



Spiritual Intelligence and Personality Traits in Relation to Job Satisfaction of Secondary School Teachers: A Narrative Review

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Abstract:

Job satisfaction — a teacher's affective evaluation of, and contentment with, the teaching profession — is a long-studied outcome in educational psychology with implications for retention, wellbeing, and performance. This narrative review synthesises the literature linking two psychological predictors, spiritual intelligence (SI) and Big Five personality traits, to the job satisfaction of secondary school teachers. Following a structured, PRISMA-informed search and screening process, six studies were retained for synthesis. Personality has been linked to job satisfaction since the dispositional turn of the 1980s, culminating in large meta-analyses reporting a reliable, moderate association. Spiritual intelligence has more recently been linked to teacher job satisfaction through both direct associations and mediation pathways involving sanctification of work and job performance. The review finds the two evidence bases positive in direction but uneven in maturity, and identifies the absence of studies modelling SI and personality jointly as predictors of secondary teacher job satisfaction as the field's central unresolved gap.

Keywords: Spiritual Intelligence; Personality traits; Five-Factor Model; Job satisfaction; secondary school teachers

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is one of the most extensively studied constructs in organisational and educational psychology, valued both as an outcome in its own right and as a predictor of retention, engagement, and performance. Among secondary school teachers specifically, low job satisfaction has been linked to burnout and attrition, making its psychological antecedents a matter of practical as well as theoretical interest. Two families of individual-difference constructs have received particular attention in this literature: personality traits, organised through the well-validated Five-Factor Model, and spiritual intelligence (SI), a comparatively recent construct concerned with a person's capacity to draw on meaning, values, and transcendent awareness.

This review synthesises the evidence connecting each construct to teacher job satisfaction, compares the maturity of the two literatures, and identifies priority directions for future research, with particular attention to secondary school samples. The specific research questions are:

RQ1. What does the meta-analytic evidence show about the relationship between Big Five personality traits and job satisfaction?

RQ2. How is spiritual intelligence associated with the job satisfaction of secondary school teachers?

RQ3. What mediating or indirect pathways have been identified linking SI, job satisfaction, and downstream outcomes such as turnover intention?

RQ4. Has any study examined SI and personality jointly as predictors of secondary teacher job satisfaction?

2. Method

2.1 Procedure

This is a narrative literature review informed by PRISMA reporting conventions (identification, screening, eligibility, inclusion) rather than a full systematic review with independent dual-reviewer screening; this distinction is treated as a limitation in Section 6. Relevant peer-reviewed studies, meta-analyses, and review articles were identified through 11 structured searches of the academic literature (via an AI-assisted academic search interface indexing Scopus, PubMed, and other major databases), using combinations of the terms “spiritual intelligence,” “personality traits,” “Big Five,” “job satisfaction,” “teacher job satisfaction,” and “secondary school teachers.” Priority was given to meta-analyses and systematic reviews where available, supplemented by primary empirical studies conducted specifically on secondary school teacher populations. The search was conducted in 2026 and was not date-restricted at the lower bound, to allow inclusion of foundational historical sources.

2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Table 1 summarises the criteria applied during screening and eligibility assessment.

Table 1

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
1. Peer-reviewed empirical studies, meta-analyses, or systematic reviews	1. Conference papers, book chapters, unreviewed preprints, or non-peer-reviewed sources
2. Reports an association between spiritual intelligence or a Big Five personality trait and a measure of job satisfaction	2. No job-satisfaction-related outcome reported
3. Conducted with teacher or comparable occupational samples (secondary-school samples prioritised where available)	3. Non-occupational samples with no generalisable relevance
4. Published in English	4. Published in a language other than English
5. Full text accessible for eligibility assessment	5. Full text inaccessible for verification

2.3 Study Selection

The search across 11 queries returned 110 result records. After removing duplicates, 85 unique records remained. Title/abstract screening for relevance to spiritual intelligence, personality traits, or job satisfaction excluded 25 records

unrelated to either predictor construct, and a further 46 records lacking a job-satisfaction-related outcome, leaving 14 records for full-text eligibility assessment. Of these, 8 were excluded at the eligibility stage (wrong population, non-peer-reviewed source, or duplicate reporting of the same underlying sample), yielding 6 studies included in the final narrative synthesis (Figure 1).

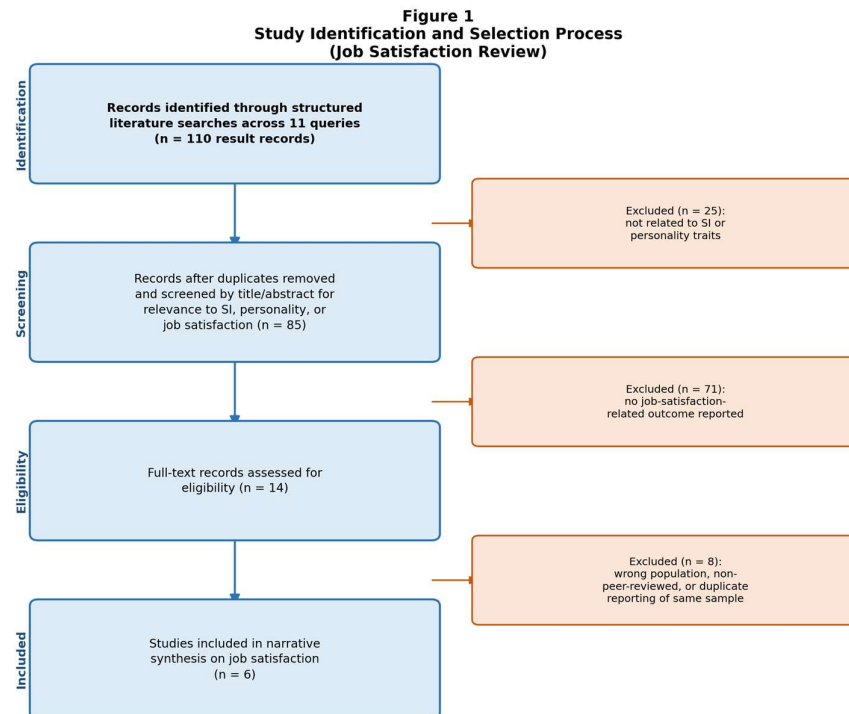


Figure 1. Study identification and selection process for the job-satisfaction review.

2.4 Data Extraction and Analysis

For each included study, the author, year, sample, predictor construct(s), satisfaction measure, and key findings were extracted into a structured summary table (Table 2). Findings were then synthesised narratively by predictor construct (personality traits; spiritual intelligence) and organised thematically to address the research questions, following the narrative synthesis approach commonly used where included studies are too heterogeneous in design and measurement for meta-analytic pooling.

2.5 Validity and Reliability

Screening and eligibility decisions in this review were made by a single reviewer against the criteria in Table 1, rather than through independent dual-coder screening with a reported agreement statistic; this is a methodological limitation relative to fully systematic reviews and is revisited in Section 6. The search log (queries, filters, and record counts at each stage) was retained as an audit trail to support transparency and reproducibility.

3. Results

3.1 Overview of Included Studies

Table 2 summarises the six studies retained for narrative synthesis.

Table 2

Studies included in the narrative synthesis

Code	Author(s)	Year	Focus	Journal / Source
S1	Judge, Heller & Mount	2002	Meta-analysis (163 samples) of Big Five traits and job satisfaction	Journal of Applied Psychology
S2	Steel, Schmidt, Bosco & Uggerslev	2019	Meta-analysis (12,000+ correlations) of personality, job and life satisfaction	Human Relations
S3	Kaur	2013	SI and job satisfaction among 100 secondary school teachers	Regional education journal
S4	Zulkifli et al.	2019	Systematic review of SI and job satisfaction among teachers	Regional review journal
S5	Efendi, Rusdinal & Gistituati	2021	Job satisfaction mediating SI/EI and teacher performance	Regional education journal
S6	Vem, Nmadu et al.	2023	SI, sanctification of work, job satisfaction, and turnover intention	International Journal of Educational Management

3.2 Personality Traits and Job Satisfaction

The landmark study in this literature is Judge, Heller, and Mount's (2002; S1) meta-analysis of 163 independent samples, which found the Big Five traits jointly correlate with job satisfaction at .41, with neuroticism and extraversion showing the most consistent individual effects. This was substantially reaffirmed by Steel, Schmidt, Bosco, and Uggerslev (2019; S2), who pooled more than 12,000 correlations and confirmed that personality accounts for a meaningful share of variance in both job and life satisfaction across occupational groups. Within education specifically, the relationship between teacher personality and job satisfaction has been studied less exhaustively through meta-analysis than the personality–effectiveness relationship, but the general pattern — emotionally stable, extraverted, conscientious teachers reporting higher satisfaction — is broadly consistent with the wider occupational literature.

3.3 Spiritual Intelligence and Job Satisfaction

Within the secondary-school teacher literature specifically, Kaur (2013; S3) reported a significant positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and job satisfaction among 100 secondary school teachers, using the Spiritual Quotient Scale and the Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale. A dedicated systematic review of SI and job satisfaction among teaching professionals concluded that the association between the two constructs is consistently positive across the studies reviewed, although the literature remains geographically concentrated (largely India, Iran, Indonesia, and Nigeria) and methodologically heterogeneous (Zulkifli et al., 2019; S4).

3.4 Mediation and Indirect Pathways

More recent work has moved beyond simple bivariate correlations toward mediation models. Vem and colleagues (2023; S6), studying Nigerian public secondary-school teachers, found that spiritual intelligence did not directly predict turnover intention but operated indirectly through sanctification of work and job satisfaction. Conversely, Efendi and colleagues (2021; S5) found that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between spiritual intelligence and teacher performance. Together, these two studies (S5, S6) suggest job satisfaction occupies a central, load-bearing position in the nomological network connecting SI to teachers' broader professional outcomes.

3.5 Comparing the Two Evidence Bases

As with teaching effectiveness, the personality–job satisfaction literature (S1, S2) is considerably more mature than the SI–job satisfaction literature (S3, S4, S5, S6): it rests on validated, cross-culturally replicated instruments and has been synthesised through large, high-powered meta-analyses spanning tens of thousands of respondents. The SI–job satisfaction literature, while consistently positive in direction, remains smaller in scale and more geographically concentrated, and has not yet been subjected to a dedicated quantitative meta-analysis restricted to teacher samples.

4. Discussion

Taken together, the six studies synthesised here (Table 2) suggest that both personality traits and spiritual intelligence are positively, if asymmetrically, associated with teacher job satisfaction. Answering RQ1, the Big Five collectively predict job satisfaction at a moderate, well-replicated magnitude (S1, S2), with neuroticism and extraversion the most consistently implicated traits. Regarding RQ2, SI shows a consistently positive but less-replicated association with job satisfaction, concentrated in a handful of national contexts (S3, S4). Regarding RQ3, two mediation studies (S5, S6) converge on job satisfaction as an intervening variable linking SI to further downstream outcomes (teacher performance, turnover intention), suggesting satisfaction may be a proximal mechanism rather than a terminal outcome of SI. Regarding RQ4, no study identified in this search modelled SI and personality jointly as predictors of job satisfaction, which remains the field's central open question.

5. Future Research Directions

5.1 Joint Modelling of Spiritual Intelligence and Personality

A study measuring both SI and the Big Five within the same secondary-school sample, and testing whether SI's association with job satisfaction persists once personality is statistically controlled, would directly address the field's most pressing gap.

5.2 Extending Mediation Models

Given that S5 and S6 each identify job satisfaction as a mediator of SI's effects on a different downstream outcome, future research could test an integrated model examining whether personality moderates or competes with SI within the same mediation pathway.

5.3 Broader Geographic and Sectoral Representation

As with the effectiveness literature, future SI–job satisfaction studies conducted in a wider range of countries and school types would help establish the generalisability of currently reported associations.

6. Limitations

- Screening and eligibility decisions were made by a single reviewer rather than through independent dual-coder screening with a reported inter-rater agreement statistic, unlike fully systematic reviews.
- The search, though structured and logged across 11 queries, relied on a single AI-assisted academic search interface rather than direct multi-database querying, which may have missed relevant records.
- The yield of six included studies is modest; this partly reflects a genuinely sparse literature at the intersection of SI, personality, and teacher job satisfaction, which is itself a finding of this review, but it also limits the strength of conclusions that can be drawn about effect-size comparisons between the two predictor constructs.
- Grey literature (unpublished theses, non-English-language studies) was not systematically searched and may contain additional relevant evidence.

7. Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Theoretically, this review contributes a structured comparison of personality trait theory and spiritual intelligence theory as they apply to job satisfaction, and positions job satisfaction as a likely mediating mechanism rather than solely an endpoint in the SI literature. Practically, the findings suggest that efforts to improve teacher retention and satisfaction might reasonably draw on both personality-informed selection or support practices and emerging SI-informed wellbeing initiatives, while research clarifies their relative and combined contribution.

8. Conclusion

Both personality traits and spiritual intelligence show positive associations with the job satisfaction of secondary school teachers, though the strength of evidence differs considerably: personality's relationship with job satisfaction is well established through large-scale meta-analysis, while spiritual intelligence's relationship, though promising and increasingly supported by mediation research, rests on a comparatively narrow and geographically concentrated evidence base. Integrating the two constructs in future empirical research represents the clearest path toward a more complete understanding of what shapes teacher job satisfaction.

Declarations

Funding: This review received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest: The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement: As this is a review of previously published literature involving no primary data collection from human participants, formal ethical approval was not required.

Data Availability: The search log and study summary table (Table 2) supporting this review are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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