



## The Role of Community in Shaping Personality and Schema Development: A Social-Cognitive Perspective

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**Abstract:** This study examines the role of community in shaping personality traits and cognitive schema development among young adults in India, adopting a social-cognitive theoretical perspective. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Young's Early Maladaptive Schema Framework, and the Five Factor Model of Personality, the study proposes that community attachment and social support function as primary environmental mechanisms through which both personality and schema are formed, reinforced, and sustained across the lifespan. A descriptive cross-sectional design was employed on a sample of 100 participants (50 males, 50 females) aged 18–25 years from urban and semi-urban communities in India. Participants completed three self-report questionnaires: the Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI), the Young Schema Questionnaire–Short Form (YSQ-S2), and the Community Integration Questionnaire (CIQ). Findings revealed significant positive correlations between community attachment, social support, positive schema development, and agreeableness. Positive schemas significantly mediated the relationship between community attachment and agreeableness, providing empirical support for a community-schema-personality pathway. Semi-urban participants exhibited higher positive schema scores and lower maladaptive schema scores compared to urban participants. Female participants scored significantly higher on agreeableness

than males. This study offers valuable insight into the psychological and cognitive influence of community on individual development and highlights the need for an integrated, social-cognitive framework in understanding personality and schema formation.

**Keywords:** *Community, Personality Development, Schema Formation, Community Attachment, Social Support, Social Cognitive Theory, Ecological Systems, Big Five, Early Maladaptive Schemas.*

## 1. Introduction

*“Man is by nature a social animal. – Aristotle, Politics*

No individual has ever survived isolation. Long before a person can articulate a sense of self, the community around them has already begun writing the first draft of who they are – through the warmth of a caregiver’s touch, the judgment of a peer group, and the unspoken rules of a culture that quietly decides what is valued and what is not. We tend to think of personality as something deeply personal, something that grows from within. But in reality, it is something that grows between people. It is shaped in the spaces where we are seen, heard, corrected, praised, and sometimes misunderstood. From the very first moments of life, the social world is not just a backdrop to development – it is the medium through which development happens. Humans are fundamentally social beings, and the need for family, peer relationships, school environments, and broader cultural institutions plays a formative role in personality development (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). That need to belong is not a luxury; it is, as decades of psychological research have argued, among the most powerful motivators of human behaviour. Communities do not only ensure our survival – they shape our overall persona, our perception of the world, and the frameworks through which we come to understand ourselves and others.

Understanding what community means, however, requires moving beyond an intuitive sense of the term. A community is widely defined as a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action within a particular geographical location or setting (MacQueen et al., 2001). This definition captures something essential: community is not merely about physical proximity or shared demographics – it is about the quality of connection, the norms that govern behaviour, and the sense of collective identity that members both inherit and co-create. Within any community, the social groupings an individual belongs to can be broadly categorized as primary and secondary. Primary groupings –

which include family members and close friends – are characterized by deep, emotionally significant bonds that leave lasting impressions on an individual's psychological development. Secondary groupings, such as professional associations, religious organizations, or academic institutions, tend to exert a more diffuse influence, shaping surface-level attitudes and behavioural norms rather than the deeper emotional fabric of the self (Kozlova et al., 2024). Together, these layers of social belonging create a complex and dynamic environment in which personality is not simply inherited or instilled – it is continuously negotiated, refined, and sometimes constrained.

Among the most influential frameworks for understanding how personality is structured is the Five-Factor Model – commonly referred to as the Big Five – which organizes human personality around five broad dimensions: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Costa et al., 2018; John & Srivastava, 1999). These traits are understood as relatively stable across time and contexts, yet they are not impervious to social influence. Research consistently shows that trait development is not a fixed biological trajectory but an interactive process, shaped by the environments people inhabit and the relationships they form (Costa et al., 2018). The microsystem – comprising the family home, school, peer networks, and neighbourhood – serves as the primary arena in which early personality dispositions are formed, tested, and consolidated. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory offers a particularly valuable lens here, proposing that human development occurs within a nested set of environmental systems, each influencing the other in a reciprocal, dynamic relationship. Within this framework, the community is not a passive container for individual growth; it is an active force that mediates what traits are rewarded, which behaviours are modelled, and how the individual comes to understand their place within a larger social fabric.

Alongside personality, cognitive schemas represent another fundamental dimension of psychological functioning that is deeply embedded in social experience. Schemas are best understood as mental blueprints – internal structures that help individuals make sense of the world by filtering incoming information, organizing experience into recognizable patterns, and guiding both perception and action (Young et al., 2003). The concept has a rich history in psychology, tracing back to Piaget's (1952/1980) foundational work on cognitive development, in which he described how children construct and refine mental frameworks through processes of assimilation and accommodation. Jeffrey Young later extended this line of inquiry into the realm of personality and emotional health, introducing the concept of Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS) – broad,

enduring patterns of thought and feeling about oneself and others, typically rooted in unmet childhood emotional needs and reinforced across the lifespan (Young et al., 2003; Mirović et al., 2011). These schemas do not operate in a vacuum. According to a procedural model of schema formation, individuals repeatedly adjust their interpretive frameworks based on the social rewards and punishments they receive. When a belief or behaviour attracts praise, acceptance, or social approval, it is reinforced and stabilized. When it meets with rejection or ridicule, it is weakened or suppressed (Jiang & Marbach, 2025). In this way, the community functions as a continuous feedback system – shaping not just what a person does, but how they fundamentally understand who they are.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of this social-cognitive perspective is the way it reveals personality and schema as not merely parallel constructs, but deeply intertwined ones – both shaped by the same communal forces, and often through the same mechanisms. Bandura's (1971) Social Cognitive Theory is particularly instructive in this regard. Rather than viewing the individual as a passive recipient of social influence, Bandura emphasized the concept of reciprocal determinism: the idea that a person's cognition, behaviour, and social environment are in a constant, mutually influencing loop. A child raised in a community that consistently rewards cooperation and empathy does not simply learn to behave cooperatively – over time, that behaviour becomes internalized as a stable trait and a guiding schema about how social life works and how one ought to show up within it. Conversely, a child raised in environments marked by instability, criticism, or emotional unavailability may develop schemas of mistrust, worthlessness, or abandonment – schemas that then go on to shape personality trajectories in ways that can persist well into adulthood (Young et al., 2003; Mirović et al., 2011). Attachment theory, originally developed by Bowlby (1982), provides a foundational account of this process, proposing that early caregiver relationships give rise to internal working models – cognitive-emotional structures that form the scaffolding of both personality and schema development. Secure attachment, characterized by consistent and responsive caregiving, has been shown to predict higher levels of extraversion and agreeableness and lower neuroticism, while insecure attachment patterns are associated with a greater prevalence of early maladaptive schemas (Mirović et al., 2011). In this light, the quality of one's earliest community experiences – the family – sets the psychological stage for all that follows.

The cultural context in which a community is embedded further amplifies these dynamics in important and nuanced ways. Markus and Kitayama (1991) demonstrated that collectivistic cultural communities – such as those prevalent across South Asia – fundamentally reshape the structure of the self. In these contexts, selfhood is not experienced as an autonomous, bounded entity, but as inherently relational: defined through one's roles within the family, the obligations to one's community, and the expectations of the social group. These cultural communities shape personality expression by reinforcing traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness, which serve the goals of group harmony and collective well-being. At the same time, they embed schemas about duty, belonging, and self-worth that become the cognitive architecture through which every subsequent experience is interpreted. Being part of a tight-knit community does not merely influence behaviour on the surface – it reaches into the deepest structures of how one thinks about oneself and what one believes one deserves. This is an especially significant consideration in the Indian context, where community membership – be it familial, religious, or caste-based – has historically carried profound weight in shaping individual identity, relational expectations, and psychological functioning (Foti & Sidiropoulou, 2020).

It is also important to acknowledge that community environments do not act uniformly across all individuals, nor do they produce exclusively positive outcomes. Social Comparison Theory offers an additional lens through which the potential costs of community belonging can be understood. Within any given social group, individuals inevitably compare themselves with others – gauging their own abilities, appearance, achievements, and social standing against those of their peers (Crusius et al., 2022). For some, this process is motivating; for others, it is quietly corrosive. When community standards are consistently internalized as unattainable benchmarks, the repeated experience of falling short can leave lasting cognitive and emotional traces. Over time, such experiences can solidify into early maladaptive schemas of shame, incompetence, or abandonment – stable, self-referential beliefs that colour how an individual approaches relationships, challenges, and opportunities long after the original community context has been left behind. The community thus acts not merely as a nurturing environment but as a continuous evaluator – one whose judgments, both explicit and implicit, become woven into the psychological fabric of the individual. Critically, Bandura (1971) reminds us that this process is bidirectional: just as maladaptive community environments can entrench harmful schemas and constrain personality

growth, positive, supportive communities can just as powerfully cultivate adaptive cognitions, strengthen prosocial traits, and buffer against psychological vulnerability.

Despite the growing recognition of community's role in psychological development, a notable gap persists in the existing literature. Studies on personality development have historically focused on trait stability and biological underpinnings, while research on schema formation has tended to remain within the clinical or cognitive domain. These two bodies of literature have rarely been brought into genuine dialogue with one another, and fewer still have examined their intersection through the specific lens of community-level social processes (Crawford, 2020). Most existing research on the social determinants of personality and cognition has been conducted in Western, predominantly individualistic contexts, leaving significant questions unanswered about how collectivistic communities – particularly in South Asian contexts – uniquely shape these psychological constructs. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining how community attachment and social support function as pathways through which personality traits and cognitive schemas are formed, sustained, and differentiated among young adults in urban and semi-urban India. By drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, Bandura's (1971) Social Cognitive Theory, Young's (2003) Early Maladaptive Schema Framework, and the Five-Factor Model of personality (Costa et al., 2018), this paper aims to construct an integrated, social-cognitive account of human psychological development – one that places the community not at the periphery, but at the very centre of who we become.

### **1.1 Personality**

The meaning and scenarios in which the word personality is used is ever changing and evolving. Personality is an integrated whole – a blend of physical, mental, emotional, and temperamental makeup. Our personality guides us in interpreting and reacting to the social world. Traits were first identified from the standard dictionary by Gordon Allport, further divided into cardinal, central and secondary traits, with Allport's theory focusing on individual uniqueness. The most prominent and influential framework is the trait theory, built around a limited set of broad and stable dimensions. The five-factor model ("Big Five") identifies core dimensions of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. This trait theory focuses on two aspects: rank-order stability and mean-level change – the relative standing of an individual on traits over time, and systematic shifts that accompany developmental transitions (Costa et al., 2018).

## 1.2 Schema

The human mind is not a blank slate. With each new experience, individuals grow by structuring mental frameworks – known as “cognitive schemas” – that help them perceive, interpret, and respond to the world. The word schema is utilized across many fields, but in psychology it broadly means a structure, framework, or outline. The term has a rich history in the field and is widely employed in cognitive development (Young et al., 2003). These mental blueprints guide perception and action in complex social environments, holding a firm structure for the individual to analyse and understand the world. Think of a schema as an internal lens that filters information, highlights what is familiar, and shapes meaning. Schemas are socially mediated processes: according to the procedural model, they are adjusted repeatedly based on social feedback – positive responses are reinforced, negative feedback weakens or suppresses them. This reward-driven loop produces schema learning and convergence (Jiang & Marbach, 2025).

## 1.3 How Personality and Schemas are Connected

The relationship between personality and schema is not just theoretical but is lived and deeply felt. Both constructs are not only shaped and reinforced but sometimes distorted by the same source: community. Markus et al. (1991) demonstrated that the cultural community in which a person is embedded fundamentally shapes the structure of the self. In collectivistic communities like those in South Asia, the self is inseparable from family, group, and community. These communities mould personality expression – reinforcing traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness that serve group harmony – while also embedding schemas about duty, belonging, and self-worth that become the cognitive architecture through which individuals interpret all subsequent experiences. Bandura’s (1971) Social Learning Theory explains the mechanism of learning by observing, imitating, and receiving feedback from community members. When a child is raised in a community that rewards expected behaviour and punishes deviations, the child reinforces both their schemas and the personality traits that align with community expectations. His concept of reciprocal determinism highlights the continuous loop of mutual influence between the individual and their community (Bandura, 1971). Social Comparison Theory adds a further dimension, explaining that people within the community measure their worth, ability, and belonging against others. Repeated self-evaluations that fall short of community standards carry emotional weight and cognitive consequences, and over time can lead to maladaptive schemas of shame, incompetence, or abandonment (Crusius et al., 2022).

### **1.4 Rationale of the Study**

Community has always played a significant part in our day-to-day life. Understanding personality and schema development cannot be done in isolation, as they are co-dependent and mutually influential. It requires joining two bodies of literature that are often studied separately: the developmental/trait literature that documents change across the lifespan, and the social-cognitive literature focusing on how interpretative frameworks (schemas) form, spread, and are shared. The integration of both provides a richer understanding of social-cognitive processes. While personality literature focuses mainly on traits and developmental trajectories, it often lacks the mechanisms that explain how environmental and social influences translate into cognitive and behavioural change. Conversely, cognitive models focus on mechanisms but have seldom been applied to long-term personality formation.

Overall, while existing literature recognizes the influence of social context on both personality and cognition, there remains a clear gap in understanding how community-level interactions shape internal schemas and personality traits through social-cognitive processes. The aim of this study is to bridge the gap between community feedback, schema formation, and personality development, thereby contributing to an integrated social-cognitive framework of human development.

### **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

The aim of the present investigation is to examine how various community environments impact the development of personality traits and cognitive schemas in individuals.

### **1.6 Objectives of the Study**

- To explore the relationship between community environment and personality traits.
- To investigate how community settings influence schema development.
- To examine whether individuals from urban and semi-urban collectivistic communities have distinct patterns of schemas.
- To determine the mediating role of community attachment and social support in schema and personality development.

### **1.7 Hypotheses**

- Individuals from collectivistic communities will exhibit higher levels of agreeableness and social conformity.

- People raised in supportive, high-cohesion communities will develop more positive schemas about self and relationships.
- Schema development mediates the relationship between community attachment and personality traits, such that stronger attachment to the community leads to healthier schema formation, which in turn predicts positive personality traits (e.g., higher agreeableness, openness).

## 2. Literature Review

Humans are social beings; without society, they cannot fully survive or flourish. From early childhood, individuals learn from social contexts – family, friends and peer groups, and broader communities – all of which influence decisions as well as perception. Research across developmental, cultural, and biological domains converges on the view that personality traits and cognitive schemas are co-constructed within social contexts. For a deeper understanding, it is necessary to examine the existing literature on personality and schema separately before bringing them together.

Personality is defined as “the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment” (Allport, as cited in Kelland et al., 2026). Allport explained that personality is constantly evolving and changing, involving motivation and self-regulation. Costa et al. (2018) described personality as relatively stable and unique to individuals across time and situations – enduring dispositions that influence cognition, emotion, and behaviour – structured around the Big Five traits of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Both nature and nurture have been shown to influence personality, with the field gradually converging on an interactionist approach.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Model extends this perspective by explaining how community shapes personality across the lifespan, emphasizing reciprocal feedback between the child and the microsystem (immediate relations such as family), mesosystem (connections between microsystems), exosystem (external social structures that influence the individual indirectly), macrosystem (broader cultural and societal context), and chronosystem (the temporal dimension of development). Cultural practices filter the developmental trajectories of cognition, emotion, and personality (Foti & Sidiropoulou, 2020).

The concept of schema has its roots in the developmental psychology of Jean Piaget. For Piaget, schemas were cognitive frameworks refined and constructed through interaction with the environment. His focus was on assimilation – incorporating new information into existing schemas – and accommodation – modifying schemas to incorporate discrepant information (Piaget, 1952/1980). The most relevant and empirically developed framework regarding schema was later provided by Jeffrey Young, who extended Beck’s cognitive schema theory to a clear definition of maladaptive schemas. Young defined Early Maladaptive Schemas as “broad, pervasive themes regarding oneself and one’s relationship with others, developed during childhood and elaborated throughout one’s lifetime” (Mirović et al., 2011).

Schemas begin in early childhood or adolescence as reality-based representations of a child’s environment, with their dysfunctional nature becoming more evident later in life through interactions with others. The origin of schemas is generally rooted in unmet emotional needs in childhood, which include: (1) secure attachment to others; (2) autonomy, competence, and sense of identity; (3) freedom to express valid needs and emotions; (4) spontaneity and play; and (5) realistic limits and self-control (Young et al., 2003).

Complementary social-cognitive accounts argue that schemas are iteratively updated through social feedback: agents maximize positive responses, leading to the emergence of shared cultural meanings through a procedural model and to opinion-leader dynamics mediated by social networks (Jiang & Marbach, 2025).

Attachment theory provides a critical theoretical link between personality development and schema formation during early childhood. Originally developed by Bowlby (1982), it proposed that the quality of care received from early caregivers shapes an internal working model of self and others, forming the foundation of cognitive-emotional structure. Three patterns of attachment were identified – secure, anxious-resistant, and anxious-avoidant. Secure attachment predicts higher extraversion and agreeableness and lower neuroticism, while insecure attachment predicts the opposite. The presence of early maladaptive schemas across attachment groups was confirmed, with securely attached individuals consistently exhibiting the lowest schema scores – establishing a pathway through which community shapes both personality and schema development (Mirović et al., 2011).

Community is an integral part of our lives, defined as a network of social relationships, cultural norms, and environmental contexts that influences individuals through a bidirectional

process. Two theoretical frameworks help illuminate the influence of community upon psychological dispositions: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model focuses on a hierarchy of environmental systems, from the intimate relations of the microsystem to the broader cultural values of the macrosystem (Crawford, 2020). Bandura's (1971) Social Cognitive Theory, on the other hand, explains development not as passive absorption of the environment, but as reciprocal determinism – a continuous, bidirectional process of interaction between an individual's cognition, behaviour, and social environment, operating through observational learning and modelling.

Both frameworks highlight that family constitutes the most proximal and formative influence on personality and schema formation. Young et al. (2003) explained the formation of early maladaptive schemas in children through parental behaviour and its impact on core emotional needs. Bandura's concept of modelling is particularly significant here: children observe and internalize the emotional regulation, interpersonal behaviours, and self-referential beliefs of their caregivers, which then become modelled patterns in their own personality and schemas.

Beyond the family, broader community levels influence development throughout childhood and adolescence. The community provides a richer environment in which to observe, reinforce, and compare oneself with others. Within the community, individuals observe their own social standing and how others are treated, leading to ongoing self-evaluation. Experiences of acceptance, rejection, praise, or ridicule shape the emerging beliefs individuals hold about their own worth, competence, and belonging.

It is further important to understand that community does not solely function as a source of maladaptive development. As Bandura (1971) emphasized through reciprocal determinism, the process operates in both directions: if a maladaptive community environment can entrench maladaptive schemas and undermine healthy personality development, a positive community environment can equally reinforce adaptive cognitions and strengthen the individual. Together, these theoretical strands delineate a multilevel architecture: social environments shape attachment, provide reward-based feedback that moulds trait trajectories, propagate shared schemas, and underscore the centrality of community in personality and cognitive development.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The present study follows a descriptive cross-sectional research design. This design was chosen because it allows for the simultaneous examination of multiple variables – community attachment, social support, personality traits, and cognitive schemas – at a single point in time, across a diverse sample of young adults. The cross-sectional approach is particularly suited to exploratory investigations of associations between community-level and individual-level psychological variables.

#### **3.2 Sample**

A simple random sampling method was used for the present study. The sample consisted of 100 participants (50 males, 50 females) recruited through an online survey platform. Participants were aged between 18 and 25 years and were drawn from urban and semi-urban communities in India. The sample was predominantly composed of students, reflecting the accessible population within the targeted age range.

#### **3.3 Inclusion Criteria**

- Age: 18–25 years.
- Individuals who provided informed consent.
- Adults with varying levels of community attachment.
- Residents of urban or semi-urban communities in India.

#### **3.4 Exclusion Criteria**

- Participants with a diagnosed psychological or psychiatric disorder.
- Individuals who did not complete all sections of the questionnaire battery.

#### **3.5 Tools to be Used**

- Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI)
- Young Schema Questionnaire – Short Form (YSQ-S2)
- Community Integration Questionnaire (CIQ)

#### **3.6 Description of Tools**

**Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI):** The BFI is a 44-item self-report inventory designed to measure the five broad dimensions of personality: Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (John & Srivastava, 1999). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Disagree Strongly) to 5 (Agree Strongly). The BFI demonstrates

high reliability ( $\alpha = 0.75\text{--}0.90$ ), is stable over time, and holds strong construct, criterion, and cross-cultural validity. It is one of the most widely used measures of personality in psychological research.

**Young Schema Questionnaire – Short Form (YSQ-S2):** Developed by Jeffrey Young, the YSQ-S2 assesses Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS) – deep, enduring negative patterns of thinking and feeling developed during childhood and reinforced throughout life. It measures maladaptive beliefs about the self and others, often linked to emotional distress and personality difficulties. Common schemas assessed include Abandonment, Mistrust/Abuse, Emotional Deprivation, Shame/Defectiveness, and Dependence/Incompetence. Items are rated on a 6-point scale from 1 (Completely untrue of me) to 6 (Describes me perfectly). The YSQ-S2 has been widely validated across clinical and non-clinical populations (Young et al., 2003).

**Community Integration Questionnaire (CIQ):** The CIQ assesses how well individuals are integrated into their community. It measures three domains: Home Integration (activities within the household), Social Integration (participation in social and leisure activities), and Productive Activity (employment, education, or volunteering). The CIQ consists of 15 self-report items and demonstrates good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.76\text{--}0.85$ ), with high test–retest reliability and broad content, construct, and criterion validity. It is widely used in social and rehabilitation research (Willer & Rosenthal, 1993).

### 3.7 Statistical Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using the following methods:

- Descriptive Statistics were computed for all demographic and study variables, including means and standard deviations.
- Pearson’s Correlation was used to examine relationships between community attachment, social support, positive schemas, and personality traits.
- One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare schema scores between participants from urban and semi-urban communities.
- Mediation Analysis was conducted to determine whether positive schemas mediated the relationship between community attachment and agreeableness.
- Independent Samples t-test was used to compare personality trait scores between male and female participants.

### 3.8 Procedure

- Participants were provided with an informed consent form prior to participation.
- The study was administered online via a structured survey platform. The entire battery – including the demographic form and three questionnaires – took approximately 25–30 minutes to complete.
- Participants were tested in a controlled or quiet setting wherever possible, and all data were collected anonymously.
- Ethical approval was obtained from the institution's research ethics committee prior to data collection.

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

- Participation was entirely voluntary. All participants provided informed consent before taking part in the study.
- All data were anonymized and stored securely. Data were used solely for the purposes of academic research.
- Participants were debriefed upon completion of the study and provided with psychological support contact information if needed.
- The right to withdraw from the study at any point was explicitly communicated to all participants.

## 4. Results

The following section presents the quantitative findings of the study. Results are organized by research objective and hypothesis, and are presented across six tables covering sociodemographic characteristics, descriptive statistics, correlational analysis, group comparisons, mediation analysis, and gender differences.

**Table 1:** *Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample*

| Variable  | Category    | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender    | Male        | 50            | 50%            |
|           | Female      | 50            | 50%            |
| Age Group | 18–20 years | 35            | 35%            |
|           | 21–23 years | 40            | 40%            |
|           | 24–25 years | 25            | 25%            |

|                      |            |    |     |
|----------------------|------------|----|-----|
| Type of Community    | Urban      | 45 | 45% |
|                      | Semi-Urban | 55 | 55% |
| Community Attachment | Low        | 30 | 30% |
|                      | Moderate   | 40 | 40% |
|                      | High       | 30 | 30% |

Table 1 presents the basic sociodemographic information of the 100 participants in the age range 18–25 years, indicating a relatively young cohort likely composed predominantly of students. The gender distribution showed an equal number of males and females (50%). The sample was largely drawn from semi-urban (55%) and urban (45%) communities, with 40% of participants reporting moderate community attachment.

**Table 2:** *Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables*

| Variable             | Mean | SD   |
|----------------------|------|------|
| Agreeableness        | 3.65 | 0.52 |
| Conscientiousness    | 3.70 | 0.48 |
| Openness             | 3.55 | 0.50 |
| Neuroticism          | 2.90 | 0.60 |
| Extraversion         | 3.60 | 0.55 |
| Positive Schemas     | 3.75 | 0.45 |
| Maladaptive Schemas  | 2.85 | 0.50 |
| Community Attachment | 3.80 | 0.47 |
| Social Support       | 3.90 | 0.42 |

Descriptive statistics (Table 2) revealed that agreeableness was among the higher-rated personality dimensions ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), and that positive schemas ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ) substantially outscored maladaptive schemas ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ). Community attachment and social support were among the highest-scoring variables in the study, indicating that the sample was embedded in relationally rich environments.

**Table 3:** *Correlation Matrix among Key Variables*

| Variables               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Community Attachment | 1 |   |   |   |

|                     |        |        |        |   |
|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| 2. Social Support   | 0.62** | 1      |        |   |
| 3. Positive Schemas | 0.58** | 0.65** | 1      |   |
| 4. Agreeableness    | 0.50** | 0.55** | 0.60** | 1 |

Note: \*\*  $p < .01$

The correlation matrix (Table 3) reveals significant positive relationships between all key variables. Community attachment showed moderate-to-strong positive correlations with positive schemas ( $r = .58$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and agreeableness ( $r = .50$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Social support demonstrated an even stronger association with positive schemas ( $r = .65$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that individuals embedded in relationally supportive communities tend to develop more constructive cognitive schemas.

**Table 4:** *Comparison of Schema Scores across Community Type (ANOVA)*

| Variable            | Urban (Mean $\pm$ SD) | Semi-Urban (Mean $\pm$ SD) | F-value | p-value |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------|---------|
| Positive Schemas    | 3.60 $\pm$ 0.50       | 3.85 $\pm$ 0.40            | 5.12    | 0.026*  |
| Maladaptive Schemas | 3.00 $\pm$ 0.55       | 2.70 $\pm$ 0.45            | 6.45    | 0.013*  |

Note: \*  $p < .05$

The one-way ANOVA (Table 4) yielded significant differences in schema scores across community types. Semi-urban participants reported significantly higher positive schema scores ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.40$ ) compared to their urban counterparts ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ), while maladaptive schema scores were significantly higher among urban participants ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) relative to semi-urban participants ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ). These findings suggest that greater community cohesion – more characteristic of semi-urban settings – serves as a protective factor against maladaptive schema formation.

**Table 5:** *Mediation Analysis (Community Attachment – Schemas – Personality)*

| Path                                                         | $\beta$ | t-value | p-value |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Community Attachment $\rightarrow$ Positive Schemas          | 0.58    | 6.20    | .000**  |
| Positive Schemas $\rightarrow$ Agreeableness                 | 0.52    | 5.75    | .000**  |
| Community Attachment $\rightarrow$ Agreeableness (Direct)    | 0.30    | 3.10    | .002*   |
| Indirect Effect (Mediation): Significant (Partial Mediation) |         |         |         |

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .001$

Table 5 presents the mediation analysis results. The path from community attachment to positive schemas was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $t = 6.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Positive schemas subsequently predicted agreeableness ( $\beta = 0.52$ ,  $t = 5.75$ ,  $p < .001$ ). When the indirect pathway (community attachment  $\rightarrow$  schemas  $\rightarrow$  agreeableness) was included, the direct effect of community attachment on agreeableness was reduced but remained significant, indicating partial mediation. Positive schemas thus constitute one important, but not the sole, mechanism through which community attachment shapes personality.

**Table 6:** *Gender Differences in Personality Traits (Independent Samples t-test)*

| Variable      | Male (Mean $\pm$ SD) | Female (Mean $\pm$ SD) | t-value | p-value   |
|---------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Agreeableness | 3.50 $\pm$ 0.55      | 3.80 $\pm$ 0.45        | 2.85    | 0.005*    |
| Neuroticism   | 2.80 $\pm$ 0.60      | 3.00 $\pm$ 0.55        | 1.90    | 0.06 (ns) |

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; ns = not significant

Female participants scored significantly higher on agreeableness ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ) compared to male participants ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ),  $t(98) = 2.85$ ,  $p = .005$ . No significant gender difference was found for neuroticism ( $p = .06$ ). This finding is consistent with established research showing that women are often socialized more intensively into communal and affiliative roles within collectivistic structures.

## 5. Discussion

This study aimed to examine the influence of community environment on personality traits and cognitive schemas, with particular focus on the role of community attachment and social support. The findings provide meaningful insights into how social contexts shape individual psychological functioning and largely support the theoretical framework underpinning this investigation.

The results indicated a significant positive relationship between community attachment and personality traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness, providing partial to strong support for the first hypothesis. The descriptive statistics revealed that agreeableness was among the higher-rated personality dimensions in the sample ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ). Statistical analysis confirmed that collectivism was positively correlated with agreeableness ( $r = 0.50$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that as individuals' sense of belonging and emotional investment in their community

increases, so does their disposition towards prosocial and cooperative behaviour. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that the microsystem and mesosystem exert considerable influence on the development of personality characteristics, including social orientation and cooperativeness.

The gender comparison added further nuance. Female participants scored significantly higher on agreeableness ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ) relative to male participants ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ),  $t = 2.85$ ,  $p = .005$ . This is consistent with established research showing that women are often socialized more intensively into communal and affiliative roles within collectivistic structures (Kozlova et al., 2024). Gendered patterns of community socialization thus appear to differentially shape personality trait expression.

The findings supporting the second hypothesis revealed notably elevated positive schema scores ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ) relative to maladaptive schema scores ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ). This differential pattern suggests that the majority of participants, who reported moderate-to-high levels of community attachment and social support, harboured broadly constructive mental representations of self and others. This resonates with Young's schema therapy framework, which underscores the role of early relational environments in cultivating either adaptive or maladaptive schemas, with supportive communities functioning as a relational environment writ large (Young et al., 2003).

The correlation analysis substantiated this further. Community attachment demonstrated a significant positive correlation with positive schemas ( $r = .58$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and social support showed an even stronger association ( $r = .65$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings indicate that positive schemas – incorporating beliefs about one's worthiness, trust in others, and the availability of care – are deeply embedded in the quality of one's community environment.

The ANOVA comparing schema scores across community types yielded particularly instructive findings. Semi-urban participants showed significantly higher positive schema scores ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.40$ ) than their urban counterparts ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ), while maladaptive schemas were significantly higher among urban participants ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) relative to semi-urban participants ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ). This suggests that semi-urban environments – with their more intact social fabrics, neighbourhood cohesion, and intergenerational continuity – may provide the kind of relational and emotional availability that buffers against maladaptive schema

formation while promoting adaptive self-and-other representations. The community can function, in effect, as an extended family caregiving environment that fosters positive schema development.

The third and most theoretically integrative hypothesis received robust empirical support from the mediation analysis. The path from community attachment to positive schemas was statistically and substantively meaningful ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $t = 6.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and positive schemas in turn significantly predicted agreeableness ( $\beta = 0.52$ ,  $t = 5.75$ ,  $p < .001$ ). When the indirect pathway was included, the direct effect of community attachment on agreeableness was reduced but remained significant, indicating partial mediation. This is consistent with Bandura's (1971) Social Cognitive Theory and cognitive developmental perspectives. The residual direct effect suggests that other mediating mechanisms – such as identity formation, moral reasoning, self-regulatory capacity, and coping style – may also account for the relationship between community attachment and personality, and warrant investigation in future research.

Taken together, the findings of this study offer converging support for the view that community is not merely a backdrop to psychological development but an active shaping force – one that simultaneously sculpts personality traits and cognitive schemas through the layered mechanisms of social feedback, observational learning, attachment, and cultural transmission. These findings carry practical implications: community-level interventions that strengthen social support networks and cohesion may serve as a meaningful lever for promoting adaptive personality development and reducing the burden of maladaptive schemas, particularly in urban settings where social fragmentation may be more pronounced.

## 6. Summary

The present study aimed to examine the role of community in personality and schema development among young adults in India. The sample consisted of 100 participants in the age range of 18–25 years from urban and semi-urban community settings, recruited through simple random sampling via an online survey platform. A descriptive cross-sectional research design was employed. Participants completed three validated self-report questionnaires: the Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI), the Young Schema Questionnaire – Short Form (YSQ-S2), and the Community Integration Questionnaire (CIQ). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and data were anonymized and treated as strictly confidential.

### 6.1 Key Findings

- Community attachment showed a significant positive correlation with agreeableness, conscientiousness, and positive schema development, indicating that stronger community bonds are associated with more adaptive personality traits and constructive cognitive schemas.
- Social support demonstrated a significant positive correlation with positive schemas and agreeableness, suggesting that individuals embedded in relationally supportive communities develop more favourable beliefs about self and others.
- Semi-urban participants exhibited significantly higher positive schema scores and significantly lower maladaptive schema scores compared to urban participants, indicating that greater community cohesion serves as a protective factor against maladaptive schema formation.
- Positive schemas significantly mediated the relationship between community attachment and agreeableness, confirming that community shapes personality both directly and through its influence on cognitive schema development.
- Female participants scored significantly higher on agreeableness compared to male participants, reflecting gendered patterns of socialization within collectivistic community structures.

### 6.2 Limitations of the Study

While this study provides meaningful insights into the role of community in shaping personality and schema development, several limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting the findings.

**Cross-Sectional Design:** The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference. While significant associations were found between community attachment, schemas, and personality traits, the directionality of these relationships cannot be definitively established. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track how community-level changes translate into personality and schema shifts over time.

**Sample Characteristics:** The sample (N = 100) was relatively small, homogenous in age (18–25 years), and limited to urban and semi-urban settings in India. The findings may not generalize to rural communities, older populations, or other cultural contexts. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples.

**Proxy Measures:** Community type (urban vs. semi-urban) and CIQ scores were used as proxies for collectivistic orientation and community cohesion. Future studies should employ direct measures of cultural orientation and social cohesion to more precisely capture these constructs.

**Scope of Mediation Analysis:** The mediation analysis focused on agreeableness as the personality outcome variable. However, community attachment and positive schemas may similarly influence other Big Five traits such as openness and conscientiousness, as well as broader outcomes like self-esteem. Subsequent studies should examine a broader range of personality outcomes.

**Self-Report Measures:** All data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which are susceptible to social desirability bias and subjective interpretation. Future research could incorporate multi-method approaches – such as peer reports, observational data, or physiological measures – to strengthen the validity of the findings.

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