




# The Relationship between Personality Traits and Job Satisfaction among Healthcare Professionals: a Comparative Analysis of Personality and Occupational Satisfaction

## Veza između osobina ličnosti i zadovoljstva poslom kod medicinskog osoblja: komparativna analiza osobina i profesionalnog zadovoljstva

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### Abstract

Job satisfaction is recognized as one of the key indicators of mental health and professional efficacy in the healthcare sector. Physicians, specialists, nurses, and clinical technicians represent some of the most frequently examined populations in psychological research on personality, occupational stress, job satisfaction, and burnout, due to their frequent exposure to emotionally demanding and high-responsibility work environments. Given the intense demands, elevated accountability, and the inherently stressful nature of their roles, healthcare professionals face complex emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal challenges, making the understanding of factors contributing to job satisfaction particularly significant. The aim of this review paper is to examine the association between personality traits and professional satisfaction among healthcare professionals through an analysis of contemporary theoretical models, relevant scientific publications, and empirical findings. Special emphasis is placed on individual differences in personality characteristics and their influence on perceptions of the work environment, quality of interpersonal relationships, and the subjective experience of professional purpose. Findings from recent studies suggest that traits such as emotional stability, conscientiousness, and openness to experience are positively associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, whereas traits like neuroticism are predictive of professional dissatisfaction and occupational burnout. This paper synthesizes data from international studies conducted in diverse clinical and hospital settings, with the goal of identifying and comparing dominant patterns in the relationship between personality traits and subjective professional well-being. In conclusion, the paper discusses implications for personnel selection, the development of psychological support systems, and the design of organizational interventions aimed at promoting job satisfaction and safeguarding the mental health of healthcare professionals.

**Key words:** healthcare professionals, personality traits, job satisfaction, occupational burnout, psychological factors

### Apstrakt

Zadovoljstvo poslom predstavlja jedan od ključnih indikatora mentalnog zdravlja i profesionalne efikasnosti zaposlenih u zdravstvenom sektoru. Doktori medicine, specijalisti, medicinske sestre i tehničari čine jednu od najčešće analiziranih grupa odnosno uzoraka u naučno-psihološkim istraživanjima o ličnosti, stresu, zadovoljstvu poslom i sagorevanju, jer su često izloženi emocionalnim i radnim pritiscima. S obzirom na visoke zahteve, odgovornost i specifičnu prirodu posla, medicinsko osoblje je izloženo intenzivnim emocionalnim, kognitivnim i interpersonalnim izazovima, zbog čega je razumevanje faktora koji doprinose zadovoljstvu poslom posebno važno. Cilj ovog preglednog rada jeste da ukaže na povezanost između osobina ličnosti i profesionalnog zadovoljstva kod zdravstvenih radnika, kroz analizu aktuelnih teorijskih modela, relevantnih naučnih radova i empirijskih nalaza. Posebna pažnja posvećena je individualnim razlikama u crtama ličnosti i njihovom uticaju na percepciju radnog okruženja, interpersonalne odnose i doživljaj profesionalne svrhe. Analizirani su nalazi koji ukazuju na to da određene osobine, poput emocionalne stabilnosti, savjesnosti i otvorenosti ka iskustvu, pozitivno koreliraju sa višim nivoima zadovoljstva poslom, dok osobine poput neuroticizma predstavljaju prediktore profesionalnog nezadovoljstva i sagorevanja. Rad se oslanja na relevantne međunarodne studije sprovedene u različitim kliničkim i bolničkim okruženjima, sa ciljem da se sistematizuju i uporede dominantni obrasci odnosa između ličnosti i subjektivnog profesionalnog blagostanja. U zaključku se razmatraju implikacije za selekciju kadra, razvoj psihološke podrške i osmišljavanje organizacionih intervencija koje mogu doprineti većem stepenu zadovoljstva i očuvanju mentalnog zdravlja medicinskih radnika.

**Ključne reči:** medicinsko osoblje, osobine ličnosti, zadovoljstvo poslom, profesionalno sagorevanje, psihološki faktori



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## Introduction

Job satisfaction is one of the most extensively studied constructs in occupational and health psychology, due to its significant impact on employee well-being, organizational efficiency, and quality of professional functioning, especially in high-stress professions such as healthcare (1). Healthcare professionals, including physicians, specialists, nurses, and clinical technicians, are continuously exposed to emotionally demanding situations, time pressure, and complex interpersonal interactions, making them highly vulnerable to occupational stress and burnout (2). These working conditions contribute not only to decreased satisfaction with work but also to adverse psychological outcomes, such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (3). Among the numerous factors influencing job satisfaction, personality traits represent stable psychological dispositions that shape how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to workplace demands (4). The Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality, encompassing neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, has emerged as the dominant theoretical framework in research examining the relationship between personality and occupational functioning (5). In healthcare settings, personality traits have been associated with differences in stress tolerance, communication styles, emotional regulation, and adaptability - all of which are relevant to perceived job satisfaction (6, 7). Given the complexity and intensity of healthcare work, a clearer understanding of how individual personality traits relate to job satisfaction can offer valuable insights into human resource management, professional development, and mental health support systems for healthcare professionals. This review aims to synthesize and compare current theoretical models and empirical findings on the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction in healthcare, with an emphasis on studies conducted in clinical and hospital environments. The goal is to identify key patterns and psychological mechanisms that may inform more effective strategies for enhancing professional well-being and retention in the healthcare workforce.

## Theoretical Framework: Personality Traits and Job Satisfaction in Healthcare

Personality traits are recognized as relatively stable dimensions of individual differences that influence cognition, behavior, emotional regulation, and interpersonal functioning in the workplace. Among various models of personality, the Five-Factor Model (FFM) has become the most widely accepted and empirically supported framework in occupational psychology (5). This model encompasses five broad traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeable-

ness, and conscientiousness. Each trait reflects specific behavioral tendencies that may shape how healthcare professionals perceive and cope with the demands of their roles. Empirical research has demonstrated that conscientiousness and emotional stability (low neuroticism) are consistently associated with higher levels of job satisfaction across different professional groups, including healthcare providers (4, 6).

Conscientious individuals tend to be more organized, responsible, and goal-oriented, which may contribute to greater professional accomplishment and a stronger sense of efficacy in clinical settings. In contrast, individuals with high levels of neuroticism often report greater emotional exhaustion and lower satisfaction with interpersonal relationships at work, which are critical components of satisfaction in healthcare environments (3, 7). Given the emotionally charged nature of medical work, traits such as agreeableness and extraversion also play a role in shaping the quality of interpersonal interactions with patients and colleagues, which can directly influence overall satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the interplay between personality and occupational experiences is essential for developing targeted interventions aimed at improving work engagement, psychological resilience, and retention among healthcare professionals (2, 6).

## Empirical Findings and Comparative Analysis

Recent empirical studies have confirmed significant correlations between personality dimensions and job satisfaction among healthcare professionals working in high-intensity environments. A cross-sectional study conducted in Spain among 312 hospital nurses found that higher levels of conscientiousness and emotional stability were positively associated with job satisfaction, while neuroticism emerged as the strongest negative predictor (8). A large-scale study using a representative sample of 2,815 Finnish physicians - found that for physicians in person-oriented specialties such as internal medicine and occupational health, higher extraversion and agreeableness were significantly associated with greater well being at work. The researchers highlight that these traits enhance interpersonal interactions with patients and colleagues, which fosters a stronger sense of professional satisfaction (9).

Comparative data from different healthcare settings suggest that personality-job satisfaction dynamics may vary across professional roles. A cross-sectional study conducted at Oslo University Hospital examined differences in job satisfaction and personality traits between ICU nurses and physicians. Results showed that physicians had significantly higher job satisfaction scores (mean 51.1) compared to nurses (mean 43.9), with  $P < 0.05$ , indicating a statistically significant difference. Nurses reported higher levels of neuroticism, which was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion, job-related stress, and burn-

out symptoms. These results suggest that neuroticism may function as a psychological vulnerability factor among nurses working in high-intensity environments. Although extraversion scores were marginally higher among physicians (mean 6.1) than nurses (mean 5.7), this difference was not statistically significant. Still, extraversion was associated with more positive interpersonal experiences, suggesting its potential role in fostering resilience and engagement at work. Additionally, the study highlighted that emotional exhaustion was present in nearly 40% of ICU (Intensive Care Unit) nurses, while depersonalization - a key component of burnout - was reported by over 30% of respondents. The authors emphasized the importance of considering individual psychological profiles, especially personality traits, when designing interventions aimed at improving mental health and work satisfaction in ICU staff (10). These differences point to the contextual nature of personality influence and underline the importance of matching individual traits with specific workplace demands.

Meta-analytical evidence also supports the stability of these associations across cultures. A recent meta-analysis involving 65 independent samples from over 20 countries reported that conscientiousness consistently predicts job satisfaction in medical contexts, regardless of geographical region, while neuroticism remains a universal risk factor for dissatisfaction and burnout (4). These findings reinforce the relevance of personality-informed approaches to organizational planning and psychological support in healthcare institutions.

Longitudinal studies have further contributed to understanding the causal links between personality and occupational satisfaction in healthcare. The study by Roberts and Grubb (11) emphasizes the significant consequences of nursing stress, particularly in relation to burnout, job dissatisfaction, and the potential for physical and emotional exhaustion. It highlights that stress among nurses is strongly linked to poor mental health, lower job satisfaction, and increased turnover rates. The need for integrated solutions is emphasized, which include organizational support, effective coping strategies, and changes in work conditions, to reduce stress and enhance both nurse well-being and patient care. It is suggested that addressing the root causes of stress in healthcare environments is crucial for creating a healthier and more sustainable workforce. These findings highlight the importance of personality traits as predictors, not only for current job satisfaction but also for long-term psychological adaptation in healthcare roles. These results emphasize the predictive value of personality traits not only for current job satisfaction but also for long-term psychological adaptation in healthcare roles.

The study by Burgess et al. (12) examined the relationship between personality traits, stress, and coping mechanisms among intensive care nurses. The findings indicated that nurses with higher levels of open-

ness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were more likely to use problem-solving coping strategies, such as active planning and reframing, which helped them manage stress more effectively. Additionally, nurses with higher levels of openness and extraversion reported lower perceived stress from patient and family interactions, while conscientiousness was negatively correlated with perceived stress related to workload and lack of confidence. The authors suggested that pre-employment screening for personality traits linked to lower stress perceptions could be valuable for recruitment and retention strategies in healthcare settings. This research underscores the importance of personality in influencing how nurses cope with the emotional and professional challenges of working in intensive care units, highlighting its potential impact on job satisfaction and well-being (12).

Cultural factors may also moderate the relationship between personality and job satisfaction. The study by Kwantes et al. (13) explores the relationship between person-job fit and job satisfaction among nurses in Japan and Canada. It found that person-job fit was strongly related to job satisfaction in both groups, with cultural context playing a key role in shaping this relationship. The study highlighted that cultural norms and values significantly influence how individuals perceive their fit with their job and how this, in turn, affects their job satisfaction. In particular, the research suggested that in collectivist cultures, such as Japan, there is a stronger emphasis on team cohesion and harmony, which enhances the positive effects of person-job fit on job satisfaction. Conversely, in individualistic cultures like Canada, autonomy and individual achievement were found to be more significant in determining job satisfaction. This indicates that the same personality traits, such as agreeableness and conscientiousness, can have varying effects on job satisfaction depending on the cultural and organizational context. These findings imply that cultural norms and work values interact with individual dispositions, shaping how satisfaction is experienced and expressed within diverse healthcare systems.

The study by Saeed et al. (14) investigates the relationship between emotional labor, compassion fatigue, and various demographic factors among mental health professionals. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between emotional labor and compassion fatigue, suggesting that higher emotional demands at work increase the risk of burnout and emotional exhaustion. It also reveals that older professionals and those with more years of experience reported lower levels of emotional labor and compassion fatigue, while women tended to experience higher levels of both. The authors recommend that healthcare organizations implement training programs focused on emotional labor and compassion fatigue, as well as promote self-care strategies to help mental health professionals manage emotional stress effectively.

## Organizational Implications and Recommendations

The consistent relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction among healthcare professionals has direct implications for human resource management, employee development, and organizational policy in medical institutions. Understanding how individual differences affect occupational well-being can inform more targeted and evidence-based strategies in recruitment, training, and retention practices.

Some study (15) explores how Big Five personality traits influence job satisfaction among Chinese healthcare professionals, emphasizing the mediating role of professional quality of life. It finds that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness are positively correlated with job satisfaction, while neuroticism is negatively correlated. The relationship between these personality traits and job satisfaction is mediated by factors such as compassion satisfaction and burnout. Specifically, compassion satisfaction mediates the positive effects of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness on job satisfaction, while burnout mediates the negative effects of neuroticism. These findings highlight the complex interplay between personality traits and professional quality of life in determining job satisfaction among healthcare workers (15). One study (16) presents a systematic review and meta-analysis that investigates the incremental validity of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) in predicting job performance in selection contexts. The results indicate that TEIQue provides additional predictive value beyond established predictors such as cognitive ability and personality traits. Specifically, factors like well-being and self-control were particularly significant in predicting job performance. Although the effect size was relatively small, the results were statistically and practically significant, suggesting that including trait emotional intelligence in selection processes can improve recruitment outcomes.

The study by Richardson et al. (17) provides a comprehensive examination of how personality traits influence career satisfaction among healthcare professionals. The findings emphasize that certain personality characteristics, particularly conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness, are positively associated with higher levels of job satisfaction in healthcare settings. These traits enable individuals to better manage the challenges inherent in healthcare professions, such as high stress and emotional demands. Conscientiousness, in particular, was found to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction, suggesting that healthcare professionals who are organized, responsible, and diligent in their work are more likely to report higher satisfaction in their careers.

The study also highlights the importance of emotional stability, which contributes to professionals' ability to handle the emotional and psychological

demands of their roles. Those who scored higher in emotional stability tended to experience lower levels of stress and burnout, which in turn led to a more positive perception of their work and career outcomes. The findings also indicate that the ability to interact effectively with others—linked to agreeableness—enhances interpersonal relationships, which is crucial in healthcare environments where collaboration and teamwork are fundamental.

Moreover, the research calls attention to the practical implications for healthcare organizations. It suggests that personality assessments should be considered as part of recruitment and selection processes. By identifying individuals with traits that align with higher job satisfaction, organizations can ensure they are hiring professionals who are more likely to thrive in their roles. Additionally, understanding the impact of personality traits can help in designing tailored professional development programs. For example, interventions aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence or stress management could be beneficial for those with lower levels of emotional stability or conscientiousness.

The study concludes that fostering a work environment that supports the development of positive personality traits can lead to improved job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and better patient care outcomes. By focusing on the individual differences in personality and their impact on professional satisfaction, healthcare organizations can create more supportive and effective work environments for their employees (17).

A study of 22,787 workers across 25 occupational groups found that all five major personality traits showed modest variation by profession, with neuroticism and openness playing significant roles. Lower neuroticism and higher extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness were generally associated with greater job satisfaction. Notably, the fit between individuals' and their occupation's average neuroticism and openness significantly influenced satisfaction - job satisfaction was higher when personal and occupational trait levels matched—underscoring the importance of person-occupation fit in occupational well being (18).

Stress of conscience refers to the psychological discomfort that arises when healthcare professionals are unable to act in accordance with their moral or ethical beliefs due to systemic, organizational, or situational constraints. It often occurs in clinical settings where workers recognize the appropriate course of action but are prevented from following it because of time pressure, staff shortages, institutional policies, or conflicting priorities. This internal moral conflict leads to feelings of guilt, frustration, and powerlessness, which, when persistent, may contribute to emotional exhaustion and professional burnout. In this sense, stress of conscience represents a specific form of moral distress that highlights the ethical tensions healthcare workers frequently navigate, particularly in high-demand environments. A cross-sectional study conducted with 602 healthcare workers in Turkey found a strong pos-

itive correlation ( $r = 0.603$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between stress of conscience and burnout, with stress of conscience explaining 36 % of the variance in burnout scores. Female staff reported higher levels of both stress of conscience and burnout. The study also revealed that less experienced workers exhibited greater burnout and stress of conscience, while prolonged experience was associated with lower levels. These results underscore the critical need for health care managers to recognize and address moral distress among staff. Implementing systemic interventions—such as ethical support programs, workload management, and tailored training—appears essential to reduce stress of conscience and prevent burnout among healthcare professionals (19).

## Psychological Interpretation and Mechanisms

Understanding the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction in healthcare requires an in-depth analysis of the underlying psychological mechanisms that mediate this association. Beyond statistical correlations, personality traits exert their influence through a range of affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes that shape how healthcare professionals experience, interpret, and respond to their work environments.

The relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction among healthcare professionals is a crucial aspect of understanding burnout, emotional well-being, and professional efficacy. Personality traits such as neuroticism, emotional intelligence, and conscientiousness play a significant role in shaping how healthcare professionals experience their work environments and how they manage the emotional demands of their jobs. Research has shown that neuroticism is strongly associated with burnout, while emotional intelligence serves as a protective factor, and conscientiousness enhances job satisfaction and overall performance in healthcare settings.

Neuroticism, characterized by emotional instability, high levels of anxiety, and vulnerability to stress, has been consistently identified as a major risk factor for burnout among healthcare workers. A cross-sectional study among mental health workers in Nigeria found that higher levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness were positively associated with work motivation. The study also revealed that motivation varied by gender and occupational status, with female employees and those in higher professional positions reporting greater motivation. These findings highlight the importance of considering personality traits in recruitment processes and suggest that targeted psychological support—such as training or counseling for individuals prone to emotional instability—may enhance motivation and overall organizational effectiveness (20).

Conversely, emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in buffering the negative effects of stress and burnout. Emotional intelligence is the ability to

recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others. Several studies have demonstrated that healthcare professionals with higher levels of emotional intelligence are better able to cope with the emotional demands of their work, leading to greater job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout. The study by Bianchi (21) found that burnout is more strongly associated with neuroticism than with work-contextualized factors such as effort-reward imbalance and social support at work. Through multiple regression and relative weight analyses, the researcher demonstrated that neuroticism accounted for a significantly larger portion of the variance in burnout symptoms compared to job-related factors. This suggests that individual personality traits, particularly neuroticism, may play a more substantial role in the development of burnout than previously acknowledged. The findings highlight the importance of considering dispositional factors in understanding burnout and suggest that interventions targeting these traits could be beneficial in mitigating burnout symptoms.

A study conducted by Szczygiel and Mikolajczak (22) among emergency nurses showed that emotional intelligence was negatively correlated with burnout. Nurses with higher emotional intelligence exhibited greater emotional clarity and resilience, which helped them to manage the stressors of their roles more effectively. The study concluded that emotional intelligence could serve as a protective factor, reducing the risk of burnout and enhancing professional satisfaction among healthcare workers.

In addition to emotional intelligence, conscientiousness, a personality trait characterized by responsibility, self-discipline, and a strong sense of duty, has been found to positively influence job satisfaction among healthcare workers. Individuals high in conscientiousness are more likely to exhibit high levels of job performance, task commitment, and adherence to professional standards, all of which contribute to greater job satisfaction. According to a study by Molero Jurado et al. (8), nurses with higher conscientiousness scores reported greater satisfaction with their work, as they were able to manage the emotional demands of the job more effectively and were more engaged in their professional roles. This finding suggests that conscientiousness is a critical trait that can mitigate the impact of work-related stressors and enhance job satisfaction.

The interaction between personality traits and work environment factors is essential in determining healthcare professionals' well-being. For instance, while neuroticism may predispose individuals to burnout, supportive work environments that foster emotional support, autonomy, and opportunities for professional development can mitigate these effects. Emotional intelligence and conscientiousness, on the other hand, act as buffers, enhancing job satisfaction and reducing the risk of burnout. This highlights the importance of psychological support, training programs, and organizational strategies that target both personality traits

and work environment factors to improve job satisfaction and mental health in healthcare professionals.

In conclusion, personality traits such as neuroticism, emotional intelligence, and conscientiousness play a significant role in shaping healthcare workers' experiences in the workplace. These traits interact with work environment factors to influence burnout, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Therefore, healthcare institutions can benefit from integrating personality assessments and training programs that promote emotional intelligence and conscientiousness, helping to reduce burnout and enhance job satisfaction among healthcare professionals.

## Conclusion

Job satisfaction among healthcare professionals represents a key component of both their occupational well-being and the overall efficiency of healthcare systems. The relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction indicates that emotional stability (low neuroticism), conscientiousness, and openness to experience are consistently associated with higher levels of satisfaction and lower risk of burnout. Conversely, high neuroticism and low extraversion are linked to increased vulnerability to stress and decreased job engagement.

Research clearly demonstrates that personality traits, through mechanisms such as emotional regulation, self-efficacy, and interpersonal functioning,

significantly influence the workplace environment and the ability to cope with the emotional demands of healthcare settings. Traits like conscientiousness and empathy contribute to maintaining positive professional experiences, while high neuroticism and low sociability may signal greater risk for occupational dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion.

Organizational interventions - such as personnel selection practices, structured psychological support, and burnout prevention programs - may serve as essential factors in reducing occupational stress and promoting mental health among healthcare workers. Flexible working conditions, emotional intelligence training, and personalized coping strategies have the potential to improve overall job satisfaction and resilience.

Furthermore, the importance of a psychologically supportive climate that promotes autonomy and team cohesion has direct implications for preserving motivation and preventing burnout. In this way, healthcare institutions can foster working environments that support personality development, minimize burnout risks, and enhance both individual and systemic outcomes. Future research should focus on exploring the complex mechanisms through which personality interacts with work environment factors across different medical disciplines, with the aim of developing more precise prevention and intervention strategies to enhance job satisfaction and mental well-being.

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