



## Personalities and Perceptions: A Cultural Exploration of Favorites in Pakistan

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### Abstract

The current study is unique because it seeks to explore the perceived characteristics of favorite personalities from the perspective of adults. To date, no study has delved into the realm of perceived personalities within the cultural context of Pakistan. The study consists of 47 participants, and the collected data underwent thematic analysis using QDA Miner Lite software to identify major themes. The overall trustworthiness of the present study is established by ensuring factors proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Throughout the process, research ethics were diligently maintained as required. Two prominent themes emerged from the analysis: "integrity of character" and "inner strength" both of which were perceived as defining characteristics of the favorite personality by the participants. The intriguing findings of this study hold significance for both parties involved: those recognizing the personality and those whose personality is being recognized. Limitations, implications and future recommendations are also given.

**Keywords:** Personality, Perceptions, Favorite, Traits, Pakistan

### Introduction

Research on personality constitutes one of the most commonly pursued areas of interest in the field of psychology. While a plethora of studies examining various dimensions of personality and their associations exist, it remains valuable to uncover the shared beliefs of individuals within specific regions. This endeavor facilitates a deeper comprehension of the cultural underpinnings of this construct. By discerning the facets of personality that are prominently recognized during the identification process, a more comprehensive insight is gained. The term "personality" finds its origins in the Latin word 'persona' (as cited in Samuels et al., 1986). The history of personality spans across numerous years and has remained a captivating field of interest within psychology. Personality encompasses temperament, character, and traits, each with varying degrees and extremes that range from dominance to submissiveness (Gillette, 2022). The concepts like perceived characteristics of a favorite personality intersects with literature on personality traits, social influence, and consumer/educational behavior in Pakistan. While none of the provided references directly studies "favorite personality" per se, many works offer closely related constructs (e.g., personality traits and their effects on attitudes, intentions, and behaviors; perceived social influence; brand/influencer perceptions; and technology adoption)

that can be integrated to build a rigorous background and research framework for studying how Pakistanis perceive and respond to favored personalities (celebrities, influencers, or role models) in education, marketing, and technology contexts. Across the cited works, trait theory and five-factor personality models repeatedly emerge as robust predictors of attitudes and intentions, especially when moderated by perceived social support, norms, or contextual factors. This provides a theoretical basis for examining how central or salient personality characteristics of a “favorite personality” may shape observers’ attitudes, trust, and behavioral intentions toward brands, technologies, or educational choices in Pakistan (Farrukh et al., 2017; Hussain, 2018; Mahmood et al., 2023; Rehan et al., 2021; Rehman & Rasli, 2016; Soomro et al., 2022). Trait theory and the Big Five are repeatedly described as foundational to understanding how individuals’ characteristics shape their perceptions and behaviors. Allport’s distinction between central (cardinal) and secondary traits, and subsequent trait-based formulations, underpin research that links personality to technology adoption, trust, and entrepreneurial intent in Pakistan (Mahmood et al., 2022). This provides a basis for treating a “favorite personality” as a salient referent whose perceived traits may guide an observer’s own traits-as-influences in judgments and actions. Kramer and Gosling (2022) affirm that valuable insights can be gleaned through personality measurements, and a comprehensive understanding of personality enables enhanced predictability of behaviors. In recent years, a significant portion of personality assessments has adopted quantitative methodologies to evaluate behaviors and outcomes. An array of personality traits, each linked to numerous other characteristics, forms the fabric of this research landscape. Beyond the researcher's enthusiasm, experts advocate for the exploration of such subjects. For instance, Quirin et al. (2020) urge future researchers to delve into the dynamics of human personality. Similarly, Ashton (2023) encourages personality researchers to classify personality traits into comprehensive categories, termed major dimensions or factors, which would facilitate more effective personality measurements. Additionally, scholars propose investigating individual variations in personality and responses to life events (Jayawickreme et al., 2020; Jayawickreme, 2022). Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory explains how cultural values such as collectivism versus individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, long-term orientation, and indulgence/restraint shape human perceptions and behaviors (Hofstede, 2001). In Pakistan’s collectivist and high power-distance culture, the perception of “favorites” such as teachers, leaders, or celebrities is often framed through family honor, respect for authority, and social conformity rather than purely individual preference. These perceptions are strongly tied to cultural norms, where admiration is influenced by religion, family values, nationalism, and collective ideals. This highlights how universal personality traits interact with localized cultural contexts to shape the selection of favorites in Pakistan, with many individuals favoring political leaders, teachers, or national heroes due to societal values of collectivism and authority, even when personal personality traits may differ (Hofstede, 2001).

Personality undergoes development throughout an individual's lifespan, from birth to advanced age, with multiple definitions attributed to this construct. Personality entails the tendency by which an individual respond to and engages with others (Hossain, 2023). Robbins and Judge (2019) define personality as the quantifiable attributes exhibited by an individual. Britannica (2002) characterizes personality as a distinctive amalgamation of perspectives, emotions, and behaviors. Long (2011), on the other hand, identifies personality as enduring traits that distinguish individuals and form the foundation for their actions. McAdams (2015) adds that personality represents a unique array within the broader spectrum of human nature. Despite the individual differences arising from age, gender, qualifications, caste, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic backgrounds, individuals attach significant importance to personality traits. These traits are enduring patterns of an individual's thoughts, emotions, and actions (Allport, 1937). While the concept of the stable nature of personality traits is revised (Haehner, 2023), the

notion that traits are subject to change throughout the lifespan has gained prominence (Bleidorn et al., 2021; Bleidorn et al., 2022). Understanding personality necessitates attention to various facets of an individual's daily life. Traditionally, personality assessment relies on standardized scientific tools like tests and questionnaires, with the objective of identifying distinct patterns of behavior and thought among individuals (Mosca et al., 2023). According to Sarkar (2020), personality echoes through behaviors and attitudes toward others, while numerous factors contributing to personality include inheritance, family background, culture, environment, mentality, and conduct. Sarkar further emphasizes that effective communication plays a paramount role in shaping one's personality. Recent literature exploring personalities and perceptions within the cultural context of Pakistan highlights several key themes. Studies show that personality traits such as conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness are linked to religious ideology and life satisfaction, with notable differences between Muslim and Christian women; for example, Christian women report higher extraversion and life satisfaction, while Muslim women show higher agreeableness and public religious practice (Butt et al., 2023). However, religiosity itself does not directly contribute to life satisfaction in either group, suggesting that cultural and religious backgrounds shape personality and perceptions in nuanced ways (Butt et al., 2023). Research on gendered perceptions in rural Punjab reveals that younger women face significant familial and community pressures but aspire to economic independence, indicating a generational shift in attitudes toward gender roles and social status (Farooq, 2020). Broader cultural perceptions also influence behaviors such as seeking psychological help, where barriers include lack of faith in treatment, religious fatalism, and fear of social stigma, underscoring the impact of cultural and religious beliefs on mental health attitudes (Husain, 2019). Additionally, technological platforms like Pakistan Explorer are being developed to personalize cultural exploration, using advanced recommendation algorithms to enhance user engagement and cross-cultural understanding (Sana & Paguigan, 2024). Overall, the literature emphasizes the complex interplay between personality, religiosity, gender, and cultural perceptions in shaping individual and collective experiences in Pakistan (Sana & Paguigan, 2024; Farooq, 2020; Butt et al., 2023; Husain, 2019). The objective of the current study is to explore common patterns in the comprehension of characteristics associated with favorite personalities perceived in Pakistan.

## **Method**

### **Participant's Characteristics**

The research participants consisted of parents whose children were enrolled in a class titled "Theories of Personality," which was offered to third-year students pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Applied Psychology. The total class size comprised 54 students, and the number of collected responses amounted to 47.

### **Research Design and Sampling**

In this cross-sectional, qualitative approach, a purposive sampling method was employed to gather information from the parents of the participants. This involved using a semi-structured, face-to-face survey.

### **Data Collection**

The course instructor assigned all students in the class to pose two interview questions to each of their parents sequentially. Subsequently, students collected the data, which was then submitted to the researcher in three formats: audio recordings, transcripts in Urdu, and translated transcripts in English.

## Data Analysis

The finalized transcripts underwent further analysis using QDA Miner Lite, a qualitative software tool. Codes were generated, followed by categorization, and ultimately, themes within the categories were identified. Throughout the research process, the identified themes, codes, and categories were continuously adjusted and refined.

## Procedure

Prior to developing the research concept, an exhaustive literature review was undertaken to shape the research problem and objectives. Interview questions were formulated in alignment with the research query. After elucidating the research's purpose, participants were presented with two interview questions by their daughters. Before posing the questions, participants were informed about the audio recording of the interviews. The recorded interviews were subsequently transcribed and translated into English for subsequent data analysis. The raw data, devoid of student and parent identities, was submitted to the course instructor. As the researcher, the course instructor verified all audio recordings, transcriptions, and English translations for each interview. In select instances, students, who were responsible for data collection, were engaged to seek additional clarity. This iterative process was imperative to maintain transparency. While the comprehensive nature of the data presented challenges due to its volume, it ultimately yielded diverse and multifaceted final findings. The overall trustworthiness of the current study is grounded in the dimensions of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability, as delineated by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Stringently observed in this study are extended involvement, thorough descriptions of participants, the involvement of an external auditor, data refinement, audio recordings and transcriptions of participants, and impartiality.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were conscientiously upheld throughout the course of the study. Students were fully apprised of the research's purpose prior to their involvement in assignments. Participation by parents was voluntary; their informed consent and anonymity were both assured, alongside adherence to other ethical standards as necessitated.

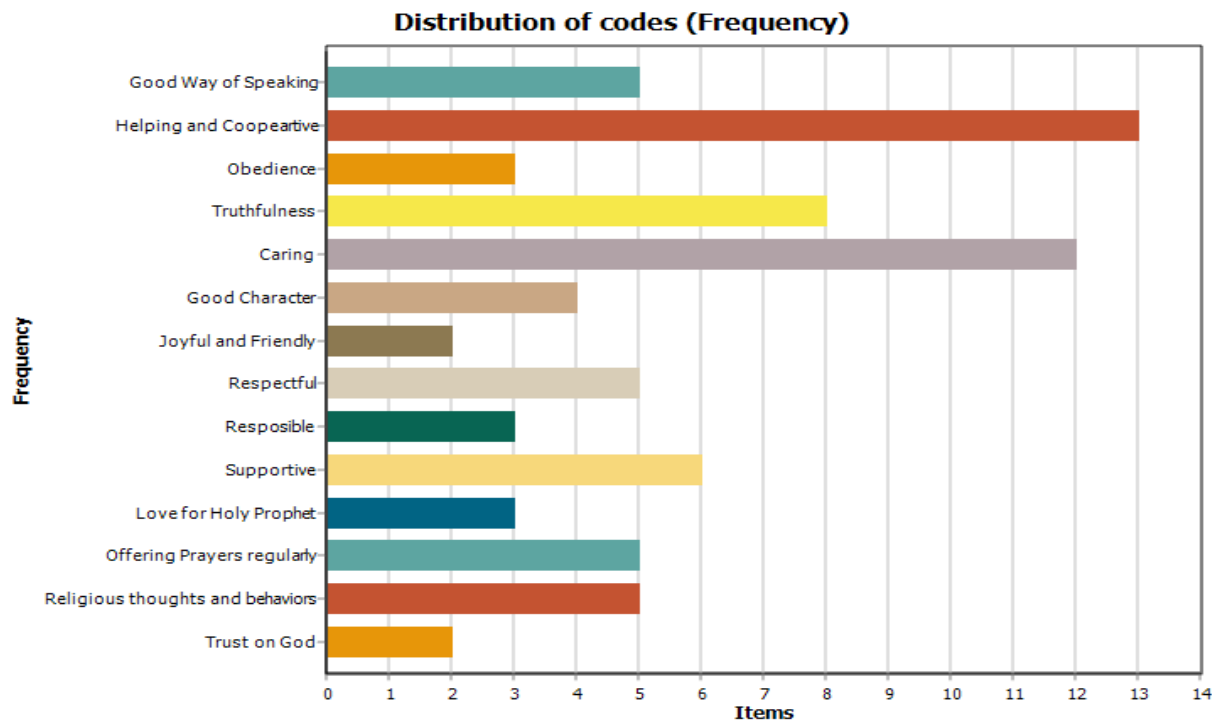
## Findings

Considering objective of the study in mind, research question was generated as "What are the perceived characteristics of one's favorite personality?" This question was phrased as, "What characteristics do you like/liked in your favorite personality?" The comprehensive findings of the participants' responses are presented in Table 1, derived from a careful analysis.

**Table 1** *Favorite Personality Traits Perceived by the People of Pakistan*

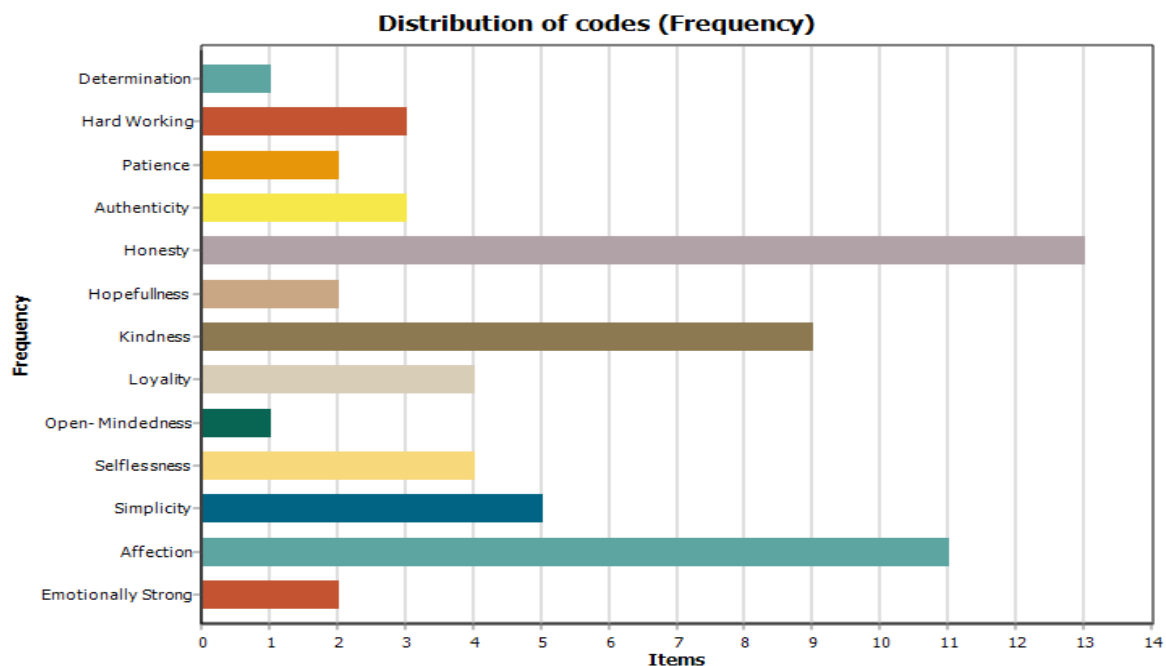
Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes
Integrity of Character	Behaviors	Good Way of Speaking, Helping and Cooperativeness, Obedience, Truthfulness
	Nature	Caring, Supportive, Joyful and Friendly, Responsible, Respectfulness
	Religiousness	Religious Thoughts and Behaviors, Offering Prayers Regularly, Love for Holy Prophet, Trust on God
Inner Strength	Attitudes	Authenticity, Honesty, Simplicity, Selflessness, Open-Mindedness, Loyalty, Kindness, Hopefulness
	Emotions	Affection, Emotional Stability
	Aspirations	Hard Work, Determination, Patience

Two identified themes; Integrity of character; and Inner Strength, are based on many categories that represents initials codes identified from significant information received from participants. Figure 1 and Figure 2 represents the frequency wise display of the codes of theme 1 and theme 2.



**Figure 1**

Integrity of Character and Sub-Themes in Perceived Favorite Personality Traits



**Figure 2**

Inner Strength and Sub-Themes in Perceived Favorite Personality Traits



**Figure 3**

Overall Summary of Favorite Personality Traits Perceived by People of Pakistan

This word cloud is generated from the responses provided by the participants in relation to the initial research question. The size of each word corresponds to the frequency of its occurrence, indicating that the term "helping and cooperative" emerges as the most favored characteristics among the participants' favorite personality traits.

## Discussion

The present study aims to investigate the perceived attributes of individuals' preferred personalities, as viewed through the lens of adults. Table 1 is constructed upon the outcomes of the research question, "What are the perceived characteristics of one's favorite personality?" This table encompasses the perceived traits of favored personalities, as perceived by adults. Participants were specifically prompted to elaborate on the traits exhibited by individuals they regarded as their favorites in terms of personality. The responses gathered from participants encapsulated the qualities they admired most in their preferred personalities. Notably, the personalities under consideration were individuals with whom participants had direct, tangible interactions, rather than being historical, religious, political, or media figures.

Two primary dimensions of characteristics emerged from the participants' responses: "Integrity of Character" and "Inner Strength."

### 1. Integrity of Character

Integrity of Character emerges as the primary major theme identified from the participants' responses. This overarching theme is rooted in the inherent nature and behavior of the personalities under consideration. Within this dimension, three sub-themes come to light: "Behaviors," "Nature," and "Religiousness."

#### *Behaviors*

This sub-theme embodies several codes encompassing positive modes of communication, helpfulness and cooperativeness, obedience, and truthfulness. These codes collectively constitute a group of perceived characteristics as reported by participants. Of particular note are the introverted individuals within the general populace who cultivate a culture of obedience, particularly towards those in positions of authority, alongside well-established social structures (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004). Of significance, the behavior most frequently admired, with a count of 13, is "helping and cooperative," showcased in the personality deemed ideal by participants. Additionally, truthfulness is cited by a substantial number of participants, totaling eight. The present study's recognition of good communication as a desirable trait aligns harmoniously with Sarkar's (2020) assertions. Sarkar advocates for the enhancement of communication skills,

especially verbal ones, as he contends that effective articulation is an art essential for visibility. Similar findings are underscored by Rachamalla and Hans (2022), emphasizing the significance of politeness and appropriate language in character evaluation.

### ***Nature***

The second sub-theme, "Nature," encapsulates the integrity of character by enumerating factors closely tied to the personalities under consideration. Codes within this sub-theme include caring (with the highest count of 12), supportive (second highest count of six), joyful and friendly, responsible, and respectfulness. The notable role of respectfulness towards others, as well as a joyful and amiable disposition, is deemed pivotal in comprehending personality traits, echoing the findings of Rachamalla and Hans (2022). For a more comprehensive breakdown, refer to Figure 1.

### ***Religiousness***

A significant number of participants recognize religiosity as a favorite trait in personalities they hold dear, suggesting that the perceived favoritism towards specific individuals may stem from their religiosity. Religiousness is further articulated through traits such as religious thoughts and behaviors, regular prayer offerings, reverence for the Holy Prophet (PBUH), and unwavering faith in God. These attributes of character are distinctively aligned with the cognitive aspect of the participant.

## **2. Inner Strength**

Inner Strength forms the second major theme, constituting one of the two main themes derived from the research question. This theme predominantly revolves around cognitive processes, delineating the perceived cognitive attributes that participants most admire in personalities. This overarching theme comprises three sub-themes: "Attitudes," "Emotions," and "Aspirations."

### ***Attitudes***

This sub-theme aggregates diverse viewpoints under the umbrella of attitudes, differentiating them from the other sub-themes within inner strength. These viewpoints encompass authenticity, honesty, simplicity, selflessness, open-mindedness, loyalty, kindness, and hopefulness. The importance of providing relevant and concise answers in the context of personality identification, as emphasized by Kapur (2022), finds alignment with the concepts of authenticity and simplicity within the current study.

Notably, "honesty" emerges as a frequently cited virtue in participants' favorite personalities, displaying parity with the "helping and cooperative" trait within the "Integrity of Character" dimension, each garnering 13 mentions. Another frequently mentioned attitude is "kindness," highlighted by nine participants.

### ***Emotions***

Personality exerts influence across all facets of life, including strategies for emotional regulation, especially negative emotions (Amini, 2023). This mental landscape comprises the emotional dimension of participants' favorite personalities, encapsulating affection and emotional stability. "Affection," mentioned by 11 participants, stands as the second highest count. Ueda and Yoshikawa (2022) contend that favorable characteristics in individuals manifest through joyful facial expressions. Furthermore, Hall et al. (2005) posit that expressions of happiness correlate with perceived trustworthiness, akin to how other emotions predict varied traits. The remaining aspects of inner strength, along with their frequency counts, are depicted in Figure 2.

### ***Aspirations***

Aspirations are recognized as an inner strength, grouping fragments of information that reflect ambition, determination, and patience—traits participants deem instrumental in liking someone's personality. This sentiment aligns with the findings of Rachamalla and Hans (2022), which highlight the role of goal achievement as a significant facet in personality understanding.

## Conclusion

It is evident that a diversity of perceptions pervades when identifying the reasons or characteristics underpinning favorite personality traits. The extensive range of findings elucidates the traits deemed most desirable within our cultural context. These insights hold relevance for both parties the personality recognizer and the recognized personality.

## Implications of the Study

The findings gleaned from this study contribute in a distinctive and intriguing manner to the realm of academic research. Theoretical implications reverberate within the ambit of personality psychology courses, extending to cross-cultural psychology. From a practical perspective, the implications resonate particularly in political spheres, wherein politicians aspire to embody appealing personalities in pursuit of public votes. The personality traits deemed most desirable in this study could serve as a blueprint for such individuals. Additionally, marriage bureaus, focusing on client personality profiles, stand to benefit from these insights. Clients could refine their profiles to align with cultural preferences, thereby enhancing their compatibility. Lastly, clinical counselors and psychologists, aiding clients in navigating personality-related matters, can draw practical insights from this study's findings.

## Limitations of the Study

It is important to note that this study's scope was confined to exploring the perceived characteristics of favored personalities. The intent was to engage parents of students enrolled in a personality psychology course. Data collection targeted parents to mitigate bias.

## Recommendations for Future Studies

This study opens doors to several intriguing avenues for future research. It is recommended that researchers explore the findings of this study across different cultural contexts; with special emphasis on examining the most frequently reported ideas in greater depth.

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