PERSONALITY AND JOB SATISFACTION OF TEACHERS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SELF-EFFICACY AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

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This study examined whether self-efficacy and work engagement mediate the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction among teachers. A sample of 133 teachers (85% female) from 17 Croatian grammar schools participated at two time points. At the first time point, they completed measures of the Big Five personality traits, teacher self-efficacy, and work engagement; two months later, they reported job satisfaction. Work engagement mediated the relationship between all five personality traits and job satisfaction: higher levels of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, and lower negative emotionality were associated with greater engagement and ultimately higher job satisfaction. Teacher self-efficacy mediated the relationship between extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness and job satisfaction. Crucially, serial mediation was also found for extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness: higher trait levels were associated with higher self-efficacy, which was associated with greater work engagement and ultimately higher job satisfaction. The findings highlight the joint role of self-efficacy and work engagement in explaining how personality relates to teachers' job satisfaction.

Keywords: personality, teacher self-efficacy, work engagement

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary work environment, job satisfaction has emerged as a crucial factor influencing productivity, turnover, engagement, and overall employee well-being (Judge et al., 2020; Harter et al., 2002). Identifying the elements that enhance job satisfaction is essential for both individuals and organisations aiming to retain skilled employees and attain high performance levels. For teachers, job satisfaction not only affects their personal well-being but also has a profound effect on their effectiveness in the classroom and the learning experiences of their students (Toropova et al., 2021). Satisfied teachers enjoy improved well-being, which reduces their susceptibility to stress and burnout (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). They also show greater commitment to their roles and are less likely to leave the profession (Blömeke et al., 2017; Klassen & Chiu, 2011). Ultimately, teachers who experience higher job satisfaction are inclined to deliver higher quality instruction and provide enhanced learning support for their students (Klusmann et al., 2008; Kunter et al., 2013).

Among the various psychological constructs associated with job satisfaction, personality traits have been particularly noteworthy. Research in this area suggests that an individual's personality can play a significant role in shaping their attitudes, behaviours, and reactions within the workplace, thereby influencing their overall job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2002; Judge & Bono, 2001; Christiansen et al., 2014). While the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction is well-established, the specific mechanisms that underline this relationship are still not fully understood. In this context, self-efficacy and work engagement emerge as important variables that may help clarify this relationship. Previous research showed that teacher personality traits are significant predictors of their self-efficacy (e.g., Djigić et al., 2014; Ramdani et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2021) and work engagement (e.g., Li et al., 2021; Macey & Schneider, 2008), whereas self-efficacy and work engagement have been identified as key variables that play a role in determining teacher job satisfaction (Kalkan, 2020; Demir, 2020; Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Mache et al., 2014; Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013). Thus, exploring the roles of self-efficacy and work engagement is essential, as they may serve as mediators that enhance our understanding of how personality traits impact job satisfaction. This study aims to investigate the potential mediating roles of self-efficacy and work engagement in the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction among teachers. Specifically, we are interested in whether self-efficacy

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and work engagement act as simple mediators or if they exhibit a serial mediation effect (personality → self-efficacy → work engagement → job satisfaction).

Personality and job satisfaction

Research on the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction has been extensively explored, particularly within the context of the Big Five model of personality. A comprehensive meta-analysis by Judge et al. (2002) revealed that extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism are significantly related to job satisfaction. Extraverted individuals typically report higher job satisfaction due to their natural ability to form positive relationships with colleagues and their active engagement in work activities (Judge et al., 2002). Conscientiousness enhances job satisfaction as it encompasses dependability, organisation, and a strong work ethic, leading to more fulfilling rewards such as promotions and recognition (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Judge et al., 2002). Conversely, individuals high in neuroticism tend to experience reduced job satisfaction because their negative outlook predisposes them to focus on stress and difficulties in the workplace (Emmons et al., 1985; Judge et al., 2002).

Building on this foundational research, studies focused on teachers have provided further insights into how these personality traits influence job satisfaction within this unique professional context. In addition to extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism, research specifically examining teachers has highlighted the significance of agreeableness. For instance, Mondal and Saha (2017) found that conscientious and agreeable teachers report high levels of satisfaction with their teaching roles, as their cooperativeness and empathy foster supportive classroom environments. Conversely, those exhibiting high levels of neuroticism tend to be less satisfied. Further investigation by Chandrasekara (2019) emphasised that agreeableness is the most influential personality trait regarding job satisfaction, with extraversion following closely behind, while the other three personality factors have a minimal effect. Additionally, a study by Li and colleagues (2021) confirmed that conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion are positively associated with job satisfaction, while neuroticism correlates negatively. Notably, openness was not found to significantly impact job satisfaction. Together, these studies highlight the importance of specific personality traits, particularly agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion, in enhancing job satisfaction among teachers, while neuroticism appears to inhibit it.

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Self-efficacy and work engagement as mediators of the relationship between personality and job satisfaction

Perceived self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs in their abilities to achieve certain levels of performance, which, in turn, influence the events that shape their lives. Beliefs about self--efficacy are crucial in determining how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1994). Teacher self-efficacy is specifically defined as "the teacher's judgement of their own capabilities to achieve desired outcomes with respect to student engagement and learning, even with students who are unmotivated" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 783). Research indicates a strong link between teachers' self-efficacy and key dimensions of personality, particularly conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to experiences (Djigić et al., 2014; Ramdani et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2021). Highly conscientious individuals are more likely to put in effort and work hard on tasks compared to those with lower conscientiousness. As a result, they tend to have greater confidence in their ability to succeed, which indicates higher self-efficacy (Chen et al., 2001; Gellatly, 1996). Similarly, extraverts may experience higher self-efficacy as their sociable nature enables them to build positive relationships and navigate social environments effectively (Esfandagheh et al., 2012). Finally, openness to experience is associated with a willingness to engage in new teaching strategies and adapt to diverse learning environments, which can further enhance teachers' self-efficacy (Lazarides & Warner, 2020).

Self-efficacy also plays a significant role in determining job satisfaction among teachers, as widely supported in the literature (Kalkan, 2020; Demir, 2020; Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Soto & Rojas, 2019). High levels of self-efficacy are associated with a greater sense of competence and accomplishment in one's profession, leading to increased job satisfaction. When teachers believe in their abilities to effectively engage students, manage classrooms, and deliver instruction, they are more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction. This is because positive self-beliefs enable them to tackle challenges more effectively, contributing to a more fulfilling work experience.

Work engagement is described as a positive and fulfilling mental state related to work, characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engaged workers invest energy, time, and effort into their tasks (the vigour aspect), perceive their work as important and meaningful (the dedication aspect), and maintain complete focus on their tasks while at work (the absorption aspect). Research has shown a significant relationship between the five basic personality traits

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and teacher work engagement (Li et al., 2021; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Extraverted teachers tend to experience more positive emotions and deeply engage in work-related activities (Perera et al., 2018), resulting in a positive relationship between extraversion and work engagement (Woods & Sofat, 2013). Those with high conscientiousness typically exhibit greater perseverance, career optimism, and professional efficacy, contributing to enhanced work engagement (Daal et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2009; McIlveen & Perera, 2015). Additionally, teachers characterised by agreeableness often cultivate more harmonious relationships with colleagues and students (Cano-García et al., 2005), which can boost their work engagement (Collie et al., 2016). Teachers with lower levels of openness frequently report feelings of alienation from both students and colleagues, as well as a decreased sense of personal accomplishment (Kokkinos, 2007). This implies that those with higher openness are likely to form stronger relationships and find more fulfilment in their work, suggesting a positive correlation between openness and work engagement (Doo et al., 2020). Lastly, teachers with elevated levels of neuroticism are prone to experiencing negative emotions (Burns & Machin, 2013) and may focus more on their moods, leading to withdrawal or distraction from their work, which ultimately results in lower work engagement (Kokkinos, 2007; McIlveen & Perera, 2015; Perera et al., 2018).

Research has also demonstrated a positive association between teacher work engagement and job satisfaction (Mache et al., 2014; Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013). Teachers who are highly engaged often feel more fulfilled and motivated, contributing to a more productive and satisfying work environment. Those with high work engagement tend to have more positive experiences and form stronger bonds with their organisations (Sonnentag et al., 2008), which further enhances their overall job satisfaction (Weiss et al., 1999).

Considering the demonstrated relations between self-efficacy and work engagement with the five dimensions of personality and job satisfaction, it can be anticipated that these factors may serve as mediators in the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction. Only a few studies have explored this topic, providing insights into how self-efficacy and work engagement influence the way personality traits affect overall job satisfaction, with even fewer specifically focused on teachers. For instance, Maggiori et al. (2016) conducted research among employees in Switzerland, finding that neuroticism is only partially mediated by occupational self-efficacy, while extraversion and conscientiousness exert an indirect effect on job satisfaction through this mediator. Similarly, Al-

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kholy (2023) examined student teachers in Saudi Arabia, revealing that self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between certain personality traits – specifically conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion – and job satisfaction.

In the context of work engagement, to the best of our knowledge, no research has been conducted within the framework of the five-factor model. Yan (2019) studied nurses in China and found that work engagement partially mediated the association between proactive personality and job satisfaction. Additionally, Chandrawaty and Widodo (2020) explored the effects of unspecified personality traits among kindergarten teachers in Indonesia, highlighting the significant mediating role of self-efficacy.

Given the limited existing research, these findings underscore the need for further investigation, particularly focusing on teachers, to better understand how self-efficacy and work engagement serve as mediators in the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction. This gap in the literature presents an opportunity for future studies to provide valuable insights into this important area.

The present study

This study aims to explore the mediating roles of self-efficacy and work engagement in the relationship between teacher personality traits and job satisfaction. In addition to testing whether self-efficacy and work engagement act as simple mediators, we also investigate a serial mediation pathway (personality → self-efficacy → work engagement → job satisfaction). The proposed ordering is grounded in social-cognitive theory, which conceptualises self-efficacy as a key belief shaping motivational investment and persistence in goal pursuit (Bandura, 1994). Moreover, consistent with the Job Demands-Resources model, self-efficacy represents a personal resource that supports motivation and goal pursuit and, in turn, fosters work engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to invest effort and persist when facing difficulties, which facilitates sustained engagement in work tasks (Salanova et al., 2011; Vera et al., 2012).

Notably, only one prior study tested this same self-efficacy → work engagement serial sequence in teachers' job satisfaction, using proactive personality as the predictor (Li et al., 2017). Their research involved a sample of 352 primary and middle school teachers in China and examined self-efficacy and work engagement as mediators within both simple and serial mediation frameworks. The findings indicated that the

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relationship between proactive personality and teacher job satisfaction was simply mediated by self-efficacy and work engagement, as well as sequentially mediated by self-efficacy–work engagement. This suggests that proactive individuals develop higher self-efficacy, which leads to increased work engagement and, ultimately, greater job satisfaction.

Our research introduces a novel approach by utilising the well-established five-factor personality model, in contrast to the proactive personality traits examined by Li et al. (2017), to investigate the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction. In this context, we will assess a sample of Croatian teachers. While the study by Li et al. (2017) provided valuable insights, its geographic and demographic limitations highlight the need for further investigation in diverse cultural settings. By examining the mediating roles of self-efficacy and work engagement within the five-factor framework, we aim to contribute to understanding these complex relationships within the Croatian educational landscape.

Based on the theoretical considerations and previous research outlined in this paper, we postulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Teacher self-efficacy will mediate the relationship between five personality traits and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2. Teacher work engagement will mediate the relationship between five personality traits and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3. Teacher self-efficacy and teacher work engagement will serially mediate the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction.

METHOD

Participants

At Time 1 (T1), the research was conducted on a convenience sample of 133 teachers (85% women) employed in 17 grammar schools in the Republic of Croatia (M_{age} = 41.19 years, SD = 9.00; M_{tenure} = 14.38 years, SD = 8.67). The teachers cover a wide range of subjects, including biology, chemistry, ecology, Croatian language, foreign languages (English, German, Italian, French, Portuguese, Russian and Latin), philosophy, ethics, logic, drama education, physics, geography, history, sociology, politics and economics, psychology, music art, visual art, computer science, mathematics, and religion. A condition for participation was that the teacher was employed full-time and taught the subject in the classroom. At Time 2 (T2), of the 133

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teachers who participated at T1, 107 completed the job satisfaction measure, resulting in an attrition of 26 participants (19.5%). Attrition analyses showed that teachers who completed both waves did not differ from those who participated only at T1 in gender, age, or tenure. They also did not differ in self-efficacy, work engagement, job satisfaction, or in the personality traits of extraversion, open-mindedness, and negative emotionality. However, completers scored higher on agreeableness and conscientiousness than non-completers.

Procedure

The research was conducted as part of the project "Personality, Emotions, and Teacher Performance: A Dynamic Perspective," funded by the Croatian Science Foundation (IP-2019-04--5472). The schools included in the present study were selected from a larger pool of Croatian grammar schools participating in a broader research project. Because the present study involved a more demanding two-wave design and a more intensive data collection procedure, we included schools that expressed willingness and had the organisational capacity to participate in this part of the project. Before the research began, we contacted school psychologists, who served as school coordinators and assisted us in securing consent from school principals and recruiting teachers for participation. Teacher participation was voluntary. We collected data at two time points, via online questionnaires. In February 2023, teachers completed a five-factor personality questionnaire, a teacher self-efficacy scale, and a work engagement questionnaire. Two months later, they filled out a job satisfaction survey. The two--wave data collection was implemented for both practical and methodological reasons. Because the present study was part of a larger project that included a broad set of instruments, separating data collection into two waves reduced participant burden and survey fatigue. In addition, measuring job satisfaction at a later time point provided temporal separation from the predictors and mediators assessed at T1, thereby reducing common method bias and strengthening the interpretability of the proposed associations. We linked the data from both measurement points using a code that was assigned to each teacher by the school research coordinator, which we provided them with at the beginning of the study. The school coordinators did not have access to the data, and the research team was unaware of which code was assigned to each teacher. Since the research was part of a larger study, which required intensive participation, we incentivised teachers and school coordinators to engage by offering them a gift voucher for a drugstore (€50 for teachers and €25 for school coordinators).

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Instruments

All instruments were administered in Croatian. We used Croatian versions of the measures that have been widely used in prior research in Croatia. In the present sample, the internal consistencies were satisfactory (see below).

Personality. Teacher personality was measured using the Big Five Inventory–2 (BFI-2; Soto & John, 2017). The inventory consisted of 30 items, measuring five personality domains (six items each): extraversion (e.g., I am someone who is outgoing, sociable), agreeableness (e.g., I am someone who is compassionate, has a soft heart), conscientiousness (e.g., I am someone who is dependable, steady), negative emotionality (e.g., I am someone who is moody, has up and down mood swings), and open-mindedness (e.g., I am someone who is curious about many different things). Teachers expressed their level of agreement with each statement on a five-point scale (1 – *strongly disagree*; 5 – *strongly agree*). The internal consistency for each dimension, indicated by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was satisfactory, ranging from 0.67 for open-mindedness to 0.80 for negative emotionality.

Teacher self-efficacy. We measured teacher self-efficacy using a short form of the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The scale consists of 12 items. A sample item is, "In the classroom, during teaching, to what extent can you craft good questions for your students?" Teachers rated their level of agreement with each statement on a 9-point Likert scale (1 – *not at all*, 9 – *very much*). Although the scale is based on three factors – Efficacy for Instructional Strategies, Efficacy for Classroom Management, and Efficacy for Student Engagement – it is also possible to calculate an overall teacher self-efficacy score, as indicated by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). In the present sample, the three subscales were moderately to strongly intercorrelated (r_s = 0.47–0.64, all $p_s < 0.001$), which supports the use of a total score in the present analyses. The reliability of the total score on the scale that we used, expressed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency, was 0.88.

Work engagement. We measured work engagement using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9; Schaufeli et al., 2006). The scale assesses three dimensions of work engagement: vigour, dedication, and absorption, with three items for each dimension, providing a total score on all nine items. Items were presented as statements to which participants responded on a seven-point scale, with anchors ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*) (e.g., "At my work, I feel bursting with energy"). In this research, we used the total score, which demonstrated satisfactory reliability, indicated by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency (0.94).

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Job satisfaction. Teacher job satisfaction was measured using the Job Satisfaction Scale (Judge et al., 1998). The scale contains five items assessing general job satisfaction. A sample item is, "I feel fairly satisfied with my present job." Participants rated their agreement with the items on a five-point scale (1 – *completely disagree* to 5 – *completely agree*). The internal consistency, indicated by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was satisfactory: 0.89.

RESULTS

Given that we used self-report questionnaires to assess five personality traits, self-efficacy, work engagement, and job satisfaction, we examined the extent to which a common method factor might have influenced our data. We conducted Harman's single-factor test by performing an exploratory principal components analysis on all self-reported items (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The factor analysis extracted 14 factors, which accounted for 73.50% of the total variance, with the first factor explaining 26.03% of the variance. Since the variance explained by a single factor is below the recommended cut-off value of 50%, we can conclude that common method bias is not a significant concern in this study.

Missing data were handled as follows: descriptive statistics and correlations were computed using all available data, whereas the PROCESS mediation analyses used listwise deletion for cases with missing values on any model variable. The descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all variables in the study are presented in Table 1. The mean scores for extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and open-mindedness are slightly above the average scale values, while the mean score for negative emotionality is slightly below the average scale value, consistent with the findings reported by Soto and John (2017). Furthermore, teachers exhibited mean scores that were slightly above the average scale midpoints for self-efficacy, work engagement, and job satisfaction, suggesting moderate levels of these work-related constructs in this sample.

Considering the obtained correlations, our results revealed that extraversion ($r = 0.272$, $p < 0.01$) and agreeableness ($r = 0.384$, $p < 0.01$) are positively correlated with job satisfaction among teachers, while negative emotionality ($r = -0.382$, $p < 0.01$) is negatively correlated with job satisfaction. Furthermore, all personality traits show a moderate correlation with work engagement ($r = 0.191$; $p < 0.05$ for open-mindedness to $r = 0.318$; $p < 0.01$ for agreeableness), with negative emotionality exhibiting a negative correlation ($r = -0.314$; $p < 0.01$). Additionally, three personality dimensions, extraversion ($r = 0.293$, $p < 0.01$), agreeableness ($r = 0.308$, $p < 0.01$), and conscientiousness ($r = 0.428$, $p < 0.01$), are positively correlated with

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teacher self-efficacy. A strong positive correlation exists between teacher self-efficacy and work engagement ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that teachers who believe in their capabilities are more engaged in their work. Finally, both self-efficacy and work engagement are positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$ for self-efficacy; $r = 0.74$, $p < 0.01$ for work engagement), indicating that higher self-efficacy and increased engagement contribute to enhanced job satisfaction.

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Extraversion	3.53	0.60							
2 Agreeableness	4.08	0.54	0.043						
3 Conscientiousness	4.04	0.61	0.206*	0.504**					
4 Negative emotionality	2.71	0.68	-0.506**	-0.214*	-0.409**				
5 Open-mindedness	3.74	0.58	0.138	0.059	-0.051	-0.020			
6 Self-efficacy	7.27	0.78	0.293**	0.308**	0.428**	-0.161	0.134		
7 Work engagement	4.29	0.91	0.276**	0.318**	0.298**	-0.314**	0.191*	0.573**	
8 Job satisfaction	4.08	0.77	0.272**	0.384**	0.150	-0.382**	0.170	0.448**	0.737**

TABLE 1
Descriptive statistics and correlations of all study variables

Notes. For all variables except job satisfaction, $N = 133$. Job satisfaction was assessed at T2 and is therefore based on $n = 107$. Correlations involving job satisfaction are based on participants with available T2 data. M and SD are calculated only on the participants with data on the corresponding variables. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

In order to test our hypotheses, we conducted a series of mediation analyses. Separate models were estimated for each personality trait (i.e., five independent sets of models), such that in each model one Big Five dimension served as the predictor while job satisfaction was the outcome. Specifically, for each trait we tested (a) a simple mediation model with teacher self-efficacy as the mediator, (b) a simple mediation model with work engagement as the mediator, and (c) a serial mediation model in which self-efficacy preceded work engagement (personality trait → self-efficacy → work engagement → job satisfaction). It is important to note that we measured five personality traits, self-efficacy, and work engagement at the first time point, while job satisfaction was measured two months later, at the second time point. We performed mediation analyses using the PROCESS macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (2013), Model 4 for simple mediations and Model 6 for serial mediation. The statistical significance of the indirect effects was assessed using the Bootstrap technique for confidence intervals at 95%, establishing statistical significance where the CI did not encompass zero (Hayes, 2018). We controlled for gender and tenure in all analyses to mitigate potential confounding effects.

In the case where teacher self-efficacy served as a mediator (Table 2), the results indicated significant indirect effects

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for several personality traits. Aligning with our *H1*, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness exhibited significant positive indirect effects on job satisfaction through self-efficacy (extraversion: $b = 0.14$; 95% C.I. [0.05, 0.27]; agreeableness: $b = 0.16$; 95% C.I. [0.03, 0.28]; conscientiousness: $b = 0.27$; 95% C.I. [0.13, 0.44]). This suggests that teachers who are more extraverted, agreeable, and conscientious report higher self-efficacy, which is in turn associated with higher job satisfaction.

		Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Extraversion	Indirect effect via TSE	0.15	0.06	0.05	0.27
	Direct effect	0.20	0.11	-0.02	0.42
Agreeableness	Indirect effect via TSE	0.16	0.06	0.03	0.28
	Direct effect	0.39	0.13	0.14	0.64
Conscientiousness	Indirect effect via TSE	0.27	0.08	0.13	0.44
	Direct effect	-0.02	0.14	-0.29	0.25
Negative emotionality	Indirect effect via TSE	-0.09	0.05	-0.19	0.00
	Direct effect	-0.32	0.10	-0.52	-0.11
Open-mindedness	Indirect effect via TSE	0.05	0.06	-0.06	0.18
	Direct effect	0.22	0.11	0.01	0.44

TABLE 2
Mediation effects of teacher self-efficacy on the relationship between five personality traits and job satisfaction (unstandardised)

Notes. For indirect effects, standard errors and 95% confidence intervals were calculated through a bootstrapping procedure with 5.000 bootstrap samples. In all the analyses, we controlled for gender and tenure. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval; TSE = teacher self-efficacy

However, these indirect effects were relatively modest in magnitude and should therefore be interpreted with caution. A significant direct effect of agreeableness supports the notion of partial mediation, while no significant direct effects were identified for extraversion and conscientiousness, suggesting full mediation. In contrast, for both negative emotionality and open-mindedness, the indirect effects on job satisfaction via self-efficacy did not reach statistical significance (negative emotionality: $b = -0.09$, 95% C.I. [-0.19, 0.00]; open-mindedness: $b = 0.05$, 95% C.I. [-0.06, 0.18]). However, the direct effects on job satisfaction remained statistically significant, suggesting that open-mindedness was positively, whereas negative emotionality was negatively, associated with job satisfaction.

The analysis of work engagement as a mediator (Table 3) revealed a similar pattern of results. All five personality traits exhibited significant positive indirect effects on job satisfaction through work engagement, fully aligning with our expectations outlined in *H2* (extraversion: $b = 0.26$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.44]; agreeableness: $b = 0.34$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.58]; conscientiousness: $b = 0.33$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.51]; open-mindedness: $b = 0.23$,

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95% CI [0.06, 0.42]). These results indicate that teachers who are more extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, and open-minded tend to be more engaged in their work, leading to increased job satisfaction. In contrast, negative emotionality demonstrated a significant negative indirect effect on job satisfaction mediated by work engagement (b = -0.27, 95% CI [-0.44, -0.10]). This finding suggests that higher levels of negative emotionality lead to decreased job satisfaction by reducing teachers' work engagement. Furthermore, a significant direct effect was identified only for agreeableness, indicating that it involves partial mediation, whereas for the remaining four personality dimensions, full mediation was observed.

TABLE 3
Mediation effects of work engagement on the relationship between five personality traits and job satisfaction (unstandardised)

		Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Extraversion	Indirect effect via WE	0.26	0.09	0.09	0.44
	Direct effect	0.09	0.09	-0.08	0.26
Agreeableness	Indirect effect via WE	0.34	0.12	0.10	0.58
	Direct effect	0.23	0.10	0.03	0.44
Conscientiousness	Indirect effect via WE	0.33	0.10	0.11	0.51
	Direct effect	-0.08	0.09	-0.27	0.10
Negative emotionality	Indirect effect via WE	-0.27	0.09	-0.44	-0.10
	Direct effect	-0.16	0.08	-0.32	0.01
Open-mindedness	Indirect effect via WE	0.23	0.09	0.06	0.42
	Direct effect	0.02	0.09	-0.15	0.19

Notes. For indirect effects, standard errors and 95% confidence intervals were calculated through a bootstrapping procedure with 5.000 bootstrap samples. In all the analyses, we controlled for gender and tenure. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval; WE = work engagement

Finally, the results of the serial mediation analysis, investigating whether teacher self-efficacy and work engagement sequentially mediated the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction, are presented in Table 4. The findings revealed patterns consistent with the simple mediation models. In accordance with our expectations in *H3*, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness demonstrated significant indirect effects via the serial mediation pathway, indicating that these traits influence job satisfaction by impacting both self-efficacy and subsequently, work engagement (extraversion: b = 0.13, 95% CI [0.04, 0.23]; agreeableness: b = 0.14, 95% CI [0.04, 0.25]; conscientiousness: b = 0.21, 95% CI [0.11, 0.35]). Teachers with higher levels of extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness have higher self-efficacy, which is associated with greater work engagement and, ultimately, higher job satisfaction. In all cases, this constitutes full mediation, as the direct effects were not significant for any personality trait. However, the serial mediation effect was not statistically significant for negative emotionality (b = -0.08, 95%

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CI [-0.17, 0.00]) and open-mindedness (b = 0.04, 95% CI [-0.05, 0.14]). These results do not support the proposed sequential indirect pathway (self-efficacy → work engagement) for these traits, suggesting that their associations with job satisfaction may be better explained by other mechanisms beyond this specific serial mediation model.

		Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Extraversion	Indirect effect via TSE → WE	0.13	0.05	0.04	0.23
	Direct effect	0.07	0.09	-0.10	0.25
Agreeableness	Indirect effect via TSE → WE	0.14	0.05	0.04	0.25
	Direct effect	0.21	0.10	-0.00	0.42
Conscientiousness	Indirect effect via TSE → WE	0.21	0.06	0.11	0.35
	Direct effect	-0.17	0.10	-0.38	0.03
Negative emotionality	Indirect effect via TSE → WE	-0.08	0.04	-0.17	0.00
	Direct effect	-0.13	0.08	-0.29	0.04
Open-mindedness	Indirect effect via TSE → WE	0.04	0.05	-0.05	0.14
	Direct effect	0.05	0.09	-0.12	0.23

TABLE 4
Serial mediation effects of self-efficacy and work engagement on the relationship between five personality traits and job satisfaction (unstandardised)

Notes. For indirect effects, standard errors and 95% confidence intervals were calculated through a bootstrapping procedure with 5.000 bootstrap samples. In all the analyses, we controlled for gender and tenure. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval; TSE = teacher self-efficacy; WE = work engagement

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the mediating roles of self-efficacy and work engagement in the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction among teachers. The results revealed significant mediating effects for both factors. Self-efficacy and work engagement proved to be significant simple and serial mediators in the relationship between three personality dimensions – extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness – and job satisfaction. These findings support the hypothesised mediating roles of self-efficacy and work engagement in the teacher personality–job satisfaction model, aligning with previous empirical findings that have shown a positive association of these two constructs with both personality traits and job satisfaction (e.g., Sari et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021; Kalkan, 2020; Mache et al., 2014). Additionally, the results are comparable to the findings of Li et al. (2017), which indicated that the relationship between proactive personality and teacher job satisfaction was simply, as well as sequentially mediated by self-efficacy and work engagement.

Teachers high on extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness likely experience higher self-efficacy because they possess the organisational skills (conscientiousness), interper-

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sonal skills (agreeableness), and proactiveness (extraversion) conducive to successful teaching (Patrick, 2011). This enhanced self-efficacy translates into greater work engagement, as individuals with high self-efficacy feel more confident in their abilities to perform their tasks effectively. This confidence fosters a sense of competence and control, leading to increased energy and persistence (vigour), a strong sense of purpose and meaning in their work (dedication), and a state of focused concentration (absorption) – all key components of work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Essentially, believing in one's capabilities makes it more likely that one will invest fully in their work. Finally, increased work engagement leads to increased job satisfaction; highly engaged teachers are more likely to experience positive emotions and a sense of accomplishment in their work (Sonnentag et al., 2008). This positive work experience directly contributes to their overall job satisfaction, fuelling a cycle of positive affect that increases both the quality and enjoyment of work, further reinforcing job satisfaction.

For all personality traits, except agreeableness, full mediation was observed. In the case of agreeableness, only partial mediation was identified, as a significant direct relationship between agreeableness and job satisfaction remained in the presence of both mediators (self-efficacy and work engagement). This indicates that agreeableness may independently contribute to job satisfaction through mechanisms not fully captured by self-efficacy and work engagement, such as fostering positive relationships with students and colleagues (Mondal & Saha, 2017).

For negative emotionality, the mediating effect was established only in the context of work engagement as a mediator, suggesting that the relationship between negative emotionality and job satisfaction is best understood through the lens of work engagement. Teachers with high negative emotionality may struggle to engage with their work, which, in turn, may reduce their job satisfaction. In the case of open-mindedness, significant mediation was also found solely when work engagement acted as the mediator. This indicates that the relationship between open-mindedness and job satisfaction is largely influenced by the level of engagement teachers have with their work. Teachers who possess high levels of openness tend to be more receptive to new ideas, experiences, and methods (McCrae & Costa, 1997), which can foster a deeper commitment to their teaching practices.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the study relied on a convenience sample of teachers from 17 grammar schools in Croatia, which limits the representativeness of the sample and the generalisability

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of the findings. In addition, participation was voluntary, which may have introduced self-selection bias. The sample included a somewhat higher proportion of women (85%) than is observed in the population of teachers in Croatian grammar schools (74.9%; Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2025), which should be taken into account when interpreting the findings and their external validity. Also, the relatively small sample may have reduced statistical power and the stability of indirect-effect estimates, increasing the risk of Type II errors; replication in larger samples is therefore needed.

Second, teachers were nested within schools, and contextual factors related to school placement (e.g., organisational climate, leadership, workload) may influence work-related outcomes. Future research should explicitly account for school-level influences (e.g., by including school as a clustering variable or using multilevel designs) and consider relevant school-level covariates in addition to individual-level controls (e.g., gender and tenure).

Third, the predominantly cross-sectional nature of our design limits causal inference; although we observed the expected associations, we cannot draw firm conclusions about the directionality of effects, particularly between self-efficacy and work engagement. As recommended by Hayes (2018), alternative specifications should be considered; however, we did not identify equally compelling alternatives given the stability of personality traits and the fact that job satisfaction was the focal outcome measured at T2. The only plausible alternative model we considered was a reversed serial ordering of the mediators (personality → work engagement → self-efficacy → job satisfaction), but we did not test it because two-wave data provide limited leverage for distinguishing competing sequential mechanisms, especially when the two mediators are strongly related. Future longitudinal multi-wave studies should therefore examine temporal precedence more rigorously and explicitly test alternative and reciprocal specifications between self-efficacy and work engagement (e.g., Xanthopoulou et al., 2009; Salanova et al., 2011).

Fourth, although the two-wave design provided temporal separation between the predictors and mediators assessed at T1 and job satisfaction assessed at T2, it also leaves open the possibility that unmeasured events occurring between the two waves may have influenced the outcome variable. This should be taken into account when interpreting the findings, as it represents a potential threat to internal validity.

Finally, the study relied solely on self-reported measures, raising the potential concern of common method bias, where responses may be influenced by the method of data collection rather than the actual constructs being measured. Although

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we conducted Harman's test, it does not guarantee the absence of common method bias. Future research might incorporate multiple methods, such as combining self-report measures with observational data or performance evaluations, to mitigate this issue.

This research has practical implications for enhancing the educational environment and supporting teacher well-being. The findings point to two strategies for improving teacher job satisfaction. First, personality-related tendencies are associated with job satisfaction; in practice, this knowledge can inform recruitment communication and guide onboarding and early support (e.g. mentoring) to help teachers build on their strengths and identify areas where additional support may be useful. Given current recruitment challenges, we caution against using personality as a primary basis for selection, and we note that students benefit from exposure to teachers with diverse personality profiles and teaching approaches. Second, professional development should explicitly target teachers' self-efficacy and work engagement. Training in classroom management, effective instructional strategies, and communication with students can strengthen self-efficacy, while initiatives that foster collaboration, mentoring, and a sense of community can enhance engagement. These programmes should be tailored to teachers' needs and school contexts.

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Ličnost i zadovoljstvo poslom nastavnika: medijacijska uloga samoefikasnosti i radne angažiranosti

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Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je ispitati medijacijsku ulogu samoefikasnosti i radne angažiranosti u odnosu između osobina ličnosti i zadovoljstva poslom kod nastavnika. U istraživanju su sudjelovala 133 nastavnika (85 % žena) iz 17 hrvatskih gimnazija, u dvije vremenske točke. U prvoj vremenskoj točki sudionici su ispunili mjere petfaktorskog modela ličnosti, nastavničke samoefikasnosti i radne angažiranosti; dva mjeseca kasnije izvijestili su o zadovoljstvu poslom. Radna angažiranost posredovala je u odnosu između svih pet osobina ličnosti i zadovoljstva poslom: više razine ekstraverzije, ugodnosti, savjesnosti i otvorenosti prema iskustvu te niža razina negativne emocionalnosti bile su povezane s većom angažiranošću i, u konačnici, višim zadovoljstvom poslom. Nastavnička samoefikasnost posredovala je u odnosu između ekstraverzije, ugodnosti i savjesnosti te zadovoljstva poslom. Ključno, za ove tri osobine utvrđena je i serijalna medijacija: više razine tih osobina bile su povezane s višom samoefikasnošću, koja je bila povezana s većom radnom angažiranošću i, u konačnici, većim zadovoljstvom poslom.

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Nalazi ističu zajedničku ulogu samoefikasnosti i radne angažiranosti u objašnjenju načina na koji je ličnost povezana sa zadovoljstvom poslom kod nastavnika.

Ključne riječi: ličnost, nastavnička samoefikasnost, radna angažiranost, zadovoljstvo poslom



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