Personality Traits of Medical Students: A Study from Private Medical College

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ABSTRACT

Background: Medical students in any medical college are considered as most intelligent and educated people. But it is important to know the personality traits of the medical students.

Aim: To determine the frequency of personality traits among final year medical students and to determine the difference of personality traits in two genders.

Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted at Avicenna Medical College, Lahore over 2 months. A total of 144 final year medical students were included in this study and standard Big Five Inventory (BFI) was introduced to all of them. They were asked to fill the proforma having demographic details and 44 questions of BFI. It assesses the personality traits into 5 domains namely Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness. Some of the questions are scored in a reverse order as per key provided by authors. In this study all data was analyzed using SPSS version 20.

Results: A total of 93 students were included and mean age was found as 22.95±0.937 years. Most of the students 76(81.7%) were female in this study while 17 students were male. The highest mean value was found for Openness and lowest value was seen for Extroversion. Also the difference in personality domains was stratifies to look for the difference in gender. It was found that mean value for extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism were higher among females but this difference was not statistically significant.

Conclusion: We conclude that there are certain personalities which are more prevalent among medical students. So we must take this aspect also in account whenever counseling regarding career and other future planning is concerned.

Keywords: Medical students; Personality; Pakistan; Medical College

INTRODUCTION

Men and women are quite different from each other in every aspect of life, but question arises how to assess the difference and label it. There are many studies which have shown that in terms of personality traits, men are more assertive and risk-taking than women and women are more tender minded and take more anxiety of an situation in general[1,2]. This difference in both genders is a generalized entity and does exist among medical students. Regarding the cause of this difference, the personality of any person is the result of completely different bio-psycho-social model of that person and different life experiences. Also cultural variation among personality traits of both genders does exist. In a study, it was found that women in Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Poland, and Russia tended to score higher than men on scales related to the personality traits of neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. On the other side, men scored higher in assertiveness[3].

Assessing the personality of a person os a difficult task and many authors have described the tools for it. Most of the authors are agreed that personality of a person can be assessed in five traits namely extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, andneuroticism, therefore named as big five inventory (BFI)[4,5]. There are many tools to assess personality traits, most commonly being used is BFI-5. It is a validated tool and is commonly used for this purpose[7,8].

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The objective of this study was to determine the frequency of personality traits among final year medical students and to determine the difference of personality traits in two genders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional study was conducted at Avicenna Medical College, Lahore over 2 months of duration, from July, 2017 to August, 2017. A total of 144 final year medical students were included in this study and standard Big Five Inventory (BFI) was introduced to all of them. They were asked to fill the proforma having demographic details and 44 questions of BFI. Each of the 44 questions has 5 options, which are scored on a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). It assesses the personality traits into 5 domains namely Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness. Some of the questions are scored in a reverse order as per key provided by authors. In this study all data was analyzed using SPSS version 20.

RESULTS

A total of 93 students were included and mean age was found as 22.95±0.937 years. Most of the students 76(81.7%) were female in this study while 17 students were male. The mean values of the 5 personality traits are shown in table 1. The highest mean value was found for Openness and lowest value was seen for Extroversion. Also the difference in personality domains was stratifies to look for the difference in gender. It was found that mean value for extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism

were higher among females but this difference was not statistically significant. All the data is given in table 2.

Table 1: Mean values of personality traits among medical students

Personality Trait	Mean ± SD
Extroversion	24.69 ± 5.33
Agreeableness	34.39 ± 5.06
Conscientiousness	30.19 ± 5.23
Neuroticism	25.35 ± 6.10
Openness	35.25 ± 5.52

Table 2: Difference in two genders regarding the personality traits

Personality Trait	Male	Female	P-value
Extroversion	22.88 ± 4.75	25.10 ± 5.39	0.121
Agreeableness	33.35 ± 6.16	34.63 ± 4.80	0.350
Conscientiousness	31.35 ± 5.12	29.93 ± 5.25	0.315
Neuroticism	23.05 ± 5.91	25.86 ± 6.07	0.087
Openness	35.35 ± 6.38	35.23 ± 5.35	0.938

DISCUSSION

In this study, 93 participants were included. Previously some studies had been conducted on medical students which have shown a very low participation rate. One study showed a participation rate of 71.6% among final year medical students[9]. In another study, participation rate was 50%[10]. In a large cohort including final year medical students, participation rate was 40%[11]. However, in our study, it was higher probably because we had included all the students of final year sitting in the class room and our sampling technique was better in this context.

The number of female doctors and medical students is on a rise worldwide and similarly in Pakistan, female students outnumber male medical students. Probably, it is not evident in terms of practicing physicians as in our culture, trend of female doctors to do a job or practice is not much acceptable yet, but perhaps in future, it will be more endemic[2,12]. Similar picture is evident in this study, where medical students constituted almost 3/4th of the study population.

In a study, it was found that medical students score significantly higher in extraversion and agreeableness. Also those students having higher score in conscientiousness had more academicscores[13]. In another study, women, on average, had higher levels of neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness, while men were more open to experience[14]. Similar findings were found in our study, where neuroticism, extraversion and neuroticism were higher among female medical students than males, however, this difference was not statistically different. As our study has overall emphasized and replicated the results of previous studies on the topic and has shown similar results among medical students of Pakistan also, so we recommend future studies to look into factors and other social factors which may contribute to personality development.

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