

## Psychologically Rich Life and Personality: A Correlational Study

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Psychologists have defined a good life in either hedonic or eudemonic terms. Recent studies in this field have highlighted an overlooked aspect of the desired good life, i.e., a psychologically rich life, defined as a life filled with varied and interesting experiences that are perspective-changing. The present study explored the relationship between a psychologically rich life and personality. A sample of 150 young adults with a mean age of 26.84 years were assessed on the Psychologically Rich Life questionnaire and the Neo-Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R). Correlation and Regression analyses were applied to analyse the results. Results show that psychologically rich life correlates significantly with various personality dimensions. Further, regression analysis was applied to identify significant predictors of a psychologically rich life. The results indicated a set of personality dimensions that significantly predict psychological richness in life. The findings of the current study help in a deeper understanding of a psychologically rich life as an aspect of a good life and its personality correlates.

**Keywords:** Psychologically rich life, Personality, Psychological richness, Big five personality.

Psychological studies on well-being have traditionally focused on understanding well-being and a good life, either in hedonic or eudemonic terms. The hedonic perspective generally considers well-being in terms of life satisfaction, happiness, and positive affect (Diener, 1984; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). The eudemonic well-being perspective is often defined as contentment achieved through self-actualization and understanding life's meaning or purpose. Oishi et al. (2019) proposed that living a psychologically rich life is another aspect different from hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Many people desire a happy and meaningful life, but these two concepts overlook certain important aspects of life: variety and variation. Both a happy and meaningful life can sometimes get monotonous. A psychologically rich life (PRL) is depicted by variety, interestingness, and perspective change, whereas a happy life is described by joy, comfort and stability, and a

meaningful life is characterized by significance, purpose and coherence. Some people neither run after a happy life nor search for meaning. Oishi found PRL related to but distinct from a happy or meaningful life with distinct causes and consequences (Besser & Oishi, 2020). A PRL is characterized by "diverse interesting and perspective-changing experiences" (Oishi and Westgate, 2021).

Certain personal and situational factors are more likely to give rise to experiences of psychological richness and build up a psychologically rich life. Novel, complex, surprising, perspective-changing experiences and uncertainty are strong determinants of interest (Berlyne, 1960), and these kinds of experiences make a life full of psychological richness. As complexity rises, so does the enjoyment and pleasure, but it goes up to a certain threshold. However,

unlike pleasure, interest persists and thrives even amidst exceedingly complex scenarios Berlyne (1974). Tomkins (1962) proposed that 'interest-excitement' is fundamental to human motivation and helps maintain sustained attention. He contends that sustained interest is imperative for perception, cognition, and action, asserting that individuals would struggle to flourish without it. Moreover, he suggests that such interest occurs when individuals make sense of novel and complex situations or stimuli. Hence, enjoyable experiences are not necessarily interesting and psychologically rich, while psychologically rich experiences may not always be pleasurable and pleasant. A PRL isn't merely a collection of momentary or short-term moments that evoke psychological richness; it's the culmination of numerous such encounters over time. Therefore, Oishi and Westgate (2021) posit that a life filled with psychological richness comprises interesting experiences wherein significant changes in perspective accompany novelty and/or complexity. Besides these situational characteristics, individual traits influence a psychologically rich life. Oishi and Westgate (2021) predicted that individuals with curiosity and openness to new experiences are more inclined to navigate complex and PRL paths. Traits such as vivid fantasy, artistic sensitivity, emotional depth, adaptability, intellectual curiosity, and unconventional attitudes (McCrae, 1996) may cultivate psychological richness. Individuals with profound and intense feelings tend to have more complicated lifestyles (Larsen & Diener, 1987). Simply experiencing intense emotions and encountering complex situations is insufficient for leading a PRL; what truly matters is how individuals adapt to and make sense of these experiences. Our curiosity, willingness to embrace new experiences, and the depth of our emotional responses drive a psychologically enriched existence. The unique and varied ways in which people respond to life's events are

considered pivotal factors influencing an individual's capacity to lead a mentally fulfilling life. So, it can be proposed that novelty, curiosity, openness to experience, and emotional depth catalyse psychological richness. Individuals who are curious and open to new experiences seek out and value novel and complex experiences that may bring into their lives several perspective-changing encounters. Additionally, it is associated with increased creativity, personal growth, and self-actualization. Inquisitive, in particular, will inspire individuals to investigate a wide spectrum of preferences (Kashdan et al., 2018), which might later generate the type of viewpoint shifts contributing to psychological richness.

Similar to the diverse factors contributing to PRL, these lives also yield unique outcomes. A lifetime abundant in psychologically rich experiences is expected to foster wisdom, as a life filled with happiness leads to personal satisfaction, while a life marked by meaningful experiences contributes to societal change and advancement. As Sternberg (2000) sees it, wisdom encompasses acknowledging life's uncertainties and constraints while navigating novel and complex social environments effectively. Wisdom also includes the capacity to blend diverse viewpoints, weigh long-term consequences in making choices, and commit to personal growth and the betterment of society. Consequently, holistic thinking styles (Choi et al., 2007) and attributional complexity (Fletcher et al., 1986) tend to be associated with good social judgment (Fast, Reimer & Funder, 2008) and wisdom and thus may be linked to psychologically rich lives.

Thus, pursuing a life characterized by perspective-changing experiences and personal growth is a central aspiration for many individuals. Understanding the role of personality traits in shaping this journey towards psychological richness is essential

for theoretical advancement and practical application. Based on the research pieces of evidence and explanations given above, the current study was designed to examine the personality correlates of a PRL. Exploring how specific personality traits contribute to the experience of psychological richness can deepen our understanding of human flourishing. Identifying these predictors can help develop interventions, therapies, and personal development strategies to foster a more fulfilling life. The PRL comprises of experiences that are mentally stimulating, engaging and arousing, which at times may be pleasant or meaningful. They, at times, may neither be pleasant nor meaningful. What distinguishes and binds these experiences together as psychologically rich is the state of complex mental engagement, a wide range of intense emotions, and diverse, novel and interesting experiences that stimulate the individual. Hence, identifying personality correlates of a PRL will likely enrich the knowledge bank. Thus, the present study aims to identify personality predictors of a PRL.

### **Objectives**

1. To explore the relationship between personality and PRL.
2. To identify personality predictors of a PRL.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Personality traits would be significantly associated with a PRL.
2. Personality traits would significantly predict a PRL.

### **Method**

#### **Design and Sample**

To fulfil the study's objectives, data has been retrieved from 150 males and females of Indian nationality with an age range between 20 to 40 years (Mean = 26.84, SD = 4.593).

### **Measures Used**

*Revised Neo – Personality Inventory (NEO PI – R)* The personality was assessed using NEO PI-R, by Costa and McCrae (1992), which has 240 self-report items to examine traits related to personality. NEO PI - R provides a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of personality. It assesses the five primary domains of personality and the six facets of each domain. The five domains of personality include "Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to experience (O), Agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C)". On a five-point Likert rating scale, ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly, respondents rate the extent to which each statement describes them. The NEO-PI has been widely used in research and clinical settings to assess personality traits and understand individual differences.

*Psychologically Rich Life Questionnaire:* PRL was assessed using the PRL Questionnaire, a questionnaire developed by Oishi et al. (2019) to measure psychological richness in life. The questionnaire has 17 questions with a 7-point rating scale (1 - strongly disagree and 7 - strongly agree).

### **Procedure**

To achieve the current research's goal, respondents were approached independently. Every participant in the study received details about the purpose and aim of the research, and they received assurances that their answers would be kept personal and private. After establishing rapport with the individual participant, the scales were administered one by one starting with several questions regarding demographic information such as name, gender, age and education qualification. Instructions for each scale were provided separately. It was assured that the participants had filled each item and no blanks were left. Following that, the scales

were scored according to the manual, and the results were tabulated.

### Results and Discussion

The present research aimed to identify personality predictors of a PRL. Correlation and stepwise regression analysis were applied to analyse the data. The mean and standard deviation of the present sample on measures of personality dimensions and PRL were calculated and depicted in Table 1. A high score on neuroticism indicates that people are anxious, hostile, depressed, impulsive, insecure and vulnerable. Individuals who score high on extraversion are excitement seekers, cheerful and invigorating. A high score on openness shows that people are broad-minded, intellectually curious, and open to new experiences. A higher score on agreeableness indicates compassion, and a higher score on conscientiousness exhibits self-control, determinism, will achieve and are dependable.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis (Means and S.D. Values N: 150)

Dimensions	Mean	SD values
Neuroticism	97.233	10.660
Extraversion	105.453	12.112
Openness	104.993	11.766
Agreeableness	102.567	11.490
Conscientiousness	111.307	12.745
PRL	83.02	14.171

Table 2 depicts the correlation coefficients between the five personality traits and the PRL. Neuroticism was negatively and non-significantly correlated with PRL, i.e. ( $r = -.136$ ). Extraversion was positively correlated with PRL, i.e. ( $r = .143$ ). Openness positively and significantly found to be correlated with PRL i.e. ( $r = .288, p < .01$ ). Agreeableness was found to be positively and significantly correlated with PRL i.e. ( $r = .165, p < .05$ ). Conscientiousness significantly and positively correlated with PRL i.e. ( $r = .359, p$ ). Thus, the results of the correlation analysis depict positive associations between four personality domains (E, A, O and C) and PRL, except neuroticism, which shows a negative correlation with PRL. Oishi and his colleagues have also reported similar findings where, except neuroticism (which was negatively correlated), all other domains of personality, including openness to experience, extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, were found to be positively correlated with PRL (Oishi et al., 2019; Oishi and Westgate, 2021). Thus, these results imply that people living a PRL are generally energetic, sociable and outgoing; curious, receptive to new ideas, experiences, and perspectives; cooperative, empathetic, and compassionate towards others; reliable, dutiful, responsible, diligent and self-disciplined; emotionally stable, calm, and resilient in the face of challenges.

Table 2. Coefficients of Correlates between Personality and PRL

PRL	Five - Traits of Personality				
	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
	-.136	.143	.288**	.165*	.359**

\*\*  $p < 0.01$  (2 – tailed)

\*  $p < 0.05$  (2 – tailed)

Table 3 Personality Predictor of PRL (Stepwise Regression Analysis)

Predictors	Multiple R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	B	F
1. Conscientiousness	.359	.129	.129	.356	21.87**
2. Openness	.427	.171	.053	.282	9.61**

\*\* p < 0.01

Stepwise regression was applied to assess the contribution of the personality domains in predicting PRL. The results shown in Table 3, point out two significant personality predictors of PRL i.e. conscientiousness and openness. Together, these two predictors account for 17.1 % of the variance in PRL. Conscientiousness was a positive predictor of a PRL, accounting for 12.9% of the variance in the criterion variable. This means conscientious individuals who are generally responsible, dutiful, hard-working, diligent, goal-oriented and reliable tend to lead a PRL. Conscientiousness contributes to PRL may be because of its influence on goal achievement, effective time management, reliable relationships, self-discipline, resilience, and a sense of accomplishment. The next predictor in the regression equation is Openness to experience, which accounts for 5.3% of the variance in PRL. People who are open to experience are more likely to pursue new and diverse experiences, engage in creative pursuits, and approach challenges with curiosity and adaptability (Mount & Barrick, 1998). This personality domain encompasses traits such as imagination, creativity, intellectual curiosity, adaptability, and a willingness to engage with diverse viewpoints and novel stimuli. Individuals open to experience find happiness and meaning in exploring new ideas, cultures, and experiences, which may lead to greater adaptability and resilience in the face of challenges. Thus, such individuals tend to

lead a life full of interesting and perspective-changing experiences, characterised by diverse experiences, deeper insights, and personal growth, making their lives psychologically rich. In the present study, extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness were not found to be significantly predicting a PRL. Top of FormBottom of FormEarlier studies partly support the present findings. Oishi et al. (2019) found that openness, extraversion, and lower neuroticism significantly predicted psychologically rich life in the Indian sample from Amazon Mechanical Turk. Ya<sup>o</sup>ar, Alkan, & K<sup>u</sup>ç<sup>u</sup>kyaman, (2022), found that the personality domains of extraversion, openness to experience, responsibility and emotional stability significantly affect a PRL, but agreeableness does not affect the PRL.

#### Limitations and Conclusion

While this study offers valuable insights into the connection between personality and leading a PRL, it is important to acknowledge its constraints. The reliance on self-report measures introduces potential biases, and the study's small sample size, focusing solely on young adults in India, may restrict the generalizability of its conclusions. Despite these limitations, the findings contribute to our comprehension of psychological richness and its interplay with personality traits within the broader context of a satisfying life. The findings highlight that openness and conscientiousness significantly contribute to a PRL, suggesting the substantial role of these two personality domains in enhancing psychological richness. Thus, the present study's findings enrich the knowledge bank of a PRL by expanding our understanding of the concept and its relation with personality.

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