Big Five Personality Traits and Workplace Outcomes: A Systematic Literature Review

Nor Azmawati Husain[1*], Yuslizawati Mohd Yusoff[2], Zuhairah Hasan[1,] Noor Rafhati Romaiha[1] & Norshiba Norhisham[1]

[1]Department of Management & Marketing, Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA(UiTM), Cawangan Melaka Kampus Bandaraya Melaka, 110, Off Jalan Hang Tuah, 75350 Melaka, Malaysia.

[2]Department of Finance, Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA(UiTM), Cawangan Johor Kampus Segamat, 85000 Segamat, Johor, Malaysia.

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ABSTRACT

Personality traits are widely used to explain why individuals respond differently to similar work conditions, yet evidence across workplace outcomes remains fragmented and sometimes inconsistent. This integrative review examines how the Big Five personality traits relate to job performance, job satisfaction, workplace spirituality, work-life balance, and cognitive biases. A structured search of Google Scholar and ScienceDirect was conducted for empirical studies published from 2019 to 2024. Thirty-two core studies were synthesized, while foundational and closely related empirical studies were used only to strengthen theoretical interpretation. Across occupational and national contexts, conscientiousness showed the most consistent positive association with job performance and job satisfaction, while extraversion was generally beneficial in socially intensive roles. Neuroticism was commonly associated with lower job satisfaction and less favourable work-life outcomes. Agreeableness and openness to experience showed more context-dependent relationships, particularly across collaborative versus competitive roles and structured versus innovative work. Evidence on workplace spirituality and cognitive biases was comparatively limited, although available studies indicate links between non-neurotic traits and workplace spirituality and between extraversion or openness and selected decision biases. The review contributes by integrating conventional workplace outcomes with less frequently examined domains and by highlighting the importance of occupational context in activating personality-related behaviour. Interpreted through the Five-Factor Model and Trait Activation Theory, these findings emphasize how occupational demands and organizational circumstances shape trait expression. The synthesis supports using personality evidence alongside job analysis and employee support rather than as a stand-alone basis for employment decisions. Future investigations should explore contextual moderators and use longitudinal designs across a broader range of work settings. Limitations include restricted database coverage and the 2019-2024 search window.

Keywords: Personality traits, Job satisfaction, Big Five personality, workplace spirituality, Cognitive biases

INTRODUCTION

Personality is a relatively enduring pattern of thoughts, emotions, and behaviour that influences how individuals interpret and respond to their environments. In organizational research, personality has long been used to explain differences in work behaviour, adjustment, and performance. The Five-Factor Model (FFM), commonly described as the Big Five, organizes personality into openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism(McCrae & John, 1992). The model is especially useful in organizational settings because the same work environment can elicit different reactions from employees who differ in these dispositional tendencies.

The workplace relevance of personality is well established, but the strength and direction of relationships are not uniform across outcomes or contexts. Classic evidence identifies conscientiousness as a broadly useful predictor of job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), while later research shows that other traits can become more or less relevant depending on job demands and situational cues. Trait Activation Theory explains this pattern by proposing that traits are expressed when situations provide cues that make those traits relevant (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Thus, extraversion may be advantageous in jobs requiring extensive social interaction, whereas conscientiousness may be particularly useful in structured roles that reward reliability, persistence, and attention to detail.

Recent empirical studies continue to report heterogeneous findings across industries and countries. Personality has been associated with job performance (Babar & Tahir, 2020; Duan & Deng, 2023; Gupta & Gupta, 2020), job satisfaction(Abdulai & Carvajal, 2023; Petasis & Economides, 2020; Topino et al., 2021), workplace spirituality (Tutar & Oruç, 2020; Tutar et al., 2020) , and work-life balance (Köse et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2024; Soni & Bakhru, 2023). A smaller stream of work also links personality with decision-making biases, particularly in investment-related contexts (Ishfaq et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2022). These findings suggest that personality is relevant not only to traditional performance outcomes but also to how people experience work, manage competing life demands, perceive meaning, and make judgments.

Despite this broad evidence base, the literature is fragmented. Many studies examine a single outcome in a single occupation or country, making it difficult to identify which personality-outcome relationships are consistent and which are contingent on context. Workplace spirituality and cognitive biases are also much less frequently examined than job satisfaction or performance. In addition, some studies treat personality traits as universally beneficial or detrimental, although interactionist perspectives suggest that the value of a trait depends on the demands and cues of a particular role.

Personality traits is particularly important in Malaysia, where most organisations operate in inclusive & diverse cultural, occupational, and organisational environments. As organisations continue to emphasise employee productivity, organisational effectiveness, and workforce well-being, understanding individual differences in workplace behaviour has become increasingly relevant, specifically in human resource management practices. Personality characteristics may anticipate how future employees respond to job demands, workplace relationships, organisational expectations, and work-life responsibilities. For instance, previous Malaysian studies have demonstrated associations between personality traits and job satisfaction among hospitality employees (Tham & Wong, 2021), as well as between personality characteristics and career success among government employees (Norliyana & Halimah Mohd, 2021). However, these studies predominantly focus on specific occupational settings and outcomes, highlighting the need for a broader synthesis of personality-related workplace outcomes. By integrating comprehensive evidence across multiple workplace dimensions, the study offers insights that may assist Malaysian organisations in understanding the role of personality in employee performance, satisfaction, well-being, and organisational decision-making.

Accordingly, this review has three objectives: (1) to synthesize evidence on the relationships between the Big Five traits and job performance and job satisfaction; (2) to examine how personality relates to workplace spirituality and work-life balance; and (3) to evaluate emerging evidence linking personality with cognitive biases in work-relevant decision-making. By integrating these outcomes, the review aims to identify consistent patterns, context-dependent findings, and gaps for future research. The remainder of the paper presents the literature review and theoretical foundation, describes the review method, reports the findings, discusses their theoretical and practical implications, and concludes with limitations and directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Big Five Personality Model

The Big Five conceptualizes personality as five broad dimensions. Openness to experience reflects curiosity, imagination, preference for novelty, and receptiveness to new ideas. Conscientiousness reflects organization, dependability, self-discipline, and goal orientation. Extraversion reflects sociability, assertiveness, activity, and positive emotionality. Agreeableness captures cooperation, empathy, trust, and concern for others. Neuroticism

reflects a tendency toward negative emotionality, anxiety, and emotional instability; its opposite is often described as emotional stability(McCrae & John, 1992) . These dimensions should be treated as continua rather than as fixed categories of 'good' or 'bad' personalities.

In the workplace, trait effects are likely to depend on the extent to which tasks and social environments allow or require particular tendencies to be expressed. Theory of purposeful work behaviour further proposes that personality traits, higher-order goals, and job characteristics jointly shape meaningfulness and work outcomes (Barrick & Mount, 1991). This perspective is useful to intepret inconsistent findings because it shifts attention from whether a trait is universally positive to when and where a trait is likely to be advantageous.

Personality and Workplace Outcomes

Job performance and job satisfaction are the most established outcomes in the reviewed literature. Conscientiousness is frequently associated with reliable performance because it supports persistence, planning, and self-regulation, whereas extraversion is often useful in socially demanding jobs. For job satisfaction, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness are often positively related to satisfaction, while neuroticism is frequently negatively related because individuals high in neuroticism are more sensitive to stressors and negative affect (Kang & Malvaso, 2023; Petasis & Economides, 2020). Nevertheless, role characteristics, procedural justice, supervisory support, and occupational demands can alter these relationships (Huo & Jiang, 2021; Tham & Wong, 2021).

Workplace spirituality refers to employees' experience of meaningful work, connection, and alignment with organizational values. It is conceptually distinct from religion and focuses on the experience of purpose and connectedness at work. Empirical evidence remains limited, but studies in university settings suggest that openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness are positively associated with workplace spirituality, while neuroticism shows weaker or nonsignificant relationships (Tutar & Oruç, 2020; Tutar et al., 2020). Meaningful work research similarly suggests that personal and contextual factors jointly shape employees' experience of meaning (Lysova et al., 2019).

Work-life balance concerns the perceived compatibility of work and non-work roles. Personality can influence how individuals organize demands, respond to conflict, and use coping resources. Studies among service workers, teachers, and bank employees show that conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and emotional stability may support more favourable work-life outcomes, although patterns vary across samples (Köse et al., 2021; Naeem et al., 2022; Soni & Bakhru, 2023). Importantly, work-life balance should not be described as directly changing personality without longitudinal evidence; most studies in this review establish associations rather than causal personality change.

Cognitive biases are systematic tendencies in judgment that can influence decision making. The evidence linking the Big Five to cognitive or behavioural biases is less developed than the evidence on performance or satisfaction. Studies of investors and financial professionals suggest that extraversion, openness, and neuroticism can be related to specific heuristics and biases, whereas conscientiousness and agreeableness show less consistent effects (Baker et al., 2023; Ishfaq et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2023). Because much of this evidence comes from investment contexts, generalization to routine organizational decision making should be made cautiously.

METHODOLOGY

To enhance transparency and reproducibility, the literature search was guided by a structured review protocol. The search strings included combinations of the following keywords: ("Big Five personality" OR "Five-Factor Model" OR personality traits) AND ("job performance" OR "employee performance"), ("job satisfaction"), ("workplace spirituality"), ("work-life balance"), and ("cognitive bias" OR "behavioural bias"). Searches were conducted separately for each workplace outcome within Google Scholar and ScienceDirect. Where necessary, Boolean operators and database-specific filters were applied to refine search results

The initial search yielded 147 records across both databases. Following removal of duplicate records (n = 23), 124 publications remained for title and abstract screening. After excluding studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria, 49 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Seventeen studies were subsequently excluded due to conceptual design, insufficient workplace relevance, or lack of direct examination of Big Five personality traits. The final review sample consisted of 32 empirical studies included in the synthesis.

To improve review search, each included study was evaluated according to four criteria: clarity of research objectives, appropriateness of methodology, adequacy of sample characteristics, and validity of conclusions. Each criterion was assessed as high, moderate, or low quality. The majority of included studies demonstrated moderate to high methodological quality, with limitations primarily related to cross-sectional research designs and reliance on self-reported data. No studies were excluded solely based on quality assessment; however, methodological limitations were considered when interpreting findings.

Figure 1 presents the study selection process. The review followed four stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. Records were first identified through database searches, duplicates were removed, and the remaining studies underwent title and abstract screening. Full-text articles were then evaluated against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria before being included in the final synthesis. This systematic selection process reduced selection bias and improved the transparency of the review methodology

Although the reference list contains 41 sources, only 32 studies met the inclusion criteria and were retained as core empirical studies for analysis. The remaining references consist of foundational theoretical publications, methodological references, and supplementary empirical studies that were incorporated to strengthen conceptual discussion and interpretation. This distinction was maintained throughout the review to ensure consistency between the study sample and the broader supporting literature

Table 1: Review Search Strategy and Selection Criteria

Databases	**Google Scholar and ScienceDirect**
Publication period	2019-2024
Search date	Jun-24
Search concepts	Big Five personality / Five-Factor Model combined with job performance, job satisfaction, workplace spirituality, work-life balance, and cognitive bias terms
Inclusion criteria	Empirical study; English language; full text available; working adults, professionals, managers, or work-relevant decision makers; at least one target outcome
Exclusion criteria	Review/conceptual papers; unrelated outcomes; inaccessible full text; clearly non-work-related samples or contexts
Core studies retained	32 empirical studies

Source: Authors' review protocol.

RESULTS

Personality Traits and Job Performance

Across the reviewed studies, conscientiousness was the most consistently favourable trait for job performance. This pattern was evident among managers, lecturers, hospitality employees, and digital workers (Babar & Tahir, 2020; Duan & Deng, 2023; Gupta & Gupta, 2020; Lan et al., 2021). Conscientious employees are generally more organized, persistent, and dependable, characteristics that are relevant across many occupations. Openness to experience was especially relevant where work involved learning, adaptation, or innovation, while extraversion was more beneficial in roles requiring frequent interpersonal interaction.

The effects of agreeableness were more context dependent. Agreeableness was positively associated with performance in some teaching and research contexts (Abiona et al., 2020; Chandrasekara, 2019), but its value

is likely to depend on whether cooperation is central to the role. Zastempowski (2024) further showed that openness, conscientiousness, and extraversion were associated with innovation among micro-entrepreneurs, reinforcing the importance of matching trait interpretation to the specific form of performance being examined.

Personality Traits and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was the most frequently examined outcome in the core studies. Conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness were commonly associated with higher satisfaction, although the relative strength of each trait varied by occupation and country (Abdulai & Carvajal, 2023; Rababah, 2019; Ward, 2019). Conscientiousness may support satisfaction by helping employees meet role expectations and experience competence, whereas extraversion and agreeableness may be advantageous in socially interactive environments.

Neuroticism showed the clearest negative pattern. Higher neuroticism was associated with lower job satisfaction among police officers, hotel managers, aviation employees, and other worker samples (Mansour et al., 2021; Petasis & Economides, 2020; Tham & Wong, 2021). However, the effects of other traits were not universal. Tham and Wong (2021), for example, showed that procedural justice helped explain the relationship between conscientiousness and job satisfaction, illustrating that organizational processes can shape how personality translates into workplace attitudes.

Personality Traits and Workplace Spirituality

Only two core studies directly examined workplace spirituality, making this the least developed workplace-attitude theme in the review. In university settings, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness were positively associated with workplace spirituality, whereas neuroticism was weaker or nonsignificant (Tutar & Oruç, 2020; Tutar et al., 2020). These findings suggest that traits associated with sociability, self-regulation, cooperation, and receptiveness may facilitate experiences of connection, meaning, or alignment with organizational values. Because the evidence is concentrated in a single sector and country, these findings should not be generalized broadly without replication.

Personality Traits and Work-Life Balance

Studies of work-life balance generally indicated that conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and emotional stability can support more favourable work-life outcomes, although effects differ across samples (Köse et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2024; Soni & Bakhru, 2023). These traits may influence planning, coping, social support seeking, and adaptability when employees manage competing work and non-work demands.

Naeem et al. (2022) reported that work-life balance mediated the relationship between several Big Five traits and turnover intentions among private-bank employees. This distinction is important: work-life balance functioned as a mediator rather than a moderator in that study. Huo and Jiang (2023) also showed that trait extraversion moderated relationships within a work-life conflict and job-performance model, indicating that personality can operate both as an antecedent of work-life experiences and as a boundary condition that changes how work-life conflict affects employees.

Personality Traits and Cognitive Biases

Evidence connecting personality with cognitive biases was comparatively limited in the 32 core studies. Ishfaq et al. (2020) found that extraversion was directly and indirectly associated with heuristic biases in investment decisions. Closely related supplementary evidence also indicates that extraversion, openness, and neuroticism can be associated with specific behavioural biases among financial professionals and investors (Baker et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2023). Zheng et al. (2022) similarly linked managerial personality traits with overconfidence in working-capital decisions among SMEs.

These findings should be interpreted cautiously because most evidence comes from financial or investment decision contexts rather than from general employee decision-making. The available evidence does not support

treating any single trait as uniformly bias-prone. Instead, different traits appear to relate to different biases under particular decision conditions, which is consistent with an interactionist view of personality.

Table 2: Characteristics and Key Findings of the 32 Core Studies

Study	Country / context	Outcome(s)	Key finding
Duan & Deng (2023)	Australia; working adults	Job performance; work-life factors	Agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion were relevant to performance; neuroticism and conscientiousness were also linked with work-related wellbeing/conflict patterns.
Abdulai & Carvajal (2023)	Ghana; public university professors	Job satisfaction	Extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were positively associated with job satisfaction.
Köse et al. (2021)	Turkey; service-sector employees	Work-life balance	Extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, and emotional stability were associated with better work-life balance; agreeableness was not significant.
Chandrasekara (2019)	Sri Lanka; government school teachers	Job performance; job satisfaction	Agreeableness and extraversion were associated with performance; several Big Five traits were related to satisfaction.
Kim (2019)	Korea; workers	Job satisfaction	Extraversion and neuroticism were related to job satisfaction through social-networking-service use.
Tutar & Oruç (2020)	Turkey; university academic/administrative staff	Workplace spirituality	Extraversion and conscientiousness showed positive relationships with workplace spirituality.
Topino et al. (2021)	Italy; young workers	Job satisfaction	Conscientiousness was associated with job satisfaction, with age-related moderation examined.
Thakre & Jadhav (2022)	India; male sales personnel	Job satisfaction	Extraversion was positively related to job satisfaction alongside occupational stress and job involvement.
Abiona et al. (2020)	Nigeria; agricultural research employees	Job performance	Agreeableness, openness, and extraversion were associated with employee performance.
Singh et al. (2019)	Caribbean; hotel employees	Job satisfaction	Conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness were related to satisfaction, with work engagement included in the model.
Petasis & Economides (2020)	Cyprus; police officers	Job satisfaction	Neuroticism was negatively associated with job satisfaction and was considered alongside occupational stress.
Halim et al. (2020)	Indonesia; manufacturing staff	Job satisfaction	Openness and conscientiousness were positively related to satisfaction, while neuroticism showed a negative relationship.
Tham & Wong (2021)	Malaysia; hotel front-desk managers	Job satisfaction	Neuroticism was negatively related to satisfaction; procedural justice mediated the effect of conscientiousness.
Gupta & Gupta (2020)	India; FMCG managers	Job performance	All Big Five traits were examined as predictors of managerial job performance, with trait-specific effects.
Babar & Tahir (2020)	Pakistan; university teaching staff	Job performance	Openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness were positively associated with job performance.

Tutar et al. (2020)	Turkey; public-university employees	Workplace spirituality	Openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness positively predicted workplace spirituality; neuroticism did not.
Slišković et al. (2022)	Croatia; male seafarers	Job satisfaction	Emotional stability, conscientiousness, and extraversion were positively associated with job satisfaction.
Soni & Bakhru (2023)	India; business-school teachers	Work-life balance	Work-life balance mediated relationships between Big Five traits and eudaimonic wellbeing.
Pandey et al. (2024)	India; banking employees	Work-life balance; perceived performance	All Big Five traits were examined in relation to work-life balance and perceived performance.
Naeem et al. (2022)	Pakistan; private-bank employees	Work-life balance; turnover intention	Work-life balance mediated the relationships of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness with turnover intentions.
Knezevic et al. (2020)	Serbia; coal-company employees	Job satisfaction	Different Big Five traits related to distinct facets of satisfaction such as supervision, benefits, coworkers, and the nature of work.
Almutairi & Ahmed (2022)	Saudi Arabia; school teachers	Job satisfaction	Conscientiousness showed the strongest positive relationship with satisfaction; neuroticism showed the weakest pattern.
Yeon & Choi (2019)	Korea; national employee panel	Job satisfaction	Personality traits, self-esteem, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction were structurally related, with gender differences examined.
Mansour et al. (2021)	Dubai; aviation employees	Job satisfaction	Extraversion was positively and neuroticism negatively related to job satisfaction.
Ward (2019)	United States; regional-bank employees	Job satisfaction	Conscientiousness was positively associated with job satisfaction.
Rababah (2019)	Jordan; hospital employees	Job satisfaction; job performance	Conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness were positive; neuroticism was negative in relationships with satisfaction/performance.
Norliyana & Halimah Mohd (2021)	Malaysia; government employees	Career success / performance-related outcome	Agreeableness, extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness related to intrinsic career success; conscientiousness and neuroticism related to extrinsic success.
Abdullah et al. (2019)	Malaysia; Islamic-bank employees	Job satisfaction	Conscientiousness showed a positive relationship with job satisfaction.
Ishfaq et al. (2020)	Pakistan; investors	Cognitive/heuristic biases	Extraversion had direct and indirect effects on heuristic biases in investment decision making.
Huo & Jiang (2023)	China; restaurant-company employees	Work-life conflict; job performance	Employee well-being mediated the work-life conflict-performance relationship and trait extraversion operated as a moderator.
Zastempowski (2024)	Poland; micro-entrepreneurs	Innovation performance	Openness, conscientiousness, and extraversion supported product innovation; openness and extraversion supported process innovation.
Lan et al. (2021)	Hong Kong; hotel employees	Job performance; job satisfaction	Personality profiles differentiated performance and satisfaction, highlighting the value of trait combinations rather than isolated traits.

Source: Authors' synthesis of the core studies.

Table 3: Cross-Theme Synthesis of the Review

Outcome	Most consistent trait pattern	Context-dependent / mixed findings	Overall interpretation
Job performance	Conscientiousness most consistently positive; extraversion useful in social roles	Agreeableness and openness vary by job demands; innovation-related performance differs from general performance	Strongest evidence for conscientiousness; trait value depends on role requirements.
Job satisfaction	Conscientiousness/extraversion often positive; neuroticism commonly negative	Agreeableness and openness vary across occupations; justice/support can shape effects	Relatively strong evidence, but organizational context matters.
Workplace spirituality	Openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness generally positive	Evidence concentrated in Turkish university samples	Promising but currently narrow evidence base.
Work-life balance	Conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and emotional stability often favourable	Traits can act as antecedents, moderators, or indirect predictors depending on model	Moderate evidence; causal direction should not be overstated.
Cognitive biases	Extraversion, openness, and neuroticism linked to selected biases in financial contexts	Bias type and decision context strongly condition relationships	Emerging evidence; insufficient for broad workplace generalization.

Source: Authors' synthesis.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings reveal varying degrees of consistency in the relationships between personality traits and workplace outcomes. Conscientiousness emerges as the most dependable positive trait for work-related outcomes, particularly job performance and job satisfaction. This pattern is consistent with the broader personality literature, which links conscientiousness with persistence, dependability, and goal-directed behaviour (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Extraversion is also frequently beneficial, but its value is more strongly tied to roles that reward social interaction, communication, influence, or visible engagement.

Neuroticism demonstrates the most consistent unfavourable association, especially with job satisfaction and work-life outcomes. This does not mean that neuroticism is inherently a 'bad personality'. Rather, higher negative emotionality can increase sensitivity to stressors and make demanding environments more difficult to manage. The more appropriate interpretation is therefore probabilistic and context dependent, not categorical.

Agreeableness and openness to experience show the greatest variation across studies. Agreeableness can be advantageous in cooperative roles because it supports trust and interpersonal harmony, but it may be less predictive in highly competitive or individually driven roles. Openness appears especially useful for innovation, adaptation, and learning, as illustrated by Zastempowski (2024), but it is less consistently associated with job satisfaction in highly structured environments. These mixed patterns support Trait Activation Theory: traits become behaviourally relevant when the work environment contains cues that invite their expression (Tett & Burnett, 2003).

The evidence on workplace spirituality is theoretically interesting but empirically narrow. The positive relationships reported for openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness may reflect employees' tendency to seek meaning, cooperate, connect socially, or align with collective values. However, because the core evidence comes from university employees in Turkey, workplace spirituality should be treated as an emerging domain rather than a well-established personality outcome. Future research should replicate these relationships in healthcare, service, manufacturing, and corporate settings.

Work-life balance provides an important bridge between personality and employees' broader wellbeing. The reviewed studies suggest that personality may influence how employees plan, cope, and respond to competing role demands. At the same time, work-life variables can mediate or moderate relationships between personality and other outcomes. This supports the Theory of Purposeful Work Behavior, which emphasizes that personality and job characteristics jointly shape meaningful work experiences and subsequent outcomes (Barrick et al., 2013).

The inclusion of cognitive biases extends the review beyond conventional workplace attitudes and behaviours. Existing studies suggest that extraversion, openness, and neuroticism can be associated with specific heuristics and behavioural biases, but the direction and strength of these associations differ by bias and decision context (Baker et al., 2023; Ishfaq et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2023). Consequently, organizations should not infer decision quality from personality scores alone. The more defensible conclusion is that personality may alter vulnerability to certain biases under particular situational conditions.

Taken together, the findings reinforce an interaction interpretation of personality at work. Personality traits provide stable tendencies, but their consequences depend on task demands, social environments, organizational systems, and the outcomes being assessed. The contribution of this review is therefore not simply to identify which traits are positive or negative; it is to show that the same trait can have different implications across performance, satisfaction, spirituality, work-life balance, and decision-making contexts.

Theoretical Implications

The findings strengthen the value of combining the Five-Factor Model with interactionist theories. The FFM provides a stable taxonomy of individual differences, while Trait Activation Theory explains why the predictive validity of traits varies across jobs and situations. The Theory of Purposeful Work Behaviour adds a motivational mechanism by linking personality, higher-order goals, job characteristics, meaningfulness, and work outcomes. Integrating these perspectives helps explain why conscientiousness is relatively robust across settings while agreeableness and openness are more contingent on the social and task environment.

The review also connects personality research with less frequently integrated domains, particularly workplace spirituality, work-life balance, and cognitive biases. This suggests that future models of personality at work should examine not only direct effects on performance or satisfaction but also how traits shape perceptions of meaning, role management, and decision processes.

Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on personality and organisational behaviour in three important ways. First, it provides an integrated synthesis of the relationships between the Big Five personality traits and five workplace-related outcomes: job performance, job satisfaction, workplace spirituality, work-life balance, and cognitive biases. While previous studies have predominantly examined individual workplace outcomes, this review offers a broader understanding of how personality characteristics are associated with multiple dimensions of employee experiences and organisational functioning. By synthesising evidence from 32 empirical studies across different occupational and national contexts, the review identifies patterns of consistency and variation in personality-related workplace outcomes.

Second, the study advances the theoretical understanding of personality–workplace relationships by highlighting the importance of contextual factors in explaining variations in these associations. Drawing on Trait Activation Theory and the Theory of Purposeful Work Behaviour, the findings suggest that the relevance of personality traits depends on occupational demands, organisational environments, and situational characteristics. In particular, conscientiousness demonstrates relatively consistent positive associations with traditional workplace outcomes, while the relationships involving openness, agreeableness, and extraversion vary according to job characteristics and organisational contexts. This interpretation contributes to the literature by moving beyond the assumption that particular personality traits are universally beneficial across all organisational settings.

Third, the study extends personality research by incorporating relatively underexplored workplace dimensions, particularly workplace spirituality and cognitive biases. The findings identify important evidence gaps concerning the relationships between personality traits, employees' experiences of meaningful work, and decision-making tendencies. These insights establish opportunities for future research to investigate how personality characteristics interact with organisational conditions to shape employee attitudes, behaviours, and workplace outcomes.

Practical Implications

For human resource management, personality information can support selection, development, team composition, and role design when it is used alongside job analysis and other valid assessment information. Conscientiousness may be particularly relevant to roles requiring reliability and self-management, while extraversion may be advantageous in customer-facing or influence-intensive work. Openness may be valuable for innovation-oriented assignments, and agreeableness may support collaboration and service relationships.

Organizations should avoid using personality assessments as stand-alone screening tools or as labels of employee worth. The context-dependent findings in this review indicate that trait-job fit is more informative than assuming that one profile is universally superior. Development interventions can also target complementary skills, such as resilience, communication, structured decision-making, and work-life boundary management, rather than treating personality as fixed destiny.

Policy Implications

The findings of this review offer several implications for organisational and human resource management policies, particularly in the areas of employee selection, professional development, workplace well-being, and organisational decision-making. First, organisations should consider incorporating scientifically validated personality assessments into broader human resource management frameworks to support employee development, career planning, and person-job fit. However, personality assessments should complement rather than replace other established selection criteria, such as competencies, qualifications, and job-related experience. Human resource policies should also ensure that personality assessments are administered fairly, transparently, and without discrimination.

Second, the findings highlight the importance of developing organisational policies that recognise individual differences in employees' responses to workplace demands. For example, employee well-being policies may incorporate flexible working arrangements, stress management programmes, and appropriate supervisory support to accommodate varying personality characteristics and work-life responsibilities. Such initiatives may contribute to employee satisfaction and psychological well-being while supporting organisational productivity.

Third, the findings are relevant to human resource management practices in Malaysia, particularly in supporting the development of an adaptable and productive workforce. Organisations may consider integrating personality-related insights into employee training, leadership development, and talent management policies. However, these initiatives should be implemented through evidence-based and context-sensitive approaches, recognising that personality traits interact with organisational culture, occupational requirements, and working conditions. Accordingly, the findings support the development of human resource policies that emphasise employee well-being, equitable opportunities, and effective person-job alignment rather than relying solely on individual personality characteristics.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This integrative review examined relationships between the Big Five personality traits and job performance, job satisfaction, workplace spirituality, work-life balance, and cognitive biases. Across the 32 core studies, conscientiousness showed the most consistent favourable relationship with traditional workplace outcomes, while extraversion was particularly useful in socially intensive roles. Neuroticism was commonly associated with lower job satisfaction and less favourable work-life experiences. Agreeableness and openness showed more variable patterns that depended on occupational demands and the specific outcome examined.

The evidence also demonstrates that personality-outcome relationships should not be interpreted in isolation from context. Organizational justice, supervisor support, work-life conditions, role demands, and opportunities for innovation can strengthen, weaken, or redirect trait expression. Workplace spirituality and cognitive biases remain promising but underdeveloped areas, and current evidence is too narrow to support broad generalizations.

Organizations are therefore encouraged to use personality assessment as one component of evidence-based HR practice, particularly for understanding person-job fit and development needs, while avoiding deterministic labels. Researchers should test personality within richer models that include job characteristics, cultural context, leadership, work design, and situational cues.

Several previous literature reviews have examined personality traits in relation to specific workplace outcomes such as job performance or job satisfaction. However, most reviews focus on a single outcome domain and do not simultaneously synthesise evidence across employee performance, workplace attitudes, well-being, spirituality, and decision-making processes. The present review contributes to the literature by integrating five workplace outcome domains within a single analytical framework. In particular, the inclusion of workplace spirituality and cognitive biases extends the conventional scope of personality research and provides a more comprehensive understanding of how personality traits influence employee experiences and organisational functioning.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The review has several limitations. First, the core search was limited to Google Scholar and ScienceDirect, so relevant studies indexed exclusively in Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, or other databases may have been missed. Second, the review period ended in 2024, and an updated search is needed before making claims about the most recent evidence. Third, the included studies used heterogeneous samples, measures, and research designs, which prevented quantitative meta-analysis. Fourth, evidence on workplace spirituality and cognitive biases was much smaller than the evidence on job satisfaction and performance.

An additional limitation concerns the predominance of cross-sectional research designs among the reviewed studies. As a result, most reported relationships are correlational and should not be interpreted as evidence of causality. Future studies employing longitudinal, experimental, or mixed-methods designs would improve understanding of the causal mechanisms linking personality traits with workplace outcomes.

Future reviews may extend the present work by incorporating additional databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and Emerald Insight. Meta-analytic techniques may also be employed where sufficient homogeneous evidence exists to quantify the magnitude of personality-outcome relationships and identify moderating contextual factors

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USAGE DECLARATION

The authors used ChatGPT to assist with language editing, grammatical corrections, and citation checking. All content has been reviewed and revised by the authors. Authors take full responsibility for the accuracy and originality of the work.

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