

The Big Five in Education: Unveiling the Personality Traits that Makes Educators Inspiring

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to assess the students' preferences for what makes an educator inspiring to them. All 38 inspiring educators' characteristics have been grouped according to the Big Five Personality Traits model. There are seven characteristics under openness; nine characteristics under conscientiousness; five characteristics under extraversion; 12 characteristics under agreeableness; and five characteristics under emotional stability. A survey method was used in this study. The data were collected using online questionnaires from 206 diploma students at one of the public universities in West Malaysia. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean scores, standard deviation, and inferential statistics, namely the Kruskal-Wallis Test. According to the study findings, three characteristics associated with agreeableness received the most positive responses from the students, followed by one associated with openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and emotional stability. The study also found that there are no significant differences in the characteristics of inspiring educators chosen by the students based on the year of study. As a conclusion, all 38 inspiring educators' characteristics can be categorised into three categories. The first category involves characteristics related to the personal qualities of educators. The second category encompasses characteristics regarding educators' pedagogical and disciplinary expertise. The third category comprises characteristics associated with the relationship between educators and students. This study aims to enhance educators' understanding, empowering them to invest in the necessary efforts to enhance their personal and professional characteristics, thereby fostering impactful and inspiring teaching and learning for their students.

Keywords: Big Five Personality Traits, Educators, Inspiring educators' characteristics, Higher education

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1. Introduction

Personality traits play a crucial role in shaping an individual's behaviour, cognitive processes, and social interactions. The Big Five Personality Traits (BFPT) model, also known as the Five-Factor Model, is widely used in the field of psychology, education, marketing, political science, sports, counselling and therapy to gain a comprehensive understanding and quantitatively evaluate different aspects of an individual's personality (Ciecuch & Laguna, 2019). The current model integrates a comprehensive array of five personality traits, namely *openness*, *conscientiousness*, *extraversion*, *agreeableness*, and *emotional stability* (Costa & McCrae, 1999). Each personality trait encompassed certain characteristics. Understanding these traits can provide valuable insights into an individual's strengths, weaknesses, and overall behaviours (Zell & Lesick, 2022).

The relationship between the BFPT and inspiring educators in higher education is multifaceted, as each characteristic contributes uniquely to the qualities that make an educator truly inspiring. Understanding the interplay of these characteristics allows educators to capitalise on their strengths, be mindful of potential challenges, and adapt their approach to cater to the diverse needs of their students, leading to inspiring teaching and learning. According to Derounian (2017), inspiring teaching will not only impart knowledge but also inspire a lifelong love for learning and personal development.

The concept of *openness* in educators is closely linked to the degree to which educators are receptive to novel ideas and demonstrate a capacity for innovation (Nascimbeni & Burgos, 2016). They introduce innovation to the classroom by exploring unconventional teaching methods and fostering students' ability to think creatively. The educators' openness is connected to how inspiration sparks through innovation. *Conscientious* educators exhibit diligence, organisation, and commitment in their professional endeavours (Spielmann *et al.*, 2022). Their conscientious nature is evident in their approach to teaching, characterised by well-planned lessons, attention to detail, and a strong dedication to ensuring student success. These qualities foster a sense of discipline and accomplishment among their students. The educators' conscientiousness is associated with how inspiration ignites through diligence.

Extraverted educators thrive on social interactions and often create lively, engaging classrooms (Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2005). Their enthusiasm is infectious, fostering a positive and participatory learning environment that inspires students to actively participate and express themselves. The educators' extraversion relates to how inspiration kindles through engagement. The concept of *agreeableness* in educators is closely linked to the degree to which educators can create a supportive and inclusive learning environment (Khodamoradi, 2020). Their empathetic approach helps build strong educator-student relationships, making students feel valued and understood, which, in turn, inspires a sense of belonging and motivation to excel. The educators' agreeableness is related to how inspiration sparks through empathy. *Emotionally stable* educators handle stress with composure, providing a model of resilience that encourages students to navigate difficulties with grace (Khassawneh, 2022). The educators' emotional stability is associated with how inspiration ignites through resilience.

Given the value of inspiring educators in higher education in enhancing the learning experiences of students both inside and outside of the university, it is essential to have an in-depth understanding of the characteristics that define inspiring educators according to the BFPT. While there is an increasing amount of study focused on determining the qualities that make educators inspiring (Su & Wood, 2012; Ahmed *et al.*, 2020; Naibert & Barbera, 2022), there is still a complex and growing understanding of the various characteristics that contribute to an educator's ability to inspire, particularly as defined by the BFPT. This study will be expected to improve the awareness and understanding of universities and educators, enabling them to make the necessary efforts to improve the personal and professional characteristics of educators. Ultimately, this will be beneficial for the students, even after their completion of university education. Inspiring educators will have a profound and enduring impact on the lives of their students (Afida *et al.*, 2023a).

At the end of this paper, the 38 inspiring educators' characteristics will be categorised into three categories: Category 1 refers to educators' personal qualities, encompassing 20 characteristics; Category 2 refers to educators' pedagogical and disciplinary expertise, encompassing 5 characteristics; and Category 3 refers to the educator-student relationship, encompassing 13 characteristics. The combination of characteristics in Category 1 and Category 2 will enhance the professional capabilities of educators. Similarly, the combination of Category 1 and Category 3 will enhance the personal qualities of educators. Furthermore, the combination of Category 2 and Category 3 will enhance educators' effectiveness as facilitators in their respective roles. When educators possess all 38 characteristics, they have the potential to become influential figures within and beyond the university setting. Their influence extends to students, motivating them to engage in meaningful academic and personal pursuits.

2. Literature review

2.1 Inspiring educators in higher education

In higher education, educators who are considered inspiring possess extensive proficiency in their subject matter, utilise interesting and motivating teaching methods, actively engage students in learning, foster a positive and respectful environment for learning, and establish genuine relationships with their students. This has been proven by studies conducted by Su and Wood (2012), Ahmed *et al.* (2020), and Naibert and Barbera (2022). They found out that inspiring educators not only possess extensive subject knowledge but also exhibit a tendency to assist and utilise inspirational teaching methods, as mentioned by students. Previous studies discussed fundamental elements of inspiring educator practices, emphasising the importance of reflective personal and classroom mission statements (Searight & Searight, 2011), modelling desired behaviours (Ahn *et al.*, 2020), fostering mutual respect (Snijders *et al.*, 2020), actively listening to students (Jones *et al.*, 2016), and cultivating meaningful relationships with students (Saidi & Vu, 2021).

The critical role of inspiring educators in higher education lies in their rich influence on students. They convey knowledge and spark a passion for acquiring knowledge, foster personal and professional growth, nurture intellectual abilities, enhance self-confidence, and contribute to overall academic achievement. Beyond the confines of the classroom, educators who inspire students serve as mentors, leading them through their academic and personal paths to success (Zhou, 2021). This mentorship can significantly assist students in navigating the complexity of their chosen area, making well-informed decisions regarding their academic and career pathways, and developing a sense of purpose in their lives (Wingfield & Wingfield, 2023). In doing so, they contribute significantly to students' personal growth, self-awareness, and the cultivation of essential life skills (Lunsford *et al.* 2017).

Moreover, it is crucial to recognise the substantial impact of educators who act as catalysts for fostering critical thinking skills. Through engaging in intellectually stimulating discussions (Tirthali & Murai, 2021), providing challenging tasks (Qardaku, 2019), and cultivating an environment that encourages independent thinking (Tsaoussi, 2020), the university successfully equips its students with the ability to critically analyse information, question preconceived ideas, and ultimately arrive at thoughtful and well-founded conclusions. Acquiring these skills is crucial for achieving academic success and empowering students with the required tools to navigate the complex dynamics of the real world (Rohm *et al.*, 2021). Within this environment, the development of critical thinking arises as an exceedingly beneficial characteristic.

The influence of inspiring educators on their students' self-confidence cannot be emphasised. According to a study conducted by Derounian (2017), these educators contribute to developing students' self-esteem and positive self-image by recognising their students' efforts and accomplishments. This confidence, in turn, empowers students to tackle challenges, take intellectual risks, and pursue ambitious goals (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). In addition, it is worth noting that educators who possess the ability to inspire play a crucial role in a university's overall success (Matheson, 2019). These educators create and foster an environment that cultivates student motivation, provides necessary support, and fosters a culture of excellence (Kahu & Nelson, 2017). The positive impact of their influence is evident in the heightened levels of student satisfaction, thereby enhancing the university's reputation (Chandra *et al.*, 2019).

2.2 The Big Five Personality Traits in higher education

Generally, the BFPT in higher education are as follows. Educators who exhibit openness are willing to embrace innovative teaching methods, include various perspectives, and cultivate a dynamic learning environment (Nascimbeni & Burgos, 2016). Conscientiousness in educators is linked to careful and thorough planning, efficient organisation, and a methodical teaching style, potentially impacting students' academic discipline and work habits (Spielmann *et al.*, 2022). Extraverted educators may demonstrate exceptional skills in establishing captivating and interactive classrooms (Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2005). In contrast, educators who exhibit agreeableness may significantly enhance educator-student relationships and foster an environment that promotes learning (Khodamoradi, 2020). Comprehending the influence of emotional stability enables educators to identify and tackle difficulties related to the emotional well-being of students (Khassawneh, 2022).

Within higher education research, multiple studies have provided evidence suggesting a significant association between the BFPT and various aspects of educators' professional lives, including their effectiveness, job performance, and levels of burnout (Liu *et al.*, 2022; Kim *et al.*, 2019; Furnham *et al.*, 2009). Notably, it plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes towards the learning process, such as motivation and satisfaction with different teaching modes (Kader *et al.*, 2022; Arias *et al.*, 2014; Fjelkner *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, it has been established in previous studies that a significant correlation exists between BFPT and the emotional well-being of students (Purna & Prawitasari, 2019). Acknowledging and valuing the variety of personality traits exhibited by educators can result in greater collaboration among faculty members, a richer educational experience for students, and a supportive learning environment within the university.

2.3 Classification of inspiring educators' characteristics according to the Big Five Personality Traits.

Below are the inspiring educators' characteristics according to the BFPT from previous studies (Table 1).

Table 1: Inspiring educators' characteristics according to the Big Five Personality Traits.

BFPT	Characteristics	Previous studies
Openness	Knowledgeable in related fields	Ali, 2019; Bath & Smith, 2009; DeYoung <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Gocłowska <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Tan <i>et al.</i> , 2019.
	Open-minded	
	Lifelong learner	
	Creative	
	Innovative	
	Knowledgeable in general fields	
	Adventurous	
Conscientiousness	Responsible	Ahmed Iqbal <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Alghamdi <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Bastian <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Paiman <i>et al.</i> , 2023; Spielmann <i>et al.</i> , 2022; White <i>et al.</i> , 2011.
	Dependable	
	Consistent	
	Ethical	
	Detailed	
	Hardworking	
	Organised	
	Result-oriented	
	Punctual	
Extraversion	Good communicator	Dhillon & Kaur, 2023; Fatemi <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Plessen <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Tlili <i>et al.</i> , 2022; Vallerand <i>et al.</i> , 2024.
	Confident	
	Passionate	
	Energetic	
	Humorous	
Agreeableness	Positive attitude	Agyemang <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Alghamdi <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Dhillon & Kaur, 2023; Fowers <i>et al.</i> , 2022; Izzati <i>et al.</i> ,
	Supportive	
	Patient	

BFPT	Characteristics	Previous studies
	Kind-hearted	2015; Noreen <i>et al.</i> , 2019.
	Fair	
	Tolerant	
	Active listener	
	Approachable	
	Flexible	
	Forgiving	
	Generous	
	Attractive	
Emotional stability	Emotionally stable	Bento <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Samfira & Paloş, 2021; Shah <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Yokus, 2022.
	Calm	
	Optimistic	
	Reflective	
	Resilient	

3. Research methodology

3.1 Survey instrument

For this survey, a structured questionnaire form made accessible through Google Forms was used. There are three parts to the questionnaire:

- Part A is about the profiles of the students.
- Part B is about the positive effects of feeling inspired.
- Part C is about the inspiring educators' characteristics.

Only Part A and Part C will be evaluated for this paper. The questions in Part A are of the multiple-choice variation. In contrast, the questions in Part C are on the Likert five-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha values were acquired to evaluate the reliability of the Likert scale questions included in the questionnaire. The obtained alpha value is 0.98, which is very good (George & Mallery, 2016). This indicates that the questions presented consistently measure the inspiring educators' characteristics.

3.2 Data collection

The data were collected through an online survey. Students have been extended an invitation to provide their response to this inquiry through email and WhatsApp. The study objectives, the disclosure of the intended use of the information provided in the questionnaire, and the estimated time required to complete the questionnaire have all been communicated to the students. The students were allotted seven days to fill out the questionnaires. The survey was conducted anonymously to enhance students' confidence in delivering truthful responses to all inquiries.

3.3 Samples

To guarantee a high response rate, the questionnaires were distributed to all 1040 diploma students at one public university in West Malaysia, even though only 281 samples were required for this study. With 206 students responding in all, the response rate was 73.3%. Thirty students were selected at random and awarded RM10 meal vouchers as an expression of appreciation for their participation in this survey. The students received their digital vouchers through email.

3.4 Data analysis

The data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. This study utilised descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation, as well as inferential statistics, including the Kruskal-Wallis Test.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Students' profiles

Out of the total of 206 students who joined the study, 112 (54.4%) were male and 94 (45.6%) were female. 136 (66.0%) were enrolled in non-engineering programmes, while 70 (34.0%) were enrolled in engineering programmes. Year 1 featured 86 (41.7%) students, Year 3 comprised 70 (34.0%), and Year 2 consisted of 50 (24.3%). 86 students (41.7%) remain without the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) as they are in the first semester of Year 1. 67 (32.5%) students have CGPAs ranging from 3.51 to 4.00, 37 (18.0%) students have CGPAs ranging from 3.01 to 3.50, and 16 (7.8%) students have CGPAs ranging from 2.51 to 3.00. Of the 206 students who participated in the survey, 149 (72.3%) admitted that they experienced feelings of inspiration while they were

attending the university, while 57 (27.7%) admitted that they had not yet experienced feelings of inspiration at the present time (Table 2). In general, the survey included university students with different backgrounds and academic profiles.

Table 2: Students' profiles

Variables	f (%)
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	112 (54.4)
Female	94 (45.6)
<i>Program of study</i>	
Engineering	70 (34.0)
Non-engineering	136 (66.0)
<i>Year of study</i>	
Year 1	86 (41.7)
Year 2	50 (24.3)
Year 3	70 (34.0)
<i>Latest CGPA</i>	
None (Year 1)	86 (41.7)
Below 2.00	0 (0.0)
2.01 – 2.50	0 (0.0)
2.51 – 3.00	16 (7.8)
3.01 – 3.50	37 (18.0)
3.51 – 4.00	67 (32.5)
<i>Feeling inspired in university</i>	
Yes	149 (72.3)
Not yet	57 (27.7)

$n = 206$

4.2 Inspiring educators' characteristics according to the Big Five Personality Traits

Table 3 presents the 38 inspiring educators' characteristics in the questionnaire per the BFPT. Seven characteristics were associated with *openness*: knowledgeable in related fields, open-minded, lifelong learner, creative, innovative, and knowledgeable in general fields; nine characteristics were correlated with *conscientiousness*: responsible, dependable, consistent, ethical, detailed, hardworking, organised, result-oriented, and punctual; five characteristics were associated with *extraversion*: good communicator, confident, passionate, energetic, and humorous; 12 characteristics were associated with *agreeableness*: positive attitude, supportive, patient, kind-hearted, fair, tolerant, active listener, approachable, flexible, forgiving, and generous; and five characteristics were associated with *emotional stability*: emotionally stable, calm, optimistic, reflective, and resilient.

Students need to determine the extent to which they agree with the characteristics that educators possess that inspire them. The following is a list of the top three characteristics of inspiring educators, according to the BFPT, that students provided the most favourable responses to (agree and strongly agree). The characteristics that fell under *openness* were knowledgeable in related fields, with a mean score of 4.54; open-minded, with a mean score of 4.49; and lifelong learner, with a mean score of 4.42. The characteristics associated with *conscientiousness* were responsible, with a mean score of 4.62; dependable, with a mean score of 4.49; and consistent, with a mean score of 4.46. The characteristics that fell under the *extraversion* were good communicator, with a mean score of 4.54; confident, with a mean score of 4.45; and passionate, with a mean score of 4.42. The characteristics associated with *agreeableness* were positive attitude, with a mean score of 4.60; supportive, with a mean score of 4.54; and patient, with a mean score of 4.53. The characteristics that fell under *emotional stability* were emotionally stable, with a mean score of 4.50; calm, with a mean score of 4.44; and optimistic, with a mean score of 4.31 (Table 3). Regarding the top five of 38 inspiring educators' characteristics, responsible had the highest mean score of 4.62; positive attitude had a mean score of 4.60; knowledgeable in related fields, good communicator, and supportive had a mean score of 4.54; patient had a mean score of 4.53; and emotionally stable had a mean score of 4.50. According to the study results, three characteristics associated with *agreeableness* received the most positive responses from the students, followed by one associated with *openness*, *conscientiousness*, *extraversion*, and *emotional stability* (Table 3). The findings indicate that students value agreeableness because it contributes to their relationships with educators. These findings aligned with Agyemang *et al.*, 2016; Alghamdi *et al.*, 2017; Dhillon & Kaur, 2023; Fowers *et al.*, 2022; Izzati *et al.*, 2015; Khodamoradi, 2020; and Noreen *et al.*, 2019 studies. Strong interpersonal relationships serve as the foundation for a feeling of comfort and assurance throughout the entire learning process. When educators possess the qualities that foster a sense of comfort in students, they will develop more confidence to take an active role in all learning programmes and activities, both within and beyond the

classroom. Students will experience more peace and confidence, knowing that educators consistently provide them with the best guidance and support. Students know they can rely on educators in the event of any issues.

Table 3: Inspiring educators' characteristics according to the Big Five Personality Traits

Code	Inspiring educators' characteristics	<i>f</i> (%)					Mean scores (SD)
		SD	D	N	A	SA	
<i>Openness</i>							
C1	Knowledgeable in related fields	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	22 (10.7)	45 (21.8)	137 (66.5)	4.54 (.723)
C2	Open-minded	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	27 (13.1)	46 (22.3)	131 (63.6)	4.49 (.757)
C3	Lifelong learner	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	30 (14.6)	60 (29.1)	116 (56.3)	4.42 (.733)
C4	Creative	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	39 (18.9)	62 (30.1)	104 (50.5)	4.31 (.789)
C5	Innovative	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	37 (18.0)	62 (30.1)	105 (51.0)	4.31 (.797)
C6	Knowledgeable in general fields	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	38 (18.4)	74 (35.9)	92 (44.7)	4.24 (.784)
C7	Adventurous	0 (0.0)	3 (1.5)	61 (29.6)	60 (29.1)	82 (39.8)	4.07 (.866)
<i>Conscientiousness</i>							
C8	Responsible	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	19 (9.2)	40 (19.4)	147 (71.4)	4.62 (.649)
C9	Dependable	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	25 (12.1)	52 (25.2)	128 (62.1)	4.49 (.724)
C10	Consistent	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	30 (14.6)	52 (25.2)	124 (60.2)	4.46 (.736)
C11	Ethical	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	29 (14.1)	59 (28.6)	118 (57.3)	4.43 (.728)
C12	Detailed	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	35 (17.0)	52 (25.2)	118 (57.3)	4.39 (.781)
C13	Hardworking	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	41 (19.9)	52 (25.2)	112 (54.4)	4.33 (.808)
C14	Organised	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	43 (20.9)	59 (28.6)	104 (50.5)	4.30 (.793)
C15	Result-oriented	2 (1.0)	0 (0.0)	37 (18.0)	73 (35.4)	94 (45.6)	4.25 (.816)
C16	Punctual	0 (0.0)	2 (0.5)	51 (24.8)	50 (24.3)	103 (50.0)	4.23 (.858)
<i>Extraversion</i>							
C17	Good communicator	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	20 (9.7)	54 (26.2)	132 (64.1)	4.54 (.667)
C18	Confident	1 (0.5)	0 (0.0)	29 (14.1)	53 (25.7)	123 (59.7)	4.45 (.749)
C19	Passionate	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	33 (16.0)	48 (23.3)	123 (59.7)	4.42 (.790)
C20	Energetic	1 (0.5)	0 (0.0)	43 (20.9)	52 (25.2)	110 (53.4)	4.32 (.816)
C21	Humorous	1 (0.5)	5 (2.4)	48 (23.3)	53 (25.7)	99 (48.1)	4.18 (.908)
<i>Agreeableness</i>							
C22	Positive attitude	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	16 (7.8)	45 (21.8)	143 (69.4)	4.60 (.676)
C23	Supportive	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	23 (11.2)	45 (21.8)	137 (66.5)	4.54 (.709)

Code	Inspiring educators' characteristics	f (%)					Mean scores (SD)
		SD	D	N	A	SA	
C24	Patient	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	25 (12.1)	47 (22.8)	134 (65.0)	4.53 (.703)
C25	Kind-hearted	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	30 (14.6)	44 (21.4)	132 (64.1)	4.50 (.737)
C26	Fair	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	25 (12.1)	47 (22.8)	133 (64.6)	4.50 (.770)
C27	Tolerant	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	25 (12.1)	58 (28.2)	123 (59.7)	4.48 (.703)
C28	Active listener	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	32 (15.5)	51 (24.8)	122 (59.2)	4.43 (.766)
C29	Approachable	1 (0.5)	2 (1.0)	30 (14.6)	50 (24.3)	123 (59.7)	4.42 (.809)
C30	Flexible	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	33 (16.0)	50 (24.3)	121 (58.7)	4.41 (.789)
C31	Forgiving	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	36 (17.5)	54 (26.2)	115 (55.8)	4.37 (.785)
C32	Generous	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	41 (19.9)	52 (25.2)	113 (54.9)	4.35 (.793)
C33	Attractive	1 (0.5)	4 (1.9)	44 (21.4)	48 (23.3)	109 (52.9)	4.26 (.894)
<i>Emotional stability</i>							
C34	Emotionally stable	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	25 (12.1)	47 (22.8)	132 (64.1)	4.50 (.744)
C35	Calm	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	26 (12.6)	63 (30.6)	117 (56.8)	4.44 (.708)
C36	Optimistic	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	41 (19.9)	57 (27.7)	107 (51.9)	4.31 (.803)
C37	Reflective	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	40 (19.4)	59 (28.6)	106 (51.5)	4.31 (.797)
C38	Resilient	1 (0.5)	0 (0.0)	47 (22.8)	55 (26.7)	103 (50.0)	4.26 (.842)

n = 206

SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly agree

4.3 Significant differences of inspiring educators' characteristics according to the year of study

According to Table 4, the Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed no significant differences in the characteristics of inspiring educators chosen by the students based on the year of study. Irrespective of the students' academic development, their consensus regarding the characteristics of inspiring educators remains consistent. This implies that students need educators who can inspire and stimulate them throughout their academic journey at the university. Students can experience inspiration at any stage in their lives, especially during their time at university. The findings of this study align with the study carried out by Passi *et al.* (2013), where they highlighted that educators who serve as positive role models can inspire students regardless of their academic level. According to Thrash and Elliot (2004), it has been observed that inspiration has the potential to manifest at various points throughout an individual's lifespan, thereby exerting a positive influence on their overall well-being and personal growth.

Table 4: Significant differences of inspiring educators' characteristics according to the year of study

Inspiring educators' characteristics	n	Mean rank	Chi-square	df	p
<i>Openness</i>					
Knowledgeable in related fields					
Year 1	86	94.84	4.678	2	.096
Year 2	50	107.35			
Year 3	70	111.39			
Open-minded					
Year 1	86	96.98	2.445	2	.294
Year 2	50	107.28			
Year 3	70	108.81			

Inspiring educators' characteristics	n	Mean rank	Chi-square	df	p
Lifelong learner					
Year 1	86	103.31	3.001	2	.223
Year 2	50	93.70			
Year 3	70	110.73			
Creative					
Year 1	86	98.13	2.015	2	.365
Year 2	50	111.85			
Year 3	70	104.14			
Innovative					
Year 1	86	103.22	0.065	2	.968
Year 2	50	102.25			
Year 3	70	104.74			
Knowledgeable in general fields					
Year 1	86	94.79	5.178	2	.075
Year 2	50	102.42			
Year 3	70	114.97			
Adventurous					
Year 1	86	103.45	4.303	2	.116
Year 2	50	90.96			
Year 3	70	112.51			
Conscientiousness					
Responsible					
Year 1	86	98.04	2.625	2	.269
Year 2	50	103.28			
Year 3	70	110.36			
Dependable					
Year 1	86	94.22	5.528	2	.063
Year 2	50	105.48			
Year 3	70	113.49			
Consistent					
Year 1	86	101.53	0.698	2	.705
Year 2	50	100.98			
Year 3	70	107.71			
Ethical					
Year 1	86	97.63	5.271	2	.072
Year 2	50	97.10			
Year 3	70	115.28			
Detailed					
Year 1	86	101.39	3.825	2	.148
Year 2	50	94.16			
Year 3	70	112.76			
Hardworking					
Year 1	86	98.56	4.671	2	.097
Year 2	50	96.28			
Year 3	70	114.73			
Organised					
Year 1	86	98.10	2.064	2	.356
Year 2	50	102.73			
Year 3	70	110.69			
Result-oriented					
Year 1	86	98.80	3.770	2	.152
Year 2	50	97.09			
Year 3	70	113.85			
Punctual					
Year 1	86	102.35			

Inspiring educators' characteristics	n	Mean rank	Chi-square	df	p
Year 2	50	90.88	5.222	2	.073
Year 3	70	113.93			
<i>Extraversion</i>					
Good communicator					
Year 1	86	97.92	1.810	2	.405
Year 2	50	107.04			
Year 3	70	107.83			
Confident					
Year 1	86	98.31	1.518	2	.468
Year 2	50	105.82			
Year 3	70	108.21			
Passionate					
Year 1	86	99.06	1.078	2	.583
Year 2	50	105.94			
Year 3	70	107.21			
Energetic					
Year 1	86	97.52	1.825	2	.402
Year 2	50	107.03			
Year 3	70	108.33			
Humorous					
Year 1	86	98.69	1.511	2	.470
Year 2	50	103.22			
Year 3	70	109.61			
<i>Agreeableness</i>					
Positive attitude					
Year 1	86	96.12	3.766	2	.152
Year 2	50	105.88			
Year 3	70	110.86			
Supportive					
Year 1	86	99.00	2.288	2	.318
Year 2	50	101.16			
Year 3	70	110.70			
Patient					
Year 1	86	99.12	2.142		.343
Year 2	50	105.88			
Year 3	70	110.86			
Kind-hearted					
Year 1	86	99.09	2.305	2	.316
Year 2	50	100.68			
Year 3	70	110.93			
Fair					
Year 1	86	98.77	1.928	2	.381
Year 2	50	102.56			
Year 3	70	109.99			
Tolerant					
Year 1	86	96.15	2.996	2	.224
Year 2	50	107.44			
Year 3	70	109.71			
Active listener					
Year 1	86	102.58	1.872	2	.392
Year 2	50	96.51			
Year 3	70	109.63			
Approachable					
Year 1	86	95.20			

Inspiring educators' characteristics	n	Mean rank	Chi-square	df	p
Year 2	50	104.45	4.497	2	.106
Year 3	70	113.01			
Flexible					
Year 1	86	98.03	5.628	2	.060
Year 2	50	96.01			
Year 3	70	115.57			
Forgiving					
Year 1	86	104.80	1.404	2	.496
Year 2	50	95.95			
Year 3	70	107.30			
Generous					
Year 1	86	102.31	1.431	2	.489
Year 2	50	97.59			
Year 3	70	109.18			
Attractive					
Year 1	86	99.53	1.804	2	.406
Year 2	50	100.43			
Year 3	70	110.56			
<i>Emotional stability</i>					
Emotionally stable					
Year 1	86	101.60	0.435	2	.804
Year 2	50	102.25			
Year 3	70	106.73			
Calm					
Year 1	86	102.55	1.013	2	.603
Year 2	50	98.57			
Year 3	70	108.19			
Optimistic					
Year 1	86	100.41	1.851	2	.396
Year 2	50	98.84			
Year 3	70	110.63			
Reflective					
Year 1	86	96.90	5.021	2	.081
Year 2	50	98.31			
Year 3	70	115.31			
Resilient					
Year 1	86	103.69	2.050	2	.359
Year 2	50	94.90			
Year 3	70	109.41			

n = 206

5. Conclusion

Based on this study's findings, three main categories of inspiring educators' characteristics that are essential and desired by university students can be concluded (Figure 1).

The first category encompasses characteristics related to the *educators' personal qualities*, which play a significant role in their capacity to serve as individuals who can motivate and inspire students. Educators possessing exceptional self-qualities will establish a comfortable and relaxed environment for students within and beyond the university. Students will exhibit greater receptiveness towards educators' advice and guidance to foster personal growth and development. Students will also cultivate a desire to imitate the personal characteristics of educators, perceiving them as accomplished individuals in life. In the first category, there are 20 characteristics of inspiring educators. Eight characteristics fall under *conscientiousness*, five fall under *emotional stability*, four fall under *extraversion*, two fall under *openness*, and one falls under *agreeableness*.

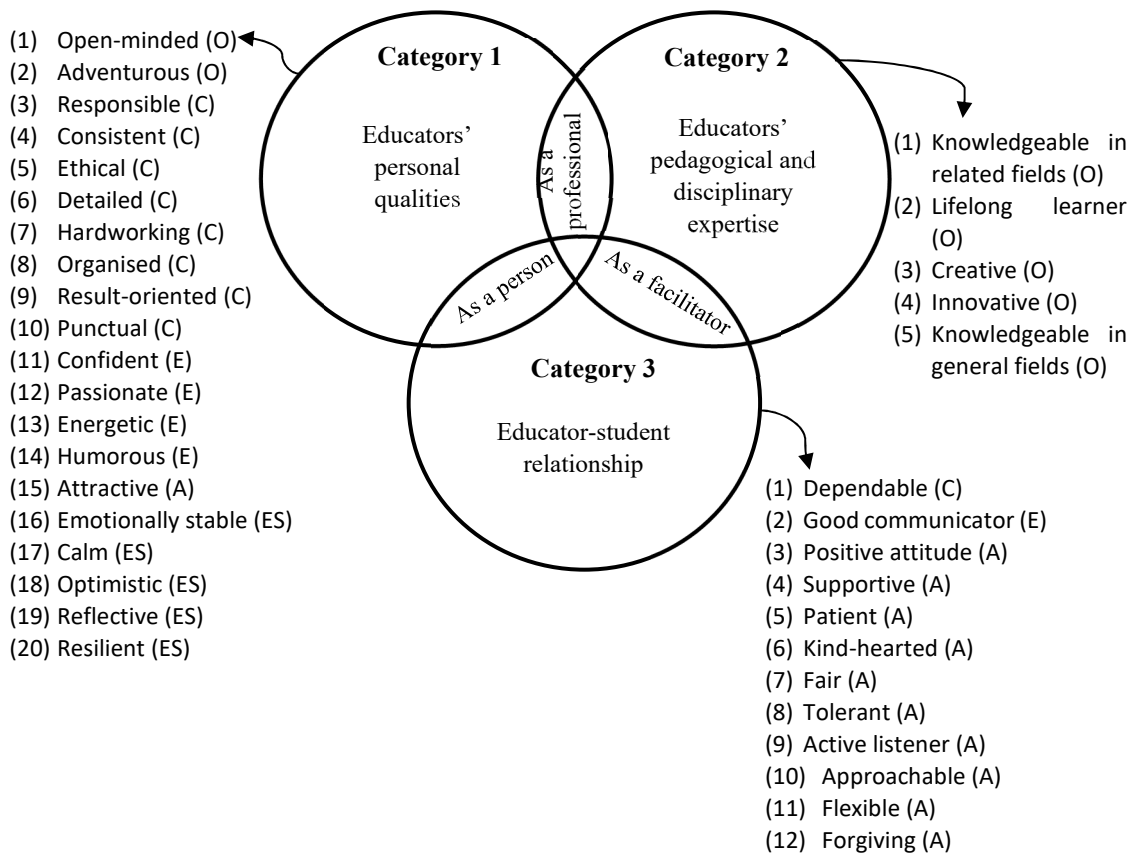
The second category encompasses the characteristics associated with *educators' pedagogical and disciplinary expertise*. These characteristics are crucial in cultivating educators' professional capabilities in teaching. Moreover, educators can effectively utilise their expertise in their respective fields, whether it be

imparting knowledge to university students or engaging with the research community both within and beyond the confines of the university. There are five inspiring educators' characteristics for the second category, where all are fall under *openness*.

The third category encompasses characteristics connected with the *relationship between educators and students*, which significantly enhance educators' effectiveness as facilitators of student learning within the university context. Educators who can facilitate students' learning will enhance the enjoyment and meaning of each class. Students will display a continuous commitment to their academic pursuits when they are aware of the educators' genuine concern for their accomplishments and their constant availability to assist in the face of any challenges encountered at university. There are 13 inspiring educators' characteristics for the third category, where eleven fall under *agreeableness* and one each falls under *conscientiousness* and *extraversion*.

When these three categories are integrated, they provide a complete set of characteristics for inspiring educators. When exceptional personal qualities are combined with knowledge and skills in their respective disciplines, educators transform into facilitators of learning with empowering relationships with students. To thrive in their profession and effectively navigate the ever-changing landscape of education, educators should aim to possess all 38 of these characteristics. Doing so will equip them to inspire and guide students throughout their academic journey. Educators have a close relationship with students and serve as influential figures in universities, often acting as role models. The actions motivated by educators catalyse students to develop into exemplary individuals and community members capable of making significant contributions to the betterment of the community.

These 38 characteristics enable educators to effectively fulfil their role and contribute to their respective area of expertise, ultimately benefiting the wider community. Educators can commit to cultivating all 38 inspiring characteristics by joining workshops, seminars, and conferences and engaging in mentorship programmes and peer support groups. These efforts will provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively cultivate and improve these inspiring characteristics within themselves. By acquiring and learning efficient strategies and approaches from fellow educators, educators can gain insight into developing and strengthening all the BFPT, ensuring an ideal learning environment for all university students.



O – Openness; C – Conscientiousness; E – Extraversion; A – Agreeableness; ES – Emotional stability

Source: Adapted and refined from Afida *et al.*, 2023b
 Figure 1: The three categories of inspiring educators' characteristics

6. Limitation and further recommendation of study

The current study has two limitations to be mindful of. The first limitation of this study is that its sample selection is limited to students currently enrolled at one public university in West Malaysia. Additional research can be undertaken to widen this study's scope. This might be accomplished by including other private and public universities in the contextual setting and by researching universities in different countries. Taking such an approach would be beneficial to contribute to a greater understanding of the subject matter under discussion.

Another limitation of this study is its dependence on a quantitative research methodology, namely utilising surveys as a primary data-gathering method. Future researchers can use a mixed-method procedure involving surveys and interviews to grasp the inspiring educators' characteristics thoroughly. Using surveys, researchers can collect data from a wider sample size. Interviews, on the other hand, provide the ability to delve further into the personal viewpoints of individual students, which in turn offers comprehensive and contextualised insights.

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