



Unraveling the Interrelationships Between Personality Factors and Dimensions of Mental Wellbeing

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Article Details:

Received on 21 Oct, 2025

Accepted on 25 Nov ,2025

Published on 26 Nov, 2025

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to see the relationship between personality factors and mental well-being. The study comprised of 300 university students collected through convenience sampling technique. The age range of the sample was between ($M= 21.94$, $S.D= 1.862$). The Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) and the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989) were applied on the sample to investigate how specific personality dimensions are linked to various facets of well-being. The results confirmed the first hypothesis, which predicted that high scores in openness to experience and agreeableness would positively correlate with self-acceptance, personal growth, and autonomy. The second hypothesis was also supported with high scorers on extraversion showing better interpersonal relations than low scorers. The third hypothesis assumed that purpose in life would moderate the relationship between neuroticism and personal growth, which was not supported by the results. The findings of the present study reveal the importance of personality factors in determining one's well-being, highlighting the significance of catering positive personality dimensions.

Keywords: Openness To Experience, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Self-Acceptance, Personal Growth



INTRODUCTION

Personality and psychological well-being are two central psychological constructs that have significant implications for understanding human adjustment, life satisfaction, and mental health. Personality can be described as enduring patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that distinguish individuals from one another and remain relatively stable over time (McCrae & Costa, 1997). The Big Five Personality Model, proposed by Costa and McCrae (1992), is the most widely accepted framework for describing personality. This model identifies five broad dimensions: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These five factors capture the full range of human personality and have been validated across different cultures and age groups (Soto, 2015; Singh & Duggal, 2019).

Each of these traits has distinct characteristics. Openness to experience refers to a tendency toward creativity, intellectual curiosity, and a preference for novelty and variety. People high in openness are imaginative, open-minded, and eager to explore new ideas and experiences (Zhao et al., 2010). Research has shown that openness is closely related to personal development and growth, as these individuals seek out opportunities that broaden their horizons (Singh & Duggal, 2019). Agreeableness reflects a person's tendency toward trust, altruism, kindness, and cooperation. Highly agreeable individuals are empathetic, compassionate, and prioritize harmonious social interactions (Jovanović & Brdar, 2018; Neser & Roos, 2020). Studies suggest that agreeableness is positively correlated with self-acceptance and positive relationships, as these individuals are often more inclined to build supportive social networks (Chopra & Selvaraj, 2020).

Extraversion is characterized by sociability, assertiveness, talkativeness, and a propensity to experience positive emotions (Watson & Clark, 1997). Extraverts are energized by social interaction and tend to have larger social circles and more satisfying interpersonal relationships (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Joshanloo et al., 2012). Research consistently finds that extraversion is a strong predictor of well-being, particularly in terms of positive social connections and life satisfaction (Neser & Roos, 2020; Khan et al., 2018). In contrast, neuroticism is defined by a tendency toward emotional instability, anxiety, moodiness, and vulnerability to stress (Smith et al., 2017). Individuals high in neuroticism are more likely to experience negative emotions and psychological distress, making neuroticism one of the strongest predictors of poor mental health and low well-being (Lahey, 2009; Schmutte & Ryff, 1997).

Psychological well-being, as conceptualized by Ryff (1989), goes beyond merely the absence of illness and includes multiple facets that reflect optimal functioning. The six core components are: (1) Self-acceptance—a positive attitude toward oneself and one's past; (2) Personal growth—the sense of continual development and realizing one's potential; (3) Autonomy—a sense of self-determination and independence in thought and action; (4) Positive relations with others—the capacity to maintain warm, satisfying, and trusting relationships; (5) Environmental mastery—the ability to manage life situations effectively; and (6) Purpose in life—having goals, direction, and meaning (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 2002). Each of these facets plays a unique role in mental health. For instance, personal growth is about perceiving oneself as developing and expanding over time, which contributes to a sense of vitality and resilience (Ryff, 1989; Hill et al., 2016). Autonomy emphasizes the ability to resist social pressures and regulate one's own behavior, which is crucial for self-confidence and personal integrity (Karademas, 2007). Self-acceptance involves recognizing



and accepting multiple aspects of oneself, including strengths and weaknesses, which fosters emotional balance (Schmutte & Ryff, 1997). Positive relations with others are essential for social support, belongingness, and happiness (Watson & Clark, 1997).

One particularly important aspect of psychological well-being is purpose in life, which refers to the sense that one's life has meaning and that one is working toward valued goals (Ryff, 1989). Research shows that purpose in life is a powerful protective factor that buffers the negative effects of stress and emotional instability (Hill et al., 2016; Schmutte & Ryff, 1997). People who have a strong sense of purpose report higher well-being, even when facing personal challenges or high neuroticism (Karademas, 2007). A wealth of studies has explored how these psychological well-being components are linked to personality traits. For example, Schmutte and Ryff (1997) found that openness to experience and personal growth are strongly connected, suggesting that those who are curious and open to new experiences tend to perceive themselves as evolving and improving. Chopra and Selvaraj (2020) similarly demonstrated that agreeableness is associated with self-acceptance and positive relations, emphasizing the social harmony and acceptance that agreeable individuals experience. Meanwhile, extraversion consistently emerges as a strong predictor of positive relationships and social satisfaction (Joshanloo et al., 2012; Neser & Roos, 2020). Neuroticism, in contrast, negatively affects personal growth, autonomy, and self-acceptance, highlighting the challenges faced by emotionally unstable individuals (Lahey, 2009; Khan et al., 2018).

Despite this extensive research, there are gaps that require further investigation. Specifically, while many studies have focused on direct correlations between personality traits and psychological well-being, fewer have explored how purpose in life might moderate these relationships. Hill et al. (2016) argue that a strong sense of purpose could potentially buffer the harmful effects of neuroticism on well-being, but empirical research on this moderating role is still limited, particularly in non-Western cultural contexts (Karademas, 2007).

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining how the Big Five personality traits—particularly openness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism—are related to different aspects of psychological well-being, and by testing whether purpose in life moderates the relationship between neuroticism and personal growth. Understanding these relationships is critical not only for advancing theory but also for informing interventions that aim to enhance mental well-being.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale for this research lies in the growing recognition that personality traits significantly shape psychological well-being, yet the dynamics of these relationships are not fully understood. While prior studies have established strong links between traits like openness, agreeableness, extraversion, and well-being outcomes, there is limited research that explores the nuanced ways in which protective factors like purpose in life might alter or buffer these associations. This is particularly important because individuals with high neuroticism are at greater risk for psychological distress, and finding ways to mitigate these effects is crucial for mental health promotion. By investigating both direct and moderating effects, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how personality and well-being interact, which can inform tailored psychological interventions.

Additionally, much of the existing research has been conducted in Western contexts, leaving a gap in knowledge regarding how these relationships function in other cultural



settings. This study contributes valuable data from a local context, offering culturally relevant insights into the interplay between personality and mental well-being.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between openness to experience and agreeableness with self-acceptance, personal growth, and autonomy.
2. To investigate the association between extraversion and positive relations with others.
3. To explore the moderating role of purpose in life in the relationship between neuroticism and personal growth.

Hypotheses

1. High scores on openness to experience and agreeableness will positively correlate with self-acceptance, personal growth, and autonomy.
2. Individuals scoring high on extraversion will also score high on positive relations as compared to low scorers on extraversion.
3. Purpose in life will moderate the relationship between neuroticism and personal growth.

METHODS

Sample

The sample of the present study comprised 300 university students, collected through convenience sampling from the University of Peshawar. Out of the total 300 participants, 150 were male students and 150 were female students. The age range of the participants was between 18 and 25 years ($M= 21.94$, $S.D= 1.862$). Participants were enrolled in various undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Inclusion criteria required participants to be current students within the specified age range and willing to provide informed consent to participate in the research.

Instruments

Big Five Inventory Scale (BFI)

The Big Five Inventory (BFI), developed by John and Srivastava (1999), was used to measure the five key dimensions of personality: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The scale consists of 44 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The response options are: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The BFI has shown strong psychometric properties, with internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) reported at approximately .75 to .90 across the five factors (John & Srivastava, 1999). The scale has also demonstrated good validity, supported by significant correlations with other established personality measures, confirming its accuracy in assessing personality traits.

Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale

The Psychological Well-Being Scale, developed by Ryff (1989), was used to assess psychological well-being across six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The scale includes 42 items, and participants respond using a 6-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree. Higher scores reflect greater psychological well-being. The scale has demonstrated excellent reliability, with reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .75 to .90 for its subscales (Ryff, 1995). Validity has been well established through correlations with measures of life satisfaction, depression, and psychological distress, supporting the scale's effectiveness in capturing well-being.

**Procedure**

The data for the present study were collected using both online and in-person methods. Rapport was first established with the students, and they were provided with a brief explanation of the study's purpose. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that their participation was voluntary and that confidentiality was maintained. Data collection took place across various departments of the University of Peshawar and lasted approximately half a month. Out of the total 300 participants, 27 completed the questionnaire via an online Google Form, while 273 completed the questionnaire in person by filling out printed forms. Participants were thanked for their time and cooperation after completing the questionnaires.

RESULTS**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample**

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Male	150	50
Female	150	50
Education		
Matric	0	0
Fa/FSc	53	17.6
BSc	181	60.3
MS	2	0.6
MPhil	13	4.3
Others	52	17.3

Note. N = 300. Participants were on average 22 years old ($SD = 1.862$).

Table 2: Psychometric Properties for BFI and PWB

Scale	No of items	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's α
BFI	44	141.9	12.3	109-176	.626
Extraversion	8	23.7	3.9	12-35	.381
agreeableness	9	30.5	4.8	19-44	.529
conscientiousness	9	28.6	4.1	18-42	.375
neuroticism	8	25.3	4.6	12-39	.529
openness	10	33.5	4.7	19-45	.462
PWB	42	160.0	19.8	104-230	.808
Autonomy	7	26.6	4.6	13-40	.353
Environmental	7	25.7	3.7	14-35	.032
Mastery					
Personal growth	7	26.96	5.12	12-42	.508
Positive relations	7	26.97	4.91	13-420	.428
Purpose in life	7	26.61	4.64	14-40	.359
Self-acceptance	7	27.03	4.89	13-14	.414

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation, BFI = Big Five Inventory, with five subscales, PWB= Psychological well-being, with six subscales.

Table 2 presents the values of the Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, Range, and Cronbach's Alpha for the scales. The Cronbach's alpha values indicate high reliability for the psychological well-being (PWB) scale, while the big five inventory (BFI) scale and its subscales show questionable to poor reliability.

**Table 3: Correlation Between BFI Subscales and PWB Subscales**

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Openness	300	33.58	4.77	-				
2. Agreeableness	300	30.54	4.87	.352**	-			
3. Self-acceptance	300	26.68	4.62	.226**	.346**	-		
4. Personal growth	300	26.96	5.12	.297**	.363**	.480**	-	
5. Autonomy	300	27.03	4.89	.371**	.173**	.399**	.380**	-

Note: $N = 300$, M = mean, SD = standard deviation, BFI = Big Five Inventory, PWB = Psychological Well-being. Openness and Agreeableness are subscales of the BFI, Self-acceptance, Personal growth, and Autonomy are subscales of the PWB.

** $p < .01$.

Table 3 shows that Openness is positively correlated with Self-acceptance (.226), Personal growth (.297), and Autonomy (.371), all significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that an increase in Openness is associated with increases in these PWB subscales. Similarly, Agreeableness is positively correlated with Self-acceptance (.346), Personal growth (.363), and Autonomy (.173), all significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that increases in Agreeableness are associated with increases in these PWB subscales.

Table 4: A comparison of high and low scorers on extraversion scale on positive relations with others

Variables	High Scorers		Low scorers		$t(198)$	P	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Positive relations with others	27.51	5.20	26.30	4.46	2.11	.035	0.24

Table 4 shows a comparison between high and low scorers on extraversion scale based on the median scores of the scale on positive relations with others. The t value shows a significant difference ($t(198)=2.11$, $p<.05$) with high scorers ($M=27.51$) showing more positive relations as compared to low scorers ($M=26.30$).

Table 5: Moderation of Purpose in Life Between Neuroticism and Personal Growth

Variable	Estimate	SE	95% CI		P
			LL	UL	
Constant	6.3126	7.1029	-7.6662	20.2914	.3749
Neuroticism	.0882	.2712	-.4454	.6219	.7451
Purpose in life	.7049	.2558	.2015	1.2082	.0062
Neuroticism x purpose in life	-.0005	.0098	-.0199	.0189	.9605
R ²	.3883				
ΔR ²	.0000				

Note: 300, Estimate coefficient β , SE = Standard error, 95% CI = confidence interval (LL= Lower level, UL =Upper level), Neuroticism is a subscale of the Big Five Inventory (BFI), assessing emotional instability and negative affect. Purpose in life, reflecting the extent to which individuals perceive their lives as having meaning and direction, and personal growth, assessing continuous development and realization of potential, are subscales of the Psychological Well-Being Scale.



Table 5 shows that Purpose in life was a significant positive predictor of personal growth ($B = 0.70$, $p = .006$), while neuroticism was not a significant predictor ($B = 0.09$, $p = .75$). However, the interaction between neuroticism and purpose in life was non-significant ($B = -0.0005$, $p = .96$), indicating that purpose in life did not moderate the relationship between neuroticism and personal growth.

DISCUSSION

In an era where mental health is increasingly recognized as a critical aspect of overall well-being, understanding the variables that influence psychological resilience and stability has become essential. Personality factors, as enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, play a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive and respond to life's challenges. This research sought to examine the relationship between personality factors and mental well-being among a sample of 300 university students, aiming to uncover how specific personality traits may serve as protective or risk factors for psychological health, with an additional focus on whether purpose in life moderates the relationship between neuroticism and personal growth. Using validated psychometric instruments—the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) and the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989)—the study investigated how specific personality dimensions are linked to various facets of well-being, offering valuable insights for mental health professionals and interventions designed to foster resilience and enhance quality of life.

The first hypothesis, which predicted that high scores in openness to experience and agreeableness would positively correlate with self-acceptance, personal growth, and autonomy, was supported. This supports earlier studies. Openness to experience means being curious, creative, and open to new ideas (John & Srivastava, 1999), and it is often linked to better personal growth and self-acceptance (Singh & Duggal, 2019; Zhao, Zhang, & Lei, 2010; Soto, 2015). People who are more open like to learn new things, which helps them grow and accept themselves more. Agreeableness, which includes being kind, caring, and cooperative, is also connected to higher well-being. Agreeable people usually have better relationships and feel more comfortable with themselves and others (Jovanović & Brdar, 2018; Neser & Roos, 2020; Steel, Schmidt, & Shultz, 2008). Recent meta-analyses also confirm that openness and agreeableness are strong predictors of life satisfaction and psychological adjustment (Anglim & O'Connor, 2019).

The second hypothesis was also supported with high scorers on extraversion scoring high on positive relationships with others than low scorers. It is easy to understand this finding as extraverted people are usually social, friendly, and energetic (Watson & Clark, 1997), which helps them build stronger relationships. This matches with other studies that found extraverts tend to have larger social networks and feel more connected with others (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Joshanloo et al., 2012; Khan, Kausar, & Alam, 2018; Hayes & Joseph, 2003). Extraversion is often linked to higher levels of positive affect, which may explain its consistent association with social well-being (Lucas & Diener, 2001). This pattern has been seen in different cultures too, showing that extraversion is an important factor in social well-being everywhere (Ching et al., 2014).

According to the third hypothesis, it was expected that having a strong purpose in life would change (moderate) the link between neuroticism and personal growth, but the result did not support this assumption. However, purpose in life was still a positive predictor of personal growth. This means that while purpose in life helps people grow, it didn't reduce the negative effects of neuroticism in this study. This is a bit unexpected



because other studies have shown that having a clear purpose can help people with high neuroticism cope better and continue growing (Hill, Sumner, & Jackson, 2016; Schmutte & Ryff, 1997; Steger et al., 2006). Neuroticism, which includes being anxious and emotionally unstable (Lahey, 2009), often makes personal growth harder. Some studies also suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing purpose in life may help mitigate the impact of neuroticism on well-being, even if moderation effects are not always clear (Krok, 2015; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992).

There could be a few reasons why the moderation effect was not found. One reason might be that university students are in a time of big life changes. They face challenges like academic pressure and figuring out their identities, which might make the effect of purpose in life less clear (Karademas, 2007; Arnett, 2000). Also, while the well-being scale was reliable, some parts of the Big Five Inventory were not as strong, which might have affected the results (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John & Srivastava, 1999).

Even though the moderation effect was not seen, the direct link between purpose in life and personal growth was clear. This shows how important purpose in life is for mental health, which many other studies also highlight (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Hill et al., 2016; Schulenberg, Strack, & Buchanan, 2011).

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Along with its significance the current study also had some limitations. Because the study was cross-sectional (data was collected at one point in time), we can't say for sure that personality traits cause changes in well-being. Future research should use longer-term or experimental designs to better understand these links. Also, the reliability of some parts of the Big Five Inventory was low, which might have affected the findings. Lastly, since all the participants were from one university, the results may not apply to other groups.

These findings are useful for practice. Since openness, agreeableness, and extraversion were linked to dimensions of well-being, training programs that help students develop these traits could improve mental health. Workshops that encourage trying new things, building empathy, and improving social skills could help students grow personally and feel more connected to others. Counselors and mental health workers should think about ways to strengthen these traits to support students' well-being.

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