



Profiles of teacher personality and relations with teacher self-efficacy, work engagement, and job satisfaction



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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on research conducted to identify profiles of personality among teachers. We also examine the associations of profile membership with dimensions of teachers' self-efficacy for teaching, work engagement, and job satisfaction. Latent profile analyses revealed four distinct profiles of teacher personality (i.e., “rigid”, “ordinary”, “well-adjusted”, and “excitable”). Underpinning the validity of the profiles, results revealed that the dimensions of teacher self-efficacy, work engagement, and job satisfaction differed meaningfully across the profiles. Generally, well-adjusted teachers reported the highest levels on the outcomes. Notably, job satisfaction was lowest among excitable teachers. Equally noteworthy, ordinary and rigid teachers did not significantly differ on seven of the eight distal outcomes; only job satisfaction differed significantly between these profiles, with ordinary teachers reporting significantly lower satisfaction. The findings provide novel evidence suggesting that models of teacher attrition, effectiveness, or selection, should consider trait interactions rather than only additive effects of personality.

There is a burgeoning interest in the role of teachers' personality in their work engagement and satisfaction (Duffy & Lent, 2009; Lent et al., 2011). This interest has been precipitated by a need to better understand the problem of teachers' attrition from, and intentions to leave, the profession, which have been attributed, in part, to low engagement and satisfaction with work (Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Martin, Sass, & Schmitt, 2012). Extant literature demonstrates that dispositional traits are associated with teachers' work engagement and job satisfaction both directly (Kokkinos, 2007; Lent et al., 2011) and indirectly via social-cognitive (e.g., teacher self-efficacy) and behavioral (e.g., goal progress) mechanisms (Lent et al., 2011). However, this literature has been limited to addressing the additive effects of personality traits on teachers' engagement and satisfaction as well as more proximal antecedents of these outcomes, such as self-efficacy. Research shows that personality traits do not exist in isolation within individuals but co-exist at different levels (Merz & Roesch, 2011). As such, a person-centered approach, permitting the identification of homogenous profiles of teachers presenting qualitatively and quantitatively distinct combinations of personality traits, may be required for a holistic understanding of the

role of personality in teacher outcomes. This research aims to extend the extant literature by investigating the way in which personality traits interact in teachers to influence substantively-important outcomes. Specifically, mixture analyses of Big-Five personality data are used to identify latent profiles of teacher personality. We then investigate whether the identified personality profiles differ with respect to teachers' levels of self-efficacy for teaching, work engagement, and job satisfaction.

1. Theoretical background

Lent and Brown (2006) propose a social-cognitive model of work satisfaction, based on the social cognitive career theory, which provides a unifying framework for understanding the effects of dispositional factors on self-efficacy, engagement, and work satisfaction. From this perspective, work satisfaction is expected for those who (a) are engaged with and make progress at valued work-related goals, (b) experience or expect favorable work conditions, (c) believe they are capable of performing major work tasks, (d) perceive goal-and-efficacy-relevant

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environmental support, and (e) possess dispositional tendencies amenable to experiencing satisfaction with work (e.g., trait positive affectivity, conscientiousness). Support for model has been obtained in at least three samples of teachers (viz., Badri, Mohaidat, Ferrandino, & Mourad, 2013; Duffy & Lent, 2009; Lent et al., 2011). Across the three studies, teachers' positive affectivity was shown to positively associate with their self-efficacy for teaching, engagement with and progress at valued work-related goals, and work satisfaction. There is also evidence that conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism are associated with teacher self-efficacy (Jamil, Downer, & Pianta, 2012), engagement (McIlveen & Perera, 2016), and satisfaction (Cano-García, Padilla-Muñoz, & Carrasco-Ortiz, 2005).

1.1. A person-centered approach to teacher personality

Although this extant literature suggests that personality factors play a role in teachers' self-efficacy, engagement, and job satisfaction, the evidence base is limited to variable-centered perspectives that examine the unique and independent contributions of personality traits to these outcomes. This perspective assumes that all individuals in a sample are from the same population and share the same set of parameters, manifested as average relations across a given sample (Morin, Meyer, Creusier, & Biétry, 2016). Thus, the variable-centered approach does not account for the presence of unobserved population heterogeneity, whereby multiple latent subpopulations of individuals may exist, characterized by differing combinations of traits. However, as personality traits are known to co-exist at different levels within individuals (Zhang, Bray, Zhang, & Lanza, 2015), it may be that distinct intraindividual configurations of traits, captured in latent personality profiles, are differentially implicated in teacher outcomes. The examination of trait combinations may allow for a more holistic understanding of the way in which people's core dispositions either enhance or diminish their confidence, engagement, and satisfaction with work-related tasks. Although it is possible to examine trait combinations and their effects on substantive outcomes within a variable-centered framework using variable interaction terms, typically this approach is cumbersome, and with even three-way interactions, interpretational difficulties may emerge (Litalien, Morin, & McInerney, 2017; Perera & McIlveen, 2017).

A person-centered approach may provide a better representation of personality trait combinations. The person-centered approach is centered on the detection of unobserved heterogeneity in a population (Lubke & Muthén, 2005). This unobserved heterogeneity manifests as multiple latent subpopulations within a population that may show distinct configurations of individual characteristics. For instance, data on a Big-Five personality measure may reflect two types of individuals in the sample: those who possess effortful control, altruistic tendencies, are open to new ideas, and tend to have positive affective experiences, with higher scores on all traits with the exception of neuroticism; and those who are more vulnerable and rigid with higher scores on neuroticism and lower scores on the remaining dimensions (Perera & McIlveen, 2017). The person-centered approach allows for the identification of profiles of individuals presenting distinct configurations of these personality characteristics. The person-centered approach may be useful in not only detecting unobserved population heterogeneity in personality data but also examining the effects of trait combinations on substantively important outcomes (Bakk & Vermunt, 2016; Lanza, Tan, & Bray, 2013).

Although there is no unifying theory of personality trait combinations, the orthogonality tenet central to the Five Factor Model approach is suggestive of the possibility of heterogeneity in personality data. From this perspective, the Big-Five dimensions should be reasonably orthogonal, and, increasingly, there is evidence to support this view

(Marsh et al., 2010; Perera, McIlveen, Burton, & Corser, 2015). The implication of approximate orthogonality is that levels of no one Big-Five Dimension hinge on levels of another dimension—they are independent. Thus, traits may simultaneously co-exist at different levels within individuals. Consistent with this view, several personality profiles have been identified in prior empirical work, which may be informative for understanding combinations of Big-Five traits constituting prototypical typologies of personality in teachers.

A “resilient” or “well-adjusted” profile has been found in prior work (Merz & Roesch, 2011; Perera & McIlveen, 2017; Rammstedt, Riemann, Angleitner, & Borkenau, 2004; Zhang et al., 2015). This profile is characterized by relatively low levels of neuroticism and high levels of extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness. A second profile that has been consistently identified is the “ordinary” profile, with near-average levels of all Big-Five traits (Perera & McIlveen, 2017; Zhang et al., 2015). A third personality profile identified is the “rigid” or “over-controlled” profile (Conte, Heffner, Roesch, & Aasen, 2017; Kinnunen et al., 2012; Perera & McIlveen, 2017). This subgroup of individuals is characterized by high neuroticism and low levels of the remaining traits. An “excitable” profile, characterized by high neuroticism and extraversion, above average openness and agreeableness, and low conscientiousness has also been obtained (Merz & Roesch, 2011) and converges, in part, with the under-controlled profile obtained in other work (Conte et al., 2017; Kinnunen et al., 2012). These findings suggest the presence of a mixture of subpopulations of participants with distinct configurations of personality traits. Based on these theoretical considerations, we expect homogenous subgroups of teachers presenting qualitatively and quantitatively differing combinations of personality that converge with the profiles obtained in previous work.

1.2. Outcomes of teacher personality profiles

1.2.1. Teacher self-efficacy

For teacher self-efficacy, denoting teachers' beliefs about their ability to manage classrooms, engage students, and use effective instructional strategies (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), positive and negative effects of extraversion and neuroticism, respectively, have been obtained (Djigić, Stojiljković, & Dosković, 2014; Jamil et al., 2012; Navidnia, 2009). As high extraversion and neuroticism predispose the experience of positive and negative affect, respectively, these traits may inform teachers' judgements about their capabilities consistent with the view that affective experiences serve as a source of information for the development of efficacy beliefs. Beyond extraversion and neuroticism, the available evidence suggests that conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness are also associated with teachers' sense of self-efficacy (Djigić et al., 2014; Navidnia, 2009; Senler & Sungur-Vural, 2013). For conscientious teachers, tendencies towards order and self-discipline may foster a high degree of preparation for educational activities, which may elicit a greater sense of their capacity to successfully engage and manage students and use effective instructional approaches. For teachers high on openness, inclinations towards intellectual curiosity and preference for variety may trigger exploration of diverse teaching and learning approaches, thereby enhancing their efficaciousness for engaging students and using effective instructional strategies (Poulou, 2007). Finally, given the centrality of teacher-student relationships to students' engagement (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011), agreeable teachers, who tend to be more tender-minded, altruistic, and straightforward, and are thus more likely to develop better interpersonal relations, may feel more efficacious for engaging students in classroom activity (Senler & Sungur-Vural, 2013). Accordingly, we expect that teachers' sense of self-efficacy for managing classrooms, engaging students, and using effective instruction strategies will differ across the

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