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**PERSONALITY TRAITS AMONG ADOLESCENTS OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILY AND TWO PARENTS FAMILY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of the present study was to compare personality traits such as neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and Conscientiousness (Goldberg, L. R. 1993) of single parent children and children who have two parents. Two hypotheses were formed to compare the groups. H1: Those individual who reared in two parents family would score high on BFI factors, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to experience and would low score on neuroticism trait than single parent mother headed family. H2: Those individual who reared in single parent mother headed family would score high on BFI factor Neuroticism and low scores on Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness to experience factors than two parent family. The sample of the study was consisting of 106 adolescents of single parent and 106 adolescents of two parent family (age range 14-18). Big five personality test (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008) was used as an inventory to measure personality traits of adolescents. Results suggest that there is a highly statistically significant difference on various variables on Big Five Inventory among adolescents of single parent and two parent families.*

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**Keywords:** Single parent, two parent family, extraversion, neuroticism, consciousness, openness to experience and agreeableness.

**INTRODUCTION**

Personality characteristics have been a central point in psychological research. Personality commonly indicates prototype of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, which is exclusively linked about a person's character that differentiate him from other people (Phares, 1991; Roberts, 2009, Funder, D. C., 1997). Personality emerges early and persists to transform in meaningful ways during the lifespan. Personality denotes anticipation of how a person will act or react under different environment (Owoseni, 2011). A person's environment can be of social (e.g. how one is extraversion or impulsive), perceptual (e.g. a person can be open to experience or closed), and cognitive (e.g. calm and relax or

neuroticism) in nature (Mount & Barrick, 2002). Personality characteristics can be considered as an intrinsic factor that can affect individual's overall development, motivation, emotional consistency, learning and intra and interpersonal relationship (Ayodele, 2011; Rashedi & Abolmaali, 2014; Lounsbury, *et.al.*, 2003). For a psychological healthy and productive personality it is necessary a person possess "the tendency to be organized, responsible, and hardworking" (American Psychological Association, 2007:218), a psychologically healthy person "follow socially prescribed norms for impulse control and to be goal directed" (Roberts & Friends, 2009:369).

Family influences play a fundamental role in personality development (Shaffer, 2005; Berry, J & Associates, 2006; Relvas & Vaz, 2007). Elkin and Handel (1978:118) defined "the family as the first unit with which children has a continuous contact and the first context in which socialization patterns develop". Yavuzer (2001) believes that the family is one of the foundation stone that prepare children for their development, integration and socialization. A normal family consists of father, mother and siblings unity, which represents family as a unit, but some factors have negative effect on family unity such as divorce, separation or death of one spouse. This is known as single family (Soyaslan, 1998; Greenberg, 2002; Senturk, 2006). A large numbers of researches have concluded that individuals who are brought up in two-parent families have better behavioural and cognitive skills (Park 2007; Artis, 2007; Broman, *et.al.*, 2008; Brown, 2004; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Teachman, 2008;) as compared to children who lived in single-parent families (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Jekielek, 1998; Fields & Casper, 2001; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Pryor & Rodgers, 2001; Gennetian, 2005; Halpern-Meehin & Tach, 2008; Tillman, 2008; Yuan, 2009). Research indicates that children of single parents more predisposed to mental health and emotional problems, feelings of rejection, and low-self-esteem, consequently these factor cause harm to the child's social, emotional and psychological development (De LaGarza R., 2010; Amato & Cheadle, 2005; Huurre & Friends , 2006).

Some Research literature suggested different results that single-parent family children demonstrate different attitudes. In an article in *Psychology Today* (2009) Dr. Bella De Paulo, points out that kids fare better academically and socially in a single-parent home than in a two-parent home.

However, now-a-days increase in number of more children in single-parent families is caused by divorce or separation. In consequence, increasing the number of more children is being raised in one-parent families and more likely in single-mother families, in Pakistan.

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The present study aims to examine whether the adolescents in single parent mother headed family present significant differences in the development of big five personality traits than two parent family.

#### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

In the light of the above mention facts hypothesis is:

- H1: Those individual who reared in two parents family would score high on BFI factors Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Openness to experience personality factors and would low score on neuroticism trait than single parent mother headed family.
- H2: Those individual who reared in single parent mother headed family would score high on BFI factor Neuroticism and low scores on Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Openness to experience factors than two parent family.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design:** Present study is the descriptive research design of the survey type.

**Participants:** The sample of the study was collected through random sampling procedure from Hyderabad city, Sindh Pakistan. The sample consists 212 adolescents (age range=14-18) as participants in the study, 106 participants belonged to single mother headed (divorced /widow/separated mother) family and 106 participants belonged to two biological parent families.

**Procedure:** All participants were high school/college (IX-XII) students. Participant adolescents those from single parent families, among these 50 were girls and 50 were boys, aged between 14 and 18 years. The adolescents from two parent families were 50 girls and 50 boys. The age range was the same 14-18.

In all cases the mother was engaged in the job (teaching, doctors) to supports their children.

It was also caution that the age of the participant at the time of separation from father should not be more than two years. Data was collected from public and private sector schools and colleges of Hyderabad city, after taking permission to data collection from the heads

of the institutions. First of all participant students were instructed to fill the questionnaire regarding personality assessment there will be no right or wrong answers. Data was collected in in-group setting.

### **Research Instrument**

(a) **The Big Five Inventory (BFI)** is a self-report inventory designed to measure the Big Five dimensions, was used to assess personality. BFI is a brief multidimensional personality inventory (44 items total) developed by John, Naumann, and Soto (2008). For data gathering regarding personality traits BIG FIVE INVENTORY (BFI) measures an individual on the Big Five Factors (dimensions) of personality (Goldberg, 1993). Each of the factors is then further divided into personality facet. These facets are 5 traits namely Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. It combines the emotion, attitude and behaviour of the people. In previous research, its domain scales have shown highly reliable (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998; John et al., 2008; Soto, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2008) ranged from .81 to .88, with a mean of .85. Respondents were instructed, rating the degree of their feelings on a five-point scale for how they generally felt about being asked questions. Answer range for the asked questions were: 1="strongly disagreed", 2="disagreed", 3="Neither disagree nor agree", 4="agreed", 5="strongly agreed". To score the BFI, reverse-score also required for negatively-keyed items.

(b) **Personal Information Sheet**

Personal Information Sheet consists the question about age, gender, family structure =Two (biological) parents / Single mother headed family. Age of the participant at time of separation. Mother profession (teaching, doctor, other).

### **Operational Definition of Key Terms**

- a) Single parent family, headed by mothers: Single mother headed families are families with children headed by a parent (mother) who is widowed / divorced or separated and not remarried and working.
- b) Two parent family: a family group consisting of two parents (biological mother and father) and their children (one or more).
- c) Extraversion: Extraversion is one of the five personality traits of the Big Five personality theory. This type of personality enjoy being with people, enjoying social gatherings, and are full of energy (Goldberg, 1993).
- d) Neurotism: Neuroticism is one of the Big Five higher-order personality traits. Individuals who score high on neuroticism are more likely than average to be moody and to experience such feelings of anxiety, worry, fear, anger, frustration, envy, jealousy, guilt, depressed mood, and loneliness (Goldberg, 1993).
- e) Conscientiousness: Conscientiousness is the personality trait of being careful, or vigilant. Conscientiousness involve task oriented trait. Conscientious people are efficient and organized as opposed to easy-going and disorderly (Goldberg, 1993).

- f) Openness to experience: Openness to experience is a trait that portrays human personality as an active imagination (fantasy), aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety, and intellectual curiosity (Goldberg, 1993).
- g) Agreeableness: Agreeableness is a personality trait by Five Factor Model manifesting itself in individual behavioural characteristics that are perceived as kind, sympathetic, cooperative, warm and considerate (Goldberg, 1993).

### DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistic mean, sd and t value to understand the difference in personality traits between two groups.

Statistical analysis was made by spss v 22.

All the hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

### RESULTS

This section presents the results of the data analysis for this study. Following hypotheses were statistically analyzed.

- H1: Those individual who reared in two parents family would score high on Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Openness to experience personality factors and would low score on neuroticism trait than single parent mother headed family.
- H2: Those individual who reared in single parent mother headed family would score high on Neuroticism and low scores on Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Openness to experience personality factors than two parent family.

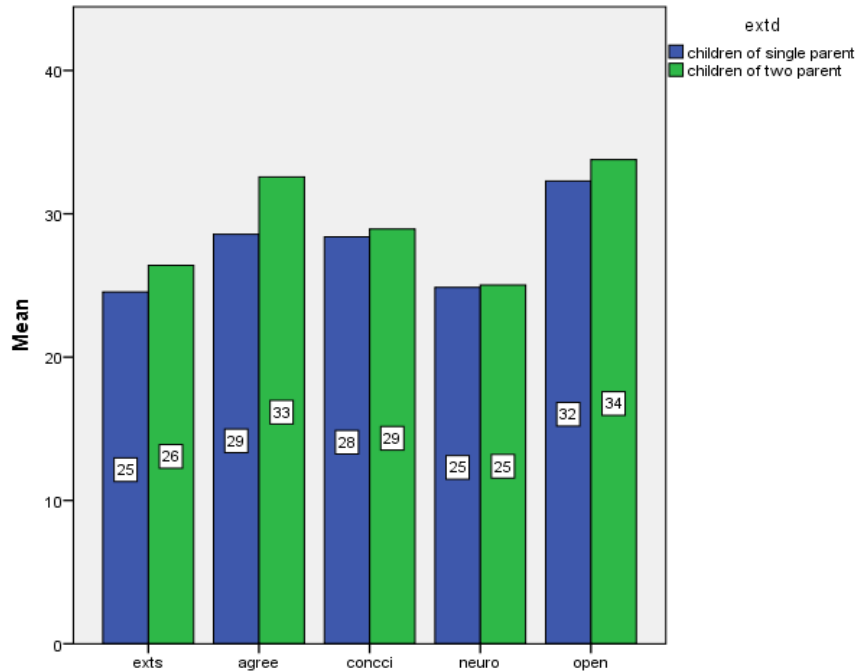
Table Showing Difference in personality traits among single mother headed family adolescents and two parents' family through mean, sd and t value.

BFI Scales	Single Parent Children (N=106)		Two Parent Children (N=106)		t	sig
	Mean	s.d	Mean	s.d		
Extraversion	24.547	5.7	26.41	5.2	-2.46	.01
Agreeableness	28.58	6.8	32.58	5.6	-4.615	.000
Conscientiousness	28.39	5.5	28.93	5.8	-.700	.485
Neuroticism	24.87	5.1	25.03	5.5	-.218	.825
Openness	32.28	5.9	33.78	5.3	-1.934	.05
Df=210						

Result indicates that there is statistically significant difference in personality traits of single parent and two parents family children. Results show on trait Extraversion single parent children (m=24.547, sd=5.7) has statistically significant difference than two parent children (m= 26.41, sd= 5.2, t=-2.460, p=.01). Single parent children (m=28.5, sd= 6.8) also has

statistically significant difference than two parent child ( $m=32.5$ ,  $sd=5.8$ ,  $t=-4.615$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) on trait agreeableness. Statistically significant difference also visible on trait Openness to experience among single parent children ( $m=32.28$ ,  $SD=5.9$ ) and two parent children ( $m=33.78$ ,  $SD=5.3$ ;  $t=-1.934$ ,  $p=.05$ ). Result depicts there is no statistically significant difference on traits conscientiousness and neuroticism.

Graphical presentation of comparison of Mean differences on different personality traits among children of Single parent and two parent family.



#### Personality Traits

Exts=Extraversion single parent children  
Ext=Extraversion dual/two parent children

Ext=Extraversion

Agree=Agreeableness

Concc= Conscientiousness

Neuro= Neuroticism

#### DISCUSSION

The result of the present study shows that the hypothesis of the study (1) Those individual who reared in two parents family would score high on Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Openness to experience personality factors and would low score on neuroticism trait

than single parent mother headed family, was confirmed, that there is a statistically highly significant difference in most of personality traits i.e., extraversion, agreeableness and openness to experience among the adolescents of single parent (mother headed) family and two parent families (table showing mean, sd and value), this result indicates adolescents of single mother headed family were low in traits of extraversion, agreeableness and openness to experience than two parent family. Lucas *et.al.*, (2000) conceptualized the trait of extraversion as individual differences in reward sensitivity. According to Toegel & Barsoux (2012) those who are low on extraversion are reserved, which can be perceived as distant or self-absorbed. Low agreeableness personalities are often competitive or challenging people, but argumentative or untrustworthy. Toegel & Barsoux (2012) and Hunter & Cushenbery (2014) found disagreeable personalities can be suspicious about others' motives which causes them to be hostile, uncooperative and generally deceitful or manipulative, aggressive, hostile, and a lack of empathy. Agreeableness has been denoted as individual differences in the coordination (vs. opposition) of common interests (Van Lieshout, 2000). Openness to experience is a factor that refers to a high level of cognitive activity (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Closed people have conventional thought system and resistant to change (Toegel & Barsoux, 2012). These personality traits can be found in anti-social and narcissistic personalities (DSM V). Results of the study also confirm by early study of Moldovan (2016) in which she found adolescents in single-parent families have less concern to obey rules, are slightly rebellious.

The results of present study supported by previous researches that children of two parent families have traits of more extravert, agreeableness and openness to experience these traits important for healthy and fully functioning personalities. Studies indicated that these traits positively correlate with adaptive functioning (DeYoung & associates, 2007; Van der Linden, *et.al.*, 2010; DeYoung & friends, 2008; Hirsh & Colleagues, 2009). Digman (1997) examined higher order attributes that reflect certain constellation of traits likely to be associated with competent functioning (Digman, 1997). DeYoung (2006) and Jang *et.al.*, (2006) suggested that conscientiousness, agreeableness, and low neuroticism (i.e., emotional stability) cohere into a higher-order trait of great developmental significance. High in agreeableness trait personality is kind and compassionate (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997).

But lower in these traits (extravert, agreeableness and openness to experience) leads to higher risks of psychopaths, antisocial lifestyle and

narcissistic personality tendencies. Studies show that children from broken homes are usually associated with anti-social behaviours, poor academic records and mental and emotional health, adverse impacts on cognitive capacity (Fergusson & friends, 1994; Chase-Lansdale et al. 1995; Morrison and Coiro 1999; Park 2007; Ayodele *et.al.*, 2013; Azuka-Obieke, 2012).

Results also suggest that there is no statistically significant difference in personality traits of Conscientiousness and Neuroticism (table showing mean, sd and value) among adolescents from single parent family as compared to two parent families. This result shows adolescents, whether they belong to single parent or two parent families, tend to be well-organized, dutiful and prefer planned behaviour. They have abilities that make them calm, stable (emotionally) and can handle criticisms and gloomy environments calmly. This result is also supported by Moldovan (2016) research that showed adolescents coming from single parent families are higher in terms of ego strength, conscientiousness, perseverance, responsibility and a high dependency to collective norms.

Thus the overall impression of result shows single parent mother headed family adolescents who lost their fathers in childhood (age before two years) are low in some personality traits like extraversion, agreeableness and openness to experience but at the same time they have ability to calm themselves in the time of crisis. These adolescents belong to working women family and due to this they are the family member where they do not have a big economical problem. They rose by an educated mother who always boosts up children's confidence; due to this they remain calm in the time of crisis as other person. At the same time when these children look at their mother who works hard for them to provide livelihoods they develop a sense of responsibility and being organized. In those families, children of working mothers showed higher levels of achievement and lower levels of internalizing behaviours such as anxiety and depression (Lucas-Thompson *et.al.*, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

Adolescents who belong to two parent families have friendly traits; they have empathetic understanding of others emotions and intentions. They have traits of openness to experience new ways of life. On the other hand adolescent that belongs to single parents family show weaker signs of above mentioned traits. They show aggressive and hostile traits but they are not different in traits that make them organized or the traits that are necessary for the achievement of aims than their counterparts who have been raised in two parent family.



### RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Present research is important for parents, educators and other people due to given understanding of the intensions, behaviour, personality assets and weaknesses of adolescents who are raised by single parent-mother headed families.

This research was conducted on sample of educated, working (doctors and teachers) women. Further research should be done on personality traits of children of single mothers who live with their parents and relatives and who are not working.

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