

**Personality Traits and Psychological Well-being of Pakistani Adolescents in the Context of
Maternal Employment: A Comparative Study**

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ABSTRACT

In a conservative country like Pakistan, maternal employment is often perceived as neglectful of children's upbringing. This study explores that perception by examining the Big Five personality traits and psychological well-being among adolescents (ages 12–19) of employed and unemployed mothers. A correlational design with purposive sampling was used to collect data from 200 school- and college-going adolescents ($M = 12.81$, $SD = 1.71$). The Big Five Personality Inventory (Rammstedt & John, 2007) and the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1995) were used. Extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness show positive and significant relationships with one another, and negative and significant relationships with neuroticism, except for conscientiousness, which has a negative but non-significant relationship with neuroticism. All five traits have positive but non-significant relationships with psychological well-being, except neuroticism, which has a negative but non-significant relationship among adolescents of employed mothers. Similarly, in adolescents of unemployed mothers, extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscience show positive and significant relationships with one another and negative relationships with neuroticism, except for conscience, which is non-significant. Extraversion has a positive but non-significant relationship with psychological well-being, while agreeableness and openness show positive and significant associations. Moreover, conscience and

neuroticism have negative but non-significant relationships with psychological well-being. Mean comparisons revealed no significant differences in agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness between groups. However, adolescents of employed mothers scored significantly higher in psychological well-being and openness. The findings suggest maternal employment does not harm adolescents' personality traits or psychological well-being. Instead, it may enhance certain positive traits. Supporting working mothers and guiding non-working mothers can help promote well-rounded development in children.

Keywords: *Big Five Personality Traits, Psychological Wellbeing, Adolescents, Maternal Employment.*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence, defined as the age between 12 and 19, is an extremely crucial phase of life during which individuals undergo intense psychological and social changes. During this period, personality patterns become distinct and finalized, significantly influencing psychological well-being (Mataud et al., 2024; Ortuño-Sierra et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2017). Research shows that personality factors—primarily those in the Big Five model, including Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness—have significant effects on mental health outcomes (Fiske et al., 1994; Gomez et al., 2018; Kang et al., 2023; Salecha et al., 2024; Shokrkon & Nicoladis, 2021).

The Big Five traits can be summarized as follows: Extraversion reflects how outgoing and energetic someone is; Openness relates to creativity and curiosity; Agreeableness involves kindness and cooperation; Conscientiousness reflects responsibility and organization; and Neuroticism is associated with emotional sensitivity and negative affectivity (Atanassova et al., 2024; Rauthmann, 2024; Weik et al., 2024). Studies have shown positive relationships between Extraversion and Agreeableness with life satisfaction and emotional resilience, whereas Neuroticism is often linked to anxiety and depression (Clark et al., 2014; Crnkovic et al., 2023; Mammadov et al., 2024; Regzedmaa et al., 2024; Schenk et al., 2024).

During adolescence, personality traits stabilize and significantly impact emotional and mental well-being, shaping how individuals perceive and respond to life experiences (Shiner & Caspi, 2015). These traits are relatively stable and predictive of key life outcomes, such as academic success, psychological adjustment, and social functioning (Soto et al., 2011). Psychological well-being includes dimensions like self-acceptance, autonomy, personal growth, positive relationships, environmental mastery, and life purpose (Garcia et al., 2024; Kalvāns, 2024; Setyorini et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2024). Traits such as Conscientiousness and emotional stability are closely linked to better outcomes in these areas, as they promote effective emotional regulation and stress management (Hampson, 2012).

Each of the Big Five traits plays a distinct role in shaping adolescent mental health (Angarita-Osorio et al., 2024; Chia & Tan, 2024; Morken et al., 2024; Onuoha et al., 2024). Neuroticism, characterized by heightened emotional reactivity, makes adolescents more susceptible to stress and anxiety, as those high in this trait tend to ruminate and react intensely to adversity (Grogans et al., 2024; Ormel et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2024; Scaini et al., 2024). In contrast, Extraversion is positively associated with well-being, as extroverted adolescents often enjoy stronger interpersonal connections and better coping skills (AMADI & ANAELI, 2024; Li et al., 2024; Winzer et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2024). Agreeableness fosters compassion and cooperation, facilitating healthier social relationships and reducing interpersonal conflicts (Bleckmann et al., 2024; Gao et al., 2023; Kovas & Papageorgiou, 2024; Laursen et al., 2014).

The interaction between personality and well-being is especially significant during adolescence as this stage coincides with the development of self-concept and identity. Positive traits such as optimism, resilience, and self-esteem serve as protective factors that help adolescents manage stress and enhance mental health (Palenzuela-Luis et al., 2022; Roberts et al., 2017). Conversely, high levels of Neuroticism are often linked to emotional dysregulation, internalizing disorders, and dissatisfaction with life (Shiner & Allen, 2017).

A longitudinal study spanning two decades showed that Openness and Extraversion were reciprocally related to well-being, whereas Conscientiousness and Agreeableness had one-directional effects. Although Neuroticism showed a strong between-person correlation with well-being, no within-person correlation was observed (Joshani, 2023). A meta-analysis of 137 personality traits also found Neuroticism to be the strongest predictor of life satisfaction and negative affect, while Extraversion and Agreeableness were equally strong predictors of positive affect (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998).

In a cross-sectional Spanish survey involving 3,400 individuals, gender differences in well-being were noted: men scored higher in self-acceptance and autonomy, while women scored higher in personal growth and positive relationships. Masculinity was a key variable for both genders, with well-being higher among professional women and men with high femininity and stable relationships (Matud et al., 2019). Salami (2011) found that personality traits significantly influence adolescent well-being, with emotional intelligence moderating the effects of Neuroticism and Extraversion. Emotional stability and Openness were essential for resilience in challenging situations. A comparative study of adolescents from employed and unemployed mothers revealed no significant differences in overall well-being. However, boys of employed mothers scored higher, whereas girls of unemployed mothers had better scores (Khurshid et al., 2016). Latha and Babu (2023) found that adolescents with employed mothers were more emotionally stable and competitive, while those with non-employed mothers were more relaxed but less stable. The quality of mother-child relationships also played a crucial role; close bonds improved well-being, whereas conflictual relationships worsened emotional outcomes. Maternal traits such as Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness were found to reduce emotional problems in children (Asmar et al., 2024).

Mehreen et al. (2023) noted that children of employed mothers had stronger problem-solving skills, while those of unemployed mothers excelled in judgment. However, the mother-daughter bond appeared weaker in employed families. In Pakistani society, educated mothers positively influence their children's health, education, and psychological well-being, while uneducated mothers tend to resist social change (Noor & Hussain, 2024).

Few studies examine how maternal job position influences the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and teenage psychological well-being, despite the fact that there is a considerable body of research on this topic. Existing research, particularly in Pakistan, provides little and perhaps incongruous results. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to investigate how adolescents of employed vs unemployed moms differ in their psychological well-being and the Big Five qualities. The results could resolve uncertainties, improve the body of literature already in existence, and direct future approaches to improving the well-being of adolescents—particularly in addressing unfavourable perceptions in Pakistani culture about the parenting skills of working moms.

Objectives

1. To investigate how psychological well-being and the Big Five personality traits—extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to new experiences, and agreeableness—relate to teenagers in Pakistan who have working or jobless mothers.
2. To investigate the detrimental relationship between neuroticism and psychological well-being in teenagers of working and unemployed moms, as well as other personality qualities (agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and extraversion).
3. To compare the psychological well-being and personality qualities (conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience, extraversion, and neuroticism) of adolescents whose moms are employed and those who are not.

Hypotheses

H1: Among Pakistani adolescents whose moms are employed or jobless, psychological well-being is predicted to be positively and significantly correlated with agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and extraversion.

H2: Among Pakistani teenagers whose moms are employed or jobless, neuroticism is likely to be adversely correlated with agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion, and psychological well-being.

H3: The study variables of agreeableness, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and psychological well-being are expected to have mean differences between adolescents of working and unemployed moms.

METHOD

Study Design

The purpose of this cross-sectional correlational study was to investigate the connection between teenage psychological wellness and personality factors.

Sampling

A random purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from 200 school and college students, aged 12 to 19.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were required to be school students boys and girls aged 12 to 19 must be school and college going.

Research Instruments

Big Five Personality Inventory (Rammstedt and John, 2007)

The Big Five Inventory (BFI-10) by Rammstedt and John (2007) is a more condensed version of the BFI, which reduced items from the original BFI but retained brevity in measurement. It applies a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree". Reliability coefficients for the BFI-10 are lower

compared with the longer versions but are still appropriate enough to balance efficiency with adequate psychometric quality for the use of research.

Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff & Kayes, 1995):

Ryff's 18-item scale assesses dimensions of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relationships, and self-acceptance. The scale uses a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) and has a reliability coefficient of 0.93 to 0.86.

Procedure

In this study, the Big Five personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) and psychological well-being were compared between mothers who were employed and mothers who were not, as well as adolescents (both sexes, school and college students aged 12–19). Additionally, the study used a purposive sample strategy in conjunction with a cross-sectional correlational research design. The study's measures comprised the Psychological Well-Being Scale (18 items) to gauge psychological well-being and the Big Five Personality Inventory (10 items) to gauge extraversion, openness to experience, neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. After giving their parents' and their own written agreement, participants spent 15 to 20 minutes completing a demographic questionnaire and the other two assessments. Following data collection, the participants and their parents received gratitude. The study conducted independent samples t-test and correlational analysis using SPSS version 26.

Ethical Considerations

The participants and their parents were thanked for their participation and given a debriefing after completing the surveys. Because the study included an educated cohort, it is significant to emphasize that the psychology department approved the study and that the data collection questionnaire was available in English.

RESULTS

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N=200)

Characteristics	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender				
Boys	155	78		
Girls	45	22		
Age			12.81	1.71
Educational Status				
Primary	109	55		
Middle	35	17		
High	46	23		
Intermediate	10	5		
Maternal Employment Status				
Employed Mothers	104	52		

Unemployed Mothers	96	48
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Note. f= Frequency, %= Percentage, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

The above table depicts that most of the participants are boys (155, 78%) followed by girls (45, 22%) with the average of 12.81 (standard deviation, 1.71). Most of the participants were from primary educational level 109, 55%, followed by high educational level 23%, then middle 35, 17% and lastly intermediate 10, 5%. The participants mostly been children of employed mothers 104, 52%, followed by children of unemployed mothers 96, 48%.

Table 2

Correlation Among Study Variables for Adolescents of Employed Mothers (N = 104)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Ectroversion	-	.95**	.29**	.32**	-1**	.01
2.Agreeableness		-	.24**	.24**	-.95**	.01
3.Openness			-	.17*	-.29**	.16
4.Consciencess				-	-.32**	.15
5.Neuroticism					-	-.01
6. Psychological wellbeing						-

Note. $p < .05$ *, $p < .01$ **

Extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness all show positive and significant relationships with one another. However, each of these traits has a negative and significant relationship with neuroticism. All five traits—extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness—have positive but non-significant relationships with psychological well-being, except neuroticism, which has a negative but non-significant relationship with psychological well-being among adolescents of employed mothers.

Table 3

Correlation Among Study Variables for Adolescents of Unemployed Mothers (N = 96)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Ectroversion	-	.92**	.32**	.45**	-1**	.21
2.Agreeableness		-	.23**	.33**	-.92**	.25*
3.Openness			-	.01	-.32**	.34**
4.Consciencess				-	-.45**	-.03
5.Neuroticism					-	-.21
6. Psychological wellbeing						-

Note. $p < .05$ *, $p < .01$ **

Conscience, agreeableness, openness to new experiences, and extraversion all exhibit meaningful and constructive interactions with one another. With the exception of conscience, which has a negative but

non-significant association with neuroticism, these attributes likewise show negative and significant relationships with neuroticism. Psychological well-being is positively, but not significantly, correlated with extraversion. There are strong and positive correlations between psychological well-being and agreeableness and receptivity to new experiences. Furthermore, among teenagers whose moms are unemployed, there are negative but insignificant associations between psychological well-being and both neuroticism and conscience.

Table 4

Mean Differences for Participants between Maternal Employment Statuses with Respect to Study Variables (N=200)

Variables	Employed Adolescents(n=104)		Unemployed Adolescents (n=96)		T	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Extroversion	7.44	3.08	6.97	2.93	1.08	.27	0.15
Agreeableness	7.43	3.08	6.90	2.72	1.27	.20	0.18
Openness	7.81	2.01	6.48	2.24	4.37	.000	0.62
Conciseness	7.25	2.38	6.86	2.51	1.11	.26	0.15
Neuroticism	4.55	3.08	5.02	2.93	-1.08	.27	0.15
Psychological wellbeing	44.96	10.62	42.10	5.68	2.39	.01	0.33

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Although there are no significant mean differences between the children of employed and unemployed mothers in terms of extroversion, agreeableness, conciseness, and neuroticism, the above table shows that the children of employed mothers score higher than those of unemployed mothers in terms of extroversion and agreeableness, while the children of employed women score lower than those of unemployed mothers in terms of neuroticism, though not significantly. Children of working mothers score considerably higher than children of unemployed mothers on the factors of openness and psychological well-being.

DISCUSSION

The study's objective was to investigate the association between psychological well-being and the Big Five personality traits in teenagers with working and jobless moms, ages 12 to 19 (including male and female students in school and college). The goal was to investigate unfavourable societal beliefs in conservative Pakistani culture about the idea that women's job has a detrimental effect on their children's personality features and psychological health. The study also sought to add to the body of knowledge, promote more investigation, and provide insights for teenagers who might be impacted by these variables.

According to the correlational analysis, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness showed positive and significant interrelationships and negative and significant correlations with neuroticism among both groups—adolescents of employed and unemployed mothers. An exception was found for conscientiousness, which demonstrated a negative but non-significant relationship with neuroticism in both groups. Among adolescents of employed mothers, all five personality traits showed positive but non-significant relationships with psychological well-being, with the exception of neuroticism, which was negatively but non-significantly related. These results suggest that while positive personality traits are present, their direct influence on well-being may be moderated by other contextual or psychosocial factors.

In contrast, among adolescents of unemployed mothers, agreeableness and openness to experience were positively and significantly related to psychological well-being, whereas extraversion had a positive but non-significant relationship. Both conscientiousness and neuroticism were negatively but non-significantly related to well-being. These findings indicate that personality traits may manifest differently depending on the mother's employment status and its potential influence on the adolescent's psychological environment. For adolescents of employed mothers, the results are consistent with previous literature suggesting that agreeableness contributes to prosocial behavior, emotional support, and stronger interpersonal relationships, which foster well-being (Hill & Allemand, 2011; McCrae & Costa, 1991). Similarly, conscientious individuals are typically more goal-directed and self-disciplined, which enhances life satisfaction and emotional stability (Roberts et al., 2007; Steel, 2008). Openness to experience supports mental adaptability and growth (Keyes et al., 2002), while extraversion promotes social engagement and positive affect (Lucas et al., 2000).

However, the non-significant relationship between conscientiousness and psychological well-being in this group may suggest that adolescents of employed mothers experience greater self-regulatory demands, possibly due to increased expectations or reduced maternal availability, leading to psychological strain despite possessing adaptive traits. In contrast, for adolescents of unemployed mothers, the significant positive associations of agreeableness and openness with well-being may reflect the stronger emotional availability or nurturing role often observed in stay-at-home mothers. This may allow adolescents to internalize these traits more effectively, translating into enhanced well-being. The non-significant results for extraversion and conscientiousness could be due to lower social exposure or fewer opportunities for structured self-discipline, which may limit the expression of these traits in ways that boost well-being.

The negative association of neuroticism with psychological well-being in both groups aligns with previous findings. Neurotic individuals often struggle with emotional regulation and report higher distress and fewer positive emotions (Hampson, 2012; Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017). Moreover, Lamers et al. (2012) suggest that traits such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion may serve as buffers against the harmful effects of neuroticism, particularly when supported by social or familial resources.

Since the independent samples t-test shows no significant mean differences between children of working and jobless moms in terms of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism, the study's third hypothesis is generally supported. On the other hand, the average scores show that children of working moms are more pleasant and extraverted than children of unemployed mothers. On the other hand, children of working mothers have somewhat reduced neuroticism scores, though not significantly. Children with working mothers score far higher than children of unemployed mothers in terms of openness and psychological well-being. The findings of our study are consistent with a recent study in Iran that discovered that adolescents with working moms had better scores on personality qualities such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to new experiences (Hashemi & Shekari-Bagheneh, 2024). Our neuroticism results, however, run counter to a study by Dutta & Das (2010) that found children of non-working moms had lower neuroticism scores than children of working mothers. This disparity may be explained by variations in the financial circumstances, educational attainment of the moms, and coping strategies used by the children of non-working mothers in the face of adversity, in addition to the authoritarian parenting style of non-working mothers. Our study confirms earlier findings that adolescents of working mothers typically have higher self-esteem and problem-solving abilities than adolescents of non-working mothers in terms of psychological well-being. This is probably because employed mothers tend to have better family finances, higher incomes, and more educated mothers (Mehreen et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

The study found positive and substantial connections between conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness to experience. Nonetheless, there is a negative and substantial correlation between neuroticism and each of these characteristics. With the exception of neuroticism, which has a negative but non-significant relationship with psychological well-being among adolescents of working mothers, all five traits—extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness—have positive but non-significant relationships with psychological well-being. Additionally, there are positive and meaningful correlations between extraversion, agreeableness, conscience, and openness to experience. With the exception of conscience, which has a negative but non-significant association with neuroticism, these attributes likewise show negative and significant relationships with neuroticism. While agreeableness and openness to new experiences have positive and substantial connections with psychological well-being, extraversion has a good but non-significant relationship with it. Furthermore, among teenagers whose moms are unemployed, there are negative but insignificant associations between psychological well-being and both neuroticism and conscience.

According to the mean differences between teenagers of working and jobless moms, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism do not significantly differ between the two groups. Although these differences were not statistically significant, the mean scores indicate that children of employed moms scored higher on agreeableness and extraversion than children of jobless mothers. On the other hand, although this difference was not statistically significant, children of working moms had slightly lower neuroticism scores than children of jobless mothers. Children with working mothers performed much better than children of unemployed mothers in terms of psychological well-being and openness to experience.

LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study has several limitations. First, the sample size was small; future research should aim for a larger sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study used a correlational research design, but a longitudinal design would be more appropriate for future investigations. Additionally, the purposive sampling technique limits the ability to generalize the results to the broader population; future studies should consider using a stratified sampling method. Another shortcoming is that the study did not account for the type of employment of the employed mothers, which is an important factor; future research should include this variable. Moreover, the study did not assess the family's income, which should be considered in future studies as an essential demographic factor. Lastly, there was an imbalance between adolescent boys and girls, which prevented the use of the independent sample t-test; future studies should aim for a more balanced distribution of gender categories. **IMPLICATIONS**

The study significantly achieves its objectives, revealing a notable difference between adolescents of employed and unemployed mothers in terms of the variables of openness to experience and psychological well-being. Adolescents of working mothers scored significantly higher on these variables compared to their peers from non-working mothers. This study plays a crucial role in raising awareness that maternal employment is not detrimental to adolescents' psychological well-being. On the contrary, it enhances their openness to new experiences and psychological health, helping to challenge the stereotype in Pakistani society that children of working mothers suffer.

Additionally, there is a need to promote women's employment and support the psychological well-being of adolescents of non-working mothers. Psycho-educating non-working mothers on how to appropriately

nurture their children, enhance their skills, and encourage openness to new experiences in a safe environment can significantly improve their children's development. Mental health professionals should organize seminars, workshops, and webinars to advocate for women's employment while addressing societal misconceptions about employed mothers. These events should also focus on educating parents on effective child-rearing practices.

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