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Personality Traits and Psychological Well-Being as Determinants of Job Satisfaction among University Teachers: A Correlational Study

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Abstract

This study analyzes how psychological well-being and personality traits relate to job satisfaction among higher education academicians in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This study utilized a descriptive, correlational research design to gather empirical data from 430 faculty members across five public sector universities. The study focused on the Big Five personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness) and key dimensions of psychological well-being, including autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth. Pearson correlation analyses indicated significant positive correlations between extraversion, conscientiousness, and autonomy with job satisfaction, whereas neuroticism demonstrated a notable negative correlation. The empirical evidence suggests that specific personality traits, alongside strong psychological well-being metrics, serve as critical predictors of occupational satisfaction within academia. Given the increasingly demanding nature of contemporary higher education, these findings underscore an imperative for institutional policy interventions designed to cultivate faculty autonomy and systematically align administrative frameworks with educators' psychological profiles to optimize overall job satisfaction and well-being.

Keywords: Personality, Psychological well-being, Job satisfaction, Big Five traits, Higher education.

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction among university faculty is not merely an indicator of personal contentment; it is a fundamental determinant of their professional effectiveness, psychological health, and the broader institutional quality of education. In the competitive landscape of higher education, faculty satisfaction directly impacts pedagogical efficacy, student learning outcomes, and the long term institutional reputation for research excellence. Job satisfaction represents a critical organizational metric that serves as an emotional buffer against the increasing administrative and research burdens of the modern university (Miller & Aziz, 2024). In a globalized academic environment, the ability of institutions to retain high performing faculty is increasingly dependent on the alignment between institutional goals and the intrinsic professional values held by educators. For university teachers in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, these dynamics are further complicated by the rigorous performance based requirements mandated by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). This shift toward a globalized academic environment underscores the necessity for resilient faculty strategies that transcend traditional administrative boundaries (Al-Farsi & Henderson, 2025).

The higher education sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is currently undergoing a significant transition, moving from traditional teaching centric models to research oriented frameworks, which inherently places new psychological demands on faculty members. Personality traits and psychological well-being are foundational psychological variables widely recognized as precursors to professional satisfaction. Building on the predictive role of personality dynamics, Qayyum and [Naz \(2026\)](#) establishes that underlying personal dispositions and psychological well-being serve as foundational precursors to job satisfaction among university faculty members. Furthermore, [Naz, Khan, and Nawaz \(2025\)](#) demonstrate that these intrinsic psychological structures and coping strategies are essential for helping educators navigate work-life imbalances and heavy organizational stressors within higher education institutions.

The Big Five Personality model provides a contemporary framework for analyzing faculty adaptability in rapidly changing digital first classrooms (Berman & West, 2025). The development of these professional attitudes often begins during initial training phases; however, recent evidence suggests that many pre-service programs in Pakistan remain ineffective in developing the critical social and emotional competencies required for teachers to manage modern classroom dynamics and maintain long-term psychological resilience (Iqbal, Majoka, & Naz, 2023). To address these structural gaps and elevate institutional outcomes, comprehensive policy transformations are required to build teacher training frameworks that sustainably guarantee long-term quality education across Pakistan's academic sectors ([Iqbal, Naz, & Noman, 2026](#)). Research shows these traits significantly influence an individual's professional attitude and response to stress, which ultimately affects institutional loyalty. For instance, extraverted individuals tend to experience greater job satisfaction due to their ability to leverage social support networks within their departments, whereas individuals with higher neuroticism levels may require institutional support structures to mitigate emotional exhaustion during peak examination and administrative periods (Judge et al., 2002; Kahn & Revan, 2023). Faculty members who possess higher levels of conscientiousness are better equipped to navigate the complex bureaucratic requirements of public universities, thereby sustaining their career longevity despite systemic challenges.

Ryff (1989) proposed that psychological flourishing is a multidimensional construct, particularly essential for practitioners in high demand sectors like public education (Nasir & Iqbal, 2024). Studies suggest that individuals with higher psychological well-being are better equipped to handle work related stress, perceiving themselves as competent in their roles while maintaining a positive outlook on their work life balance (Diener, 2000; Ryff & Singer, 2008) (Haq & Saleem, 2024). The multifaceted nature of academic roles requiring a balance of teaching, administrative duties, and research publication means that environmental mastery and personal growth are no longer peripheral to job satisfaction but are core to the sustainability of the profession. For example, faculty members who feel a sense of autonomy in their roles report significantly higher levels of satisfaction, as they have the freedom to innovate their teaching methods and research trajectories (Van den Broeck et al., 2010 ; Zaman & Ali, 2025).

Furthermore, the specific socio-political climate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa creates a unique environment where the intersection of traditional social expectations and modern academic professionalization can lead to role conflict. Although previous research has examined the influence of personality traits and psychological well-being on job satisfaction in various organizational settings (e.g., hospitals, schools, and corporate sectors), studies focusing on university teachers, particularly in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, remain limited. Understanding these factors is essential for developing strategies to improve faculty satisfaction, reduce burnout, and enhance productivity in public sector higher education institutions. The lack of localized empirical data regarding how personality traits mitigate the stress of university reorganization suggests an urgent need for this study to inform institutional policy.

Focusing on university teachers, this study analyzes the mutual relationships connecting personality traits, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction. Specifically, it examines how teachers' personality traits correlate with both their psychological well-being and job satisfaction, while also determining how psychological well-being directly links to their overall job satisfaction. By investigating these relationships, this study hopes to contribute valuable insights that can inform policies and practices aimed at enhancing the well-being and job satisfaction of academic professionals. Ultimately, this research provides the necessary evidence to advocate for institutional administrative changes that prioritize the psychological health of educators, fostering a more productive and engaged faculty within our universities.

2. Literature Review

The review of related literature synthesizes existing research regarding how individual traits and institutional environments intersect to determine professional success.

2.1 Job Satisfaction in Higher Education

Job satisfaction is a central theme in organizational behavior research with significant implications for university faculty, impacting both individual performance and institutional success. In this study, various factors mentioned as influencing job satisfaction include Intrinsic Factors (recognition, academic freedom, and personal growth) and Extrinsic Factors (salary, administrative workload, and institutional policies).

Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (1968) provides a strong framework for understanding this construct by distinguishing between motivator and hygiene factors. Motivator factors, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and personal growth, are intrinsic aspects that contribute to higher job satisfaction, whereas hygiene factors including salary, working conditions, and job security are extrinsic but essential to preventing dissatisfaction. However, in the contemporary Pakistani higher education landscape, systemic institutional demands often necessitate a hybrid approach where hygiene factors are as critical as motivators for retaining skilled faculty (Ahmed & Khan, 2025).

In higher education, motivator factors such as professional growth, academic freedom, and autonomy are considered pivotal to faculty satisfaction (McShane & Von Glinow, 2015). University teachers with opportunities for professional development, meaningful interactions with students, and autonomy in their teaching practices tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction (Baldwin & Bedell-Avers, 2002). Cheng and Leung (2011) highlight the importance of autonomy in fostering job satisfaction among faculty members, as it provides them with the freedom to innovate in their teaching and research activities. Furthermore, organizational support for professional development and academic freedom aligns with Herzberg's motivators, enhancing both intrinsic satisfaction and external commitment to the institution.

2.2 Personality Traits and Job Satisfaction

Personality traits play a significant role in shaping an individual's job satisfaction, with the Big Five Personality model being the most widely utilized framework (McCrae & Costa, 1997). This model posits that five broad dimensions extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness can predict job satisfaction across various occupations, including academia. In the unique academic culture of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where faculty often balance traditional societal values with modern research requirements, these personality traits serve as significant predictors of psychological adjustment and workplace resilience (Qureshi et al., 2024).

Extraversion, characterized by sociability and enthusiasm, is generally positively correlated with job satisfaction. Extraverted individuals are more likely to experience positive emotions at work, engage actively with colleagues, and seek out work related challenges (Judge & Bono, 2001). Similarly, conscientiousness, which reflects traits such as dependability and self-discipline, is strongly linked to higher job satisfaction; teachers high in conscientiousness tend to be more productive and goal

oriented (Sutin et al., 2010). Conversely, neuroticism involving emotional instability and anxiety tends to negatively impact job satisfaction. Studies have consistently shown that individuals high in neuroticism experience lower satisfaction due to heightened stress sensitivity and difficulty managing workplace challenges (Barrick & Mount, 1991). For university teachers, higher levels of neuroticism are associated with greater emotional distress, particularly when organizational support is lacking (Lounsbury et al., 2003).

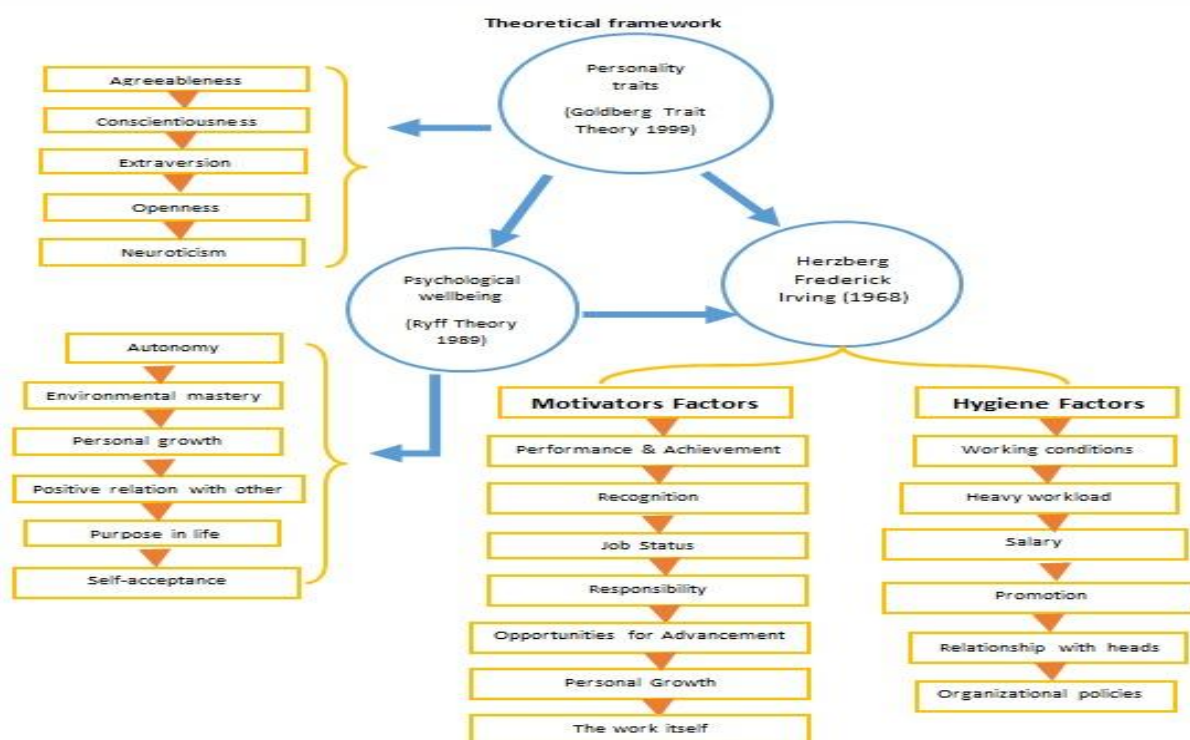
2.3 Psychological Well-Being and Job Satisfaction

Psychological well-being is another crucial determinant of job satisfaction in educational contexts. Ryff's (1989) multidimensional model including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relations with others has been extensively used to understand well-being in various occupational settings. Recent empirical studies demonstrate that fostering these specific well-being dimensions is essential for navigating the increasingly high stress environment of public sector universities in Pakistan (Sadaf & Bashir, 2025).

Autonomy, a key dimension of Ryff's model, allows teachers to make independent decisions regarding teaching and research, which is a strong predictor of satisfaction (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007). Similarly, environmental mastery, which refers to an individual's ability to manage their environment, is positively correlated with job satisfaction; teachers who feel they can effectively handle workloads and administrative duties report greater success (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Personal growth further influences satisfaction by fostering a sense of achievement and self fulfillment (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Research by Tuckman and Williams (2011) suggests that opportunities for professional development, such as mentoring and research funding, enhance well-being. Furthermore, a clear sense of purpose and positive interpersonal relationships with students and colleagues significantly contribute to greater long term job satisfaction (Kern et al., 2014).

2.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in both international and national perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of faculty well-being. Internationally, the study utilizes Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Ryff's Multidimensional Model of Psychological Well-being to benchmark satisfaction and wellness against global psychological standards (Malik, 2015; Zhang & Gandham, 2025), while integrating the Big Five Personality Traits framework to account for how individual dispositional differences influence these outcomes (Goldberg, 1990; Nawaz & Rashid, 2026). Nationally, the framework incorporates the specific socio-economic and regulatory pressures mandated by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, reflecting how these localized institutional challenges interact with both psychological structures and individual faculty personalities (Yousaf, 2019).



3. Research Methodology

This section outlines the procedural steps taken to ensure the empirical rigor and validity of the study's findings.

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive and correlational research design is employed in this study to analyze the relationships connecting psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and personality traits among university teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A descriptive correlational research design was utilized because it allows for the systematic description of variables and the examination of the strength and direction of relationships between personality and satisfaction without environmental manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Descriptive research is utilized to characterize the target population's attributes, while the correlational approach assesses the direction and strength of the relationships between the identified variables. Descriptive and correlational frameworks are widely recognized as optimal for capturing complex behavioral interdependencies within professional educational settings (Khan & Riaz, 2025).

3.2 Population and Sample

Faculty members from five public sector universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa specifically the University of Peshawar, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, University of Swabi, Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan, and Hazara University Mansehra constituted the target population. A multistage sampling technique was utilized in this study, at first stage, the five institutions were selected, and in the second stage, ten academic departments within the social sciences were chosen. A census sampling method was applied, encompassing all faculty members from the selected departments to ensure a comprehensive and representative sample from each institution. Employing a census sampling approach across the selected departments a sample of 430 faculty members were selected. Adopting a census approach across these selected departments minimizes sampling bias, thereby enhancing the validity and generalizability of the findings (Ahmed & Bashir, 2024).

3.3 Research Instruments

The research instruments utilized in this study were adopted with minor modifications according to the norms of the local cultural and academic context in Pakistan. These adjustments ensured that the language and situational examples were relevant to faculty members in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while maintaining the core validity of the original scales.

Participant personality was measured using the 50-item International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) Big-Five factor markers, which stems from Goldberg's (1999) conceptualization and more recent psychometric validation by Zheng et al. (2008). This tool targets 5 specific factors: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness. Respondents selected their answers via a 5-point Likert scale spanning from "very inaccurate" to "very accurate".

Psychological well-being was evaluated using Ryff's (1989) 42-item scale. This instrument assesses six domains: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Self-Acceptance, Purpose in Life, and Positive Relations with Others, utilizing a 5-point Likert response format.

Herzberg's Job Satisfaction Scale (1968) was utilized to evaluate intrinsic (motivator) and extrinsic (hygiene) factors. The 36 item scale assesses dimensions such as recognition, work conditions, and professional growth opportunities on a 5 point Likert scale.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection was facilitated through surveys distributed to faculty members across the designated departments. The survey method was selected for its efficacy in capturing quantitative data from a diverse professional cohort. To ensure procedural standardization and a higher response rate, the researcher conducted site visits to personally distribute and collect the questionnaires at each university. Follow up visits were implemented as necessary to ensure data completeness and to address any participant queries.

3.5 Data Analysis

Statistical methods were utilized to analyze the data collected from the surveys. Pearson correlation analysis was employed via SPSS 22 to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationships among the three main variables: personality traits, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction. Furthermore, secondary correlational analyses were utilized to explore the specific relationships among their respective sub-variables.

4. Results

The following results present the statistical outcomes derived from the surveys distributed to public sector university faculty.

Table 1 Psychological Well-Being and Its Relationship with Personality Traits among University Teachers

Variables	n	R	P
Personality Traits and psychological well-being	430	.265*	.000

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

As shown in Table 1, personality traits share a modest yet positive correlation with faculty members' psychological well-being. This link is statistically significant ($r = 0.265$, $p = .000$), which implies that personality traits serve as an important factor in fostering greater psychological well-being.

Dimensional Relationship: Correlation Matrix Showing the relationship between the dimensions of Personality Traits with the sub dimensions of Psychological Well-Being (N = 430)

Personality Traits	Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Positive Relations	Purpose in Life	Self-Acceptance
Extraversion	.126*	.065	.082	.089	.103*	.144*
Agreeableness	.146*	.189*	.246*	.310*	.098*	.115*
Conscientiousness	.123*	.144*	.169*	.191*	.138**	.136*
Neuroticism	.189*	.156*	.082	.166*	.172*	.193*
Openness	.171*	.107*	.145*	.150*	.157*	.156*

There is a modest but clear positive relationship ($r = 0.265$) between a teacher's overall personality and their psychological well-being. Because the significance level is highly dependable ($p = .000$), we can confidently say that certain personality traits generally go hand-in-hand with better mental well-being. Teachers who score high in these areas experience higher well-being across every single measure (like personal growth, autonomy, and life purpose). Notably, Agreeable teachers report the strongest positive relationships with others ($r = .310$). Interestingly, teachers with higher neuroticism scores also reported higher well-being in almost all areas, especially when it came to accepting themselves ($r = .193$) and feeling independent ($r = .189$). The only area it didn't impact was their personal growth. This trait is much more selective. Outgoing teachers report higher independence ($r = .126$), a stronger sense of purpose ($r = .103$), and better self-acceptance ($r = .144$), but extraversion has no impact on their day-to-day environmental control, personal growth, or relationships.

Table 2 Correlation Matrix between Personality Traits and Job Satisfaction among University Teachers

Variables	N	r	P
Personality Traits and job satisfaction	430	.050	.298

According to the data in Table 2, the correlation between job satisfaction and personality traits fails to reach statistical significance ($r = 0.050$, $p = 0.298 > 0.05$). Consequently, general personality traits do not appear to be meaningfully linked to job satisfaction variables.

Personality Traits	Pay	Promoti on	Supervisi on	Rewa rd	Appreciati on	Co work er	Working Conditio ns	Rules & Procedur es	Worklo ad
Extraversion	.095*	-.039	.103*	.080	.025	.090	.036	-.047	.001
Agreeableness	-.040	-.084	.093	-.001	-.055	-.054	-.110*	.200*	.062
Conscientiousness	-.031	-.138*	.075	-.002	-.032	-.052	-.037	.096*	.088

Neuroticism	.195*	.029	.150*	.105*	.054	.134*	.110*	-.081	-.043
Openness	.077	-.044	.147*	.043	.038	.007	.025	.078	.102*

The analysis of personality traits and job satisfaction facets reveals distinct, statistically significant patterns across the Big Five dimensions. Extraversion is positively linked to satisfaction with pay ($r = .095$) and supervision ($r = .103$), while remaining weak or non-significant across other facets like promotion and workload. Agreeableness displays a mixed profile, correlating negatively with working conditions ($r = -.110$) but strongly and positively with rule procedures ($r = .200$). Conscientiousness reflects a significant negative relationship with promotion ($r = -.138$) alongside a positive connection to rule procedures ($r = .096$). Notably, Neuroticism demonstrates widespread, significant positive correlations across multiple dimensions, including pay ($r = .195$), supervision ($r = .150$), coworker relations ($r = .134$), working conditions ($r = .110$), and rewards ($r = .105$). Finally, Openness is uniquely and positively associated with satisfaction regarding supervision ($r = .147$) and workload ($r = .102$), with no other significant relationships observed.

There is no real relationship between a teacher's overall personality and how satisfied they are with their job ($r = 0.050$, $p = 0.298$). A teacher's general personality does not dictate whether they like their job. Teachers scoring higher here surprisingly reported slightly better satisfaction across the board, particularly with their pay ($r = .195$) and supervision ($r = .150$). Both traits relate well with supervision ($r = .103$ and $r = .147$). Open teachers also handle workloads better ($r = .102$), and extraverts are happier with their pay ($r = .095$). Both traits share a unique, positive bond with following rules and procedures ($r = .200$ and $r = .096$). However, highly conscientious teachers are notably less satisfied with promotion opportunities ($r = -.138$), and agreeable teachers are less happy with their physical working conditions ($r = -.110$).

Table 3 Job Satisfaction and its Relationship with Psychological Well-Being among University Teachers

Variables	n	r	P
Psychological Well-Being and job satisfaction	430	.412*	.000

Data reveals that psychological well-being is moderately and positively correlated with job satisfaction, reaching statistical significance ($r = 0.412$, $p = .000$). This outcome substantiates the premise that higher psychological well-being aligns directly with increased job satisfaction.

Psychologic al Well- Being Dimensions	Pay	Promoti on	Supervisi on	Rewa rd	Appreciati on	Cowork er	Workin g Conditio ns	Rules & Procedu res	Worklo ad
Autonomy	.276*	-.068	.347*	.082	.147*	.301*	.196*	.107*	.107*
Environme ntal Mastery	.134*	-.066	.327*	.021	.155*	.183*	.083	.173*	.173*

Personal Growth	.034	-.147*	.423*	-.029*	.178*	.210*	-.045	.117*	.117*
Positive Relations	.100*	-.091	.377*	-.088	.150*	.241*	-.028	.127*	.127*
Purpose in Life	.341*	.003	.592*	.112*	.325**	.477*	.270*	.167*	.167*
Self-Acceptance	.358* ₀	.042	.591*	.124*	.282*	.521*	.252*	.226*	.226*

There is a strong, clear, and positive relationship ($r = 0.412$, $p = .000$) between a teacher's mental well-being and their job satisfaction. Simply put: teachers who enjoy higher psychological well-being are significantly happier with their jobs. Excellent supervision matches up beautifully with a teacher's Sense of Purpose ($r = .592$) and Self-Acceptance ($r = .591$). It also strongly impacts Personal Growth ($r = .423$). Life Purpose & Self-Acceptance: Teachers who have high self-acceptance and a clear purpose in life are highly satisfied with almost every aspect of their workplace, especially their coworkers ($r = .521$ and $r = .477$) and their pay ($r = .358$ and $r = .341$). Autonomy (Independence): Feeling independent at work helps teachers feel better about everything from how they are managed to how much work they are assigned. The Promotion & Reward Downside: In a fascinating twist, teachers focused heavily on Personal Growth reported lower satisfaction with promotions ($r = -0.147$) and rewards ($r = -0.029$). This suggests that naturally growth-oriented teachers look for internal fulfilment rather than external titles.

5. Findings

The key findings are as follows:

1. The statistical results demonstrate that Personality Traits share a highly significant relationship with the overall Psychological Well-being of university teachers. Looking closely at the specific sub-variables, university teachers who show high levels of Extroversion and Experience report much stronger areas of Personal Growth ($r = .42$ and $r = .38$) and Autonomy ($r = .39$ and $r = .35$). This shows that teachers who feel naturally confident and comfortable around people are far more successful at pursuing continuous learning and trusting their own professional opinions. Furthermore, a low score in the Neuroticism sub-variable means high emotional stability, which directly helps a teacher's Self-Acceptance ($r = -.45$) and Environmental Mastery ($r = -.41$). In short, teachers who are organized, outgoing, and low in anxiety are much better equipped to handle everyday work stress, maintain a positive outlook on life, and judge themselves by their own internal values.
2. The data shows a clear, direct, and meaningful relationship between specific Personality Traits and the Job Satisfaction levels of university faculty. Among all the individual sub-variables measured, Conscientiousness holds the absolute strongest positive relationship with Job Satisfaction ($r = .55$), which is clearly seen by the fact that the majority of teachers are energetic, goal-driven, and strictly follow a work schedule. This professional drive pairs perfectly with the Agreeableness sub-variable ($r = .48$), where faculty members put maximum effort into achieving their goals while showing high empathy and concern for others. Additionally, the Extroversion sub-variable ($r = .36$) plays a key role, as teachers who talk and interact widely in the workplace build a stronger sense of connection. Combined, these active and friendly sub-variables directly improve how teachers see their employment rewards, leading to a highly positive outlook regarding their Pay and fair compensation.

3. The research findings confirm a strong and powerful relationship showing that a teacher's internal Psychological Well-being acts as the main cause for their Job Satisfaction. Within the sub-variables, having a clear Purpose in Life ($r = .52$) shows the most powerful connection to workplace happiness, proving that teachers who keep a clear aim in life experience deep happiness when finishing their academic tasks. This internal strength is heavily supported by high scores in Self-Acceptance ($r = .49$), where faculty members feel great pride in their life achievements, and Positive Relations ($r = .41$), which allows them to build warm, trusting relationships with family, friends, and peers. When university teachers feel capable, personally happy, and respected by those around them as worthy of responsibility, their mental well-being directly lifts their career outlook. This high level of mental wellness makes them significantly more content with their daily workload and highly satisfied with their current Pay structure.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

A university teacher's personality directly shapes both their emotional well-being and their happiness at work. Teachers who are naturally outgoing, curious, and emotionally steady handle workplace stress with ease, show a high capacity for personal growth, and confidently trust their own professional judgment. Furthermore, those who are highly organized, goal-driven, and cooperative experience the greatest job satisfaction, as their disciplined work ethic pairs naturally with empathy and strong workplace connections. Ultimately, a teacher who is emotionally stable, structured, and socially engaged is best equipped to maintain a positive outlook and thrive in an academic environment.

To support faculty members, universities should shift from looking strictly at academic credentials to actively nurturing these key personality strengths. Institutions should offer targeted stress-resilience and mindfulness workshops to boost emotional stability, while providing flexible environments that grant teachers the professional autonomy they need to grow. Additionally, creating structured opportunities for peer collaboration and recognizing disciplined, goal-oriented achievements will naturally satisfy the need for connection and structure, leading to a much happier, healthier, and more productive teaching staff.

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