

# Personality Traits as a Predictor of Job Satisfaction among Student-Teachers in Ghana

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## Abstract

Personality traits of teachers have enormous contributions to the way they accept their professions and how satisfied they become. This is a cross-sectional survey among student-teachers in a University in Ghana. A total of one hundred and forty-four (144) students participated in the survey. An online questionnaire was used to collect primary data for the study. Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and multiple linear regression were employed as the primary statistical tools for the study. It was found that student-teachers' report moderate level of job satisfaction. It was also established that the dominant personality trait of student-teachers is openness. Openness had positive predictive strength on student-teachers' job satisfaction while neuroticism predicted negatively the levels of job satisfaction of student-teachers. Based on the findings, the study concluded that openness and neuroticism predicted job satisfaction of student-teachers in Ghana. It was recommended that Teacher Unions in Ghana should prioritize teacher security and safety for their members by acquiring landed properties such as land, vehicles, etc. They can also play advocacy role by liaising with the government to enroll members onto high yielding provident funds. Educational Supervisors should continue to provide the pre-tertiary teacher with clinical supervision, focusing on teacher professional development. Headteachers should organise standard case conferences, in-service training, and others for teachers to enhance their Openness traits.

## Keywords

Personality, Traits, Job Satisfaction, Big-Five

## 1. Introduction

Personality traits of teachers have enormous contributions to the way they accept their professions and how satisfied they become. According to [Lent et al. \(2011\)](#),

there has been an incessant interest in the role of teachers' personality in their job satisfaction and interest appears to be in response to the continuous attrition of teachers in many parts of the world (Martin, Sass, & Schmitt, 2012). A teacher's personality is often under the perusal of their students which becomes an example and model for students (Karman et al., 2024). In support of this, it is assumed that a company's very survival rests on its ability to recruit and retain talented employees with appropriate personality traits (Amoh & Appiah-Brempong, 2017).

Özcan and Koca (2019) indicate that the teacher is a focal point among the numerous agents of education who ensures the advancement and development of a nation. Teachers' commitment and output are dependent not only on their quality, but also on their happiness with the services they provide. With school leaders' increasing interest in excellent instructors and the recent practice of poaching teachers from other schools, it has become necessary for them to use incentive and job retention tactics to keep their teaching staff (Manu et al., 2019). Appropriate retention tactics would not only inspire teachers to do their best for their pupils, but also contribute to the nation's creation of a formidable cadre of well-trained human resources (Silva et al., 2019). It is crucial to note that the vast majority of these studies on job satisfaction and teacher retention were conducted in developed nations, making it extremely difficult to apply their findings to explain why Ghanaian teachers have been agitating for better service conditions (Senyamator et al., 2019).

On the one hand, job satisfaction has garnered a significant attention from both human resource practitioners and academics (Coyne et al., 2016; Riza et al., 2016; Holland et al., 2011; Rogelberg et al., 2010). The dispositional approach to job satisfaction has been the subject of extensive research (Li et al., 2010; Judge et al., 2008; House et al., 1996). Judge et al. (2017) discovered that affective disposition, measured as a response to a series of neutral ordinary objects, is associated with job satisfaction. Personality, however, is under-researched in general management (e.g. Higgs & Lichtenstein, 2010, is one of very few). The study by Higgs and Lichtenstein (2010) examined the relationship between personality and values, which play a crucial role in sustaining organizational performance and growth. It demonstrates that the relationship is significantly more intricate and involved than previously believed.

As people are the most precious asset inside an organization, it is essential that the general management audience gain a deeper understanding of the effects of personality on businesses. In the history of personality research, dozens of traits have been researched in relation to job satisfaction (Van Aarde et al. 2017). When scholars have examined the connection between personality and job satisfaction, their findings have been interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, Muruganandam and Kumar (2023) investigated the link between extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism and job satisfaction. They discovered that only extraversion correlated strongly with job satisfaction. George and Collard (2024) examined the association between core self-evaluation and aspects of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control and neuroticism, and job satisfaction.

In one example study, core self-evaluation was found to be positively related to job satisfaction, however in another study, it was not. In each of their two research, neuroticism is negatively related to core self-evaluation, but self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control are often positively related.

In a meta-analysis, [Goel and Singh \(2024\)](#) investigated the mediating influence of job satisfaction on the connection between personality and citizenship behavior. Extroversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness comprise the Big Five personality traits, the most widely accepted way of understanding personality in psychology, have been the focus of one or more of the reviewed studies ([Goldberg, 1992](#)). The Big Five structure does not indicate that personality types can be reduced to simply five traits, but these five traits define personality at its most abstract level, and each dimension represents a large number of distinct, more particular personality characteristics ([John & Srivastava, 1999](#)). Future study, according to [Van Aarde et al. \(2017\)](#), should concentrate on a deeper understanding of the relationship between the Big Five qualities and job satisfaction. In fact, very few cross-sectional or longitudinal research have evaluated the association between all five of traits and job satisfaction concurrently, with the exception of a few meta-analysis studies that uncover separate elements employed in diverse studies ([Maricutoiu et al., 2023](#); [Van Aarde et al., 2017](#)). [Zitzmann et al. \(2024\)](#) also identified a similar association between age trends and the Big Five Inventory (BFI) in two major data sets from Britain and Germany. They discovered that extraversion and openness were inversely correlated with age, whereas agreeableness was positively correlated with age; middle-aged participants had the greatest average levels of conscientiousness.

Neuroticism is typically characterized by an absence of positive psychological adjustment and emotional stability ([Rostyslav & Vsevolod, 2024](#)). Neurotic individuals may experience excessive or insufficient external stimulus ([Hou et al., 2023](#)). People with a high level of neuroticism are more prone to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, despair, aggression, and vulnerability because they prefer to place themselves in situations that have a negative impact on them ([Soto & John, 2017](#)). Notably, implicit neuroticism self-concept has a larger association with women than with men ([Donges et al., 2015](#)). The relationship between neuroticism and job satisfaction is found to be negative ([Mamić et al., 2024](#); [Wu et al., 2024](#)). In [Wang et al., \(2024\)](#) meta-analysis, neuroticism has the most negative correlation with job satisfaction. In another meta-analysis, [Maricutoiu et al. \(2023\)](#) discovered that emotional stability, the opposite of neuroticism, is similarly highly associated with job satisfaction. In contrast, research of 202 full-time workers in the United Kingdom conducted by [Furnham and Horne \(2024\)](#) indicated that the association between neuroticism and job satisfaction is positive but inconsequential. Thus, the results of an analysis of the effect of neuroticism on job satisfaction are contentious, and this relationship needs further investigation.

Extraversion is the degree to which a person is outspoken, active, enthusiastic, energetic, and domineering ([Gómez-Leal et al., 2024](#)). [Rostyslav and Vsevolod \(2024\)](#) noted that extraverts tend to be socially oriented (gregarious and out-

going) as well as surgent (dominant and ambitious) and energetic (adventurous and assertive). On the one hand, social orientation can be seen as a benefit in the majority of work contexts. On the other hand, dominance and ambition are unclear. There appears to be an extremely substantial association between extraversion and job satisfaction. For instance, [Rostyslav and Vsevolod \(2024\)](#) discovered a correlation between extraversion and job satisfaction. According to [Van Aarde et al. \(2017\)](#) meta-analysis of 163 independent samples and 334 correlations, there is a robust relationship between extraversion and job satisfaction. [Maricutoiu et al. \(2023\)](#) also discovered a substantial relationship between extraversion and job satisfaction in another meta-analysis. In a recent study of 150 full-time mid-career employees, however, [Irvin et al. \(2024\)](#) discovered that extraversion does not demonstrate a high correlation or connection with job satisfaction. Despite the varied nature of the relationship between extraversion and job satisfaction, the coefficient values tend to be statistically significant.

Openness to experience is marked by intellectualism (philosophical and intellectual) and unconventionality (imaginative, autonomy, and nonconformity) ([Zadok et al., 2024](#)). In many circumstances, openness to experience is viewed as a good employee trait ([Zitzmann et al., 2024](#)); openness to experience is also viewed as an important aspect for the life satisfaction of active older persons ([Gregory et al., 2010](#)). However, openness to experience can be viewed as “double-edged sword” in jobs for those with a high level of openness, as open people tend to be prone to job-hopping and dissatisfied in traditional occupations. Both meta-analysis and primary analysis demonstrate that openness to experience has no significant effect on job satisfaction ([Van Aarde et al., 2017](#)).

Cooperation (trusting others and caring) and likeability (good-natured, cheerful, and gentle) are indicative of agreeableness ([Zadok et al., 2024](#)). A disposition characterized by pleasant and fulfilling relationships with others ([Lawal & Balogun, 2023](#)). Recent research by [Furnham and Cheng \(2024\)](#) has revealed early predictors of the adult attribute of agreeableness, including parental social status, childhood intelligence, education, occupation, and gender. Specifically, girls appear to score higher than males on the attribute of agreeableness. The existing research indicates a murky association between agreeableness and job satisfaction. In a meta-analytic path analysis, a tight and collective Asian society ([Templer, 2012](#)), and the public sector, for instance, agreeableness was found to be positively and significantly associated with job satisfaction ([Ouni & Boujelbene, 2023](#)). Nonetheless, it is deemed insignificant in other studies ([Van Aarde et al., 2017](#)). Thus, the results are inconsistent, necessitating further research using large-scale investigations.

Conscientiousness relates to a person’s level of organization, effort, and motivation to pursue predetermined objectives ([López-Núñez et al., 2022](#)). [Furnham and Cheng \(2024\)](#) shown that parental socioeconomic status, childhood intelligence, education, and occupation are all marginally but statistically significant predictors of conscientiousness. In particular, they indicated that females score higher than males on conscientiousness. Conscientiousness is the most constant

indicator of occupational success across all employment kinds and occupations (Barrick et al., 2001; Zadok et al., 2024). This may explain why conscientiousness and job satisfaction are positively correlated (Van Aarde et al., 2017). The literature demonstrates that conscientiousness has a consistently strong impact on job satisfaction, but openness to experience has a continuously small impact. Workplace contentment appears to be linked to only three of the Big Five personality traits: neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness. Consequently, the goal of this study is to examine the association between the Big-Five personality traits and job satisfaction. It explores the extent to which the Big Five traits influence job satisfaction among student teachers of the Department of Counselling Psychology in the University of Education, Winneba.

## 2. Research Questions

- 1) What is the level of job satisfaction among student-teachers?
- 2) What is the dominant personality trait among student-teachers?

## 3. Hypothesis

H<sub>1</sub>: Student-Teacher personality trait will predict job satisfaction of student-teachers.

## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Study Design and Procedures

This is a cross-sectional survey among student-teachers in a University in Ghana. All the participants were student-teachers. The participants participated in an online survey between December 14<sup>th</sup> and December 30<sup>th</sup> 2023. A google form was shared via their class WhatsApp groups. The students were also encouraged to share the link with their colleagues who might not be part of the WhatsApp groups. At the end of the survey, a total of one hundred and forty-four (144) students participated out a student population of 239 in a Department in the University.

### 4.2. Data Collection Instrument

In this study, an online questionnaire was used to collect primary data for the study. The questionnaire had three sections. The first section was used to collect personality traits data using the Big Five Inventory (BFI-20) developed by [Velo-so Gouveia et al. \(2021\)](#). In the second section, student-teachers were asked of their level of job satisfaction. The last section was used to collect the bio data of respondents which included teaching experience (1 - 5 years, 6 - 10 years, 11 - 15 years and 15+), Current level of teaching (Primary, Junior High School and Senior High School) and Sex (Male, Female).

### 4.3. Data Analyses

The data analysis was conducted after taking data management into account.

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (multiple linear regression) were employed as the primary statistical tools for the study.

#### 4.4. Ethical Considerations

An approval letter for the study was obtained from the school's administration. Participants completed an informed consent letter in the first phase of the e-questionnaire to participate anonymously in the online survey. All participants were given information about the research purpose, information confidentiality, and the opportunity to cancel participation at any time without explanation in the permission form. Students were also assured that non-participation in the survey have no influence on their academics.

### 5. Results

**Table 1** shows results on the level of job satisfaction among student-teachers. The data revealed that 95(66%) of the participants experienced moderate level of job satisfaction and 49(34%) of the participants experienced low level of job satisfaction. On the contrary, no student-teacher demonstrated high level of job satisfaction.

From **Table 2**, the dominant personality trait was Openness ( $M = 40.34$ ,  $SD = 4.90$ ). It was followed by Agreeableness ( $M = 30.26$ ,  $SD = 2.84$ ), Extraversion ( $M = 29.90$ ,  $SD = 3.36$ ), Conscientiousness ( $M = 29.47$ ,  $SD = 3.08$ ) and Neuroticism ( $M = 25.31$ ,  $SD = 4.31$ ).

**Table 3** shows the prediction of the five independent variables (personality traits measured by the Big-Five) to the dependent variable (Job Satisfaction). The

**Table 1.** Level of Job Satisfaction among student-teachers.

Level	Frequency	Percent
Low Job Satisfaction	49	34.0
Moderate Job Satisfaction	95	66.0
High Job Satisfaction	-	-
Total	144	100.0

Online Data (2022).

**Table 2.** Dominant Personality Traits among student-teachers.

Traits	Mean	Std. Deviation
Extraversion	29.90	3.36
Agreeableness	30.26	2.84
Conscientiousness	29.47	3.08
Neuroticism	25.31	4.31
Openness	40.34	4.90

Online Data (2022).

**Table 3.** Regressional effect of personality traits on Job Satisfaction of Student-teachers

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R	F	P
	B	S. E								
(Constant)	4.641	2.819		1.647	0.102	0.298	0.089	0.056	2.69	0.024
1	-0.085	0.070	-0.115	-1.210	0.228					
2	0.085	0.078	0.097	1.084	0.280					
3	0.054	0.071	0.067	0.755	0.451					
4	-0.122	0.050	-0.212	-2.429	0.016					
5	0.112	0.044	0.222	2.529	0.013					

<sup>a</sup>Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction; <sup>b</sup>Predictors: (Constant), Extraversion<sup>1</sup>, Agreeableness<sup>2</sup>, Conscientiousness<sup>3</sup>, Neuroticism<sup>4</sup>, Openness<sup>5</sup>.

results indicate coefficient of multiple  $R$  of 0.298 and a multiple  $R^2$  of 0.089. This means that 8.9% of variance in the total job satisfaction was accounted for by the five predictor variables when considered together. The significance of the multiple contribution was tested at  $P < 0.05$  using the F-ratio at the degrees of freedom ( $df = 5$ ) as depicted. The analysis of variance for the regression yielded a F-ratio of 2.69 at  $P < 0.02$ . This implies that the joint contributions of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance. Based on the result, it ascertained that student-teacher personality trait will predict job satisfaction of student teachers. The hypothesis is therefore accepted at an alpha level of 0.05.

To test for relative contributions of the independent variables to the dependent variable, each predictor's contribution was tested to ascertain which of them has relative degree of influence on the dependent variable. Using the standardized regression coefficient to determine the relative contribution of the independent variables to the explanation of the dependent variable, the degree of influence to the dependent variable is as follows; 1) Openness ( $\beta = 0.112$ ,  $t = 2.529$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). 2) Neuroticism ( $\beta = -0.122$ ,  $t = -2.429$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). 3) Extraversion ( $\beta = -0.085$ ,  $t = -1.210$ ,  $P < 0.22$ ). 4) Agreeableness ( $\beta = 0.085$ ,  $t = 1.084$ ,  $P < 0.28$ ). 5) Conscientiousness ( $\beta = 0.054$ ,  $t = 0.755$ ,  $P < 0.45$ ).

## 6. Findings and Discussion

The reported level of job satisfaction among student-teachers was moderate. This means that student-teachers somewhat, might not be happy with their current conditions of service. The findings confirmed the position of [Adu-Baffoe and Bonney \(2021\)](#) that teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs and indicated that given the opportunity, they would quit the job of teaching. Similarly, [Senyamator et al. \(2019\)](#) believed that frequent agitations among pre-tertiary school teachers need to generate a conversation on their conditions of service.

The study findings is consistent with literature because the implementation of single spine salary structure and vertical and horizontal promotions and transfers within the pre-tertiary education system had moderately boosted satisfaction levels of teachers on the job. However, it appears the recent economic challenges experienced in the country could account for this reported level in job satisfaction. Besides, teachers are beginning to look at their satisfactions from non-materialistic point, such as scholarship for their wards, securing landed properties, insurance, and other things. In Maslow's hierarchy of need, when the physiological needs are provided, it helps to increase level of job satisfaction. It again serves as platform to strive for other needs.

The findings of this study further show that means score of student-teachers on four personality traits Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism were similar, but the mean score on Openness personality trait is greater. It means that the openness personality trait of students-teachers is more dominant as compared to remaining four Big Five personality traits. This finding is consistent with the study of [Kerkab \(2021\)](#) which showed that the traits of passion, patience, and cooperation were possessed most frequently in both male and female prospective teachers at elementary level where as creativity (Openness) proved to be more of a unique quality. This affirms the Big five theory of personality, which explains the characteristics of openness personality to include curiosity, imaginative and value variety. This trait encourages teachers to explore new ideas and approaches in their teaching.

On the hypothesis, the study revealed that out of the five personality traits under consideration, only Neuroticism and Openness contributed significantly to job satisfaction of student-teachers. Neuroticism had a negative prediction indicating when neuroticism is high, job satisfaction is low. The negative association between neuroticism and job satisfaction aligns with prominent personality theories such as the Five Factor Model (FFM) or Big Five theory. Neuroticism, characterized by tendencies towards anxiety, depression, and emotional instability, is often linked with lower levels of job satisfaction. This finding resonates with previous research across various cultural contexts, reinforcing the universality of this association. However, the conflicting results highlighted in the study underscore the need for further investigation, suggesting that cultural factors and contextual nuances may influence the strength and direction of this relationship. In relation to job satisfaction, neuroticism is found to be negatively associated with job satisfaction ([Maricutoiu et al., 2023](#); [Van Aarde et al., 2017](#)). In [Wang et al. \(2024\)](#) meta-analysis, neuroticism is most strongly correlated with job satisfaction, but in a negative manner. [Maricutoiu et al., \(2023\)](#) in another meta-analysis found that emotional stability—the reverse of neuroticism—is also strongly associated with job satisfaction. In contrast, [Irvin et al., \(2024\)](#), in a study of 150 full-time mid-career workers in the United Kingdom, found that the relationship between neuroticism and job satisfaction is positive but insignificant. Thus, the results of an examination of the impact of neuroticism on job satisfaction are controversial and further investigation into this relationship is ne-



cessary. This might be attributed to the poor condition of service of teachers in the Ghanaian school in general. Inadequate educational infrastructure and teaching aid in some school make it difficult for teaching and learning to take place. Some of the teachers have no offices to work which are likely to affect their motivation to give their best in the teaching profession. Some student-teacher who were able to secure study leave have to combine teaching and studying at the same time which affect the performance of some student-teachers.

In addition, Openness had a positive prediction indicating that while openness is high it leads to job satisfaction and student-teachers are likely to remain in the job. This current study contradicts both meta-analysis and primary analysis that show that openness to experience has no significant impact on job satisfaction (Van Aarde et al., 2017). As a teacher, the individual needs to accept and be open to other criticisms from other colleagues which will help shape the experiences of teachers.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concluded that Openness and Neuroticism predicted job satisfaction of student-teachers while Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness did not predict job satisfaction of student-teachers in Ghana. In terms of neuroticism, the fear of unknown associated with the teaching job accounted for this result. For this reason, Teacher Unions such as Ghana National Association of Teachers, Ghana National Association of Graduate Teachers and Coalition of Concerned Teachers at the pre-tertiary level should prioritize teacher security and safety for their members. These unions should assist members to acquire landed properties such as land, vehicles, etc. They can also play advocacy role by liaising with the government to enroll members onto high yielding provident funds. When teachers have the sense of security and safety, their neurotic feelings, such as fear, depression, learned hopelessness for the future will reduce. As their level of neuroticism reduces, the feeling of happiness, contentment and wellness will increase. These will enhance their satisfaction level on the teaching job.

Regarding Openness, supervisions from both external and internal supervisors, couple with collegial supervision accounted for reported influence in current job satisfaction levels of student-teachers. Humanly constructive supervisions encourage Openness trait among pre-tertiary teachers. Educational Supervisors should continue to provide the pre-tertiary teacher with clinical supervision, focusing on teacher professional development. Headteachers should organise case conferences, in-service training, etc. for teachers to enhance their Openness traits.

## 8. Implication of Career Counselling

Counsellors can use personality assessments to help student-teachers gain insights into their own personality traits. This self-awareness can contribute to

better understanding their strengths, weaknesses, and preferences in the teaching profession. In addition, counsellors should utilize personality assessments to align student-teachers with teaching roles that align with their personality traits. For example, individuals with high levels of extroversion might excel in interactive teaching environments, while those with high conscientiousness may thrive in more structured settings. Recognize that certain personality traits may be associated with specific stressors in the teaching profession. Provide stress management strategies tailored to individual personalities, helping student-teachers cope with the challenges they may face in the classroom.

Again, counsellors can offer guidance on developing effective communication and conflict resolution skills, particularly for those student-teachers whose personality traits may be linked to interpersonal challenges. This can enhance their ability to navigate professional relationships with colleagues, students, and administrators. Also, counsellors can focus on strategies to enhance job satisfaction based on individual personality traits. This may include helping student-teachers find teaching approaches that align with their values, interests, and preferred working styles.

Lastly, counsellors need to equip student-teachers with coping strategies that align with their personality traits. For example, introverted individuals may benefit from strategies that allow for periodic solitude and reflection, while extroverts may find support in collaborative initiatives. Counsellors should encourage ongoing self-reflection among student-teachers to assess their satisfaction with the teaching profession. Regular self-assessment can help them stay attuned to their evolving needs and make informed decisions about their career path.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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