

**Personality Traits and Psychological Wellbeing 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 wellbeing 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 Wellbeing Scale (Ryff, 1995) were used. Extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscience show positive and significant relationships with one another, and negative and significant relationships with neuroticism, except for conscience, which has a negative but non-significant relationship with neuroticism. All five traits have positive but non-significant relationships with psychological wellbeing, 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 wellbeing, while agreeableness and openness show positive and significant associations. Moreover, conscience and*

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

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

## INTRODUCTION

In the male-dominated society of Pakistan, maternal employment is often viewed negatively. It is a common belief that a woman's place is at home, and if she works outside the home, it may be detrimental to the upbringing, personality development, and mental health of children. It is also believed that employed mothers are unable to properly care for their children. As a result, maternal employment is extensively discouraged. There are numerous reported cases in which women are forced to stay at home to perform household chores and often leave their jobs either before marriage or upon their husband's instruction after marriage (Ali et al., 2010; Rass & Salahuddin, 2021; Tabassum, 2016).

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 wellbeing (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, Conscience, 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; Conscience 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 wellbeing, 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 wellbeing 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 Conscience 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 wellbeing, 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 wellbeing 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 wellbeing, whereas Conscience and Agreeableness had one-directional effects. Although Neuroticism showed a strong between-person correlation with wellbeing, no within-person correlation was observed (Joshnloo, 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 wellbeing 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 wellbeing 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 wellbeing, 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 wellbeing. 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 wellbeing, whereas conflictual relationships worsened emotional outcomes. Maternal traits such as Conscience, 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 wellbeing, 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 wellbeing, 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 mother differ in their Big Five qualities and the psychological wellbeing. The results could resolve uncertainties, improve the body of literature already in existence, and direct future approaches to

improving the wellbeing of adolescents—particularly in addressing unfavourable perceptions in Pakistani culture about the parenting skills of employed mother.

### **Objectives**

1. To investigate how psychological wellbeing and the Big Five personality traits—extraversion, conscience, openness to new experiences, and agreeableness—relate to adolescents in Pakistan who have employed and unemployed mothers.
2. To investigate the relationship between neuroticism and psychological wellbeing in adolescents of employed and unemployed mother, as well as personality traits (agreeableness, conscience, openness to experience, and extraversion).
3. To compare the psychological wellbeing and big five personality traits (conscience, agreeableness, openness to experience, extraversion, and neuroticism) of adolescents whose mother are employed and those who are not.

### **Hypotheses**

H1: Among Pakistani adolescents whose mother are employed or unemployed, psychological wellbeing is predicted to be positively and significantly correlated with agreeableness, conscience, openness to experience, and extraversion.

H2: Among Pakistani adolescents whose mother are employed or unemployed, neuroticism is likely to be adversely correlated with agreeableness, conscience, openness to experience, extraversion, and psychological wellbeing.

H3: The study variables of agreeableness, openness to experience, conscience, extraversion, neuroticism, and psychological wellbeing are expected to have mean differences between adolescents of employed and unemployed mother.

### **METHOD**

#### ***Study Design***

The purpose of this cross-sectional correlational study was to investigate the relationship between psychological wellness and personality traits among adolescents of Pakistani employed and unemployed mothers.

#### ***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 Wellbeing 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.

#### **Ethical Consideration**

All APA 7 ethical codes of conduct were followed throughout the study. The authors of the instruments were contacted via email to obtain permission for the use of their scales in data collection. Parents and adolescents were then approached for participation. For participants under the age of 18, parental consent was obtained to administer the instruments. For participants aged 18 and 19, parental consent was not required, in accordance with APA 7 ethical standards. Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences. Upon completion of data collection, participants were acknowledged and thanked for their contribution. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.

### **RESULTS**

**Table 1**

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

Characteristics	<i>f</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		

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 conscience 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 conscience—have positive but non-significant relationships with psychological wellbeing, except neuroticism, which has a negative but non-significant relationship with psychological wellbeing 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 wellbeing is positively, but not significantly, correlated with extraversion. There are strong and positive correlations between psychological wellbeing and agreeableness and receptivity to new experiences. Furthermore, among adolescents whose mother are unemployed, there are negative but insignificant associations between psychological wellbeing and both neuroticism and conscience.



**Table 4**

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

Variables	Employed Mother's Adolescents(n=104)		Unemployed Mother's Adolescents (n=96)		t(n=198)	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 employed mothers score considerably higher than children of unemployed mothers on the factors of openness and psychological wellbeing.

## DISCUSSION

The study's objective was to investigate the association between psychological wellbeing and the Big Five personality traits in adolescents with employed and unemployed mother, 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 adolescents who might be impacted by these variables.

According to the correlational analysis, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscience 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 conscience, 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 wellbeing, 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 wellbeing 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 wellbeing, whereas extraversion had a positive but non-significant relationship. Both conscience and neuroticism were negatively but non-significantly related to wellbeing. 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 wellbeing (Hill & Allemand, 2011; McCrae & Costa, 1991). Similarly, conscientious individuals are typically more goal-directed and self-disciplined, which enhances life satisfaction and emotional stability (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 conscience and psychological wellbeing 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 wellbeing 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 wellbeing. The non-significant results for extraversion and conscience 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 wellbeing.

The negative association of neuroticism with psychological wellbeing 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, conscience, 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 employed and unemployed mother in terms of extraversion, agreeableness, conscience, and neuroticism, the study's third hypothesis is generally supported. On the other hand, the average scores show that children of employed mother are more pleasant and extraverted than children of unemployed mothers. On the other hand, children of employed mothers have somewhat reduced neuroticism scores, though not significantly. Children with employed mothers score far higher than children of unemployed mothers in terms of openness and psychological wellbeing. The findings of our study are consistent with a recent study in Iran that discovered that adolescents with employed mother had better scores on personality qualities such as agreeableness, conscience, extraversion, and openness to new experiences (Hashemi & Shekari-Bagheney, 2024). Our neuroticism results, however, run counter to a study by Dutta & Das (2010) that found children of non-employed mother had lower neuroticism scores than children of employed mothers. This disparity may be explained by variations in the financial circumstances, educational attainment of the mother, and coping strategies used by the children of non-employed mothers in the face of adversity, in addition to the authoritarian parenting style of non-employed mothers. Our study confirms earlier findings that adolescents of employed mothers typically have higher self-esteem and problem-solving abilities than adolescents of non-employed mothers in terms of psychological wellbeing. 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 conscience, 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 wellbeing among adolescents of employed mothers, all five traits—extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscience—have positive but non-significant relationships with psychological wellbeing. 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 wellbeing, extraversion has a good but non-significant relationship with it. Furthermore, among adolescents whose mother are unemployed, there are negative but insignificant associations between psychological wellbeing and both neuroticism and conscience.

According to the mean differences between adolescents of employed and unemployed mother, extraversion, agreeableness, conscience, 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 mother scored higher on agreeableness and extraversion than children of unemployed mothers. On the other hand, although this difference was not statistically significant, children of employed mother had slightly lower neuroticism scores than children of unemployed mothers. Children with employed mothers performed much better than children of unemployed mothers in terms of psychological wellbeing 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 considerably achieves its objectives, revealing a notable difference between adolescents of employed and unemployed mothers in terms of openness to experience and psychological well-being. Adolescents of employed mothers scored significantly higher on these variables compared to their peers with non-employed 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 employed mothers suffer.

Additionally, there is a need to promote women's employment and support the psychological well-being of adolescents with non-employed mothers. Psychoeducating non-employed mothers on how to nurture their children effectively, enhance their parenting 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.

Pakistani men must be encouraged and psycho-educated to support equal rights for women, as educated and employed mothers contribute significantly to raising well-adjusted children. Moreover, maternal employment can improve the household's financial stability and ensure better provision for children's needs and education. The societal barriers that hinder women's and mothers' employment must be dismantled to foster prosperous child development and a healthier society.

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