adolescence phase also, a lot of these negative behaviors were controlled because they learned to have better self-control. So the recent evidence suggests that self-control can be improved even after the age of 10. Techniques of mindfulness meditation, for example, have been shown to increase self-control ability and so on. So there are a lot of therapeutic and intervention programs that can impact personality change, and mostly these are used for changing personality in the positive direction.

If certain traits are problematic, causing distress and problems and adaptation in life, this intervention can change those traits towards more positive traits in terms of their adaptability and so on. So this shows that personality is not impossible to change. Things can change. At least the research shows in this direction.

Now let us see what the causes of personality change are. Why does personality change? So we have discussed the causes of personality stability, why it remains stable. Now let us see why it changes sometimes. So personality change, whether in absolute terms or relative to peers, is indeed possible and can be influenced by various factors. Let us look into why it sometimes changes.

While genes are typically associated with stability, one of the main reasons why personality remains stable is because of genetic influence. Some say that genetic influence may be programmed in the genes themselves for certain changes in personality. For example, they may also play a role in shaping patterns of personality change over time, analogous to how they influence, let's say, the timing of pubertal changes. So if you see some of the biological changes, you know, they may differ from person to person. For some people, it can be one

year ahead; for some, it may be one year delayed and so on, which can be programmed by genetic programming and so on. Similarly, certain personality changes may also be programmed in the genes themselves, so certain changes could actually be related to genetic influence as well. However, research suggests that genetic influence on personality changes is very limited, implying that environmental factors are more dominant. So genes are mostly related to stability, but in some cases, even genes can cause certain changes. But the evidence for genes in terms of personality changes is very limited.

That shows whenever changes happen, which research shows a lot of changes can happen, it is because of environmental factors only. Because mostly other factors lie in the environment. What kind of environment can change one's personality? One is socialization and parenting. Early childhood experiences, particularly how parents and caregivers interact with children, can significantly influence personality development.

So, what kind of parenting experiences impact the personality of a child in a very strong way? For instance, Kagan (1994) observed that toddlers with inhibited temperaments, which we have discussed earlier, are basically children who are very shy and avoid new places and new people. Temperaments become less inhibited often. So sometimes the children with inhibited temperaments, sometimes their tendencies change and become less inhibited.

Often they had parents who encouraged them to engage with novel situations rather than shielding themselves. So these personalities also sometimes change. But during childhood, their temperament was very inhibited meaning they were very shy, preferred not to interact with people, and avoided new situations.

Such children also change in many cases, and they become less inhibited. One of the main reasons was the influence of the parents. So parents, because they encourage them to change and engage with novel situations rather than shielding them all the time. So conversely, children whose parents allowed them to avoid distressing situations tended to remain inhibited. If parents were not allowing them, then such changes were not possible.

So parenting could instigate changes in personality, particularly during childhood, depending on what kind of parenting role they received. Sometimes personality can change because of certain life stresses and major transitions in life. Stressful life events and major life transitions can disrupt personality stability. When something very dramatic happens in one's life—some traumatic event, something very drastic—changes in one's life occur because the environment changes so drastically that it impacts them hugely and because of this impact, the person also changes.

Research indicates that significant life changes are associated with reduced stability in personality traits. For example, experiencing life stress can lead to lasting changes in self-esteem and intimacy. You know, a lot of traumatic events, when they happen, people also completely change. There can be a complete transformation of personality when something very negative happens in one's life.

Let's say sometimes the death of a very important person in one's life can change the concerned person because now this whole life structure changes for that person. Now the person has to take extra responsibilities which was taken by the person who died. So they had to deal with so many new things, so such people sometimes completely change drastically as compared to who they were earlier before the death of that person. Such disruption in the environment can trigger personality change and individuals adapt to new circumstances.

Because they need to adapt to new circumstances which are very challenging, they had to change themselves. So sometimes personalities can change because of dramatic changes in one's life. Sometimes personalities can also change because of changing social roles. An individual moves through different life stages and occupy new social roles. With the passage of time our social roles also changes.

So child goes to adolescence, their role changes. When they go to adulthood, their role changes. When they marry and have children, their role changes. So like that, in every stages of life, our social role changes. With the change of social roles, we have to change accordingly too.

For example, you know, when you become a parent, sometimes in your career, role changes might happen. People have to adapt to demands and expectations associated with these roles. This adaptation can result in lasting changes in personality. So when suddenly your role changes, suddenly you are a single parent, suddenly you have to take the role of a parent because of the birth of a child, and so on. So completely your role changes, your demand changes, so personality can also change because of that.

For example, research by Helson and colleagues found that women who became mothers tended to show an increase in responsibility and self-control along with a decrease in sociability compared to women who did not become mothers. So the moment women become mothers, sometimes their personalities and their roles and characteristics also change because of the new responsibility. Their ability to self-control and adapt to a lot of distress and workability and so many things could change because of the new roles.

Similarly, longitudinal studies of male managers demonstrate that success in managerial roles influences changes in nurturance behaviors. The moment you become more successful as a manager or your role changes in the higher position, people also sometimes change their behaviors, or certain changes may happen. So social roles can also lead to certain changes in the personality. Now these are some of the possible reasons why sometimes personalities can change. Now even research shows that historically, with the passage of time, overall at the population level, the personalities are also changing in terms of how the people were, let us say, 30 years back and how, in the present generation, the traits are changing with the passage of time.

So those are the historical changes. So the concept that personality can change in response to shifting social circumstances is supported by recent research. Studies conducted by Jean Twenge and her colleagues using cross-temporal meta-analysis techniques have demonstrated a significant shift in the average level of personality traits among young people over several decades. So the young people who were, let's say, a few decades back in the 70s and 60s and the young people in today's world, there seems to be a change in the personality of people at the population level, not the individual level. For example, they found there is a change in the self-esteem and extroversion.

So the Twenge study indicates that young people of today report higher average levels of self-esteem and extroversion compared to individuals in the 1960s. This could mean that people in today's generation are more extroverted and they have higher self-esteem. Mostly these studies were conducted in the western context, so at least in that context also there is a change in personality historically. So this suggests that a cultural shift towards valuing individual self-assurance and sociability could be responsible for such changes.

They have also observed some gender differences. Over time there has been a decrease in gender differences in personality traits. Young women in particular have shown an increase in assertiveness and other traits traditionally associated with masculinity. So the gender differences are also decreasing with the passage of time because the women are taking more roles that the males used to take in today's world. So more traits associated with assertiveness and leadership roles and all these things are decreasing simply because in today's world scenarios or environments are changing. Women are able to take more roles which were traditionally given to males and so on. So that is also decreasing in terms of traits.

In terms of anxiety and neuroticism, recent samples of young people also exhibit higher levels of anxiety and neuroticism compared to earlier generations. This is one kind of, one can say, more of a negative finding in the sense that today's generation is much more likely to have higher anxiety levels as compared to, let's say, the 60s young generation, or they are showing more of a trait of neuroticism; emotional instability is increasing. So these trends reflect societal changes that may contribute to increased stress and mental health challenges among the young generation. So that means in today's generation, young generations are facing much more stressful situations, many more challenges, and more mental health problems, which could be what is being reflected here. The locus of control also found certain changes are happening. So Twenge also found that recent cohorts, or recent populations, are more likely to perceive their lives as controlled by external forces than by their own internal desires and abilities.

So that means as compared to the earlier generation, today's generation finds reasons more in the outside of themselves. So their more external locus of control is increasing. So they

are more likely to perceive their lives as controlled by external forces rather than their internal desires and abilities. So this shift suggests that changes in how individuals perceive and attribute control over their lives are possibly influenced by cultural shifts towards external validation and societal pressure. So people are becoming more externally oriented in terms of finding causes of their behavior.

This is also another change they noticed. So this finding underscores that personality traits can evolve over historical time frames in response to changing social and cultural conditions. So the changes of overall environmental factors in terms of broader social and cultural factors, people are also changing. Some personality change could be self-initiated. It may not be only because of external factors or biological factors.

So it is possible that some personality change is partially self-initiated. So nothing is complete because we can always say partially because at least some involvement of the person himself or herself. This changes an involved profound shift in perspective and meaning, which individuals perceive as altering their personality. Sometimes people change completely because whenever something happens that may be triggered by some external things, they themselves completely shift their mental perspective of life. The meaning of life changes sometimes, and so they also change accordingly.

So these experiences are typically catalyzed by significant life events or periods of emotional distress, as we have already discussed. Drastic changes in life can trigger it, and it cannot happen automatically; you have to kind of also participate in it. So even that is why we are getting self-initiated, so the person kind of looks actively at why this has happened in life and what the meaning of life is so that all these things shift their perspectives so that can also change personality. Now, at the end, we will be discussing why. Although we have seen the evidence for both stability of personality and some possible changes that are possible in the personality. So there is evidence for the stability of personality, and there is evidence for certain changes in personality within certain limits.



Now Generally, what we see is that changing personality is not so easy. Obviously, it is much easier when, during childhood, it is more malleable. One can change their personality much more, at least with less effort. Even that is also not so easy.

But with progress of age, changing of personality is much more difficult. It is not so easy. People cannot change overnight. It happens very rarely. So what is the obstacle in changing personality?

Why is it so difficult to change personality? So some of the reasons I will be just talking about at the end. So this is one reason: satisfaction with current personality. If somebody is very satisfied with the way they are, then there is no need for change, and there will not be any change. So many people are generally content with their personalities as they are and may not perceive a compelling reason for drastic change.

They may not see any reason why they need to change. So then there is no positive motivation to do it. So a lot of people are actually satisfied with the way they are. Which is fine. While some may express a desire to enhance certain traits slightly.

Most are not actively seeking. Most people are not actively seeking to change themselves. They may here and there see certain problems in themselves. They may try to change a few things. But most people are not very actively or consciously trying to change themselves.

So that is why people generally don't change their personality. Another reason is difficulty in acting contrary to traits. Once a personality is set after certain experiences from childhood or certain stages of life, then it is very difficult to go against it because it becomes a set pattern. So there is an inherent inertia to changing. So people don't

feel comfortable because it becomes a comfort zone whatever the way they are, and going beyond that is very difficult, and they feel highly, you know, discomfort in terms of behaving contrary to that, so that is why also people don't change, so even when individuals recognize sometimes there has to be some changes that should be done It is not so easy because of the difficulty in behaving opposite to their personality. For example, introverts becoming more extroverted to enhance social interaction. The actual act of behaving

contrary to an imagined trait is very difficult. So when, let us say, somebody is very introverted and wants to increase their extrovertedness.

So behaving like an extrovert for an introverted person is very difficult because it is not simply in their patterns. So they find a lot of inner resistance. So that also needs sustained effort, which can lead to exhaustion, and people sometimes then give up. So sometimes certain traits are very strong, not easy to change. Sometimes there is a blind spot and external attribution.

Individuals often attribute negative experiences or failure to external factors rather than acknowledging how their own personality traits contribute to this outcome. Many times our own personality traits cause a lot of failures and problems in life. But people generally don't want to see that it is within themselves. They always want to find reasons outside themselves especially for the negative experiences and outcomes in life.

They will always attribute it to external factors. I failed, or I am not able to experience certain positive things in my life. So when you see the reasons outside, you don't feel like changing yourself because you don't see the reason within yourself. When you see it within yourself, you would like to change yourself. When you see it outside yourself, you will always see what the problem is on the outside.

So because of this tendency of external attribution, people also don't change. Because they tend to blame external circumstances more, which hinders their self-awareness. That is the problem within themselves; they don't focus on that. Another reason is desire for consistency and predictability. We want to be consistent in our behavior.

We make certain images of ourselves, and we want to maintain that image. And so changing personality means your image could also change. So people don't want to do that. So people generally prefer consistency and predictability in their lives. Pursuing significant personality change often means stepping out of your comfort zone, learning new skills, and engaging in unfamiliar behavior, which can be uncomfortable and unsettling for a lot of people.

So generally, people avoid that. Another reason is resistance in certain personality types. Individuals with certain personality traits are very resistant to change— generally they don't change. Such as people with a narcissistic personality who may face challenges in recognizing the need for change and resist efforts.

Certain personality traits are very problematic, like narcissistic people. They always want attention for themselves and have very problematic relationships with other people because they always want to be the center of attraction. Such people don't see any problem with their behavior, and they create all the problems for other people. So such traits hinder self-awareness. We cannot—generally, we do not expect such people will change because they do not see any problem in their behavior. So certain traits are like this are highly resistant to change. So these are some of the reasons why personality change is difficult. Having said that, it is not impossible.

Research shows that certain changes happen, but generally it becomes more difficult with the progression of age. It is much easier in the earlier stages of life. So, personality is by and large more stable, but there are certain changes possible under certain conditions. We have discussed all of these aspects here. With this, I will stop here.

We will be talking about some other aspects in the next lecture. Thank you. Thank you.