

PERSONALITY TRAITS OF PAULINE IN “EVERYTHING EVERYTHING” NOVEL

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Abstract

Personality has been described as being an individual's characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling and acting across a wide range of situations. It affects how we make decisions, solve problems, handle conflict and cope with stress. This research aims to investigate the character, Pauline Furukawa Whittier, in the novel “Everything Everything” by Nicola Yoon. Pauline is a loving mother but was blinded by the trauma that she got from losing her husband and son. This affects her action in treating her only daughter, Maddy. The Big Five Personality from McRae & Costa (1992) is used to analyze personality traits. The researcher also employed a qualitative research method in collecting the data. The result revealed that Pauline is described as a woman who has neuroticism and conscientiousness. These two personalities are dominant due to Pauline’s traumatic experience that made her really need to be so protective to look after her daughter even by manipulating her own daughter.

Keywords: *Personality traits, conflict, literature, Pauline*

INTRODUCTION

Every human being is born with a distinctive and unique character from one individual to another, either in terms of behavior or personality. This individual characteristic or often known as personality represents those characteristics of a person that account for a consistent pattern of feeling, thinking, and behaving (Pervin & John as cited in Dornyei, 2005) and personality is also one of the human unique factors (Feist and Feist, 2008). Allport (as cited in Nicholson, 2000) also thinks that each individual’s personality is different from others and unique. According to Briley and Tucker-Drob (2014), these differences exist due to genetic and environmental factors.

According to Ryckman (2008), personality can be defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influenced his or her cognition, motivations and behaviors in various situations. Mishel (1968) defines personality as the pattern of individual behavior that is manifested and then practiced in everyday life. Personality can be seen from individual traits such as ways of thinking, behavior reaction, emotional response and interaction.

Nowadays, many researchers believe that there are five core personality traits known as The Big Five Personality by McRae & Costa (1992). Big Five Personality is a five-dimensional personality tendency called OCEAN -Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism-

Openness refers to the degree to which one is imaginative, creative, curious and broad-minded. Individuals with a huge amount of Openness would be open with their experiences, and able to describe and tell their inner experiences to others (Cervone & Pervin, 2012). This individual tends to be active, creative, innovative, original, have a wide range of interests, and has a great curiosity about everything.

Conscientiousness involves the extent to which one is well-organized, responsible, punctual, achievement-oriented and dependable. This type highlights the behavior someone does in achieving their goal (Cervone & Pervin, 2012).

Extraversion reflects the degree to which one is energetic, social, talkative, and gregarious. Extraversion commonly known as extrovert is an attitude related to interpersonal interactions (Cervone & Pervin, 2012). Measure the number and intensity of interpersonal interactions, level of activity, and need for stimulation and capacity for excitement.

Agreeableness reflects the extent to which one is warm, caring, supportive, cooperative and gets along well with others. This is an attitude related to friendliness. It is related to what one person does with another person.

Neuroticism means the degree to which one is worried, anxious, impulsive, and insecure. Neuroticism distinguishes emotional balance or emotional stability against negative feelings such as anxiety, nervousness, sadness, emotional insecurity, sentimental, temperamental and depression (Cervone & Pervin, 2012). Additionally, neuroticism identifies individual susceptibility to psychological pressure, unrealistic ideas, excessive desire or drive, and failure to provide appropriate responses.

Table 1. The Big Five Factors are (recreated from John & Srivastava, 1999)

| Big Five Dimensions | Facet | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Openness | Ideas Fantasy Aesthetic | Actions Feeling Values |
| Conscientiousness | Competence Order Dutifulness | Achievement striving Self-discipline Deliberation |
| Extraversion | Gregariousness Assertiveness Activity | Excitement-seeking Positive Emotions Warmth |
| Agreeableness | Trust Straightforwardness Altruism | Compliance Modesty Tender-mindedness |
| Neuroticism | Anxiety Angry hostility Depression | Self-consciousness Impulsiveness Vulnerability |

These factors above eventually became known as the “Big Five” (Goldberg, 1981), a title chosen not to reflect their intrinsic greatness but to emphasize that each of these factors is extremely broad. Thus, the Big Five structure does not imply that personality differences can be reduced to only five traits. Rather, these five dimensions represent personality at the broadest level of abstraction, and each dimension summarizes a large number of distinct, more specific personality characteristics.

“Everything Everything” by Nicola Yoon, is introduced to readers about a mother named Pauline Whittier and her daughter, Maddy. Pauline is a single parent due to her husband and son had died in an accident. Since then, Pauline has become so protective of her daughter. Having been traumatized by her loss, Pauline treated her daughter by locking her inside the house. She also created a fake diagnosis of SCID for Maddy to forbid her from leaving the house.

Studies about “Everything Everything” novel by Nicola Yoon has been performed in many pieces of research. More precisely there are some previous studies that had been conducted by researchers in analyzing the personality trait of the characters. First, (Siahaan & Wulan, 2020) conducted research on the teenage relationship of Maddy, Pauline’s daughter. Another newest study on this novel was carried out by (Talumepa, Rorintulus & Lolowang, 2022) who revealed the bravery of the main character, Maddy.

While those two studies focus on the main character, Maddy, the writer finds something unique in the personality of Pauline, Maddy’s mother. With the big-five theory by McRae & Costa (1992), how would Pauline’s personality be represented between those five dimensions and how it is visible in her daily feeling, thinking and behaving towards her daughter is the main gap of this research.

METHOD

This study applied the qualitative method. According to Sahu (2013), qualitative is an approach that aims to explore a phenomenon by understanding the behavior of individuals or groups. The example of qualitative research is the reason why a certain group of people in a particular area prefer a particular type of tea. A qualitative method has been used in anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and almost all fields of social science of inquiry, including applied linguistics (Croker, 2009). In addition, the researcher uses library research since the researcher uses the document to be analyzed in the form of a novel.

This research approach uses personality traits by McCrae & Costa (1992) who emphasized the five dimensions of personality tendencies -Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism- which we can shorten into OCEAN. Each category has a tendency towards certain personalities that help the researcher easier to analyze the data.

The source of the data in this study is taken from the novel "Everything Everything" by Nicola Yoon. A mother's superfluous action in this novel attracts a lot of attention from communities in society. It shows that a mother could do anything for her children including lying to her because of her own anxiety about losing another family member.

The method of supplying data is by referring to the reading technique with the advanced technique of note-taking. Sudaryanto (2016) states that the stage of data, namely taking notes, selecting and removing unnecessary data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Personality Traits of Pauline Whittier

After researching, reading, understanding, and analyzing the novel "Everything, Everything", the writer found Pauline Furukawa Whittier's personality traits related to the character. Two personalities are dominant between the five dimensions theory by McCrae & Costa. These personalities reflect in her way of feeling, thinking and behaving toward her daughter, which would be explained in detail in this section.

1. Neuroticism

According to the theory of McCrae & Costa (1992), this personality trait is characterized by sadness, low self-esteem, moodiness, temperamental, worry, self-pitying, self-consciousness, emotional, pessimism, vulnerability, depression, and emotional instability. An individual high in this trait tend to experience mood swings, anxiety, irritability, and sadness. In the novel *Everything, Everything*, Pauline experiences many of these personality traits due to anxiety, depression, sadness, and emotional instability, which is described by her behavior in caring for her daughter, Madeline Furukawa Whittier or as she is often called Madeline.

According to Madeline, she only lived in a specific room made by Pauline, and not just anyone could visit her. In McCrae and Costa's (1992) theory, Pauline's attitude, which limits her daughter's activity, can be categorized as a personality trait of neuroticism since she is always worried about her daughter. We can see it in the following fragment of the story:

In my white room, against my white walls.... There's no one else here except my mother, and my nurse, Carla, who spends all time watching me breathe. I rarely have visitors, and so there's no one to lend my books to. (p.1-2)

From the fragmented story above, we can see that Pauline is trying to ban Madeline from social contact with other people by making this reason as the main problem:

According to my mom, I almost died as an infant. And so, I stay on SCID row. I don't leave my house, have not left my house in seventeen years. (p.3)

Pauline's fear of Madeline's disease makes her overprotective of her only daughter. Another piece of evidence that illustrates Pauline's anxiety in caring for Madeline is when Madeline tells us about the

condition of the food that she must eat every day when they are going to have a Friday Night Dinner with Carla, Madeline's nurse. All the food that Madeline was about to eat was taken very seriously by Pauline. As explained in McRae & Costa's theory, Pauline's actions can be categorized as a personality trait of neuroticism because Pauline has a fear of her child interacting with other people and new things that can make her child sick.

Of course, we have to be careful with the menu because of my allergies, but my mom always makes her version of a cassoulet.... The version that my mom cooks for me contains only white beans cooked in chicken broth. p.26)

From the story above, we can see how worried Pauline is about other substances that can interfere with Madeline's health. She even immediately checked her daughter's temperature when she found Madeline didn't have an appetite after asking about Madeline's recent change in attitude.

"Not hungry?" my mom asks a few minutes later. She presses the back of her hand against my forehead. (p.27)

Not only that, Pauline's anxiety continued as the doorbell rang several times. It intrigues Madeline, but Pauline asks her to stay in her chair.

"Stay here," she says to me (p.27)

In the fragment above, we can see that Pauline's anxiety arises whenever someone else comes to her house. It also makes it impossible for just anyone to enter the house without her permission. Her demeanor sometimes makes Madeline wonder what it's like to be outside and interact with other people, one of whom is their new neighbor. Carla even described Pauline's anxiety toward others who wanted to come by, forbidding Madeline to see who was ringing the doorbell for fear that Madeline's illness would relapse if she met other people. We can see in this fragment of the story:

"Your mother said to stay here." (p.28)

Pauline's emotional instability comes back when she refuses a Bundt cake given by their new neighbor, Olly, who came with her sister, Kara, without letting the cake touch her hands and surprise them. Kara didn't even hesitate to say that Pauline was a rude person.

*"I'm sorry, but I can't accept this."
There's a moment of shocked silence.
"So, you want us to take it back?" Olly asks disbelievingly.
"Well, that's rude," Kara says. She sounds angry and resigned, as though she'd expected disappointment. (p.29)*

Even though Pauline knew she was being rude, she still felt guilty and apologized to them as depicted in the story fragment below:

"I'm so sorry," my mom says again. "It's complicated. I'm really very sorry because this is so sweet of you and your mom. Please thank her for me." (p.29)

But that attitude did not last long. Pauline's fears and anxieties resurfaced when Olly asked Madeline's whereabouts as Madeline described in:

"Is your daughter home?" Olly asks quite loudly, before she can close the door.

“I’m so sorry, but she can’t. Welcome to the neighborhood, and thank you again.” The front door closes and I step back to wait for my mom. (p.29)

From the fragments above, we can see that Pauline experiences mood swings so fast. She even forgets her guilt and seems irritable if other people want to approach her daughter. It strengthens the evidence that Pauline can be said to have neuroticism, as found in McCrae and Costa's (1992) personality traits theory which described: that people who are high in this trait tend to experience mood swings, anxiety, irritability, and sadness.

Another evidence that Pauline is experiencing emotional instability is when she feels guilty and is haunted by the fear of Madeline after refusing Olly and Kara's visit two weeks ago. Pauline finally relented by bringing in Madeline's favorite architecture tutor, Mr. Waterman, as an apology to his daughter. But this attitude raises questions for Madeline because she is not used to receiving guests except Carla. She tells us that it is not easy to enter her house because Pauline is always worried about Madeline's health condition. As she explains in the following fragment:

Having a visitor is a big deal because they have to agree to a medical background check and a thorough physical... It’s a pain to come see me (p.58)

Even though Pauline's neuroticism, her daughter thought visiting her must be very painful. Pauline is afraid of losing her child to a severe combined immunodeficiency disease, making her very strict and limiting Madeline's interaction with the outside world. It clearly proves that Pauline has a high level of neuroticism as stated in *Personality in adulthood, second edition, A five-factor theory perspective*, by McCrae and Costa (1992).

From all the statements above, the researcher concludes that Pauline's neuroticism can cause Madeline to experience the same neuroticism. Even Pauline's neuroticism can give rise to another personality trait that makes her appear manipulative, namely the attitude of someone with a low level of Agreeableness. Thus, researchers argue that neuroticism can cause other personality traits to appear in a person, as Pauline experiences throughout the novel *Everything, Everything*, and that attitude is harmful to a person's mental health.

1. Conscientiousness

As described in the big five theory by McCrae and Costa (1992), standard features of this dimension include high levels of attention, excellent impulse control, and goal-directed behavior. Highly conscientious people tend to be organized and pay attention to detail. They make plans, think about how their behavior affects others, and pay attention to deadlines.

In the novel “Everything, Everything”, Pauline is described as a character who pays attention to detail, is very organized, persevering, punctual, and a hard-working person. It was made clear by her profession as a doctor. Besides that, she is a doctor for her only daughter.

Pauline's attention to detail and organized behavior began with her taking Carla's place to check on her only daughter's health while she was off on Madeline's birthday, as described below:

She stops inflating the cuff...and filling out my daily health log... She puts on her stethoscope... her smile fades and is replaced by her more serious doctor’s face. (Everything, Everything P. 8)

From the fragment above, we can see that Pauline does her job well and professionally, though the patient she checks is her daughter. She watched every movement of Madeline's breath carefully.

Another piece of evidence that shows Pauline's attention to detail and organized behavior is the description of the actions of Carla, Madeline's nurse when she checked Madeline's health while Pauline was working at the hospital. As explained in the following fragment:

She picks up my health log from yesterday, quickly reviews my mom's measurements and adds a new sheet to the clipboard. (Everything, Everything, p.13)

We can see that Pauline always provides a new health log sheet to see Madeline's health progress which Carla fills out when she is not around her daughter as proof that she is organized and pays attention to detail. She even designed a sunroom for Madeline in such a way that it was as if her daughter could play outside as Madeline told us:

The sunroom is my favorite room in the house.... The room's décor is like a movie set of a tropical rainforest. It's filled with realistic and lush-looking fake tropical plants. (Everything, Everything, p.71)

From the fragment above, we can see that Pauline always pays attention to the details of her house so that Madeline can still live a normal life like other children, even if only from inside the house. It is enough to prove that Pauline has conscientiousness based on the personality trait theory of McRae and Costa (1992).

Another piece of evidence that demonstrates Pauline's punctuality is when Carla says:

"Has she ever been late a day in her life?"

And Madeline also said:

I'm not even allowed to be late for Friday Nights Dinners.

From the fragments above, we can see that Pauline is always on time. She even keeps the people and things around her disciplined and well-organized. Based on the evidence above, we can conclude that Pauline has the personality trait of conscientiousness, as stated in the theory of McRae and Costa (1992). It is extraordinary because not everyone can do what Pauline did and should be followed by every reader.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the personality traits of Pauline Furukawa Whittier, the researcher concluded that Pauline Furukawa Whittier in the novel "Everything, Everything" has a high level of neuroticism since she tends to have emotional instability, and is always worried about losing her daughter. This is due to a traumatic experience 18 years ago which made her lose her son and husband. Therefore, she misused her profession as a doctor by making false diagnoses about her daughter's health condition to protect her children by forbidding her to stay away from her and making her stay at home. In addition, Pauline also has a high level of conscientiousness. She tends to be disciplined and pays attention to details because of her fear that she will have little time for her daughter, Madeline Furukawa Whittier, who is the reason for Pauline's survival. So, she always uses her time wisely and makes Madeline live by the rules she has made.

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