



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

PERSONALITY FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF MENTAL HEALTH AMONG TEACHERS

KEY WORDS: Personality Factors, Mental Health, School Teachers, Big Five Personality, Nadia District

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' mental health is a critical determinant of educational quality, professional effectiveness, and student development. Despite growing recognition of the role of personality in psychological well-being, empirical evidence from localised educational contexts in India remains limited. The present study examined the predictive role of personality factors in determining the mental health of secondary and higher secondary school teachers in Nadia District, West Bengal. Grounded in the Five-Factor Model of Personality, the research explored how individual personality dimensions contribute to variations in teachers' mental health. A descriptive-correlational design was adopted, and data were collected from a representative sample of teachers using standardised psychometric instruments, namely the Big Five Inventory (BFI) to assess personality traits and the General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28) to measure mental health. Descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analyses were employed to analyse the data. The findings indicated that personality factors significantly predicted teachers' mental health, although their relative contributions varied across dimensions. Neuroticism emerged as the strongest positive predictor of psychological distress, indicating that teachers with higher emotional instability were more vulnerable to poor mental health. In contrast, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness demonstrated protective associations with psychological well-being, with conscientiousness showing the most substantial negative relationship with mental health problems. Gender-based comparisons revealed only limited differences in personality traits and mental health, suggesting that personality characteristics exert a stronger influence than demographic factors. The study underscores the importance of incorporating personality assessment into teacher well-being initiatives, professional development programmes, and psychological support services. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on teacher mental health by providing context-specific evidence from Nadia District and offer practical implications for educational policymakers, school administrators, and teacher educators seeking to strengthen teacher resilience and promote healthier educational environments.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers occupy a pivotal position in society, influencing not only students' academic achievement but also their social, emotional, and moral development. The effectiveness of teachers depends not only on their professional competence but also on their psychological well-being. In recent years, increasing workloads, administrative responsibilities, curriculum reforms, technological demands, and heightened societal expectations have exposed teachers to substantial occupational stress, making mental health a critical concern in educational research (Kyriacou, 2001; World Health Organisation [WHO], 2022). Poor mental health among teachers has been associated with reduced instructional quality, burnout, absenteeism, diminished job commitment, and adverse student outcomes (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005).

Personality factors represent enduring psychological characteristics that shape how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to occupational demands. The Five-Factor Model (FFM), comprising neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, has emerged as one of the most influential frameworks for understanding individual differences in mental health (McCrae & Costa, 2008). Empirical evidence consistently indicates that neuroticism is associated with higher psychological distress, anxiety, and depression, whereas conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness are positively related to resilience, adaptive coping, and overall psychological well-being (Kokkinos, 2007; Malouff et al., 2005). These personality traits influence how teachers manage occupational challenges and maintain emotional stability within demanding school environments.

Although international research has extensively documented the relationship between personality and mental health, relatively few studies have examined this association among school teachers in localised Indian settings, particularly in West Bengal. Nadia District presents a unique socio-cultural and educational context where teachers work under diverse

institutional and demographic conditions that may shape their psychological experiences. Investigating personality factors as predictors of mental health among teachers in this region is, therefore, both timely and necessary. The findings can help identify vulnerable personality profiles and inform targeted interventions, counselling services, and teacher development programmes to strengthen psychological well-being and enhance educational quality.

Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to examine the predictive role of personality factors in determining the mental health of secondary and higher secondary school teachers in Nadia District, West Bengal. Teachers' mental health is fundamental to maintaining effective teaching, fostering positive classroom environments, and ensuring students' academic and socio-emotional development. However, teachers are increasingly confronted with occupational stress arising from expanding professional responsibilities, administrative demands, curriculum reforms, and changing educational expectations. Since individuals differ in the way they perceive and cope with these challenges, personality traits may significantly influence their psychological well-being.

Drawing upon the Five-Factor Model of Personality, the study investigates whether the dimensions of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness significantly predict teachers' mental health. Specifically, the research seeks to identify which personality traits function as protective factors that promote psychological well-being and which traits increase susceptibility to psychological distress. Furthermore, the study explores the relative contributions of each personality dimension in explaining variations in teachers' mental health.

By focusing on school teachers in Nadia District, the study aims to generate context-specific evidence on the relationship between personality and mental health in the Indian educational setting. The findings are expected to assist

educational administrators, teacher educators, school counsellors, and policymakers in designing evidence-based interventions that promote teacher well-being. Additionally, the study seeks to provide empirical support for incorporating personality assessment into teacher recruitment, professional development programmes, counselling services, and mental health promotion initiatives. Ultimately, the research aims to contribute to the broader literature on teacher psychology by enhancing the understanding of how enduring personality characteristics influence mental health and by identifying practical strategies to foster a healthier, more resilient, and professionally effective teaching workforce.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the personality factors and mental health status of secondary and higher secondary school teachers in Nadia District.
2. To examine the relationship between personality factors and mental health among school teachers in Nadia District.
3. To determine the predictive role of personality factors (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) in explaining the mental health of school teachers in Nadia District.

Research Questions

1. What are the levels of personality factors and mental health among secondary and higher secondary school teachers in Nadia District?
2. Is there a significant relationship between personality factors and the mental health of school teachers in Nadia District?
3. To what extent do personality factors predict the mental health of secondary and higher secondary school teachers in Nadia District?

Research Hypotheses

H : There is a statistically significant relationship between personality factors and the mental health of secondary and higher secondary school teachers in Nadia District.

H : The five personality factors (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) significantly predict the mental health of secondary and higher secondary school teachers in Nadia District.

H : Neuroticism positively predicts psychological distress, whereas conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience negatively predict psychological distress among secondary and higher secondary school teachers in Nadia District.

The Relation Between Personality Factors and Mental Health of Teachers

Personality and mental health are two closely related psychological constructs that significantly influence teachers' professional effectiveness and overall well-being. Personality refers to the relatively stable patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that distinguish individuals and determine how they respond to environmental demands (McCrae & Costa, 2008). The Five-Factor Model (FFM) conceptualises personality through five broad dimensions: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. These traits shape teachers' coping strategies, interpersonal relationships, emotional regulation, and resilience in educational settings.

Mental health, according to the World Health Organisation (2022), is a state of well-being in which individuals realise their abilities, effectively cope with normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute to their communities. Among teachers, sound mental health is associated with effective classroom management, professional commitment, job satisfaction, and positive student outcomes, whereas poor

mental health often results in stress, burnout, absenteeism, and reduced teaching effectiveness (Kyriacou, 2001).

Research consistently demonstrates that personality factors are significant predictors of mental health. Neuroticism is positively associated with anxiety, depression, and psychological distress, while conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness are linked with greater resilience, emotional stability, and psychological well-being (Malouff et al., 2005). Teachers possessing adaptive personality traits are generally better equipped to manage occupational stress and maintain positive mental health despite workplace challenges. Therefore, understanding the relationship between personality factors and teachers' mental health provides valuable insights for developing preventive interventions, counselling programmes, and professional development initiatives that promote teacher well-being and educational effectiveness.

Review of Allied Literature

Recent research has consistently identified personality as a significant psychological determinant of teachers' mental health and well-being. The Five-Factor Model (FFM) has become the dominant theoretical framework for explaining how stable personality traits influence individuals' responses to occupational stress and psychological challenges. Among the five dimensions, neuroticism has repeatedly emerged as the strongest predictor of poor mental health, whereas conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness are generally associated with better psychological adjustment and resilience (McCrae & Costa, 2008; Malouff et al., 2005).

A recent empirical study by Espinoza-Díaz et al. (2023) demonstrated that teachers' psychological well-being is significantly influenced by personality traits, burnout, and the psychosocial work climate. Using multiple regression analysis, the researchers found that personality contributed substantially to predicting teachers' well-being, suggesting that emotionally stable and conscientious teachers adapt more effectively to occupational demands. These findings reinforce the importance of personality as a protective factor against work-related psychological distress.

A comprehensive meta-analysis by Zhou et al. (2024), synthesising evidence from 173 studies involving nearly 90,000 teachers, further confirmed that personality characteristics play a crucial role in teacher well-being. The study identified neuroticism as one of the strongest negative predictors of teacher well-being, whereas positive psychological resources and job competencies enhanced well-being and occupational commitment. The authors concluded that personality should be considered when designing interventions to improve teachers' mental health and retention.

Complementing these findings, Ozturk et al. (2024) reviewed contemporary research on teacher well-being and observed that psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct influenced by both individual characteristics and workplace conditions. Their review emphasised the need to adopt holistic approaches that integrate personality, emotional resources, organisational support, and the work environment to better understand teachers' mental health.

Research also indicates that mental health promotion among teachers can be strengthened through evidence-based interventions. A systematic review and meta-analysis by Carroll et al. (2023) found that psychological intervention programmes significantly reduced stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout while improving teachers' overall well-being. The authors argued that preventive mental health programmes should incorporate individual psychological characteristics, including personality, to maximise their effectiveness.

Despite the growing international evidence, studies examining personality as a predictor of teachers' mental health in India remain relatively limited, particularly at the district level. Most Indian investigations have focused on teacher stress, burnout, or job satisfaction rather than examining the predictive influence of the Big Five personality dimensions on mental health. Consequently, there is a clear need for context-specific research among school teachers in Nadia District, West Bengal. The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating how personality factors predict teachers' mental health, thereby contributing empirical evidence that may inform teacher education, counselling services, and mental health promotion initiatives.

Methodology

The present study employed a descriptive survey design within a correlational framework to investigate the predictive role of personality factors in the mental health of school teachers in Nadia District, West Bengal. This approach was considered appropriate because it facilitates the examination of relationships among naturally occurring variables and enables the prediction of one variable from another without experimental manipulation.

The independent variables comprised the five dimensions of personality—Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience—while mental health served as the dependent variable. The study sought to determine the extent to which these personality traits predict teachers' mental health.

The sample consisted of 516 secondary and higher secondary school teachers (344 males and 172 females) drawn from 30 government, government-aided, and government-sponsored Bengali-medium schools across 15 educational blocks of Nadia District. A multiphase stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure that the sample adequately represented the target population with respect to gender and school characteristics.

Data were collected using two standardised psychometric instruments. Personality traits were assessed through the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI), which measures the five major personality dimensions, whereas mental health was assessed using the General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28), a widely used instrument that evaluates somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction, and severe depression. Both instruments possess well-established reliability and validity and are widely accepted in psychological and educational research.

Before data collection, permission was obtained from the heads of the selected schools. The researcher personally visited each institution, explained the study's purpose, and obtained informed consent from participants. Teachers completed the questionnaires during scheduled sessions following the standardised instructions provided with each instrument. The completed questionnaires were screened for completeness, coded, and entered for statistical analysis to examine the predictive relationship between personality factors and mental health.

RESULTS:

Personality Factors Examined

The study assessed personality using the Big Five Inventory (BFI), which measures five broad personality dimensions:

- Extraversion – sociability, optimism, and enthusiasm.
- Agreeableness – cooperation, empathy, and interpersonal warmth.
- Conscientiousness – responsibility, self-discipline, and organisation.
- Neuroticism – emotional instability, anxiety, and vulnerability to stress.
- Openness to Experience – curiosity, creativity, and willingness to embrace new ideas.

The descriptive analysis revealed that teachers generally possessed high levels of Extraversion ($M = 3.09$), Agreeableness ($M = 3.68$), Conscientiousness ($M = 3.89$), and Openness ($M = 3.45$), whereas Neuroticism was comparatively low ($M = 2.46$), indicating an overall balanced personality profile.

Mental Health Status of Teachers

Mental health was assessed using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). The findings indicated that the participating teachers generally enjoyed good mental health. The overall mean mental health score was 1.93 ($SD = 0.35$), while the sub-dimensions—Somatic Symptoms ($M = 1.93$), Anxiety/Insomnia ($M = 1.88$), Social Dysfunction ($M = 2.33$), and Severe Depression ($M = 1.59$)—also reflected favourable levels of psychological well-being. These results suggest that, as a group, teachers in Nadia District demonstrated healthy psychological functioning.

Relationship Between Personality Factors and Mental Health

The core objective of the study was to determine whether personality traits predict teachers' mental health. Stepwise multiple regression analysis confirmed that personality factors significantly influenced mental health outcomes.

For the overall sample, Neuroticism and Conscientiousness emerged as statistically significant predictors. Neuroticism showed a positive association with psychological distress ($\beta = 0.33$), indicating that emotionally unstable teachers were more likely to experience poorer mental health. Conversely, Conscientiousness ($\beta = -0.25$) and Job Satisfaction ($\beta = -0.10$) demonstrated protective effects, suggesting that organised, responsible, and professionally satisfied teachers reported better mental health. Together, these variables explained 28% of the variance in mental health ($R^2 = 0.28$).

Separate analyses by gender revealed similar trends. Among male teachers, Neuroticism and Conscientiousness jointly explained 26% of the variance in mental health ($R^2 = 0.26$). Higher Neuroticism was associated with poorer mental health, whereas higher Conscientiousness was associated with better mental health.

Among female teachers, Neuroticism and Conscientiousness again emerged as significant predictors, accounting for 31% of the variance in mental health ($R^2 = 0.31$). Neuroticism remained the strongest positive predictor of psychological distress, while Conscientiousness contributed positively to psychological well-being.

The comparative analyses demonstrated that male and female teachers did not differ significantly in overall mental health or personality traits. Although females recorded slightly higher mean scores on Agreeableness and Conscientiousness, and males scored marginally higher on Extraversion and Openness, none of these differences reached statistical significance.

DISCUSSION

The present study demonstrates that personality factors are significant predictors of the mental health of secondary and higher secondary school teachers in Nadia District. The findings revealed that the participating teachers generally exhibited good mental health, characterised by low levels of somatic symptoms, anxiety, social dysfunction, and severe depression. Additionally, the teachers reported favourable personality profiles, with high levels of conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness, alongside comparatively low neuroticism. The multiple regression analysis further established that neuroticism, conscientiousness, and job satisfaction significantly predicted mental health, with the final model explaining 28% of the variance. Specifically, neuroticism emerged as a positive predictor of

psychological distress, whereas conscientiousness and job satisfaction functioned as protective factors. These findings indicate that emotionally stable, organised, and professionally satisfied teachers are more likely to maintain better psychological well-being.

The results are consistent with the Five-Factor Theory of Personality, which posits that enduring personality characteristics influence individuals' emotional regulation, coping strategies, and responses to stressful situations (McCrae & Costa, 2008). The strong predictive role of neuroticism observed in the present study corroborates the meta-analysis by Malouff et al. (2005), which concluded that individuals with higher neuroticism are more vulnerable to anxiety, depression, and other psychological disorders. Likewise, the protective effect of conscientiousness aligns with previous research indicating that conscientious individuals possess stronger self-regulation, problem-solving skills, and adaptive coping mechanisms that promote mental well-being.

The findings are also supported by recent teacher-focused research. Espinoza-Díaz et al. (2023) reported that personality traits significantly influence teachers' psychological well-being, with emotionally stable and conscientious teachers demonstrating greater resilience against occupational stress. Similarly, Zhou et al. (2024) identified neuroticism as one of the strongest negative predictors of teacher well-being, while positive personality characteristics enhanced occupational adjustment and psychological health. The absence of significant gender differences in personality traits and mental health further suggests that psychological characteristics, rather than gender, are more influential determinants of teachers' well-being.

Overall, the study highlights the practical value of integrating personality assessment into teacher recruitment, professional development, counselling, and mental health promotion programmes. Strengthening emotional resilience and fostering adaptive personality characteristics may contribute to healthier teachers, improved instructional effectiveness, and more supportive school environments.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that personality factors are significant predictors of the mental health of secondary and higher secondary school teachers in Nadia District. Among the Big Five traits, neuroticism emerged as a risk factor for psychological distress, whereas conscientiousness demonstrated a protective influence on mental well-being. Teachers generally exhibited balanced personality profiles and good mental health, with no significant gender differences. These findings underscore the importance of promoting psychological well-being through personality-informed interventions, supportive school environments, and professional development programmes, thereby contributing to a healthier, more resilient, and effective teaching workforce.

Future Research

Future research should examine the relationship between personality factors and teachers' mental health using longitudinal and mixed-methods designs to better understand changes over time and the underlying psychological processes. Comparative studies across different districts, states, and educational settings would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Researchers may also investigate the mediating or moderating roles of variables such as resilience, emotional intelligence, coping strategies, organisational support, and work-life balance. Furthermore, intervention-based studies evaluating the effectiveness of personality-informed counselling, stress management programmes, and mental health promotion initiatives would provide valuable evidence for strengthening teacher well-being and educational outcomes.

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