

## Research Article

# Personality Traits in Iranian Single-Parent and Single-Child Adolescents: A Comparative Study

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The family impacts on the personality development. Single-parent families related to psychological well-being and mental health status of adolescences. The aim of the study was to compare personality traits between Iranian single-parent adolescents and single-child adolescents. This was an Ex-Post Facto research. The sample was 60 Iranian female adolescents (30 single-parents and 30 single-children) who were selected from the Culture, Hazrat Zahra, and Farzanegan schools at Tehran city. The instrument was the NEO Personality Inventory (NEOPI), Short form. Data were analyzed using MANOVA, univariate ANOVA, and independent t-test by the SPSS23 software. There were significant differences between two groups in the personality traits of Neuroticism (N), and Agreeableness (A) ( $p < 0.01$ ). The single-parent adolescents showed higher Neuroticism (N), and Agreeableness (A) scores than single-child adolescents. The conditions of single-parent adolescents can lead to personality problems. Considering the association between child-rearing and personality traits of adolescents, assessing other related factors with personality traits of adolescents especially in single-parent family, is recommended.

**Keywords:** Personality traits; NEO-PI; Single-parent; Single-child; Adolescents; Iran**Introduction**

Personality is a relatively stable pattern of traits, tendencies and characteristics. The Big Five personality traits are Openness (O), Conscientiousness (C), Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A), and Neuroticism (N). Openness to experiences is appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual idea, imagination and curiosity. It includes being curious versus cautious and conservative, a curiosity about and appreciation for adventure. Conscientiousness is a tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully and aim for achievement. It includes being organized and efficient versus easygoing and careless, demonstrate self-discipline and plan out things, rather than being spontaneous. Extraversion is Energy, urgency and the tendency to seek stimulation and the company of others. It focuses on how outgoing or reserved and withdrawn someone is, as well whether she or he is shy, and includes displaying positive emotions, energy, and so on. Agreeableness is a tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others. It is about how compassionate and friendly someone is, as well as how competitive and outspoken the person may be, and includes how well people cooperate with others. Neuroticism is a tendency to easily experience unpleasant emotions such as anger, anxiety, depression, vulnerability, hostility and impulsiveness. It includes how people experience such things as depression, anger, unpleasant situations, etc. Sensitivity, confidence, and security play important roles in the neuroticism trait [1,2]. Previous studies have shown personality traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Openness to experience correlated with adaptive functioning of personality [3-6]. Specific personality traits represent adaptive or maladaptive behaviors of individuals in different situations. The single parent family impacts on the personality development in adolescents [7-12].

Today, children and teens may not have one of parents in their life. In a single-guardian family, there is only one of the parents and the guardianship of child is left with another parent. Factors of single-guardian family may include death, and divorce. Also adopted children who were born without marriage of their parents together, may live in a single-guardian family [13,15]. The single-guardian children are deprived of intimate relationships of parents. They suffer from behavioral problems [16-22]. Single-child is a pervasive phenomenon in Iranian society, due to cultural and social conditions, economic problems, concerned about the costs, multi-child problems, marriage in high ages, divorce, and other reasons, the number of single-child families have increased in Iran [23,24]. Single-child is not problematic by itself, but inappropriate parenting styles may have poor consequences [25]. Single-child versus multi-child families can shape behavior and cognition of children in different ways [26]. Single-child parents, who do not change their parenting styles during adolescent stage, will cause a double burden on the adolescents that can have adverse effects on them. The aim of the study was to compare the personality traits between Iranian single-parent female adolescents and single-child adolescents.

**Methods****Participants**

This was an Ex-Post Fact research. The sample was 60 Iranian female adolescents 15-17 years old (30 single-parents and 30 single-children) who were selected from the Culture, Hazrat Zahra, and Farzanegan schools at Tehran city.

**Procedure**

The study protocol was approved by an institutional review board.

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics of variables for the sample.

Age	Single-parent		Single-child	
	F	%	F	%
15 years old	8	13.3	7	11.7
16 years old	13	21.7	13	21.7
17 years old	9	15	10	16.7
Personality traits	M	SD	M	SD
Neuroticism (N)	23.16	6.75	16.26	7.22
Extraversion (E)	26.23	5.04	29.76	5.59
Openness to experience (O)	25.86	5.01	25.80	5.11
Agreeableness (A)	29.00	5.79	26.20	4.83
Conscientiousness (C)	32.53	7.12	36.73	5.45

With reference to the mentioned schools, students who had criteria of the study were selected. The goals of study, being confidential of information were explained to them. The students provided written consent. They completed the Farsi version of the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI)-Short form. The inventory was performed in the sample individually. Data were analyzed using MANOVA, univariate ANOVA, and independent t-test by the SPSS23 software.

**Measures**

**NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI):** The NEO PI was developed by Costa and McCrae in 1985. The NEO PI examines a person’s Big Five personality traits: Openness (O), Conscientiousness (C), Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A), and Neuroticism (N). The shorter NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) has only 60 items (12 per domain). The items answered on a five-point Likert scale (0-4). The internal consistency of the NEO-FFI was 0.83 [27]. In the present study the 60-items version (NEO-FFI) was used, and the Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of the NEO-FFI were between 0.47 and 0.77, indicating moderate to high internal consistency.

**Results**

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics (percent, frequency, mean and standard deviation) of the variables for the sample. The results of  $\chi^2$  test showed that there were no significant differences between two groups in variable of age, and the groups was homogeneous ( $\chi^2=0.12$ ,

$df=1$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). The single-parent adolescents showed higher mean scores in personality traits of Neuroticism (N), and Agreeableness (A) ( $p<0.01$ ) than single-child adolescents.

For determination of normality of the data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. The obtained significant levels in personality traits of Openness ( $z=0.95$ ,  $sig=0.51$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), Conscientiousness ( $z=1.24$ ,  $sig=0.09$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), Extraversion ( $z=0.95$ ,  $sig=0.32$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), Agreeableness ( $z=1.11$ ,  $sig=0.13$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and Neuroticism ( $z=1.22$ ,  $sig=0.09$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) was greater than 0.05. As for the normality distribution of data, parametric statistical tests were used to analyze the data.

The prerequisites of normality distribution of data, the equality of variance, and the equality of matrix of co variances were confirmed. The significance levels of all tests allow the use of Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to testing the statistical significance of the mean differences in personality characteristics between the groups. There is a significant difference at least in the one of the personality characteristics as the dependent variables. The amount of this difference was (Wilk’s lambda=0.73,  $p<0.05$ ) (Table 2).

For determine of difference between the groups in each of the variables, the univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used. Table 3 shows the results of ANOVA for comparison of groups in personality traits. There was a significant difference between two groups in the personality traits of Neuroticism (N), and Agreeableness (A) ( $p<0.01$ ). The mean scores of Neuroticism (23.16,  $SD=6.75$  vs. 16.26,  $SD=7.22$ ), and Agreeableness (29,  $SD=5.79$  vs. 26.30,  $SD=4.83$ ) in the single-parent adolescents were significantly higher than single-child adolescents (23.16,  $SD=6.75$  vs.16.26,  $SD=7.22$ ). The obtained significance level of the personality traits is smaller than the Benfronni’s correction (the division of the significance level of 0.05 to 5 personality traits components). The Effect size (Eta) for personality traits of Openness was 0.01,  $p=0.96$ , for Conscientiousness was 0.10,  $p=0.015$ , for Conscientiousness was 0.10,  $p=0.015$ , for Extraversion was 0.10,  $p=0.014$ , for Agreeableness was 0.20,  $p=0.001$ , for Neuroticism was 0.20,  $p=0.001$ . That means 26% of the total variance or individual differences in personality traits was related to group differences (single-parent and single-child adolescents).

**Table 2:** Results of the multivariate tests<sup>a</sup>.

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig	Eta
						(Effect size)
<b>Intercept</b>						
Pillai's Trace	0.993	1457.102 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	54.00	0.000	0.993
Wilks' Lambda	0.007	1457.102 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	54.00	0.000	0.993
Hotelling's Trace	134.917	1457.102 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	54.00	0.000	0.993
Roy's Largest Root	134.917	1457.102 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	54.00	0.000	0.993
<b>Group</b>						
Pillai's Trace	0.264	3.881 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	54.00	0.004	0.264
Wilks' Lambda	0.736	3.881 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	54.00	0.004	0.264
Hotelling's Trace	0.359	3.881 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	54.00	0.004	0.264
Roy's Largest Root	0.359	3.881 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	54.00	0.004	0.264

a. Design: Intercept + group b. Exact statistic.

**Table 3:** Univariate ANOVA for the personality characteristics scores.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	Eta	Power
						(Effect size)	
Neuroticism (N)	714.15	1	714.15	14.6	0.001	0.2	0.96
Extraversion (E)	187.27	1	187.27	6.58	0.014	0.1	0.71
Openness to experience (O)	0.07	1	0.07	0.01	0.96	0.01	0.05
Agreeableness (A)	405.6	1	405.6	14.25	0.001	0.2	0.96
Conscientiousness (C)	264.6	1	264.6	6.53	0.015	0.1	0.71

## Discussion

The aim of the study was to compare personality characteristics in single-parent and single-child adolescents. The results showed that there were significant differences between single-parent adolescents in the personality characteristics of Neuroticism (N), and Agreeableness (A) compare to single-parent adolescents. Shah, Haider, and Halipoto [28] reported that mother single parent adolescents had significant lower scores on the personality traits of Extraversion Agreeableness, and Openness to experience; and higher scores on the Neuroticism compare to two parent adolescents.

The development of personality the child and adolescent is strongly influenced by their parents [29]. According to Carl Rogers, the lack of unconditional positive regard in some single-parent families (especially mother single-parent families) may develop personality disorder in adolescents. Single-parent adolescents cannot cope with their conditions. Sadeghi and Roshannaie [30] reported that Iranian multi-child families' adolescents had significant higher scores in hope, resiliency, and differentiation than single-child families' adolescents. The absence of one parent or both of them, have an adverse effect on their development, and predispose them to subsequent mental or behavioral disorders. Father's absence can have a direct effect (e.g. depriving a child of a male role model) and indirect (e.g. support) on the children [31]. Single-parent children and adolescents suffer more likely of economic poverty, low self-confidence, low self-esteem, low social skills, low academic achievement, and academic dropouts, worried, anxious, disappointed, depressed, aggression, antisocial behavior, delinquency, and psychosocial problems than two-parent children and adolescents [7,8].

It is possible that the experience of being abandoned or the lack of support from their parents is one of the reasons for high Neuroticism (N), and low Agreeableness (A) in adolescents. The suffering of the lack of parental support in single parent families can lead to mental health and, in turn, harm to function of adolescents. Also inadequate economic status, lack of loving relationships in the family, lack of one of parents in the family, and lack of appropriate facilities can be reasons of being Neuroticism in the adolescents with single parent families. According to the learned helplessness theory, it seems that single-parent adolescents believe that some things in life are out of their control, so they surrender to external events that can be lead to Neuroticism in these adolescents. Bidar Tabie reported that Iranian single-parent adolescents living without their grandparents had significant higher scores in the social performance dimensions (academic performance, relationships with peers, family relationships, and self-care) than adolescents living without them. Ghamari Givi, and Khoshnoodniay Chomachaei reported that Iranian two-parent

children had higher social skills and academic performance, less physical symptoms, anxiety, social dysfunction, depression and general mental disorder than children with divorced and divorcing parents. Ferdowsi found Iranian single-parent adolescents had higher significant scores on the own position subscale of Self-Differentiation Index (DSI) than two-parent adolescents. Motamedi Sharak, Ghobari Bonab, and Rabiee indicated that Iranian single-parent students had significantly more behavior problems (aggression-hyperactivity, anxiety, depression, antisocial behaviors) than two-parent students.

The study has some limitations. The project was a causal comparative study, and causal relationships between the variables were not assessed. Other factors such as social and cultural issues may impact on the results. The sample was limited to Iranian female adolescents. The phenomenon of single-parent can lead to mental health problems in adolescents. They are a high-risk group for the development of psychiatric disorders. Using of psychological and counseling services for single-parent and low-income families, is recommended. Insurance companies should be coverage these services for them. The establishment of an independent organization with financial credits in Iran that can provide economic, cultural, social, and educational support for single-parent families is suggested. Providing more knowledge about single-parent adolescents' characteristics, as well as training of appropriate parenting styles for single-parent families, is necessary. Longitudinal and prospective studies, using of qualitative, interview methods and large sample size, are recommended.

## Acknowledgement

This paper is based on a Msc thesis in clinical psychology by the senior author. We thank all of subjects who participated in the study.

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