



Mother personality trait and maternal role adaptation of first-time mothers: Self differentiation as a mediator

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ABSTRACT

Background: Mothers, especially first-time mothers, are expected by society to suitably adapt to their new role so they can nurture their children properly. Mother's self-differentiation examines their capacity to discern themselves to others and how it will help them adapt better in their transition. In this research, self-differentiation acts as a mediator between mothers' personality and their capability in maintaining their new role as a mother.

Purpose: This research analyzes the mediation role of self-differentiation between personality and abilities of first-time mothers regarding their adaptation to their new role.

Method: 107 participants, aged between 21 and 25 years, who have children under one year old, and an average marriage age of 1-3 years. Three measuring instruments were used, the International Personality Item Pool-Big Five Markers 50 (IPIP-BFM-50), the Differentiation of Self Scale in Two Domains (DSS-2D), and the Maternal Role Adaptation Questionnaire (MRAQ).

Findings: Results indicate that aspects of mothers' personality influence their maternal role adaptation. Furthermore, aspects of self-differentiation, significantly mediate the relationship between the mother's personality and maternal role adaptation.

Implication: Mothers' self-differentiation will support their adaption in her new role as a mother. Therefore, interventions in helping first time mothers could involve mothers' self-differentiation and personality aspects

KEYWORDS

first-time mothers; motherhood; self-differentiation; maternal role adaptation

Introduction

Motherhood is a significant role that women are expected to have by their social surrounding (Szekeres et al., 2023). For first-time mothers, the initial experience of motherhood is challenging due to the pressure to fulfill the role perfectly, while they need to learn many things and receive guidance from the people around them (Corder et al., 2020). The transition to becoming a mother occurs in the first year after the mother gives birth to her first child (Hwang et al., 2022). During the transition period, first-time mothers need to adapt to various changes in her life. The adaptation process during this transition is called maternal role adaptation (Javadifar, 2016). To avoid negative evaluations from the social environment, first-time mothers try to meet the ideal standards of motherhood (Law et al., 2021). Indonesian mothers are often depicted as selfless figures who also the reason on how each family members could connect with each other (Kalauserang, 2023).

Kudo (2018a) divides the self-differentiation aspect into four aspects: interpersonal differentiation togetherness, intrapsychic differentiation, interpersonal differentiation individuality, and adaptive interpersonal relationship. In the family context, family members with low self-differentiation will be very reactive to responses from family members and find it

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challenging to adapt to the desires and needs of other family members (Mozas-Alonso et al., 2022). Therefore, first-time mothers need to be able to carry out self-differentiation in undergoing the transition period as a mother. The theory of self-differentiation is rooted from Bowen’s family therapy approach (Bowen, 1978). Kudo (2018a) has developed the measurement for self-differentiation, that consist of differentiation togetherness factor, Intrapsychic differentiation factor, differentiation individuality factor, and adaptive interpersonal relationship factor. The explanation of this research result will be based on self-differentiation theory where it examines the role of self-differentiation for first-time mothers to adapt with the new roles.

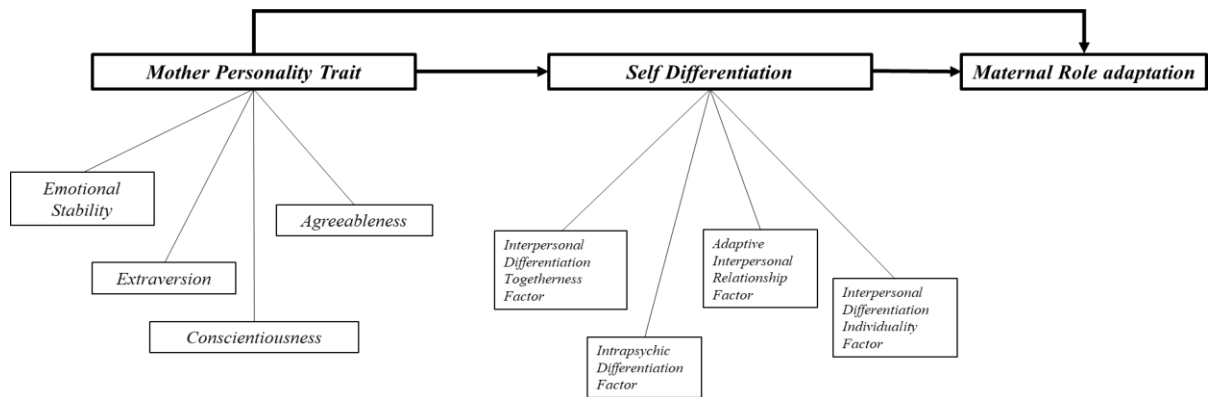


Figure 1. Research Framework

In order to see how self-differentiation can help first-time mothers to adapt, this research will also try to examine the other factors that contribute to first-time mothers’ ability to adapt. Previous research shows that a mother’s traits influenced maternal competence, as it also mediated maternal burnout (Polizzi et al., 2022). Therefore, this research will focus on looking at five traits developed by Goldberg (1992). In this research we will use the IPIP BFM 50 that has been adapted into Bahasa Indonesia by Akhtar & Azwar (2019). Based on the explanation, it appears that first-time mothers tend to have difficulty adapting to becoming mothers. To be able to adapt optimally, first-time mothers need to be able to balance their self-concept and social expectations. Self-differentiation is the ability of someone to develop a sense of self within themselves to balance individuality and intimacy. First-time mothers' internal factors influence adapting and self-differentiating. Therefore, this research examines the relationship between maternal personality traits, self-differentiation, and maternal role adaptation, as the framework pictured in Figure 1. The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

- H1: There is a significant relationship between mother personality trait and self-differentiation in first-time mothers.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between mother personality trait and maternal role adaptation in first-time mothers.
- H3: There is a significant relationship between self-differentiation and maternal role adaptation in first-time mothers.
- H4: Self-differentiation mediated the relationship between mother personality trait and maternal role adaptation in first-time mothers.

Method

Participants

This research uses quantitative methods to answer the relationship between maternal personality traits, self-differentiation, and maternal role adaptation. We used Google Forms, as the informed consent was also attached. This research focuses on women who have just become mothers and are still undergoing the transition to motherhood during the first year after birth. The participants were 107 first-time mothers with an average age of between 21 and 25 years,

children a maximum of one-year-old, and an average age of marriage in the range of 1 to 3 years. The following Table 1 describes the demographic data for all participants.

As many as 65% of participants were aged 21-25 years. Most of the participants had children in the age range of 7 - 12 months, namely 53,8%. The religion adhered to by the majority of participants is Islam, namely 82.2%. The participants who took part in the research had quite diverse ethnicities, but the Betawi ethnic group had the most participants, namely 25.2%.

Most participants had completed a Bachelor's degree, which accounted for 70.1% of the group. The average participant has an income of above 4 million rupiah per month. As many as 82% of participants were housewives and did not have a job, while the remainder had part-time jobs such as freelancers and entrepreneurs. As many as 79.3% of participants had a marriage age of less than 1-3 years, and as many as 93.4% of participants did not undertake a pregnancy program. This data shows that most participants are still in a period where they are just adapting to their marriage.

Table 1
Overview of Participant Demographic Data

Category	Subcategory	n	%
Mother Age (new mothers)	21-25	70	65%
	26-29	14	13%
	30	23	21%
Child Age (in months)	1-6	50	46.8%
	7-12	57	53.8%
Religion	Islam	88	82.2%
	Non-Islam	19	17.8%
Ethnic Group	Acehnese	6	5.6%
	Bataknese	17	15.8%
	Betawinese	27	25.2%
	Sundanese	14	13.1%
	Javanese	11	10.3%
	Chinese	17	15.8%
	Lampungnese	8	7.47%
	Padangnese	5	4.7%
Education	Palembangnese	2	1.9%
	S2	13	12.1%
	S1	75	70.1%
	Diploma	10	9.3%
Monthly Income	<High School	9	8.4%
	≤ 3.999.999	25	23.4%
	4.000.000 – 5.999.999	30	28%
	6.000.000 – 7.999.999	12	11.2%
	8.000.000 – 9.999.999	18	16.8%
In Pregnancy Program	≥ 10.000.000	22	19.6%
	Yes	7	6.5%
	No	100	93.4%

Instrument

In collecting research data, there are three measuring instruments used, including the International Personality Item Pool-Big Five Markers 50 (IPIP-BFM-50) to measure mother personality, the Differentiation of Self Scale in Two Domains (DSS-2D) to measure self-

differentiation, Maternal Role Adaptation Questionnaire (MRAQ) to measure the level of maternal role adaptation.

The Differentiation of Self Scale in Two Domains (DSS-2D), adapted from Kudo (2018a), measuring instrument measures four dimensions of self-differentiation, namely interpersonal differentiation togetherness, intrapsychic differentiation, interpersonal differentiation individuality, and adaptive interpersonal relationship. The Differentiation of Self Scale in Two Domains (DSS-2D) contains 29 statements with a 7-point Likert scale as answer choices to describe the suitability of each participant's behavior to the statements given. The item example is "*saya peduli mengenai apakah orang berpikir baik tentang saya atau tidak*". Each subscale showed good reliability figures, namely Cronbach's alpha .6 – .8. This shows that DSS-2D is a reliable measuring tool.

The Personality Item Pool-Big Five Markers 50 (IPIP-BFM-50) measuring tool consists of 50 items measuring extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and intellect/imagination. These dimensions have been adapted and translated by Akhtar and Azwar (2019). Each form of answer choice consists of five scales (1-5), ranging from strongly disagree to totally agree. The emotional stability domain shows an indication of the level of Neuroticism. Someone who has a high level of Neuroticism will show low emotional stability. Therefore, scoring shows that the higher the emotional stability score, the lower the neuroticism trait score; conversely, the lower the emotional stability score, the higher the neuroticism trait. One of the item examples is "*Menghidupkan suasana dalam suatu acara*". The IPIP-BFM-50 measuring instrument have Cronbach's alpha reliabilities of .5 – .8 from each dimension. This shows that the IPIP-BFM-50 is a reliable measuring instrument.

Javadifar (2013) developed the Maternal Role Adaptation Questionnaire (MRAQ) and was used in Sajadian et al. (2022) which have five responses scored from 1-5, from strongly disagree to totally agree. A higher score indicates a mother's level of adaptation in 'motherhood.' The item example is "*saya menikmati bermain dengan bayi saya*". The score shows a mother's level of adaptation in becoming a mother. The MRAQ measuring instrument has a reliability of Cronbach alpha .8. This shows that the MRAQ measuring instrument is reliable.

Data Analysis

This research uses mediation analysis techniques to examine the relationship between maternal personality traits, self-differentiation, and maternal role adaptation. To answer the hypothesis, researchers try to indicate the comprehensive relationship that happens among variables, therefore researchers start with correlation to see whether each variable has connection to one and another. After finding out which of the variables has connections, researchers are trying to indicate which variables have an influence on one and another with mediation analysis as the researchers' main focus. Mediation analysis was carried out on each measurement instrument score and dimensions of the three variables. Mediation analysis was performed using JASP 0.16.4. We have tested normality, linearity, and also multicollinearity to fulfill the basic assumption, and no basic assumption is violated.

Result and Discussion

To answer hypothesis one (H1) until hypothesis three (H3), we use simple correlation to see whether there's a significant relationship among mother personality, mother's self-differentiation and maternal role adaptation. The result showed that there are correlations for some aspects between variables which supports the three hypotheses, as the explanation follows. Based on the results of the correlation test in Table 2, the maternal personality traits emotional Stability (ES; $r = .37$), Extraversion (E; $r = .23$), Agreeableness (A; $r = .29$), and Conscientiousness (C; $r = .32$) have statistically significant positive correlations with maternal role adaptation (MA) ($p < .05$). This shows that the mother's personality, which includes emotional stability,

extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are strongly correlates to her adaptation to her role. This proves that a mother who shows stable emotions is more inclined to interact with the social environment, has a positive attitude towards the environment, and has the will to achieve goals can help the mother to adapt to her new role.

Meanwhile, the intellectual dimension has an insignificant correlation with MA ($p > .05$). This shows that a mother's openness and ability to receive new knowledge and imagination do not contribute to her adaptation to the role as a mother. The intellectual dimension score shows an attitude where a person can be open and readily accept new learning. When first-time mothers score high, they will be more open to new information during the transition. On the other hand, mothers also have to be able to sort out what information is correct and what is not. Moreover, the participants who participated in this research were new mothers or less than one year into becoming mothers, so there were many of them, and it took a more protracted process for mothers to filter all the information. This results in someone with a high level of openness to new information, possibly feeling overwhelmed in being able to absorb all the information needed. At the same time, they must also be able to process their energy and emotions to provide optimal care.

Table 2
Correlation Test Results of Research Variables

Variable	Maternal Role Adaptation		Self-Differentiation		
	Role	ID	IP	IN	AD
Mother Personality					
Extraversion	.23*	.07	.18	.05	.38***
Emotional Stability (vs Neuroticism)	.37**	.45***	.046	.07	.29**
Intellectual/Imagination (Openness)	.08	.04	.26**	.32**	.08
Agreeableness	.29**	.14	.01	.24**	.26**
Conscientiousness	.32***	.07	.11	.40***	.10
Maternal Role Adaptation	-	.36***		.38***	.43***

Note. ID = Differentiation Togetherness Factor, IP = Intrapsychic Differentiation Factor, IN = Differentiation Individuality Factor, AD = Adaptive Interpersonal Relationship Factor.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

In self-differentiation, Interpersonal Differentiation Togetherness Factor (ID; $r = .36$), Interpersonal Differentiation Individuality Factor (IN; $r = .38$), and Adaptive Interpersonal Relationship Factor (AD; $r = .43$) have statistically significant positive correlations with MA ($p < .05$). These results indicate that a mother's ability to separate her expectations from those of others (ID) can help her adapt to her role. Then, a mother's ability to have individuality or her values (IN) can also support her ability to adapt. The mother's ability to adapt to the social environment also helps the mother to adapt optimally as a mother. Meanwhile, the Intrapsychic Differentiation Factor (IP) has an insignificant correlation with MA. This shows that the mother's ability to separate her emotions and thoughts has no relationship to her ability to adapt. Among the four aspects of self-differentiation, only one aspect does not have a significant relationship with a mother's level of adaptation, namely the intrapsychic differentiation factor (IP).

In order to answer hypothesis four (H4), mediation tests were divided into several models based on variables that correlate. The results of the mediation test between mother personality trait, self-differentiation, and maternal role adaptation can be seen in more detail in Table 3. The result shows that some aspects of self-differentiation could mediate mother's personality and maternal role adaptation, which also support hypothesis four (H4).

Table 3

Mediation Test Results between Maternal Role Adaptation, Self-Differentiation and Mother Personality

Model	β	SE	p
Model I			
<i>Direct Effect</i> ES → MA	0.041	0.015	.008**
<i>Indirect Effect</i> ES → ID → MA	0.017	0.008	.024*
<i>Total Effect</i> ES → MA	0.058	0.014	<.001***
Model II			
<i>Direct Effect</i> ES → MA	0.041	0.014	<.001***
<i>Indirect Effect</i> ES → AD → MA	0.016	0.007	.012*
<i>Total Effect</i> ES → MA	0.058	0.014	<.001***
Model III			
<i>Direct Effect</i> E → MA	0.011	0.014	.424
<i>Indirect Effect</i> E → AD → MA	0.024	0.008	.002**
<i>Total Effect</i> E → MA	0.035	0.014	.014*
Model IV			
<i>Direct Effect</i> A → MA	0.071	0.30	.020*
<i>Indirect Effect</i> A → IN → MA	0.028	0.013	.031*
<i>Total Effect</i> A → MA	0.099	0.031	.002**
Model V			
<i>Direct Effect</i> A → MA	0.065	0.030	.030*
<i>Indirect Effect</i> A → AD → MA	0.034	0.014	.019*
<i>Total Effect</i> A → MA	0.099	0.031	.002**
Model VI			
<i>Direct Effect</i> C → MA	0.036	0.017	.038*
<i>Indirect Effect</i> C → IN → MA	0.022	0.008	.009**
<i>Total Effect</i> C → MA	0.058	0.016	<.001***

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

ES personality aspects directly influence MA ($\beta = 0.041$, $SE = 0.015$, $p < .05$). This shows that the higher the emotional stability a mother has, the better her ability to adapt to her new role. The relationship between ES and MA can be mediated by the interpersonal Differentiation Togetherness Factor (ID). The direct influence between ES and MA makes the interpersonal Differentiation Togetherness Factor (ID) a partial mediator between ES and MA ($\beta = 0.017$, $SE = 0.008$, $p < .05$). This shows that a mother with a good level of differentiation in the interpersonal aspect of the Differentiation Togetherness Factor (ID) can help mediate the relationship between a mother's emotional stability and her ability to adapt to the role. The relationship that occurs between ES, ID and MA shows that a mother's ability to separate herself from other people, and her ability to adapt to the social environment can mediate between a mother's emotional stability and her ability to adapt to her role in being a mother.

Adaptive Interpersonal Relationship Factor (AD) can also mediate the relationship between ES and MA which found to be statistically significant ($\beta = 0.016$, $SE = 0.007$, $p < .05$). ES directly influences MA, so AD is a partial mediator. This shows that a mother with a good level of differentiation in aspects of AD can help the relationship between her emotional stability and her ability to adapt to her role. This relationship proves that the better a mother is at maintaining the quality of her social interactions, even though at the same time she can also pursue her dreams, the better a mother can adapt to her social environment.

Adaptive Interpersonal Relationship Factor (AD) was also a statistically significant mediator between E and MA ($\beta = 0.024$, $SE = 0.008$, $p < .05$). When the independent variable cannot influence the dependent variable without the role of the mediator variable, then complete mediation or perfect mediation occurs. In this case, E has no direct influence on MA ($\beta = 0.011$, $SE = 0.014$, $p > .05$), which results in AD being a perfect mediator for the relationship between E and MA. As a perfect mediator, it can be interpreted that E cannot play a direct role in increasing maternal adaptation without the intermediary of AD.

Based on the results of the mediation test, it is proven that extraversion cannot necessarily support the adaptation ability of first-time mothers without the mother's ability to adapt to the environment (AD). When first-time mothers go through a transition period, they will experience considerable changes in the social environment, and the expectations given by other people will also become more numerous and complex (Javadifar, 2016). This is in line with research conducted by Ikizer (2022), where someone with a high level of extraversion tends to have a high-stress level when faced with stressful situations or when their social interactions are limited. In neutral conditions, someone with high extraversion tends to be able to interact well with the environment; however, in stressful situations such as a mother's transition period, it can affect the spirit and enthusiasm in carrying out social activities or interacting with the surrounding environment. Therefore, first-time mothers need to increase AD or the ability to adapt to their needs in being part of their social environment. From this research, someone who has a high extraversion trait may not necessarily have a good level of adaptation in becoming a mother if they do not have abilities in the adaptive interpersonal relationship factor aspect.

Based on the results of the mediation test, interpersonal Differentiation Individuality Factor (IN) and Adaptive Interpersonal Relationship Factor (AD) are statistically significant partial mediators between A and MA ($\beta = 0.028$, $SE = 0.013$, $p < .05$; $\beta = 0.034$, $SE = 0.014$, $p < .05$; respectively). On the other hand, A also directly influences MA ($\beta = 0.065$, $SE = 0.030$, $p < .05$), thus making IN a partial mediator in the relationship between A and MA. This shows that a mother with a good level of differentiation in the interpersonal aspects of Differentiation Individuality Factor (IN) and Adaptive Interpersonal Relationship Factor (AD) can help the relationship between her level of agreeableness and her ability to adapt to her role. A person with a high level of agreeableness shows attitudes such as being willing to do good to others, trusting others, and being seen as generous. In stressful situations, agreeableness does not always support someone with low stress (Ikizer, 2022). In this case, first-time mothers with high agreeableness are more

focused on following the expectations given so that they may lose their identity or personal values. Therefore, to maintain the stability of a mother's agreeableness, it needs to be supported by her ability to have her values (IN) and adapt to her social environment (AD). This is necessary so that first-time mothers can adjust expectations and have good relationships with other people while still maintaining their values. The interpersonal aspect of the differentiation individuality factor (IN) can significantly be a partial mediator between C and MA ($\beta = 0.058$, $SE = 0.016$, $p < 0.05$). On the other hand, C directly influences MA, making IN a partial mediator in the relationship between C and MA.

Apart from the analysis, the characteristics of the study are specific in that it only examines mothers aged 20 - 30 years. Research needs to consider shifts in the present, where first-time mothers begin to shift at more than 30 years old. So that future research can include first-time mothers in a wider age range.

Conclusion

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, the main conclusion obtained by researchers is that there are positive relationships between some aspects of mother personality traits and the certain level of self-differentiation in first-time mothers. Some aspects of maternal personality and self-differentiation have a significant positive relationship with maternal role adaptation. The maternal personality traits that have a significant positive relationship with maternal role adaptation are emotional stability, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Then, the dimensions of self-differentiation that have a significant positive relationship with maternal role adaptation are the interpersonal differentiation togetherness factor (ID), interpersonal differentiation individuality factor (IN), and adaptive interpersonal relationship factor (AD). Future research can expand the distribution of data to get a better picture of a mother's adaptation that is more representative.

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