

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Relationship between Personality Traits and Prosocial Behavior among Adolescents

Fauzia Tariq & Dr. Irum Naqvi

Abstract

Background: Personality is the inner features of a person which help them in the beliefs, moods and behavior of an individual. Several studies have now tested to find the relationship between personality characteristics and prosocial behavior among adolescents'. These characteristics and prosocial behavior also appear to extend throughout the lifespan: the personality characteristics and prosocial behavior vary from childhood to adolescence, and adolescents to adulthood but prosocial behavior were more in adolescents.

Methods: The present study finds a relationship between Personality Traits and Prosocial Behavior among Adolescents. Convenient sample of 300 Students (Male, n= 150, Female=150) with age range from 16 to 18 years was recruited from different schools and colleges of twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. The Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) and Prosocialness scale (Caprara et al., 2003) were used to measure the personality traits and prosocial behavior.

Results: The results showed that Personality Traits (Openness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) had positive relationship with Prosocial Behavior but Neuroticism had negative relationship with Prosocial Behavior. Regression analysis further showed that Personality Traits (Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) were positive predictors of Prosocial Behavior, where Agreeableness was found the strongest predictor among all. However, Neuroticism was the negative predictor of Prosocial Behavior among adolescents.

Conclusions: The current study reveals that there is a significant correlation between personality traits and prosocial behavior. Literature suggested that agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to having significant positive correlations with helping behavior and neuroticism has negative relationship with prosocial behavior.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness Neuroticism. Prosocial Behavior.

- 1. MSc scholar, National Institute of Psychology, Center of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad
- 2. Assistant Professor, National Institute of Psychology, Center of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Fauzia Tariq, National Institute of Psychology, Center of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Email: fouzia.tariq6@gmail.com



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Foundation University Islamabad

Background

Personality is the inner features of a person which help them in the beliefs, moods and behavior of an individual. Several studies have now tested to find the relationship between personality characteristics and prosocial behavior among adolescents. These characteristics and prosocial behavior also appear to extend throughout the lifespan: the personality characteristics and prosocial behavior vary from childhood to adolescence, and adolescents to adulthood but prosocial behavior were more in adolescents (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000).

The five-factor model of personality is identified as "Big Five Personality" (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John& Srivastava, 1999). It defines the most important features of personality. John and Srivastava (1999), claimed that "these five dimensions characterized personality at the vast level of thoughts, and each dimension accurately refer to the features of personality. The big Five Personality factors are; openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism and conscientiousness.

Openness to experience describes a person's degree of intelligence, interest, inventiveness and inclination for innovation and diversity. These individual are supposed to be moreactive, self-assured, and encouraged. (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John & Srivastava, 1999).

Extraversion is the state of predominantly gaining gratification from oneself. They tend to like human collaborations and to be passionate, talkative, self-assured, and sociable. Usually individuals with this trait of personality show domination and affiliation (Costa & McCrae, 1992,). A person with this trait has positive view of human nature. They are kind hearted. Volunteer to help others and want helping behavior from others in return.

Agreeableness is a personality trait manifesting itself in individual behavioral characteristics that are perceived as kind, sympathetic, cooperative, warm and considerate. In contemporary personality psychology, agreeableness is one of the five major dimensions of personality structure, reflecting individual differences in cooperation and social harmony (Thompson, 2008).

Neuroticism is big five higher-order personality traits in the psychology field described as anxiety, fear, irritability, uneasiness, envy, hindrance, suspiciousness, and isolation. Individuals who experienced anxiety, terror, and annoyance are more prone to develop neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John & Srivastava, 1999).

Conscientiousness is one of the five traits of the Five Factor Model of personality and is an aspect of what has traditionally been referred to as having character. Conscientious individuals are generally hard-working and reliable, they are also likely to be conformists, (Daniel, DeYoung, Higgins & Jordan, 2002). This dimension of Big Five inventory described those people who are responsible,

dependable, persistent, organized, disciplined, methodical, diligent, risk averse, achievement oriented and purposeful (John & Srivastava, 1999; Goldberg, 1990).

Prosocial behavior is described as an act which is beneficial for others (Caprara et al., 2003). The word "prosocial behavior" has been use since 1970. The understanding of (prosocial behavior) was predicted as to be pleasing in interactive relationships. It is an action to offer benefits to others (Shaffer, 2009). It is a "voluntary behavior" proposed to provide benefits to others. Eisenberg's (1997) work proposes that children may show an increase in prosocial behavior when they regulate their negative emotions (sadness or anxiety) and if they have the ability not to let these emotions overwhelm them. However, if they cannot control these, then there is a lesser chance to be prosocial.

The phase of adolescents' prosocial behavior is closely related to the qualities of personality i.e. agreeableness and conscientiousness (Shiner, 2000). Behavior of prosocialness enhance the helpful, well-behaved and cooperative performance which is associated to agreeableness. It also comprises self-regulation and determination which states the concept of (conscientiousness) (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005).

Adolescents show prosocial behavior such as helping others, distributing their things to others and helping others to be calm. These have been connected to perspective-taking skills (Kohlberg, 1981). A study was conduct to evaluate the hereditary and encouragement of atmosphere on the adolescents' prosocial behavior. The findings of the study claimed that females have higher score of "prosocial behavior" as compared to males and is constant over adolescents (Jade &Rijsdik, 2009).

Many studies are done in Pakistan on Personality Traits and Learning Styles between Learners of Mathematics, Architecture, and Fine Arts (Zonash & Naqvi, 2011). Research conducted in Pakistan on "prosocial behavior" is narrow. Khan and Mukhtar (2013) explores the pro-social behavior of society in positions of "age and gender" with an objectives of assessment. Results revealed that mature people are more pro-social as compared to adolescents.

The purpose of this study is to discover the relationship between personality traits and prosocial behavior among adolescents, and to provide a contrast between neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness and extraversion. The current study found that the personality traits influence prosocial behavior in an individual. The present study also tried to clear the gap in the existing obtainable literature concerning personality trait and prosocial behavior. The literature displays that women have higher level of altruism and more prosocial behavior (Carlo, Haussmann, Christiansen, &Randall, 2003). It has also identified that conscientiousness and extraversion interrelate with interpersonal personality dimensions to guess prosocial behavior.

In Pakistan the exploration on personality traits has been there for some time but studies on pro-social behavior occurred only in recent times. It was found that in Pakistan, females are high on scale of neuroticism because in our culture they experience more stress due to extreme burden (Ansari, 2003). Many researchers conducted studies on personality in Pakistan (Chishti, 2002, Fayyaz 2008) but nobody concentrated on its relationship with prosocial behavior. This research can contribute for upcoming application for whose main emphasis is on personality trait and prosocial behavior. This is the minor effort to know different personality dimensions and prosocial behavior among adolescents. Keeping in view the prime nature of phenomena under study following hypotheses were specifically made for testing:

- Conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness and extraversion are positively related with prosocial behavior among adolescents.
- 2. Neuroticism is negatively related with prosocial behavior among adolescents.
- 3. There are a gender differences in prosocial behavior and personality traits among adolescents.
- 4. There are age differences in personality traits and prosocial behavior among adolescents

Method

Design

This is a quantitative study which made use of a descriptive (survey) research method to gather relevant data. The purpose of the study was to test the formulated objectives and hypotheses.

Participants

The sample was selected in the research for the study consists of adolescents' boys and girls. The sample was collected through convenient sampling to approach the participants from schools and colleges of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. A sample of 300 students (boys, n=150) and (girls, n=150) age ranging from 10 to 18 years were taken.

Table 1 Frequency table for Demographic Variables (N = 300).

Demographics	f	%
Gender		
Boys	150	50
Girls	150	50
Age		
Group 1 (10-12)	62	20.6

Group 2 (13-15)	105	35.0
Group 3 (16-18)	133	44.4

Table 1 describes the distribution of sample of adolescents on the basis of gender and age. Distribution on the basis of gender indicates an equal ratio of boys and girls. And the distribution on the basis of age is follow: group 1 (20.6%), group 2 (35.0%) and group 3 (44.4%).

Measures

Demographic Form. It was in English language and consisted on 5-itmes and only those are reported which have significant results that are; age and gender.

Big Five Inventory. The BFI scale was established by (John & Srivastava, 1999). It is a Likert type scale with 44-items on a five-point scale from "strongly agree to strongly disagree". "Strongly agree" was given as value (5), "a little agree" was given as value (4), "Neither agree or nor disagree "was given as value (3), "little disagree" was given as value (2) and "strongly disagree" was given as value (1). The reverse items were (6, 21, 31, 2, 12, 27, 37, 8 18, 23, 43, 9, 24, 34, 35, 41). Big Five Inventory dimensions are constructed as follow: 8 items of extraversion, 9 items of agreeableness, 9 items of conscientiousness, 8 items of neuroticism and 10 items of openness. The test-retest alpha reliability of extraversion is .90, agreeableness is .80, conscientiousness is .80, neuroticism is .82 and openness to experience is .80. Score ranges of the Big Five Inventory (BFI) subscales are: extraversion 8-40, agreeableness 9- 45, conscientiousness 9-45, neuroticism 8-40 and openness 10-50.

Proscocialness Scale. The prosocial behavior scale named "Prosocialness scale" was used. This was developed by Caprara (1998). It is a 16-item Likert type scale with items answered on a five-point scale from "almost never true to almost always true". Where "almost never true" was given as value "1", "occasionally true" was given as value "2", "sometimes true" was given as value "3", "often true" was given as value "4" and "almost always true" was given as value "5". Alpha reliability is .88. Score range lies between 5 to 80 (Caprara, 1998).

Procedure

This study aims to find the relationship between personality traits and prosocial behavior among adolescents. For this purpose, I collected data of 300 participants consisting of male students, (n=150) and female students, (n=150) from schools and colleges of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The consent to collect data was attained from the school and college principals. Before directing, they were guaranteed that all the information provided by them would be kept confidential and will be used only for the purpose of this research. They were guided to give their responses correctly and accurately and asked not to leave any item vacant. The questionnaires were then distributed, and every applicant had to fill two questionnaires - the Big Five

Results

Table 2 Descriptive and α -reliability value of Prosocialness Scale and Subscales of Big Five Inventory (BFI) (N=300)

Variable	No of items	а	M	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Potential	Actual	_	
PROS	16	.92	54.97	14.03	16-80	20-77	91	.11
EXTRA	8	.90	32.72	7.05	8-40	9-40	-1.4	1.2
AGR	9	.80	32.25	7.00	9-45	11-44	81	.93
CONS	9	.80	29.88	7.26	9-45	10-43	53	.13
NEUR	8	.82	27.20	7.33	8-40	10-40	46	28
OPEN	10	.80	34.37	8.13	10-50	11-49	58	.65

Note. PROS = Prosocialness, EXTRA = Extraversion, AGR = Agreeableness, CONS = Conscientiousness, NEUR = Neuroticism, OPEN = Openness.

Table 3

Correlation between Sub-scales of Big Five Inventory (BFI) and Prosocialness Scale among Adolescents (N=300)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 PROS	54.97	14.03	-	.23**	.27**	.25**	29**	.15**
2 EXTRA	32.72	7.05		-	.27**	.34**	19**	.25**
3 AGR	32.25	7.00			-	.46**	26**	.47**
4 CONS	29.88	7.26				-	28**	.57**
5 NEUR	27.20	7.33					-	17**
6 OPEN	34.37	8.13						-

Note. PROS = Prosocialness, EXTRA = Extraversion, AGR = Agreeableness, CONS = Conscientiousness, NEUR = Neuroticism, OPEN = Openness. *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 4

Multiple Linear Regression between Personality Traits and Prosocial Behavior among Adolescents (N=300)

Variables	В	β	SE	t	p	R2	∆R2	F
Constant		37.4		4.70	.00	.091	.109	4.31
Age	.95	.01	7.9	.81	.41			
Gender	.95	.02	1.1	.54	.58			
EXTRA	.25	.12*	.12	2.07	.00			
AGR	.37	.18*	.13	2.79	.00			
CONS	.20	.10*	.14	1.48	.00			
NEUR	10	14*	.11	87	.00			
OPEN	.26	.06*	.12	-2.37	.01			

Note: EXTRA = Extraversion, AGR = Agreeableness, CONS = Conscientiousness, NEUR = Neuroticism, OPEN = Openness. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p>.001

Table 5

Mean Standard Deviation and Independent sample t-test for Gender Differences in Personality Traits and Prosocial Behavior among Adolescents (N=300)

Variable	Boys		Girls						Cohen's d
variable	(n=150)		(n=150)				95%CI		Colleil s u
_	М	SD	М	SD	t(298)	p	LL	UL	-
PROS	54.30	14.38	55.64	13.69	.83	.40	-4.53	1.84	-
EXTRA	31.37	6.87	34.08	6.99	3.4	.00	-4.28	-1.13	.39
AGR	32.60	8.50	31.89	5.10	.88	.37	879	2.30	-
CONS	29.72	8.41	30.04	5.92	.37	.71	-1.96	1.34	-
NEUR	26.84	8.14	27.55	6.43	.83	.40	-2.37	.96	-
OPEN	34.26	9.11	34.49	7.05	.25	.80	-2.08	1.61	-

Note. PROS = Prosocialness, EXTRA = Extraversion, AGR = Agreeableness, CONS = Conscientiousness, NEUR = Neuroticism, OPEN = Openness, CI=Confidence Interval, LL= lower limit& UL= upper limit*p<.05, **p<.01

Table 6

One Way Analysis of Variance forAge on Prosocial Behavior and Sub-Scales of Big Five Inventory (BFI) (N=300).

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3				
W	(n = 62)	(n = 105)	(n=133)			T. I	
Variables	М	М	M	Б		Tukey's post hoc	
	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	F	P		
PROS	54.2	53.2	56.7	1.98	.14		
rkos	(14.1)	(15.1)	(12.9)		.14	-	
EXTA	32.1	31.9	33.6	2.12	.12		
EATA	(7.8) (7.6) (6.1)	2.12	.12	-			
AGR	32.3	31.8	32.5	.34	.70		
AUK	(6.6)	(7.9)	(6.5)	.54	.70	-	
CONS	29.0	28.8	31.1	3.23	.04	1 & 2 < 3	
CONS	(8.7)	(8.2)	(9.6)	3.23	.04	1 & 2 < 3	
NEUR	27.4	27.8	26.6	75	.47		
NEUK	UR .75 (6.8) (7.2) (7.7)	.13	.47	-			
ODEN	33.2	33.9	35.3	1.7	17		
OPEN	(7.8)	(8.9)	(7.5)	1.7	.17	-	

Note. PROS = Prosocialness, EXTRA = Extraversion, AGR = Agreeableness, CONS = Conscientiousness, NEUR = Neuroticism, OPEN = Openness. CI= Confidence Interval, LL= Lower interval & UL= Upper limit. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Inventory and the Prosocialness Scale. The students filled out the questionnaire in their classes under the supervision of teachers. At the end of data collection, the participants were thanked for their participation. The data was analyzed using SPSS-21. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics and α reliability values of prosocialness scale and subscales of Big Five Inventory. The alpha reliability of extraversion is .90, agreeableness is .80, conscientiousness is .80, neuroticism is .82 and openness is .80 and prosocialness is .92. It is observed that all the scales used have their skewness/ Kurtosis within the desired range of +1.5 to -1.5.

As shown in the table, the subscales of Personality traits correlate with each other as well as significantly correlate with prosocial behavior (prosocialness) of

adolescents. Subscales significantly correlated with each other except Neuroticism of personality traits showed negative correlation among all subscales and prosocialness.

Table 4 describes the linear regression results, which show that demographic variable like age and gender predicts prosocial behavior but not significant (*beta values*), as well as birth order also have non-significant negative results. Table 4 also shows that personality traits extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness are significantly predicting the prosocial behavior but neuroticism is negatively predicting prosocial behavior. The strongest predictor of prosocial behavior is agreeableness and the openness is the lowest predictor of prosocial behavior. Values described the variance of prosocial behavior for R2 is 9.1%.

As the table shows, there is significant difference on Extraversion between the scores of boys (M = 31.37, SD = 6.87) and girls (M = 34.08, SD = 6.99). Hence, suggesting that girls are statistically more extravert than boys.

Table 6 shows the mean difference level of age of personality traits and prosocialness. There is significant difference shown in conscientiousness of personality traits as shown in this table. The age of group 3 (M = 31.1, SD = 9.6) have higher conscientiousness as compared to age of group 2 (M = 28.7, SD = 8.2) and age of group 1(M = 27.4, SD = 6.8). Results revealed that significant difference exist in Conscientiousness. Post-hoc results for conscientiousness (1 & 2 < 3) showed Conscientiousness increase by the age.

Discussion

This study was planned to comprehend the relationship of personality traits and prosocial behavior among adolescents. The sample was comprised of 300 adolescents. According to literature, prosocial behavior increases in adolescents and inked with the personality traits as well (Eisenberg &Fabes, 1990).

Result of present study showed significant and positive relationship between prosocial behavior and personality traits persistent with previous findings i.e. agreeableness and conscientiousness have been simultaneously linked to prosocial behavior during adolescence (Shiner, 2000). Chishti (2002) conducted a cross-sectional survey in Nigeria to examine the influence of five personality factors on prosocial behavior. The research showed that there was significant relationship between the variables of study. The relation between prosocial behavior and neuroticism is negative. Literature suggested that low anxiety level in those who were found more prosocial and extravert (Shiner & Capsi, 2003). As in this study, the results revealed that there is a (negative) relation of extraversion with neuroticism. This means that extraverted people express more socializing behavior, and are more enthusiastic as compared to people who scored high in neuroticism. Anxiety, sadness and loneliness are the traits of neuroticism, and the person who scored high in this variable may lose their interest in social activities

It was also seemed that there is a positive relationship between openness to experience and extraversion. Openness to experience defines extensiveness, depth, genuineness, and honesty, so it is projected that it always links with extraversion (Costa & McCrae, 1992). There was a significant negative relationship between agreeableness and neuroticism. On the other hand, conscientiousness has significant a significant negative relationship with neuroticism. It is stated that neurotic individuals are less conscientious. People high on neurotic impulsiveness find it difficult to involve themselves in enjoyable tasks and activities. Individuals who are low on conscientiousness are unable to motivate themselves to perform a task that they would like to accomplish (Costa & McCrae, 1992). It was suggested that those who are high on neuroticism would score low on

conscientiousness. Significant relationships were found between conscientiousness and extraversion, and agreeableness. These positive relationships are due to the fact that conscientiousness involves subsequent rules and values and will naturally relate with agreeableness characteristics (Norman, Blais, & Herzog, 1993).

Regression analysis was done to see predictive roles of personality traits and demographics on prosocial behavior. Results of this study showed that there were positive (non-significant) prediction of demographic variables and prosocial behavior. Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) indicated the same results and show negative (nonsignificant) prediction of prosocial behavior with birth order and study discipline. Carter, Powell, Steelman and Werum, (2002) stated that birth order may negatively predict prosocial behavior and impact of it may vary according to cultural context. Results also showed that personality traits show positive and significant prediction of prosocial behavior. According to literature, those who show more agreeableness traits have more capability to help others, and like the same with other personality traits, i.e., conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness. In the case of neuroticism, results showed negative (significant) predictor of prosocial behavior. Literature showed that neuroticism is negatively linked to prosocial behavior (Knight, 2005). If individuals are high on neuroticism, it means that individuals are less prone to be prosocial with others (Table 4).

It was also hypothesized that there would be significant gender differences in terms of personality traits and prosocial behaviors and t-test analysis revealed. Table 5 showed significant gender difference in extraversion, i.e. girls are more extraverted than boys. According to literature, there is a gender difference on the extraversion. Those women who scored unusually higher on extraversion showed more positive emotions, warmth behavior and gregariousness as compared to men (Costa,2001). As for adolescents, girls show more positive emotions towards others as compared to boys. Thus, extraversion trait is higher among those girls who showed more positive emotions, and warmth behavior.

One-way ANOVA was carried out to explore the age differences. It was hypothesized that, there were age differences on personality traits and prosocial behavior among adolescents. Results showed significant age differences among conscientiousness of personality trait, i.e., those who are older have more conscientious traits than younger ones (Table 6). Khan and Mukhtar (2013) explored the pro-social behavior and personality traits of society in positions of age and gender with an objective of assessment. Results revealed that mature people are more prosocial and their personality traits are more polished as compared to younger ones. So it might be a reason that, when we grow up through time, our personality traits change.

Limitations and Suggestions

The present study has met a few limitations that hindered a more thorough investigation. The participants

were only reached on a convenient basis and were also selected from the schools' colleges of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. To go for a bigger sample size in terms of number of participants as well as random sample technique from multiple colleges across the cities of Pakistan for better generalizability. The use of self-report measure resulted in high social desirability with acquiescence of response style. This method was also affected by the subjectivity of the participants such as their mood at the time of filling out the questionnaires and their understanding of the questionnaire items. It is necessary to collect data at that time when the participants are willing to fill-out the questionnaires. The correlation method used in the study provides no causal association between the constructs. This impacts the results predictive value. Cross cultural (coeducation / separate education system) studies could be conducted to examine the difference between the different education system.

Implications

Prosocial behavior has a long history psychology in general, and in social psychology in particular. Our aim is to inculcate prosocial behavior in adolescents so that we may get a developed society. It can be done in schools and at homes as well by giving rewards on sharing, caring, and helping others. Primary prevention programs can enhance the prevalence of prosocial behaviors of students, by refining classroom's environment and the quality of teacher-student interactions, providing emotional support and helpful models of prosocial behavior through mass media and role-playing techniques and directly reinforcing positive behavior and social skills. Using the Big Five Inventory was helpful in explaining the attitudes and perception of adolescents. This study is helpful in the field of personality and it will be beneficial for researchers in the future who want to study personality differences and prosocial behaviors.

Conclusion

The current study reveals that there is a significant correlation between personality traits and prosocial behavior. Literature suggested that agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to having significant positive correlations with helping behavior (Wilson & Workman, 2011) and neuroticism has negative relationship with prosocial behavior (Carlo, Knight &Okun 2005). These personality traits were not studied in a single model. Different studies are added to understand the phenomena of personality traits and their relationship with prosocial behavior. The results conclude that there is a positive relationship between personality traits extraversion. openness, agreeableness conscientiousness) and prosocial behavior. But there is a negative relationship between neuroticism and prosocial behavior. The present study has practical and theoretical implications. It is suggested that different personality traits can enhance the prosocial behavior in different educational settings. On the basis of the above discussion, it can be concluded that there is significant positive correlation between personality traits (i.e. extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) and prosocial

behavior. But with prosocial behavior, there is a significant negative correlation with neuroticism.

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Ethical Consideration

The study was approved by the National Institute of Psychology (NIP). Consent Form was taken before taking data and participants were asked to take voluntary participation. It was also informed to the participants that there is no harm and their data will be kept confidential.

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Availability of data and materials

The data sets used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Authors' contributions/Author details

Fauzia Tariq performed the main study under the supervision of Dr. Irum Naqvi. Fauzia Tariq and Muhammad Omer Shehzad wrote the article under the guidelines of FUJP Foundation University Journal of Psychology, Fauzia Tariq, National Institute of Psychology, Center of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad Muhammad Omer Shehzad, Department of Psychology, Foundation University Rawalpindi Campus. Dr. Irum Assistant professor, National Institute Psychology, Center of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

Abbreviations

BFI: Big Five Inventory

PROS: Prosocialness Scale

Corresponding author

Correspondence to Tariq, F.

fouzia.tariq6@gmail.com

Ethics declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (National Institute of Psychology,

Islamabad). A written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare to have no competing interests.

Additional Information

Not applicable.

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