

## Psychological Well-Being in Married Individuals: Examining Role of Conscientiousness Personality Trait

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### Abstract

This study investigates the influence of conscientiousness personality trait on psychological well-being of married individuals facing complex life issues. The attainment of psychological well-being is essential for individuals to cope and thrive during challenging times. Conscientiousness trait is known to promote commitment and a drive to achieve life goals, which can positively affect psychological well-being of married individuals. The study adopts a quantitative approach with 144 married participants (92 females and 52 males) aged 21-63 years. The primary analytical techniques use simple regression and correlation as additional analyses to examine the relationship between conscientiousness and psychological well-being, as well as the dimensions of both variables. The results show that conscientiousness has an influence on psychological well-being, and correlates with all aspects of the variable.

**Keywords:** psychological well-being, conscientiousness, married individuals

### Abstrak

Bagi individu menikah dengan problema kehidupan yang kompleks, *psychological well-being* diperlukan untuk bertahan. Trait kepribadian *conscientiousness* mendorong individu mengembangkan komitmen dan mengusahakan tujuan hidupnya, diasumsikan memiliki pengaruh terhadap *psychological well-being* individu menikah. Penelitian ini bertujuan memastikan apakah trait kepribadian *conscientiousness* berpengaruh terhadap *psychological well-being* individu menikah. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan partisipan sebanyak 144 individu menikah (92 wanita dan 52 pria) berusia 21-63 tahun. Teknik analisis utama adalah regresi sederhana dan korelasi sebagai analisis tambahan untuk melihat hubungan variabel *conscientiousness* dan *psychological well-being* serta dimensi dari kedua variabel. Hasil penelitian menemukan ada pengaruh kepribadian kepribadian *conscientiousnes* terhadap *psychological well being*, serta *trait* kepribadian *conscientiousness* berkorelasi dengan semua aspek *psychological well-being*.

**Kata Kunci:** *psychological well-being*, conscientiousness, individu menikah

### Introduction

Marital conflicts particularly between spouses disrupt harmony and lead to divorce (Musaitir, 2020). In Indonesia, the incidence of divorce has been on an upward trend. According to the Central Statistics Agency (2022), there were 447,743 cases of divorce recorded in 2021, which increased to approximately 516,334 in 2022 (Central Statistics Agency, 2022).

The increasing number of cases indicates a growing trend of unhappy marriages, which can result in poor psychological well-being for married individuals (Wilson & Oswald,

2005). This reinforces the idea that marriage can accommodate psychological well-being in individuals (Khumalo et al., 2012). The adult age group, specifically married individuals, is an interesting population to study regarding their psychological well-being, considering the complex developmental tasks faced (Ryff, 1995).

The concept of psychological well-being, as explained by Ryff and Singer (2008), consists of six dimensions, including self-acceptance, personal growth, life purpose, environmental mastery, autonomy, and positive relations with others. According to

Ryff and Singer (2006), well-being is a crucial factor in personal and social development. The importance of mental health and psychological well-being cannot be overstated. This is particularly significant, as conflicts and issues are inevitable within a marriage when it comes to married individuals.

Psychological well-being can be described as a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively (Huppert, 2009). It has a positive impact on married couples, characterized by a reduction in negative emotions such as low depressive symptoms (Wright & Brown, 2016). In marriage, having good psychological well-being can lead to marital satisfaction (Walker et al., 2013) and high-quality marriages (Brown et al., 2012; Khazeh et al., 2014).

Well-being is a universal variable influenced by various factors, such as self-esteem (Awan & Sitwat, 2014; Carmona et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2014; Fiyaz et al., 2016; Jayakrishnan et al., 2014; Urzua et al., 2018), social support (Bano & Sitwat, 2017; Ghosh et al., 2017; Li & Hsu, 2017; Pateraki & Roussi, 2013; Straiton et al., 2019; Wright & Brown, 2017; Zaleska & Basista, 2016), coping strategies (Rusu et al., 2015; Mir & Naz, 2017), and personality (Diener, 2012; Ryff, 2014). In the adult age group, personality is also seen as one of the variables with the strongest influence on psychological well-being (Kokko et al., 2013).

Regarding personality, the Big Five theory can help individuals create positive situations within the context of marriage (Igbo et al., 2015; McCrae & Costa, 1991). Donnellan et al. (2004) suggested that conscientiousness helps married individuals reduce negative interactions and attain marital satisfaction. The Big Five theory is considered a relatively stable personality framework in the adult population, especially in middle-aged adults.

Conscientiousness is one of personality trait known to correlate with various aspects of psychological well-being (Jones et al., 2015). It is characterized by the tendency of

an individuals to be organized, diligent, meticulous, achievement-oriented, and reliable (John & McCrae, 1992). Generally, individuals with conscientious personality trait have an easier recovery from negative emotions (Javaras et al., 2012) and show high levels of self-regulation, perseverance, and impulse control (Carter et al., 2015; John & McCrae, 1992). Therefore, it influences individuals in responding to high-pressure situations (Lee-Baggley et al., 2005). This is supported by study that demonstrated a negative relationship between conscientiousness and depression, negative mood, and stress (Shackelford & Besser, 2007; Li et al., 2020). Furthermore, psychological well-being can be characterized by low levels of depression and stress (Wright & Brown, 2017; Xiang et al., 2019), confirming that conscientiousness can be a predictor of the variable.

Conscientiousness assists individuals to develop coping mechanisms, especially effective problem-focused strategies, to deal with various life challenges (Bartley & Roesch, 2011; Dwan & Ownsworth, 2017; Smith et al., 2013). Boyce et al. (2016) also indicated that a wife with high conscientiousness has better marital satisfaction. This suggests that the variable is an attractive and relevant personality trait in describing psychological well-being of married individuals, considering the dynamic and challenging nature of marital life (Story & Bradbury, 2004).

A previous study examining the relationship between personality trait and psychological well-being has been conducted on adult participants (Dangi & Nagle, 2015; Gale et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2015; Kokko et al., 2013; McHugh & Lawlor, 2012; Nes et al., 2011; Oravec et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2016). Among the constellation of the Big Five personality trait, previous study has primarily examined trait of extraversion (Dangi & Nagle, 2015; Dwan & Ownsworth, 2017; Gale et al., 2013; McHugh & Lawlor, 2012). This study used conscientiousness personality trait, which was assumed to have

an influence on psychological well-being in married individuals.

### Methods

A quantitative approach with simple regression techniques was employed to investigate the impact of conscientiousness on each dimension of psychological well-being. Furthermore, correlation techniques were utilized to explore the relationship between conscientiousness and psychological well-being, as well as the dimensions of both variables. The participants were 144 married individuals aged 21-63 years ( $M = 1.37$ ,  $SD = .48$ ). The majority of the participants were female, with a total of 92 participants, while the remaining 42 participants were male.

Psychological well-being refers to a state of psychological welfare, wherein individuals can acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, continually develop themselves, establish life goals, find purpose and meaning in life, cultivate positive relationships with others, competently manage their environment under their needs, and possess the autonomy to make choices and take actions (Ryff, 1989). In this study, this variable was measured using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB) 42 Item version, developed by Ryff (1989) based on six dimensions, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. An example of item from this scale is: "I am not afraid to speak my mind, even when it goes against the majority." The options ranged from 1-5 (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) and consisted of favorable and unfavorable responses. Based on the calculation of item discrimination power, 7 items were eliminated, leaving 35 with a reliability of .939.

Individuals with trait of conscientiousness are cautious, reliable, organized, and responsible (Feist & Feist, 2008). This study measured conscientiousness personality trait using the big five personality scale, adapted linguistically and culturally by Ramdhani

(2012). An example of item from this scale is: "I am a person who finishes tasks thoroughly." The options ranged from 1-5 (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) and consisted of 6 items, with a reliability value of .818.

Before completing the questionnaire, participants were asked to voluntarily agree to participate. The data analysis technique consisted of two parts: first, correlation to examine the relationship between variables and the dimensions of the variables, and second, regression analysis to examine the influence of conscientiousness on each dimension of psychological well-being.

### Results and Discussion

The results for the correlation level presented in Table 1 show several interesting findings. Age is correlated with many aspects except for personal growth and the purpose of life.

Based on Table 1, the number of children is not correlated with any aspect. Educational level is positively correlated with several aspects such as autonomy, personal growth, positive relation, and self-acceptance. Furthermore, the age of marriage has a significant positive correlation with several aspects such as conscientiousness, and several dimensions of psychological well-being except for personal growth and purpose in life.

As shown in Table 2, conscientiousness influences all aspects of psychological well-being in married individuals. Meanwhile, Table 3 presents the results for male participants, which demonstrate similar findings. The study shows that conscientiousness exerts a significant influence on all dimensions of psychological well-being, with the strongest impact observed in the dimension of purpose in life for husbands. Similarly, Table 4 illustrates that even though the variable affects all dimensions of psychological well-being for wives, the most considerable impact is seen in the dimension of personal growth.

Based on the data analysis, the number of children does not correlate with any aspect of psychological well-being. This finding can be understood in the context that having children can be a source of happiness for parents, but it also brings a heavy responsibility of raising and educating them. Therefore, there are numerous challenges that parents encounter, including issues related to their strengths and weaknesses (Barlow et al., 2006). Psychological well-being of parents is not determined by the number of children but by the positive relationship built between parents and children (Lin & Chen, 2018).

However, the age of marriage has a significant positive correlation with several aspects, such as conscientiousness personality trait and several psychological well-being aspects except for personal growth and purpose in life. This finding indicates that conscientiousness enables individuals to hold onto their commitments and resilience in facing problems to maintain a longer age of marriage. Personal growth and purpose in life appear to be personal accomplishments that are not easily attained by every married individuals, irrespective of the duration of their marriage. Therefore, Soulsby and Bennett (2017) suggested that marriage can assist individuals in realizing their life goals and attaining personal growth.

The level of education correlates positively with several aspects, such as autonomy, personal growth, positive relation, and self-acceptance. This aspect can indeed aid individuals in enhancing their internal qualities, fostering their independence and autonomy, promoting clearer thinking, and enabling them to evolve into individuals with meaningful life goals. Moreover, it can assist individuals in accepting themselves, hence, promoting the development of positive social relationships. Several previous studies have shown that individuals with higher levels of education and better academic performance tend to have greater psychological well-being (Ahrens & Ryff, 2006; Khumalo et al., 2012; Krause, 2018).

Based on the analysis, conscientiousness is correlated with all aspects of psychological well-being. This fundamental finding provides a basis for analyzing the extent of conscientiousness in each aspect of psychological well-being, then providing a more comprehensive description. Trait influences all aspects of psychological well-being in married individuals, which is in line with the findings of Melendez et al. (2019). Dewal and Kumar (2017) suggested that the drive to uphold commitments and attain goals reinforces the determination of individuals and instills the confidence to succeed. This can help individuals attain life satisfaction and psychological well-being when they successfully achieve many of their life goals (Simsek & Koydemir, 2013).

Furthermore, the greatest influence of conscientiousness also emerges in the aspect of personal growth. This highlights that the characteristic of maintaining commitments and making an effort to sustain a healthy married life can significantly aid in their personal growth and development. Therefore, a successful marriage requires positive social relationships between the husband, wife, and their families. Positive social relationships can have a substantial impact on individuals in promoting self-reflection and personal growth (Bauer et al., 2014; Ryff, 2014; Toyama et al., 2020).

The magnitude of the influence of conscientiousness on other aspects such as environmental mastery is also worth discussing. Several studies stated that conscientiousness strongly influences environmental mastery (Anclim & Grant, 2016; Jones et al., 2015; Marrero-Quevedo et al., 2019). Individuals who can successfully adapt and assimilate into their environment are also able to effectively engage in activities. Therefore, environmental mastery plays a critical role in satisfying various aspects of psychological well-being.

Table 1  
*Correlation Matrix of All Participants*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1											
2	.86**										
3	.54**	.61**									
4	-.02	-.15	-.11								
5	.29**	.24**	.10	.09							
6	.35**	.25**	.09	.20*	.50**						
7	.24**	.26**	.05	.11	.59**	.66**					
8	.14	.08	-.01	.25**	.61**	.51**	.70**				
9	.24**	.22**	.16	.18*	.53**	.49**	.67**	.64**			
10	.02	.04	.01	.14	.57**	.40**	.65**	.75**	.60**		
11	.20*	.17*	.05	.23**	.57**	.59**	.75**	.65**	.67**	.58**	
M	34.86	104.36	1.42	4.74	22.94	9.50	20.98	26.53	26.74	20.19	24.49
SD	8.87	96.37	1.12	1.25	3.43	2.18	3.75	3.43	3.71	3.06	3.73

Description: 1: age; 2: marriage age (in months); 3: number of children; 4: education level; 5: conscientiousness; 6: autonomy; 7: environmental mastery; 8: personal growth; 9: positive relations; 10: purpose in life; 11: self-acceptance

Table 2  
*Regression of Conscientiousness Personality Trait on Psychological Well-Being Dimensions of All Participants*

Aspect	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
Autonomy	.256	.251	48.802	p < .01
Environmental mastery	.352	.348	77.243	p < .01
Personal growth	.370	.365	83.265	p < .01
Positive relation	.283	.278	55.987	p < .01
Purpose in life	.330	.326	70.060	p < .01
Self-acceptance	.320	.315	66.896	p < .01

Table 3  
*Regression of Conscientiousness Personality Trait on Psychological Well-Being Dimensions of Male Participants*

Aspect	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
Autonomy	.321	.307	23.605	p < .01
Environmental mastery	.494	.484	48.821	p < .01
Personal growth	.453	.442	41.396	p < .01
Positive relation	.408	.396	34.390	p < .01
Purpose in life	.540	.531	58.782	p < .01
Self-acceptance	.502	.492	50.340	p < .01

Table 4  
*Regression of Conscientiousness Personality Trait on Psychological Well-Being Dimensions of Female Participants*

Aspect	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	sig.
Autonomy	.218	.209	25.350	p < .01
Environmental mastery	.277	.270	34.945	p < .01
Personal growth	.313	.306	41.509	p < .01
Positive relation	.253	.244	30.753	p < .01
Purpose in life	.213	.205	24.691	p < .01
Self-acceptance	.216	.208	25.092	p < .01

A previous study suggested that individuals who possess a strong sense of focus and commitment to their life goals tend to develop resilience in the face of adversity (Wilt et al., 2017). Additionally, those with a tendency toward conscientiousness often experience greater enjoyment and happiness in the performance of daily routines (Howell et al., 2017). They often experience more fulfilling outcomes, leading to a greater sense of positive meaning and overall psychological well-being.

Conscientiousness has the greatest influence on purpose in life, which is consistent with Anglim and Grant (2016). The position of head of the household assumes a significant responsibility in guiding the direction of the family, which can be challenging for husbands lacking a clear sense of purpose. As the primary breadwinner, the husband assumes a crucial role in securing the financial well-being of the family, and this often involves exerting additional effort to increase income. Moreover, husbands can also alleviate the responsibilities of their wives by providing support for domestic activities, thereby facilitating a more equitable distribution of duties (Sapkota et al., 2013). The responsibility and commitment of individuals enable them to have aspirations to make their families happy and prosperous. These aspirations often arise in the minds of many people before starting a family (Osei-Tutu et al., 2018). Therefore, conscientiousness is crucial because it helps individuals to develop self-control and live with a future-oriented orientation (Constantini & Perugini, 2016).

It is evident that for a wife, concentrating on accomplishing tasks and fulfilling commitments in daily life helps in attaining maturity. The persistence in fulfilling the responsibilities of a homemaker, alongside other role, allows individuals to positively interpret their life journey. Unfortunately, wives often face greater role conflicts as homemakers and working women, compounded by societal and cultural demands, which can negatively impact their

psychological well-being (Ryff, 2014). Ahrens and Ryff (2006) suggested that the education level of a wife is related to high psychological well-being when managing family affairs. Education may enable individuals to perceive challenges positively, and a wife may interpret family life as an endeavor to receive love and affection, thereby feeling accepted (Oravec et al., 2020).

Committing to fulfilling these challenging role and tasks is crucial as it enables individuals to develop appropriate coping strategies, maintain their steadfastness in times of struggle, minimize conflicts, and effectively overcome the challenges of daily family life (Krok, 2014; Nes et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2013). Ultimately, individuals who positively interpret their life journey can achieve marital satisfaction and well-being with greater ease (Dezutter et al., 2013; Dogan et al., 2012).

Psychological well-being is a significant goal for married individuals, and this phenomenon is explained by the self-determination theory, according to the eudaimonia perspective (Ryan et al., 2008). The study suggests that the variable is not easily attained, hence married individuals must strive for and actively work towards. This finding implies that achieving psychological well-being is not solely reliant on experiencing positive emotions (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Furthermore, conscientiousness plays a crucial role in enhancing resilience and persistence, which can be beneficial in pursuing and achieving psychological well-being.

Ryff (1989) explained that happiness may not necessarily assist individuals in achieving psychological well-being. Many other factors can be emphasized in achieving this variable, such as the pursuit of life goals and aspirations. Life goals can be personally developed based on values adjusted with the partner to be realized together. Intrinsic motivation can strengthen these personal goals for individuals to exhibit behavior aimed at achieving their targets (Ryan et al.,

2008; Siwek et al., 2017). Therefore, psychological well-being can be fulfilled when couples have the intention and commitment to navigate household life. Harmony in the household is also a positive consequence of joint commitment that promotes the fulfillment of the variable.

Concerning the limitation, this study has not been able to show the extent to which conscientiousness personality trait plays a role in certain dimensions of psychological well-being.

### Conclusion

The study yields several conclusions that warrant consideration. Firstly, it highlights the notable role of conscientiousness in promoting psychological well-being among married individuals. Secondly, the findings substantiate the theoretical framework posited by Sun et al. (2016) that identifies conscientiousness as the primary determinant of purpose in life, environmental mastery, and personal growth. Third, the fulfillment of psychological well-being in husband and wife seems to be contextual and influenced by gender role according to norms. This is because conscientiousness has the strongest influence on psychological well-being aspects based on gender. Concerning the suggestions proposed, married individuals need to develop and maintain a commitment to a shared vision. The congruence of conscientiousness tendencies helps couples sustain their marriage (Rammstedt & Schupp, 2008). Therefore, the Office of Religious Affairs and Civil Registration officials are encouraged to contribute towards organizing workshops aimed at preparing couples for marriage. These workshops should focus on educating couples on the importance of readiness for marriage and fostering commitment toward their marriage. To facilitate further study, it may be beneficial to explore additional personality trait within the Big Five framework or alternative personality concepts. Furthermore, internal and external variables known to impact psychological

well-being of married individuals should also be considered.

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