

## Personality Traits and Parenting Stress Among Working Mothers of Young Children

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### Abstract

Working mothers with young children bear dual responsibilities, managing professional duties while attentively caring for their children, often leading to parenting stress. This study aims to examine the influence of Big Five personality traits on parenting stress among working mothers with young children. This research fills a gap in the literature regarding how personality aspects affect parenting stress. The study involved 206 participants specifically working mothers with children aged 0-6 years, who are married, and reside in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This study utilized the Parenting Stress Scale (PSS) and The Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI), with data analysis conducted through multiple regression techniques. The results indicate that agreeableness and extraversion negatively affect parenting stress, while openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism do not have a significant impact. These findings underscore the importance of understanding personality traits in managing parenting stress among working mothers. The implications of this study can be used to develop more effective interventions to support the mental health of working mothers.

**Keywords:** Parenting stress, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism.

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### Introduction

Typically, parents, especially mothers who give birth to their children, welcome their arrival with immense joy. For many, children are a source of happiness. They nurture their children

with great responsibility and enthusiasm. However, the experience of parenting is not always filled with joy. Sometimes, parenting is accompanied by negative emotions in addition to positive ones. The presence of these negative emotions becomes more pronounced when mothers are not only focused on their parenting responsibilities but are also dealing with additional stressors, such as work or other obligations. Research has shown that parenting stress and burnout are significant contributors to these negative emotions, which can affect the overall well-being of both the parent and the child (Guo et al., 2024; APA, 2021).

Working mothers bear dual responsibilities: managing household duties and job responsibilities. This situation makes it easier for mothers to encounter parenting stress. Research by Rajgariah et al. (2020) in India indicates that working mothers are more likely to experience parenting stress. When comparing parenting stress, 13% of non-working mothers exhibited high parenting stress, whereas 26% of working mothers experienced high parenting stress. This is supported by recent studies which highlight that the challenges of balancing work and family life contribute significantly to parenting stress among working mothers, affecting their mental health and overall well-being (Parker et al., 2023; Kumari et al., 2024). Furthermore, coping strategies such as seeking social support and job flexibility are critical in managing these stress levels effectively (Kumari et al., 2024; Gloor et al., 2022). A study in Italy by Giannotti et al. (2022) found that during the pandemic, mothers were more likely to experience higher parenting stress than fathers, as mothers played a more significant role in caregiving. Parenting stress among mothers during the lockdown also increased due to children being constantly at home, which increased daily caregiving activities and reduced personal time for mothers. Research in Indonesia by Masyito (2021) found that 70% of working mothers in Pasuruan City experienced moderate levels of parenting stress.

Parenting stress as the psychological distress experienced by parents in raising their children, characterized by high negative emotions and low positive emotions (Berry & Jones 1995). This

stress can significantly affect the mental health of both parents and children, leading to adverse outcomes such as poor psychological well-being, increased risk of child maltreatment, and detrimental effects on family functioning. Recent studies highlight that parents of children with special educational needs, including intellectual disabilities such as Down Syndrome, experience elevated levels of stress compared to parents of typically developing children (Fucà et al., 2022). Moreover, mindful parenting practices, which focus on emotional regulation and relational processes, have been shown to mitigate some of these stresses by promoting secure attachments and well-being in both parents and children (Sansone, 2024).

This psychological distress arises from difficulties in fulfilling individual responsibilities as parents. More specifically, Berry and Jones divide parenting stress into two components: a positive component (pleasure) and a negative component (strain). Pleasure refers to the emotional benefits and personal development parents feel, while strain refers to the demands parents experience, including time, cost, effort, restrictions, and feelings of shame.

Recent research has emphasized the multifaceted nature of parenting stress and its significant effects on family dynamics and child development. For instance, a study by Deater-Deckard (2021) highlighted that parenting stress is a critical factor influencing child behavioral outcomes and is associated with both internalizing and externalizing problems in children.

In another study, Crnic and Coburn (2022) explored how everyday stresses and parenting challenges impact parents' mental health and parenting practices. The research suggested that high levels of parenting stress might impair parents' ability to engage positively with their children, thereby influencing children's emotional and behavioral adjustment. These studies underscore the importance of understanding and addressing both the positive and negative components of parenting stress, as identified by Berry and Jones, to enhance family well-being and promote positive developmental outcomes for children.

High levels of parenting stress negatively impact the quality of life (physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and environment) of full-time working mothers (Limbers et al., 2020). Additionally, high parenting stress has been found to affect children's problematic behavior, mediated by negative parenting styles (Mak et al., 2020). Research by Spinelli et al. (2020) also shows that parents with high levels of parenting stress tend to disengage from their children, resulting in ineffective emotional regulation in their children. This indicates that parenting stress not only affects parents as individuals but also indirectly influences their children's development. Furthermore, research by Ward and Lee (2020) suggests that maternal parenting stress has a more significant impact on children's problematic behavior compared to paternal parenting stress.

Various factors contribute to individuals experiencing parenting stress. In addition to external factors such as social support, internal factors such as personality also influence parenting stress. One personality construct is the Big Five Personality Traits. The 'Big Five' theory by Lewis Goldberg (1990), also known as the Five-Factor Model or OCEAN, explains five major dimensions of personality: Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Each dimension encompasses a broad spectrum of traits, allowing for a more comprehensive description of an individual's personality. For instance, in the case of parenting stress among working mothers with young children, mothers who are open to parenting experiences may be more flexible in addressing parenting challenges (Crowe, 2021). Conscientious mothers tend to excel in time and task management related to caregiving. Conversely, extraverted mothers benefit from a better social support network, which helps manage stress. Agreeable mothers demonstrate their ability to compromise and cooperate with partners or other caregivers (Crowe, 2021; Hampson, 2012). Mothers with high levels of neuroticism are more likely to experience parenting stress. Thus, these personality dimensions

influence how working mothers cope with and manage parenting stress (Lahey, 2009; McCrae & Costa, 2008).

Among the five personality types, extraversion (Rantanen et al., 2015; Vermaes et al., 2008) and agreeableness (Vermaes et al., 2008; Wen et al., 2023) consistently show a negative correlation with parenting stress. Conversely, neuroticism consistently shows a positive correlation (Plotkin et al., 2014; Rantanen et al., 2015; Vermaes et al., 2008). Additionally, Wen et al. (2023) found a negative relationship between conscientiousness and parenting stress. Openness in parents of children with hearing impairments is associated with lower levels of parenting stress (Plotkin et al., 2014).

This study is unique as no prior research has examined the relationship between the Big Five Personality Traits and parenting stress among working mothers of young children. Previous studies have used subjects such as families of children with spina bifida (Vermaes et al., 2008). Wen et al. (2023) focused on parents of children with special needs, adding a variable related to children's problematic behavior. Mazza et al. (2021) examined the relationship between neuroticism, parenting stress, and burnout among parents working from home in the United States. This study uniquely explores how the Big Five Personality Traits impact parenting stress among working mothers of young children, offering a positive outlook on understanding and addressing stress in parenting by providing insights into personality's role in stress management. Based on the above explanation, the objective of this research is to explore the role of the Big Five Personality Traits in predicting parenting stress among working mothers of young children. The proposed hypotheses are: (a) there is a negative relationship between openness (O), conscientiousness (C), extraversion (E), agreeableness (A), and parenting stress (PS) among working mothers of young children. (b) There is a positive relationship between neuroticism (N) and parenting stress (PS) among working mothers of young children.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

This study involved 206 working mothers with children aged 0-6 years (Mean Age = 32.35, SD = 5.74) residing in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, living with their husbands (Mean Husband Age = 34.23, SD = 6.25). The minimum education level was high school graduation or equivalent. The sample was selected using purposive sampling based on the criteria mentioned above. The study utilized a purposive sampling technique to recruit working mothers with children aged 0-6 years from the Special Region of Yogyakarta, focusing on those employed, living with spouses, and having at least a high school education. The informed consent process followed ethical guidelines, providing participants with detailed information about the study's objectives, procedures, risks, and benefits. Participants signed a consent form to confirm their voluntary participation and understanding, with confidentiality ensured through unique identifiers and secure data storage.

### *Measurements*

*Parenting Stress Scale (PSS):* To measure parenting stress (PS) among working mothers with young children, the Parenting Stress Scale (PSS) designed by Berry and Jones (1995) was used. It was translated into Indonesian by Kumalasari et al. (2022). This scale, comprising 15 items, aims to reveal two components of parenting stress: pleasure and strain. Examples of items from the pleasure component include: "I feel close to my child.", "I enjoy time with my child.", and "My child is an important source of affection for me." Examples of items from the strain component include: "Having a child leaves little time and flexibility in my life.", "Having a child is a financial burden on the family.", "My child's behavior is often embarrassing or stressful.", The scale has an alpha coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.828$ .

*Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI)*: This inventory is designed to reveal five personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (OCEAN) in working mothers with young children. The Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI) used in this study was designed by Goldberg and adapted into Indonesian by Ramdhani (2012). The subscale for agreeableness consists of seven items; conscientiousness consists of six items; openness consists of six items; extraversion consists of five items; and neuroticism consists of four items, totaling 25 items. Responses on the BFI follow a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). Ramdhani's (2012) analysis showed that the BFI traits had alpha coefficients as follows: openness  $\alpha = 0.79$ , conscientiousness  $\alpha = 0.78$ , extraversion  $\alpha = 0.74$ , agreeableness  $\alpha = 0.76$ , and neuroticism  $\alpha = 0.74$ .

To validate both the Indonesian version of the Parenting Stress Scale (PSS) and the Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI), conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Assess internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha for each subscale to confirm reliability, with an acceptable threshold being above 0.70.

### **Data Analysis**

The steps for conducting multiple regression analysis include assumption testing. Researchers ensured no missing values and outliers were present in the data. The relationship between independent and dependent variables was examined using scatterplots. The distribution of residuals was checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov or Shapiro-Wilk tests. A scatterplot between residuals and predicted values was used to check for homoscedasticity, and The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was calculated to ensure no multicollinearity among the independent variables.

Once all assumptions were met, regression analysis was performed. The regression results were interpreted based on a p-value  $< 0.05$ , indicating that the independent variable significantly

influenced the dependent variable. Conversely, a p-value > 0.05 indicated no significant influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

## Result

From a total of 206 respondents, the demographic data distribution is presented in [Table 1](#). The data collection process was conducted through questionnaires distributed both online and offline to the study's respondents, who were working mothers with young children. Initially, data was collected from 245 respondents across Indonesia. The researchers then filtered the respondents by excluding those who did not meet the criteria or did not complete the questionnaire in its entirety. After the screening process, 206 respondents remained, whose data will be analyzed.

Table 1  
*Demographic Data Participants (N=206)*

Characteristic	Category	N	%
Occupation	Formal ASN, BUMN	75	36,41%
	Formal Private Sector	74	35,92%
	Informal	57	27,67%
Education	Elementary to Middle School	3	1,46%
	High School/Vocational School	23	11,17%
	Diploma (D1-D3)	36	17,48%
	Bachelor's Degree (D4/S1)	122	59,22%
	Master's Degree (S2)	20	9,71%
	Doctoral Degree (S3)	2	0,97%
Number of Children	1 – 2	156	75,73%
	3 or more	50	24,27%
Children's Age	0 - 3 years	93	45,15%
	3 years 1 month - 6 years	114	54,85%
Children's Gender	Male	118	57,28%
	Female	88	42,72%



**Table 1** shows that the majority of participants in this study are young adults aged 20-40 years (92.23%), have formal employment in government or state-owned enterprises (36.41%), and possess a D4/S1 level of education (59.22%). Most participants have 1-2 children (75.73%) aged 3-6 years (54.85%), and the majority of these children are male (57.28%).

### *Results of Assumption Testing*

**Table 2**

*Correlation Between the Big Five Personality Factors and Parenting Stress (N=206)*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Openness</b>	<b>Conscientiousness</b>	<b>Extraversion</b>	<b>Agreeableness</b>	<b>Neuroticism</b>
Parenting Stress	-.328**	-.311**	-.447**	-.470**	.339**

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

**Table 2** shows a significant correlation between the five personality factors and parenting stress. The results indicate that openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness are significantly and negatively correlated with parenting stress. In contrast, neuroticism is significantly and positively correlated with parenting stress. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that agreeableness and extraversion have a strong relationship with parenting stress, whereas neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness have a weaker relationship with parenting stress.

### *Hypothesis Testing Results*

**Table 3** and **Table 4** indicates that the combination of the five personality factors in working mothers with young children explains 25.4% of the variation in work stress levels,  $R^2 = .254$ ,  $F(5,200) = 170.344$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Table 3**

*Output of Coefficient of Determination and F-Test (Simultaneous)*

<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>RMSE</b>
I	.522	.272	.254	3.372

**Table 4**

*Results of the Analysis of the Simultaneous Influence of Personality on Parenting Stress*

<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of Square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
Regression	851.720	5	170.344	14.979	<.001
Residual	2274.396	200	11.372		
Total	3126.117	205			

The partial t-test output in [Table 5](#) reveals several findings. The Extraversion factor ( $\beta = -.222$ ,  $t = -2.523$ ,  $p = .012$ ) and the Agreeableness factor ( $\beta = -.265$ ,  $t = -3.059$ ,  $p = .003$ ) are predictors of parenting stress in working mothers with young children in Yogyakarta. Higher levels of environmental support and the ability to compromise with the environment can reduce parenting stress in these working mothers. In contrast, the Openness factor, or openness to new experiences and knowledge ( $\beta = -.064$ ,  $t = -.797$ ,  $p = .426$ ), and the Conscientiousness factor, or carefulness in managing work ( $\beta = .44$ ,  $t = .545$ ,  $p = .586$ ), do not function as predictors of parenting stress in working mothers with young children in Yogyakarta. Furthermore, the Neuroticism factor ( $\beta = .122$ ,  $t = 1.678$ ,  $p = .095$ ) also cannot be used as a predictor of stress in working mothers with young children in Yogyakarta.

**Table 5**  
*T-test Output (Partial)*

<b>Model</b>	<b>Unstandardized</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Standardized</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>P</b>
Intercept	36.018	3.585		10.048	<.001
O	-.066	.083	-.064	-.797	.426
C	.057	.104	0.44	.545	.586
E	-.269	.107	-.222	-2.523	.012
A	-.370	.121	-.265	-3.059	.003
N	.133	.079	.122	1.678	.095

The partial t-test output in [Table 5](#) reveals several findings. The Extraversion factor ( $\beta = -.222$ ,  $t = -2.523$ ,  $p = .012$ ) and the Agreeableness factor ( $\beta = -.265$ ,  $t = -3.059$ ,  $p = .003$ ) are predictors of parenting stress in working mothers with young children in Yogyakarta. Higher levels of environmental support and the ability to compromise with the environment can reduce parenting stress in these working mothers. In contrast, the Openness factor, or openness to new experiences and knowledge ( $\beta = -.064$ ,  $t = -.797$ ,  $p = .426$ ), and the Conscientiousness factor, or carefulness in managing work ( $\beta = .44$ ,  $t = .545$ ,  $p = .586$ ), do not function as predictors of parenting stress in working mothers with young children in Yogyakarta. Furthermore, the Neuroticism factor ( $\beta = .122$ ,  $t = 1.678$ ,  $p = .095$ ) also cannot be used as a predictor of stress in working mothers with young children in Yogyakarta.

## **Discussion**

The objective of this study is to investigate the influence of the Big Five Personality Traits on parenting stress experienced by working mothers of young children. The results of this study indicate that the personality traits of extraversion and agreeableness can significantly explain the

levels of parenting stress among working mothers with young children. Meanwhile, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism are found not to be predictors of parenting stress in working mothers with young children in Yogyakarta.

These findings support previous research indicating that a dominant agreeableness personality can predict lower parenting stress in working mothers. This is consistent with the study by Wen et al. (2023), which shows a negative relationship between agreeableness and parenting stress. Specifically, agreeableness is described as a protective factor against parenting stress. Vinayak and Dhanoa (2017) also found a negative relationship between agreeableness and parental burnout, which correlates positively with parenting stress in mothers.

Individuals with high agreeableness are more likely to feel connected with others, be more friendly, and cooperative (Leonardi et al., 2021). This trait enables mothers with high agreeableness to better understand and feel connected to their children's needs, making the process of caregiving and playing with their children less burdensome and distressing. Agreeableness can mediate the impact of children's problematic behaviors on parenting stress (Wen et al., 2023).

Agreeableness is inversely related to parenting stress, meaning that higher levels of agreeableness generally predict lower levels of stress among parents. This personality trait is characterized by a tendency towards empathy, cooperation, and a desire to maintain harmonious relationships, which can make the challenges of parenting feel less overwhelming. Agreeable parents are more likely to engage positively with their children and other caregivers, facilitating smoother interactions and reducing potential stressors. As a result, agreeableness can serve as a protective factor, helping parents manage the demands of caregiving more effectively, thereby mitigating overall parenting stress.

The results of this study also align with previous research on the influence of extraversion on parenting stress. The study by Mazza et al. (2021) indicates that lower levels of extraversion predict higher parenting stress. According to Plotkin et al. (2014), individuals with an extraverted personality view activities outside the home with their children as enjoyable. While post-work outdoor activities are generally seen as tiring and energy-draining, this is different for mothers with high levels of extraversion. Despite being busy with work and their children's needs to play outside, mothers with a more dominant extraverted personality are more resilient to parenting stress.

Extraversion is negatively associated with parenting stress, indicating that higher levels of extraversion are generally linked to lower stress levels among parents. Individuals with high extraversion typically exhibit sociability, energy, and a positive outlook, which can enhance their ability to manage the challenges of parenting. These characteristics allow them to build and sustain strong social support networks, engage in enjoyable activities with their children, and maintain a positive emotional state, all of which contribute to reducing parenting-related stress. Consequently, extraversion acts as a protective factor, enabling parents to navigate the demands of caregiving with greater resilience and reduced stress.

However, this study's findings differ from previous research regarding the impact of conscientiousness on parenting stress. This study shows that conscientiousness is not a significant predictor of parenting stress in working mothers. In contrast, previous studies (Piotrowski et al., 2023; Crowe & Weaver, 2021) found that conscientiousness negatively correlates with parenting stress. Parents with a conscientious personality are structured, well-prepared, and possess good time management skills (Piotrowski et al., 2023). In reality, this orderliness and preparedness do not effectively balance domestic (childcare) and public (full-time work) demands. This is because families in Indonesia or Asia generally have domestic

helpers or extended family members, especially new families, where the mother or mother-in-law often assists in caring for young children.

Additionally, the findings differ from previous studies on the impact of openness on parenting stress. The correlation test results in this study show a negative relationship between openness and parenting stress, consistent with Plotkin et al. (2014). Further, it is explained that individuals with an openness personality are more proactive in exploring new and unfamiliar things (Leonardi et al., 2021). This trait enables mothers with high openness to try various new coping mechanisms to overcome various challenges in caregiving and work. However, this study's findings indicate that openness does not significantly influence parenting stress. This is because the knowledge and experience gained from various media are not necessarily practiced in daily caregiving. Mothers feel more comfortable with caregiving methods that align with how they were raised by their parents.

This study's findings also differ from previous research regarding neuroticism. Previous studies found that neuroticism significantly influences parenting stress. The study by Mazza et al. (2021) indicates that high neuroticism in a mother can predict higher parenting stress. This supports previous research showing a positive correlation between neuroticism and parenting stress (Crowe & Weaver, 2021; Haddad, 2015). This may be because mothers with a neurotic personality tend to experience detachment in their caregiving (Flordelis, 2022). This detachment can make mothers less concerned and less thoughtful about what happens during caregiving, reducing their experience of parenting stress. This study finds that neuroticism does not significantly influence parenting stress in working mothers.

#### *Research Limitations*

This study has several limitations. First, although the data distribution includes participants from various regions in Indonesia, the number of participants is still very limited. A larger number of

respondents would facilitate drawing more robust conclusions. Second, the data collection process was relatively lengthy due to the high level of busyness of the study subjects. The speed of obtaining the desired data was not optimal.

## **Conclusion**

The results and discussion of this study indicate that agreeableness and extraversion have a negative influence on parenting stress among working mothers with young children. Furthermore, the results show that openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism do not influence parenting stress in working mothers with young children.

## **Recommendations**

Several recommendations are offered for respondents and future researchers. First, mothers with high scores in extraversion and agreeableness should practice self-awareness. This self-awareness is crucial to understanding their internal resources, which can be leveraged to minimize parenting stress. Second, future researchers should consider developing research methods by conducting experiments. These experiments could be directed towards psychoeducation to investigate the effects of psychoeducation on agreeableness and extraversion in reducing parenting stress, among other factors.

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## **Conflict of Interest**

The researchers declare that this paper has no conflicts of interest.

## **Author Contribution**

All authors have contributed equally to the study's conceptualization, interpreting data, reviewing, and editing the manuscript.

## **Data Availability**

Data can be provided upon request to the author.

#### Declarations Ethical Statement

The study followed the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki.

#### Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all persons involved in the study.

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