



## Original Article

## College Students' Struggles with Career Decisions and Their Personality

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## ABSTRACT

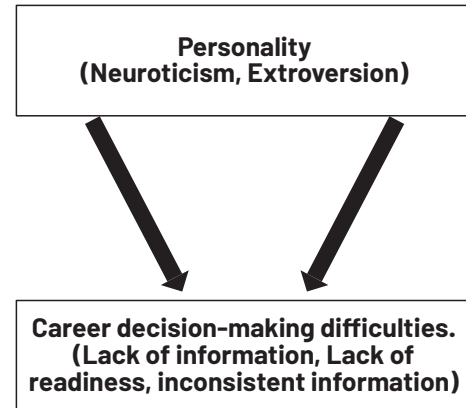
Students face challenges while selecting a career in Pakistan is very common. 99% students lack career counselling services in schools, colleges and universities. In the current study career decision-making difficulties faced by students in Peshawar was investigated when they plan to apply in a school, college and university and to evaluate what kind of assistance they need in their career choices related to their personality. **Objective:** To see how personality affect the decision-making of careers in students at high schools, colleges, and universities. **Methods:** The influence of personality traits (Extraversion and Neuroticism) on the decision-making of career difficulties was investigated using a causal-comparative study methodology. In Pakistan, 99 percent of pupils still need career guidance. As a result, three hundred and seventy-six (N=376) students were chosen from Peshawar's various schools, colleges, and universities. Two questionnaires were used to gauge the participants' responses: The career decision-making difficulties Questionnaire and Big Five Personality Inventory. **Results:** Findings suggest that most students needed help with professional decision-making and that a small percentage of students were satisfied with their selected disciplines. **Conclusions:** Students with high neuroticism and low extroversion had difficulty making professional decisions.

## INTRODUCTION

Historically, choosing a Career or profession has been seen as less stressful and more straightforward some years ago. In general, a person's career is decided mainly by following their father's footprints, so a child of a carpenter would also become a carpenter in the future, and a child of a cobbler would also learn how to become a cobbler like his father; however, the most honorable and well-off high-class people prepare their children to be upcoming pioneers. This process of young people choosing their career has changed dramatically, mainly since the industrial revolution has grown increasingly complicated and perplexing. In the twenty-first century, the numerous professional paths and many employment opportunities make this decision-making process even more challenging

[1]. Further widespread entrance of students into higher education, the large number of females arriving in the workforce, and the swing from industrial development to service-based enterprise in several developed economies have influenced how people choose their careers. In contrast, the old-style outlook of deciding on a career only once in a lifetime has become obsolete and has been replaced with the notion that choosing a career is a lifelong process [2]. Today's new generation make multiple consecutive decisions, evaluate their former professional choices, and change their behaviors and ambitions regularly. Job counseling is critical in assisting people in being much more aware of their options and making informed decisions about many disciplines and available

career opportunities that best suit their personalities. An academic atmosphere is designed to encourage and support a job choice well-suited to one's personality type. There are a variety of elements that influence one's decision to pursue a particular career path. Borchert identified personality, opportunities and environment as important factors for career decision-making. However, the most critical aspect in determining one's professional path is the individual's personality and desire to pursue a specific career path [3]. Feldman proposed that personality characteristics, professional interests, demographic position, early job experiences, familial contexts, and implications are part of professional decision challenges [4]. Personality is the unique, relatively long-lasting internal and external characteristics of a person's character that impact conduct in various settings [5]. In the big five personality models, five traits have been classified as 'wide' since they have been shown to unite numerous perspectives and domains. [6]. Neuroticism, agreeableness, openness to experience, extraversion, and conscientiousness are measurable components of personality. Investigators consistently perceive and agree about personality traits and their relevance in the professional decision-making procedure (Figure 1) [7]. Agreeing with the model of Gati, which categorizes personality characteristics, individuals with more emotional stability are predicted to face fewer issues in professional decision-making both beforehand and during the career decision-making process [8]. Studies have found adverse associations between occupational decision-making challenges [9] and extraversion and emotional stability characteristics, supporting the significance of personality traits [10]. It was found that personality relates to complications of professional decision-making independent of educational environment and age when the influence of personality on career indecision was explored with the questionnaire on Career Decision-Making Difficulties. Another study found perfectionism, more agreeableness, neuroticism, and the need for psychological inference considerably linked with emotional and personality-related professional challenges [11]. Personality qualities have been linked to challenges in making job decisions. [12].



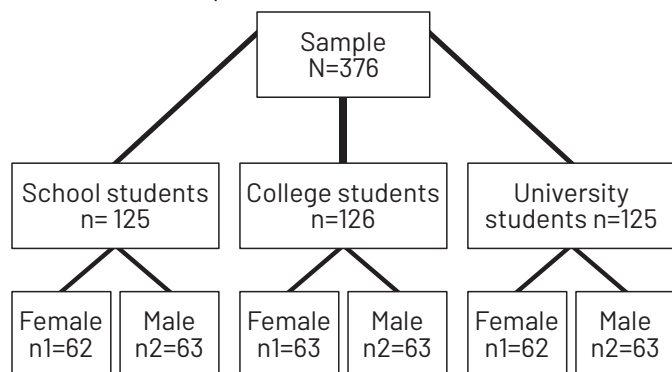
**Figure 1:** Conceptual model of the study

In Pakistan, students must go through three stages of professional decisions. Students must choose a career during Matriculation, Intermediate, and Bachelor studies. After completing eighth grade, students must choose a career route that will allow them to pursue future opportunities. They can pick either Science or Arts. Each group has various mandatory and core subjects. After matriculation, students are enrolled in colleges and typically have merely two months to select a career. Subject choices in secondary education often reflect their career path. So, it is highly encouraged to get guidance now. This allows them to carefully weigh the options of General Science, Commerce, Computer Science, Fine Art, Pre-Engineering, and Pre-Medical. Then, at the bachelor's level, career counselor assesses the student's financial situation and academic performance, recommending disciplines such as medicine, business, arts & humanities, management, engineering etc. At every step, students choose subjects that lead to a relevant career. Choosing a career is a challenging task that requires careful thinking and concentration. Many people can make such choices easily, but many others have difficulty. These concerns and issues cause hazards in decision-making, preventing accurate choices [13]. Due to a lack of competent career guidance, these issues are prevalent in Pakistan. To compensate for the lack of career counseling and decision-making skills, students rely on their friends and family members for career advice, which causes them confusion and makes them dependent on their friends and elders for career advice, which causes them to lose their ability to think for themselves. This causes students to choose the wrong professional path, and instead of being inspired by their jobs or majors, they are demotivated and lose their passion for movement. Adolescence is still in the fog of a new round of choices, which causes pupils to pick an inappropriate professional route, further demotivating them. Their inability to focus and be excited about their subject prevents them from giving their best. Counselors can help students make career choices by learning about

their challenges and helping them overcome or at least reduce them. The current study sought to depict and characterize the numerous career-related decision-making challenges, Pakistani students face. Understanding the underlying causes of issues is critical since it might determine the severity and the type of response necessary. The study sought to discover the effect of personality on challenges of professional decision-making among Peshawar students. The study also compared male and female students' professional decision-making challenges. This study also includes to analyze the influence of Neuroticism and Extroversion in students' career decision-making difficulties.

## METHODS

In this research, a causal-comparative research design was used that was questionnaire-based survey. From the heads of institutions, permission was taken and information was collected from different schools, colleges, and universities in Peshawar. The sample comprises three hundred and seventy-six participants (N=376), selected through a stratified purposeful sampling technique (Figure 2). Three strata were made based on educational level. The first strata consisted of school-level students in which only students of grade 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> were selected. The second stratum consists of college-level students and third stratum consists of university-level undergraduate (BS and Masters) students. Each stratum consists of same number of students and equal number of male and female students.



**Figure 2:** Flowchart of students selected for the study

The sheet of demographic information was used to obtain basic info about the participants. Then two scales, Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) and Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI) subscales (Neuroticism and Extraversion) were administered. Before filling the questionnaires instructions were given to the participant. They were guaranteed the confidentiality of the data. Participants were also requested to carefully read and then fill questionnaires. In the end, the respondents were appreciated for their cooperation and involvement in the study. After data collection, all the analyses were done with

the help of SPSS version-21.0.

## RESULTS

Table 1 showed number of items and Cronbach's alpha reliability of Career decision-making difficulties questionnaire (CDDQ) and Big Five Personality Inventory. It indicated that these scales were reliable.

**Table 1:** Psychometric properties of scales (N=376)

Measure	No of items	Alpha coefficient
Big Five Personality Inventory	44	.78
Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire	34	.89

Table 2 showed the frequencies and percentages of the educational level of the participants. The frequency of both Matric and University level students was 125, while the frequency for college-level students was 126. The table also indicated that 33.2% of matric level, 33.6% of intermediate level, and 33.2% of university level students participated in the research.

**Table 2:** Frequency table of Educational Level of Participants (N=376)

Educational Level	F (%)
Matric	125 (33.2)
FA/FSC	126 (33.6)
BS/B.SC/Master	125 (33.2)
Total	376 (100)

Table 3 showed One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the scale of career decision-making difficulties among students of all three groups (school, college, and university). The mean score of a school with standard deviation was  $154 \pm 43.03$ , and the mean score of a college with standard deviation was  $156.6 \pm 45.4$ , while the mean score of the university with standard deviation was  $156.6 \pm 45.8$ . The result showed no significant variance between school, college, and university students

**Table 3:** ANOVA (One way) and means standard deviations on career decision-making difficulties questionnaire of school, college, and university students (N=376)

	School	College	University		
Scale	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± S.D	F(1,294)	$\eta^2$
CDDQ	$154 \pm 43.03$	$156.2 \pm 45.4$	$156.6 \pm 45.8$	.075	.928

Table 4 indicated that the mean score of career decision-making difficulties scale with standard variation was  $155.5 \pm 42.8$  and the mean score of subscale neuroticism with standard variation was  $24.1 \pm 5.06$  while the subscale Extraversion mean score with standard variation was  $25.4 \pm 5.46$  among all three levels (School, College, and University). Results indicated a positive relationship between the neuroticism subscale and career decision-making difficulties scale ( $r=.040$ ) which showed that neurotic students would face more difficulties in their careers. Results also indicated a significant negative correlation between the Career decision-making

difficulties scale and Extraversion, which was ( $r = -.127^{**}$ ). This means that extroverts will face fewer career decision-making difficulties.

**Table 4:** Descriptive Statistics and correlation for Career Decision-Making Difficulties scale with subscale Neuroticism and subscale Extraversion (N=376)

Variables	n	M ± SD	1	2	3
Career Decision-making Difficulties	376	155.5 ± 42.8	-	-	-
Neuroticism	376	24.1 ± 5.06	.020	-	-
Extraversion	376	25.4 ± 5.4	-.127*	.400**	-

## DISCUSSION

The main objective of this research was to determine the effect of personality on career decision-making issues among students. The impact of neuroticism and extraversion on challenges of career decision-making was investigated. Furthermore, obstacles in selecting career decisions were compared among high school, college and university students. It was discovered that all three levels of students (school, college, and university) in Pakistan have difficulty selecting career decisions. Various studies show that personality strongly impacts career decision-making problems. Both the scales Career decision difficulties questionnaire (CDDQ) = .89, and Big five personality Inventory = .78) were reliable and internally consistent for the current sample, according to reliability analyses. According to the study findings, there is no substantial variance between all these three levels. (School, college, and university). Furthermore, these findings also demonstrate that students at all these three levels struggle to make career choices. The findings also show that in Pakistan, students, even at the level of master's, are perplexed about their job options, and they are confronted with obstacles and continue to struggle with career decisions. These findings are also confirmed by the fact that 99 percent of Pakistani students do not have access to career counseling and most students choose a vocation based on a family's agreement, devotion to a companion, or preoccupation with an ideal. Almost no occupation is chosen logically based on aptitude tests or other psychological measures. The results reveal that neuroticism and career decision-making difficulties have a substantial positive relationship. These findings are in line with prior studies. Students who scored high on career hesitation or were unsure about their career choice also had high levels of neuroticism [14, 15]. Neuroticism seems to be related to underperformance because the emotional constituents in the career decision-making process are involved. It was found that neuroticism is associated favorably with dependent decision-making and adversely connected with problem-solving impairments [16]. To minimize their perceived stress level, neurotic people appear to be watchful more in their job hunt as well as

impulsive in the decision-making of their career [17]. The study's findings also show a negative correlation between Career decision-making difficulties and Extraversion. These findings align with earlier research, which found that high extroversion is associated with fewer difficulties in making career selections [18]. Extraversion is essential in job development, helping the quest for information about potential careers [19]. According to Van Hooft *et al.*, extrovert individuals seek social support and are more persistent in their quest when they are having difficulty finding work [20].

## CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of the current research was to determine the impact of personality on career decision-making challenges in students. Results demonstrate that student's at high school, college, and university encounter significant challenges in making career options. As a result, there is a requirement for career counseling facilities in Peshawar for all students at all stages of school, college, and university to overcome or, at minimum, mitigate these challenges. The research findings also demonstrate that personality has a considerable impact. A high level of neuroticism has a negative impact on job decisions, whereas a high level of extraversion has a beneficial impact. The current study was conducted with limited resources, a small sample size, and a short time frame. Data were gathered by self-report questionnaires, which are susceptible to participant bias. Students from various educational levels (Matric, Intermediate, and University) were included in the study, which tainted the results and complicated the analysis. For each component, data were collected using only one specific metric (personality and career decision-making difficulties). However valid and reliable these psychometric tools may be, they cannot comprehensively and thoroughly assess these constructs.

## Authors Contribution

Conceptualization: HA

Methodology: SA, HA

Formal analysis: HM, SA

Writing-review and editing: HA, SA, HM

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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