

# “Motion of the OCEAN”: How Big 5 Personality Traits Can Be An Indication of Job Satisfaction

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## Project Questions:

1. Is the “hands-on” and controversial nature of ABA therapy partially responsible for the high turnover rate and high burnout levels seen in ABA therapists?
2. Can a more positive work environment or a meaningful career play a role in long term job satisfaction?
3. Can the Big 5 Personality Inventory be an indication of success and strong leadership? On the contrary, can it also be an indication of employee burnout?

## Background

In March of 2019, I began working for Center of Autism and Related Disorders (CARD), and became increasingly interested in the diverse group of people I saw working alongside me. Each had a different style of therapy and a different way of thinking about their job, and yet they all had excellent trial numbers, rapport with the children, and generally different feelings about their responsibilities and their job itself. This made me curious about how personality traits could be indicators about job satisfaction, specifically in the field of behavioral health.

## Methods

The participants in this study will be a sample size of 30 ABA therapists. An anonymous online survey will be given to all 26 therapists to measure their Big Five Personality inventory and level of Job Satisfaction. The survey will be taken while on paid time for therapists to increase likelihood that the survey will be completed with the most honesty. All relevant data will then be coded and analyzed using SPSS systems and Excel spreadsheets.

## Results

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the plans for this experiment were unable to be carried out. However, similar literature shows that significant correlations may be seen with regard to Neuroticism and certain sub-scales of burnout, and traits of Extraversion and Conscientiousness may be significantly negatively correlated with cynicism towards one’s job (Hurt, et al. 2013). Furthermore, another study implied that certain facets of Extraversion such as enthusiasm and assertiveness can be an indication of greater job satisfaction (Harari et al 2018).

Scale	Exhaustion		Cynicism		Professional efficacy		Job satisfaction	
	r	P	r	P	r	P	r	P
Extraversion	-0.194	0.098	-0.311	0.001	0.413	0.000	0.427	0.000
Agreeableness	-0.183	0.293	-0.318	0.281	0.422	0.001	0.367	0.275
Conscientiousness	-0.197	0.271	-0.288	0.051	0.489	0.000	0.334	0.035
Neuroticism	0.349	0.000	0.281	0.006	0.438	0.000	0.288	0.001
Openness	0.185	0.085	0.175	0.272	-0.001	0.992	0.111	0.255
Job satisfaction	-0.513	0.000	-0.661	0.000	0.359	0.000	-	-

r = Pearson correlation coefficient; P = probability level. Bold font indicates statistically significant values (P < 0.05). Capitalized letters indicate the domains of the five-factor model of personality. Capitalized letters indicate the subscales (facets) of the Maslach Burnout Inventory - General Survey. Job Satisfaction is the total score from the Andressen and Wiles scale and is included both as a row and a column to allow full reporting of its correlations with other variables. The Andressen and Wiles scale is scored with higher scores reflecting lower levels of job satisfaction; for readability, correlations have been reversed throughout this article.

## Discussion

These results may imply that those that score higher on scales of Extraversion and Conscientiousness would be less likely to suffer from burnout or less satisfaction with their job than those that score high on scales related to Neuroticism. We can apply this knowledge to the field of ABA therapy and possibly use facets of the Big 5 inventory to improve turnover rates in the field, hiring processes, improvement of general job satisfaction, or even for client-therapist pairings. These results may also imply that facets of the Big 5 Inventory could be applied in other therapy settings such as occupational or physical therapy.

## References:

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