
A Comparison of Personality Traits of Chartered Accountancy Students and Chartered Accountancy Professionals

Khadija Amin Bhatti¹, Easha Shahid^{2*}**Abstract**

The current study used cross-sectional design as it aimed to compare the personality traits of Chartered Accountancy (CA) Students and Chartered Accountancy Professionals. The objective of this study was to look for any differences that may have appeared in the personality of CA students as they became professionals. A sample of 255 participants was taken (CA Students=154 and CA Professionals=101) from the age range of 18-70. The data was collected through snowball sampling technique using Big Five Inventory-44, a likert type questionnaire. The data was then manually entered in SPSS Version 20 for statistical analysis. Independent samples *t*-test was applied for comparing the personality traits of CA students and CA professionals. The results showed that there was a significant mean difference found on extraversion between Chartered Accountancy (CA) Students and Chartered Accountancy Professionals. CA professionals had a significantly higher score on extraversion than CA Students. Furthermore, there was a significant difference between CA Students and CA Professionals on the neuroticism. The CA Students scored high in comparison to CA professionals on the personality trait of neuroticism. Moreover, there was a significant difference between CA Students and CA professionals on conscientiousness. The CA professionals scored higher than CA Students on conscientiousness. There was no significant difference found between the scores of CA professionals and CA students on the scales of agreeableness and openness to experience. These findings have clear implications for Chartered Accountancy training programs and can contribute to further research.

Keywords: Chartered Accountancy Professionals, Chartered Accountancy Students, Pakistan, Personality Traits

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Introduction

Chartered Accountancy (CA) in Pakistan, offers job opportunities in accounting, finance, auditing, and taxation, supervised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan. Progressing through four levels is

necessary for qualification. Levels 1 and 2 require studying and passing exams, while in level 3, individuals begin Articleship alongside their studies. Upon clearing level 4, individuals attain CA qualification. The personality traits of Chartered Accountancy (CA) students and professionals in Pakistan remain relatively understudied, despite the promising career prospects within the field (Tabani's School of Accountancy, 2022). Students dedicate considerable time and effort to their studies, requiring discipline and conscientiousness for success. Additionally, CA professionals must display extraversion, openness to training, and staying updated with industry advancements for success. Meanwhile, Personality Psychology examines the distinct thought patterns,

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behaviors, and emotional tendencies that distinguish individuals (Cherry, 2023). The Big Five Personality Model, encompassing conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience, extraversion, and neuroticism, works as a framework for assessing personality traits (Cherry, 2023). Furthermore, personality traits offer insights into individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Diener & Lucas, 2023).

While some theories, like Cattell's Trait Theory, assert stability in personality traits (Cherry, 2023), others, such as Skinner and Watson's Behavioral Theory, suggest that personalities evolve over time through conditioning as well as interactions with the environment (Cherry, 2023). Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory also supports this view proposing that personalities develop through observation and cognition (Walters, n.d.). Research suggests that personality traits can either remain stable or go through changes throughout life, influenced by multiple factors like family, culture, societal norms, occupation, and education (Soto et al., 2011; Srivastava et al., 2003). However, there is no conclusive age at which personality stabilizes (Srivastava et al., 2003).

In Pakistan, research in social science is limited due to a lack of institutions and funding. Zardari (2014) proposes fostering research culture at the educational level to address this issue, highlighting a lack of focus on the "big five" personality traits in Pakistan.

Therefore, this research aims to study the difference between personality traits of CA students and CA professionals as their roles change. This study categorizes CA Students as those in levels 1 and 2, while CA Professionals include individuals in levels 3 and 4, as well as CA qualified personnel.

Literature Review

This study investigated the personality traits of Chartered Accountancy (CA) students and Chartered Accountancy professionals using

the BFI-44 scale. It aimed to identify any variations in personality attributes as individuals changed roles from being CA students to CA professionals. Research shows that students undergo significant transitions in personality as they change roles and become professionals (Hoff et al., 2021). Smith and Pilling (2008) mentioned the difficulties students face as they enter the workforce, such as adapting to new environments and bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Various studies emphasize the importance of personality traits in academic and professional success. Fitria (2021) found that extroverted students performed better in vocabulary learning. In another study, Wilmot et al. (2019) showed that extraversion was positively related with factors like dedication and confidence in overcoming obstacles at workplace. Moreover, Lindahl (2023) concluded through his study that conscientiousness is associated with research output, highlighting the importance of diligence in academia and professions (Harper, 2022; Kumaravelu, 2016; Oriarewo et al., 2018). While, personality traits contribute to success at workplace, they also differ across individuals belonging to different professions.

The personality traits of professionals from various fields have been compared with one-another in multiple studies. Lounsbury et al. (2009) found that business majors scored higher on conscientiousness and extraversion but lower on openness, neuroticism, and agreeableness as compared to non-business majors. Similarly, researchers found low levels of openness in accounting graduates (Lounsbury et al., 2009).

Moreover, the difference between the personalities of students and professionals have also been studied for different job sectors. Cordina et al. (2010) and Hall et al. (2013) observed high agreeableness and openness among pharmacy students as

compared to pharmacists. Furthermore, Reeve (1980) noted low openness to experience among medical professionals, while another research found high neuroticism among medical students (Cordina et al., 2010; Hall et al., 2013; Reeve, 1980). Research on managers and entrepreneurs disclosed distinct personality profiles associated with leadership roles. Lounsbury et al. (2016) observed high scores across major personality traits among managers, while Zhao and Seibert (2016) found entrepreneurs showed high openness, extraversion, and conscientiousness but low agreeableness and neuroticism (Lounsbury et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, studies on students in different disciplines revealed diverse personality profiles. Kumar (2018) observed high neuroticism and low extraversion and conscientiousness in engineering students, opposing to Van der Molen et al., (2007) findings of high extraversion and conscientiousness among engineers (Crawford et al., 2013; Khan, 2006; Kumar, 2018; Van der Molen et al., 2007).

In conclusion, the study of personality traits of CA students and professionals using the BFI-44 scale aimed to find out any differences between the two groups. It utilized a wide range of literature to contextualize the significance of personality traits in academic and professional settings, emphasizing their influence on success and performance.

Rationale

The transition from student to professional life often involves changes in personality due to increased responsibilities and social expectations. Despite extensive research on personality development, little is known about how this transition affects individuals in high-pressure fields like Chartered Accountancy. Given the demanding nature of CA training and work, this study aimed to explore whether personality traits differ

between CA students and professionals. Understanding these differences can help improve training approaches, support services, and career development in the accounting profession.

Hypotheses

H1: There is significant difference between CA professionals and CA students on the scores of 'Extraversion'.

H2: There is significant difference between CA professionals and CA students on the scores of 'Openness to Experience'.

H3: There is significant difference between CA professionals and CA students on the scores of 'Neuroticism'.

H4: There is significant difference between CA professionals and CA students on the scores of 'Agreeableness'.

H5: There is significant difference between CA professionals and CA students on the scores of 'Conscientiousness'.

Method

Research Design

The study was quantitative and involved a comparison between personality traits of two groups at a single point in time. The study was cross-sectional research.

Sample

The participants were recruited through non-probability sampling technique i.e. snowball sampling. The total sample size was of 255 individuals (CA Students=154, CA Professionals= 101). The sample size was calculated using G*Power analysis to ensure adequate statistical power for detecting medium effect sizes at a significance level of $\alpha = .05$. The age range of the sample was chosen to be from 18-70 as the sample includes both the students and professionals. CA Students and CA Professionals were requested to fill in the questionnaire. They were then further requested to send the questionnaire to their fellow CA students or CA colleagues that they work with, therefore, carrying the chain forward and allowing the snowball technique to be utilized in

recruiting the participants. Moreover, both the genders participated in the study.

Table 1
Participants Demographics (N=255)

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Male	156	61.2
Female	99	38.8
Chartered Accountancy Students	154	60.8
Chartered Accountancy Professionals	101	39.2

Table 1 shows that the gender of Chartered Accountancy (CA) Students and Professionals was 156 males (61.2%) and 99 females (38.8%). It also indicates the frequency and percentages of the Chartered

Accountancy (CA) Students and Professionals who were a part of the study. The sample consisted of 154 CA students (60.4%) and 101 CA Professionals (39.6%).

Table 2
Age of the Participants (N=255)

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age (years)	18	67	23.49	7.30

Table 2 represents the age (in years) of the 255 participants of the study. The minimum age was 18 years while the maximum age reported was 67. The mean and standard

deviation of the age was ($M=23.49$, $SD=7.30$).

Measures

Big Five Inventory

To measure the personality traits, the Big Five Inventory by John et al. (1991) was used. The scale included 44 short item questions which measured all the five dimensions of personality traits. The responses were to be given on a Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 indicated strongly disagree and 5 meant strongly agree. Each trait on the scale has a .80 Cronbach alpha value approximately (Husain et al., 2025). The test is present within the public domain for usage so no permission from the author was required to be obtained.

Informed Consent & Demographic Form

Along with the personality test, an informed consent form and a demographics form was

also provided to the participants to fill. The demographics form included the age, gender and a check box to report if the participant was a Chartered Accountancy Student or a Chartered Accountancy Professional.

Procedure

After the approval of Ethical Review Committee and Institutional Review Board, the data collection was started. The questionnaire had 3 sections. The first section was of the informed consent section which provided information regarding the research being performed i.e. the research topic, its objectives, ethical considerations. Then a short description about the researcher along with the supervisor was given including the email of the researcher if there were any queries that needed to be clarified. The next

section included all the demographics questions for the participant to answer and in the last section the Big Five Inventory was included. Afterwards, the questionnaires were printed and the researcher went to private Chartered Accountancy (CA) institutions and Chartered Accountancy companies in order to get the questionnaires filled. They were then requested to fill in the form. The record of the answers was then manually added onto SPSS version 20 software and then analyses were run.

Statistical Analysis

The research involved looking at the difference between scores of two groups: Chartered Accountancy Students and Chartered Accountancy Professionals on BFI-44. So, independent samples t-test was used for this research. Moreover, the statistical analysis was performed through SPSS version 20.

Ethical Considerations

The research was designed while keeping in mind the ethical considerations. No information of the participants was received in terms of their name, contact details, thus, their anonymity was maintained. Moreover, section 1 informed the participants about their ethical rights i.e. right to voluntary participation and right to withdraw There was

no deception involved as the participants were informed of the purpose of the research. Lastly, the research did not have any potential risks involved.

Results

The main objective of conducting this study was to explore and compare the personality traits of Chartered Accountancy (CA) Students and Chartered Accountancy Professionals. The variables taken for this study were personality traits (extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, agreeableness and neuroticism), CA Students and CA Professionals. The assessment tool used in the study was “Big Five Inventory” while to get the desired results Independent Samples t-test was performed. This chapter will describe in further detail the methods of the study that have been used to test the corresponding hypotheses.

Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test

Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test was performed to measure the internal consistency of all the items in the questionnaire as well as for the items that constituted each personality type (extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, neuroticism and conscientiousness).

Table 3
Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test Results (N=255)

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach’s Alpha
BFI-44	44	.61
Extraversion	8	.61
Openness to experience	10	.46
Neuroticism	8	.74
Agreeableness	9	.67
Conscientiousness	9	.67

According to Table 3, BFI-44 and extraversion had a Cronbach alpha value of .61 which showed acceptable internal consistency. Meanwhile, neuroticism had a Cronbach alpha value of .74 and

agreeableness and conscientiousness had a Cronbach alpha value of .67 which specified satisfactory internal reliability. Lastly, openness to experience had a low internal consistency because of the Cronbach alpha

value of .46. Normality test was carried out to determine the normal distribution of data for Big Five Factors: extraversion, openness to experience, neuroticism, agreeableness

and conscientiousness and the data was normally distributed. Hence, the assumption that data is normally distributed was fulfilled.

Table 4

t test for Comparison between CA Students and CA Professionals ($N=255$)

Variables	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Extraversion	-2.01	242	.045	.27
Openness to experience	1.64	228.72	.102	.23
Neuroticism	3.25	239	.001	.41
Agreeableness	0.49	243	.621	.07
Conscientiousness	-2.72	238	.007	.36

The Table 4 showed that there was a significant mean difference on extraversion between Chartered Accountancy (CA) Students and Chartered Accountancy Professionals $t(242) = 2.01, p < .05$. Findings revealed that CA professionals had a higher score ($M = 3.37, SD = .60$) on extraversion than CA Students ($M = 3.20, SD = .64$). Thus, the first hypothesis was found correct as the analysis did show a significant difference between the two groups on extraversion personality trait.

Moving on, the table also highlights that for openness to experience, the difference between the means of CA Students and CA Professionals wasn't significant $t(228.72) = 1.64, p > .05$. Therefore, the second hypothesis was proven incorrect as the analysis didn't show a significant difference between the two groups on the openness to experience personality trait.

Furthermore, for neuroticism, the table represents that there was a significant difference between CA Students and CA Professionals $t(239) = 3.25, p < .05$. The CA Students scored high ($M = 3.04, SD = .83$) in comparison to CA Professionals ($M = 2.74,$

$SD = 0.61$) on neuroticism personality trait. So, the third hypothesis was found correct as the analysis did show a significant difference between the two groups on the neuroticism trait.

According to the Table 4, for agreeableness there isn't a significant difference between the two groups $t(243) = .49, p > .05$. Hence, the fourth hypothesis was proven incorrect as the independent samples *t*-test results highlighted that there wasn't a significant difference on the agreeableness personality trait between CA Students and CA Professionals.

Lastly, the table represents that there was a significant difference between CA Students and CA Professionals on the conscientiousness trait $t(238) = -2.72, p < .05$. The CA Professionals scored higher ($M = 3.72, SD = 0.58$) than CA Students ($M = 3.50, SD = 0.62$). So, the fifth hypothesis was found correct as the analysis did show a significant difference between the two groups on the conscientiousness personality trait.

Discussion

The research aimed to compare the personality traits of Chartered Accountancy

(CA) Students and CA Professionals, while focusing on the Big Five traits: extraversion, openness to experience, neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

Results from independent samples t-test supported hypotheses for extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness while negated the hypotheses for openness to experience and agreeableness.

The studies done by Van Kuijk and Paresi (2020) and Albawwat et al., (2021) found similar traits in professionals from other fields, including high conscientiousness and extraversion and low neuroticism. Moreover, Holt et al. (2017) found low extraversion and conscientiousness and high neuroticism among accounting students, aligning with this study's findings. And Van der Molen et al. (2007) and Kumar (2018) reported similar traits in engineers and engineering students. Extraversion is related to positive workplace behaviors such as ambition and effective challenge-taking (Wilmot et al., 2019). The results of this study show that extraversion scores tend to improve in CA professionals. The reasons for this may be that as professionals, these individuals are expected to socialize more to meet job requirements. Another reason may be that CA professionals grow more confident over time and may subsequently find it easier to network with others around them. Overall, this change is likely to be helpful for CA professionals, both for their professional and personal lives.

Moreover, Conscientiousness correlates with better work attendance, organization, and overall productivity (Harper, 2022). The scores of Conscientiousness possibly improve from students to professionals due to the transition of individuals from teenage to twenties and thirties. Aging itself may have contributed to development of stronger feelings of self-discipline and self-accountability. Moreover, the requirement to fulfill professional ethics in order to sustain and thrive in a job, may be a significant motivator behind conscientiousness.

Additionally, CA professionals' low score on neuroticism may be an indicator of emotional stability achieved as a result of professional

and familial stability that comes with a stable job. Lower scores on neuroticism may also be a result of stable identity that individuals form as they age and take on satisfactory new roles.

On the other hand, insignificant differences between the scores on agreeableness and openness to experience show that these two traits remain unaffected during professional transition. It may be because agreeableness is a trait that is developed through long-term socialization processes, such as early family environment and cultural influences, rather than short-term role changes. Similarly, openness to experience is often linked to stable cognitive styles and personal interests, which may not significantly shift simply due to entering a professional role. Therefore, while traits like extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism may adapt in response to changing responsibilities and environments, agreeableness and openness may remain relatively stable across such transitions.

While existing research compares student and professional traits, further studies are needed for clarity. This would increase understanding of characteristic personality traits in students and professionals.

Implications

This research will be helpful for different types of stakeholders. Chartered Accountancy (CA) Students can take note of the personality traits that CA Professionals exhibit and they can then start to work on themselves in order to bring a change in their personalities that will benefit them in the future while they are looking for a job. Moreover, HR managers can use this research as a framework for hiring CA Professionals. So, they will be able to recruit those whose personality traits would complement their skills and credentials, therefore, enrolling the ones that will yield the greatest benefit to the company. Furthermore, counselling psychologists can utilize this study in order to

guide those students who come to them for counselling regarding choosing the CA stream. The counseling psychologist can let them know what traits the CA field requires and whether it is suitable for them with respect to the existing personality traits that they have. Lastly, researchers can use this research for further studies of CA professionals.

Limitations and Recommendations

One of the limitations of this study was that it cannot be generalized to other students or professions as the sample was only Chartered Accountancy (CA) Students and CA Professionals. Also, since the data was collected from CA Students and CA Professionals based in Lahore (Pakistan), the data cannot be generalized to the whole country or even province. It is recommended to carry further research for CA professionals in other cities of Pakistan too so that the results can be generalized across the country.

Ethics Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the APA Ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Contribution of Authors

Khadija Amin Bhatti: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Easha Shahid: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the authors.

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Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [E.S.] upon the reasonable request.

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