

The Influence of Genetics on Job Satisfaction: A Narrative Literature Review

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Abstract

Organizations are increasingly investing in initiatives to enhance employee job satisfaction. However, it is essential to determine whether job satisfaction—a key workplace attitude—is significantly influenced by genetic predispositions. If genetics play a dominant role, workplace initiatives may have limited effectiveness, potentially rendering billions of dollars in investments less impactful. Despite the importance of this question, existing research on the genetic basis of job satisfaction is sparse, necessitating a synthesis of current findings and new directions for future investigation.

This study conducts a multidisciplinary narrative literature review of Scopus-indexed research in organizational behavior, human resource management, and psychology. The findings highlight significant gaps and mixed evidence, with genetic influences on job satisfaction ranging from mild to substantial. These results suggest the need for a deeper examination of this underexplored area.

Practitioners should consider individual differences influenced by genetics when designing workplace interventions. Researchers are encouraged to explore the complex interaction between genetic and environmental factors to fill critical gaps in the literature. For society, enhancing understanding in this domain supports UN Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by fostering more efficient, inclusive approaches to employee well-being and workplace practices.

Introduction

Job satisfaction is among the most extensively researched concepts in management literature (Abu Orabi et al., 2024; Judge et al., 2020; Oyewobi, 2022) due to its profound implications for organizational performance (Akdere & Egan, 2020), employee well-being (Abdullah et al., 2021), and retention (Nguyen, 2020). Research into job satisfaction continues to reflect a longstanding debate in applied psychology over the relative influence of individual traits versus workplace environments. This discussion finds its origins in Lewin's (1935) framework, which proposes that behavior results from the interaction between a person and their environment ($B = f[P, E]$) (Lewin, 2005). The situational perspective highlights how workplace factors, such as job design (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), leadership styles (House et al., 1996), and organizational culture (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), shape job satisfaction. Conversely, the dispositional perspective focuses on how individual differences—including cognitive ability (Judge et al., 1999), personality traits (Staw et al., 1986), and genetic factors (Arvey et al., 1989)—influence job satisfaction. These contrasting views underscore the need for a deeper theoretical understanding that reconciles both perspectives.

To address this gap, the current paper presents a narrative literature review exploring the genetic underpinnings of job satisfaction. While extensive research in social sciences has examined environmental influences, such as workplace design (Boamah et al., 2022; Niebuhr et al., 2022), leadership (Boamah et al., 2022; Damanik et al., 2023), and team dynamics (Hajiali et al., 2022; Niskala et al., 2020), the role of genetics remains underexplored. Investigating genetic factors could provide a more comprehensive understanding of job satisfaction by acknowledging inherent predispositions alongside environmental conditions (Bagozzi & Verbeke, 2020).

This study offers valuable contributions for several stakeholders. For industry professionals, understanding genetic influences on job satisfaction can enhance human resource practices by enabling more personalized employee engagement strategies. This approach can lead to improved job performance, satisfaction, and retention rates. By focusing on the biological basis of job satisfaction, behavioral genetics theory enriches our understanding of the interplay between inherent traits and workplace experiences. This perspective highlights the importance of personalized approaches in management practices, suggesting that interventions designed to improve job satisfaction should account for genetic predispositions as well as situational factors. For academicians, the study broadens theoretical frameworks in organizational behavior, encouraging interdisciplinary research that integrates psychology, genetics, and management. For society, this research aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). By promoting workplace inclusivity and mental health, the findings support the creation of healthier, more satisfying work environments that benefit individuals and organizations alike.

Theoretical underpinning

The Behavioral Genetics Theory (Zietsch et al., 2015) offers a foundational framework for understanding how genetic factors may influence job satisfaction. This theory explores the extent to which inherited traits contribute to individual differences in behaviors, attitudes, and psychological outcomes (Bouchard & McGue, 2003). By examining genetic and environmental interactions, behavioral genetics provides insights into why some individuals consistently experience higher or lower attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction) and behaviors regardless of situational factors (Bouchard & McGue, 2003).

Furthermore, behavioral genetics research has linked job satisfaction to heritable personality traits (Ilies & Judge, 2003; Judge et al., 2012). Traits such as neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness—which have been shown to have genetic underpinnings (Power & Pluess, 2015; Sanchez-Roige et al., 2018)—strongly influence how individuals perceive and respond to their work environments (Judge et al., 2002). For example, individuals genetically predisposed to higher levels of neuroticism may be more prone to negative perceptions of their jobs, leading to lower job satisfaction, while those inclined toward extraversion often experience more positive workplace interactions and higher satisfaction.

The influence of genetics on affective dispositions is another critical component of behavioral genetics theory (Zietsch et al., 2015). Genetic variations can affect an individual's baseline levels of positive and negative affectivity (Mickey et al., 2011), which in turn may influence their overall job satisfaction. Individuals with a genetic predisposition for positive affectivity are more likely to interpret workplace challenges optimistically, whereas those with a tendency for negative affectivity may struggle with maintaining satisfaction in similar conditions (Ilies & Judge, 2003).

Additionally, behavioral genetics considers how gene-environment interactions shape job satisfaction. While genetic predispositions create a foundation for certain attitudes, environmental factors such as work design, leadership styles, and organizational culture can either amplify or mitigate these genetic tendencies. For example, an individual predisposed to lower job satisfaction due to genetic factors might experience improved satisfaction when placed in a supportive work environment.

Job Satisfaction

The formal definition of the job satisfaction could be traced back to the studies of (Fisher & Hanna, 2005). Based on amounts of case studies, they described the job satisfaction as: a product of non-regulatory mood tendency. (Gilbert A. Churchill et al., 1974) published an article called Measuring the Job Satisfaction of Industrial Salesmen and made it clear that: the job satisfaction, as a constitutional concept, contains the features of the job and the features of job-related environment. In a positive measurement of the constitutional concept of the job satisfaction, Churchill et al. gave an operational definition of the job satisfaction, i.e. the work-related affection states covering five aspects, namely the supervisors, the jobs, the work colleagues, the compensation, and the promotion opportunities.

(Locke et al., 1976) improved the study of Fisher and proposed the definition of the job satisfaction with far-reaching influences, i.e. the job satisfaction is a kind of pleasant or positive affection state, which grows in the process of evaluating an individual's work experience. At this point, the job satisfaction is gradually taken as an affective reflection to the work. (Organ & Near, 1985) recognized that the job satisfaction could be defined in perspective of affection or explored in perspective of cognition. Based on the perspective of cognition, the job satisfaction is interpreted as an understanding of a psychological process of recognition, including the consciousness, the perception, the reasoning, the judgment, and other aspects.

(Brief & Roberson, 1989) summarized previous researches and proposed a paradox, i.e. the job satisfaction is usually interpreted as an academic term containing affective elements, and the affective contents, however, are not measured effectively. The measurement of job satisfaction mainly focuses on the cognition. (Moorman et al., 1993) pointed out: from the affective perspective, the job satisfaction is an overall positive affective evaluation; from the cognitive perspective, the job satisfaction is a more logic and rational evaluation of working conditions. Cognition does not depend on affective judgment (De Houwer & Hermans, 2010). The cognitive perceptive of job satisfaction is

an evaluation of working conditions, opportunities, and output (Moorman et al., 1993). The measures of job satisfaction do not include the description of feelings.

The affection-based job satisfaction is an overall positive affective evaluation on the job. According to this definition, the job satisfaction is about whether the job stimulates employees' pleasant emotions and positive feelings. The affection-oriented job satisfaction is to measure the feelings and emotions of employees in working (Matzler & Renzl, 2022). The positive feelings or emotions mean high job satisfaction. The cognition-based job satisfaction is a more logic and rational evaluation on the working conditions (Zhu & Akhtar, 2014). According to this definition, the cognition-oriented job satisfaction contains a comparison process. It is a relative concept. The evaluation is from the comparison with references. It does not depend on emotional judgment. It is the evaluation on working conditions, development opportunities, as well as working output (Pedrycz et al., 2011). Here, the cognition-based job satisfaction is to measure whether the nature of job, the working conditions, and development opportunities satisfy individuals' needs.

Relevant indicators are mostly about the evaluations on jobs, instead of the descriptions of feelings. Motowidlo (1996) defined the self-reporting-style job satisfaction as: a judgment of the friendliness of working environment. On the basis of paradox theory, Brief (1996) defined the job satisfaction as: the statement of internal state, reflected by affection or cognition, about liking or disliking the job and the degree. Coming into the 21st century, Weiss (2022) put forward a definition of the job satisfaction, similar to the one by Motowidlo. The definition of the job satisfaction by Weiss was clearer, i.e. the job satisfaction is an individual's positive measurable judgment on his or her working conditions. Weiss et al. regarded the job satisfaction as an internal state, which was an affective evaluation on the job by liking or disliking and the degree. Thus, the job satisfaction is about the attitude. Harrison (2006) and his colleagues published an article *How important are job attitudes?* Meta-analytic comparisons of integrative behavioral outcomes and time sequences and pointed out that the job satisfaction is a kind of job attitude.

Reviewing the studies of job satisfaction, it can be found that the institutional concept of job satisfaction, describing employees' working attitudes, evolves gradually concerning the definitions. The development of definition follows the line from single perspective to multiple perspectives and also reflects a cognitive process from overall perception to specific cognition. According to studies of job satisfaction, some scholars argued that the job satisfaction is a single concept and employees produce the overall attitude or opinion to the work. The representatives of this view are Hoppock et al (1935). Hoppock in his doctoral thesis *Job Satisfaction* described the job satisfaction as the employees' subjective reflections to working scenarios, i.e. the affective reflection of employees in working or the subjective feelings about their working environment. Hoppock thought that the job satisfaction is the subjective evaluation, psychologically and physically, on the job and the working environment.

Locke (1976) defined the job satisfaction as the positive and pleasant affective state, which an individual hold about his or her job. Kalleberg (1977) argued that the job satisfaction is an employee's normal attitude to his or her job. The employee balances his or her satisfaction or dissatisfaction to different parts of the job and finally forms an overall conclusion about the job, satisfying or not. Lussier (2005) defined the job satisfaction as the employees' overall attitude to the work. Differing from the overall perception above, other scholars in relevant

studies agreed that the job satisfaction is a specific element concept. It reflects employees' evaluations on every specific aspect of their work. Thus, the measures of the job satisfaction should not be general but focus on specific aspects of the work.

Vroom (1962) pointed out that the job satisfaction has seven aspects, i.e. the compensation, the supervisor, the colleagues, the working environment, the job content, the promotion, and the organization self. A study by Smith et al. shows that the job satisfaction has five aspects, i.e. the compensation, the job, the promotion, the supervisor, and the colleagues. To sum up, regardless the researchers study the concept of job satisfaction from which perspectives, their definitions of the job satisfaction are more or less about personal affections. If the employees have positive and pleasant feelings in work, their attitudes to the work will be defined as job satisfaction. Otherwise, if the employees have negative and unpleasant feelings in work, their attitudes to the work will be defined as unsatisfied (Chen, 2005).

Research Methodology

To address the research questions comprehensively, this study employs a multidisciplinary narrative literature review. The review focuses on research published in SCOPUS-indexed journals across the fields of psychology, organizational behavior and human resource management. A narrative literature review serves as a qualitative synthesis of existing studies, providing a broad understanding by identifying key themes, research gaps, and critical insights (Sukhera, 2022). Unlike systematic reviews, which follow strict protocols, the narrative approach allows for flexibility in synthesizing findings from diverse disciplines, making it suitable for complex, interdisciplinary topics (Cissey Usman et al., 2025).

In this context, the narrative literature review enables a holistic exploration and critical evaluation of research findings from neurodiversity, education, and technology. This approach supports the identification of overarching themes, highlights gaps in current knowledge, and proposes areas for future research. By integrating insights from multiple disciplines, the review contributes to a deeper understanding of how technology, particularly chatbots, can enhance educational outcomes for neurodiverse populations. Furthermore, this methodology helps synthesize knowledge that can inform practical applications and theoretical frameworks, ultimately advancing the field and offering guidance for further multidisciplinary research.

Findings And Future Research Directions

Research by Arvey et al. (2000) and Song et al. (2000) underscores the significant role of genetic factors in job satisfaction, with heritability estimates ranging between 30% and 50%. These findings suggest that personality traits such as Extraversion and Neuroticism mediate this genetic influence. However, the current studies rely on homogeneous Western, predominantly white twin samples, limiting their generalizability. This highlights the need to explore cross-cultural differences in genetic-environment interactions. Future studies can utilize Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory to understand how collectivist versus individualistic values shape these dynamics. Such insights would benefit global HR managers by offering culturally informed strategies to enhance job satisfaction across diverse workforces.

Gender and Occupational Differences

Existing research lacks depth in exploring how genetic and environmental determinants of job satisfaction vary by gender and occupation. Studies like Stanek et al. (2016) have shown that environmental influences increase with age, yet gender-based variations remain underexplored. Applying Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) can help explain how societal expectations influence the expression of genetic predispositions in men and women. Additionally, investigating whether traits like Openness to Experience impact job satisfaction differently in creative industries versus technical fields can provide more personalized career recommendations. This research direction benefits career counselors and organizational leaders by offering tailored approaches to employee engagement and satisfaction.

Environmental Interactions with Genetic Predispositions

While genetic factors play a role, workplace experiences significantly shape job satisfaction. Research by Hahn et al. (2000) and McCall et al. (2000) emphasizes non-shared environmental influences, such as leadership styles and team dynamics. The interplay between genetic predispositions and these environmental factors remains unclear. Applying Person-Environment Fit Theory (Edwards, 1996) can help explore how environments amplify or mitigate genetic tendencies. For example, understanding how an autocratic leadership style impacts employees with high Neuroticism versus high Extraversion can inform leadership training programs. This direction benefits HR departments and leadership coaches by refining strategies for workplace management and employee well-being.

Age-Related Changes in Genetic Influence

Research by Stanek et al. (2016) suggests that genetic influences on job satisfaction decrease with age, with environmental factors becoming more prominent over time. However, these studies cover limited time frames. Longitudinal research spanning multiple decades, guided by Life-Span Development Theory (Baltes, 1987), can offer insights into how significant life events—such as promotions, job losses, or career changes—affect job satisfaction. This understanding can help policy-makers and retirement planners design age-appropriate workplace policies and retirement strategies, promoting satisfaction across an individual's career span.

Genetic Markers and Job Satisfaction

Initial findings by Song et al. (2000) on genetic markers like DRD4 VNTR and 5-HTTLPR are promising but lack robustness due to small sample sizes. Leveraging Genome-Wide Association Studies (GWAS) can provide a comprehensive understanding of the genetic loci linked to job satisfaction. Integrating polygenic scores into research can further clarify how clusters of genes contribute to Positive and Negative Affectivity. This research can benefit genetic researchers and HR professionals by paving the way for predictive models that identify potential job satisfaction risks and strengths.

Personality Traits as Mediators

Personality traits, particularly Extraversion and Neuroticism, mediate the relationship between genetics and job satisfaction. While research by Ilies and Judge (2000) aligns with the Big Five Personality Framework (Costa & McCrae, 1992), exploring specific sub-traits such as sociability versus assertiveness within Extraversion can deepen our understanding. Applying Trait Activation Theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003) can help identify situations where these sub-traits are most influential. This

research benefits recruiters and team managers by helping match employees to roles that maximize their strengths and satisfaction.

Additional Future Research Directions

Multidisciplinary Research Directions

Future research should adopt a multidisciplinary approach by integrating insights from fields such as genetics, psychology, neuroscience, sociology, and organizational behavior. This approach can provide a more holistic understanding of job satisfaction and its determinants.

Neuroscience and Organizational Behavior

Integrating neuroimaging techniques like fMRI and EEG with traditional job satisfaction surveys could uncover how brain activity correlates with job satisfaction and workplace behaviors. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) could be applied to explore how intrinsic motivations interact with neural responses in different workplace environments. This approach could benefit workplace designers and HR professionals by identifying neural triggers for motivation and satisfaction.

Sociogenomics and Job Satisfaction

The emerging field of sociogenomics examines how social factors influence gene expression. Applying Gene-Environment Interaction (GxE) Theory can explore how workplace dynamics like leadership style, team culture, and job autonomy affect genetic predispositions for satisfaction. This research could help policy-makers and organizational leaders craft environments that enhance employee well-being by considering biological and social interactions.

Epigenetics and Workplace Stress

Epigenetic research could investigate how workplace stress alters gene expression related to job satisfaction over time. Allostatic Load Theory (McEwen, 1998) could guide studies on how chronic workplace stress impacts both mental and physical health. This research can provide insights for corporate wellness programs and mental health practitioners by identifying early biological markers of job dissatisfaction and burnout.

Personality, Genetics, and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Combining AI with machine learning techniques can help predict job satisfaction based on genetic and personality data. The Five-Factor Model (Costa & McCrae, 1992) can provide a theoretical framework to explore how AI-driven assessments can optimize employee placement and job role design. This would benefit HR analytics teams and talent management consultants by offering data-driven approaches to enhance employee fit and satisfaction.

Cross-Cultural and Cross-Sector Research

Global Cultural Variations

Applying Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (1980) can investigate how genetic-environment interactions influence job satisfaction differently across individualistic and collectivist cultures. Comparative studies across sectors like healthcare, technology, and manufacturing could reveal how culture shapes job satisfaction determinants. This research benefits multinational organizations by helping design culturally sensitive HR practices.

Gender and Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1991) can explore how gender and SES intersect with genetic predispositions to influence job satisfaction. Understanding these variations can inform policies aimed at reducing workplace inequities. This direction benefits diversity and inclusion officers and policymakers focused on workplace equality.

Implications

Academic Implications

This research paper provides a significant contribution to academicians by consolidating and synthesizing existing studies on the genetic influences on job satisfaction. It highlights the need to consider internal, biological factors alongside traditional environmental determinants, redirecting scholarly focus toward an integrative approach. The emphasis on genetic predispositions offers a fresh perspective in the widely researched domain of job satisfaction literature. This shift not only broadens the understanding of job satisfaction but also encourages future research to explore how internal factors interact with workplace dynamics.

Importantly, the paper contributes to the development of multidisciplinary research by bridging the fields of genetics, psychology, neuroscience, and organizational behavior. By exploring genetic influences on workplace attitudes, such as job satisfaction, the paper underscores the value of integrating biological sciences with social sciences. This multidisciplinary approach opens new avenues for research into how genetic markers, neural responses, and workplace factors collectively shape employee well-being.

The paper also highlights the importance of cross-cultural studies, noting that current research is limited by homogeneous Western samples. Future research directions proposed by the authors emphasize exploring cultural variations and gender-based differences in genetic-environment interactions. By incorporating frameworks like Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and Intersectionality Theory, future studies can enhance the global applicability of these findings. This focus on multidisciplinary and cross-cultural aspects paves the way for richer, more inclusive research that addresses diverse workforce dynamics across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

Practical Implications

This research paper provides valuable insights for industry practitioners, particularly HR professionals, talent acquisition managers, and organizational leaders. By highlighting the significant role of genetic predispositions and personality traits (like Extraversion and Neuroticism) in job satisfaction, the findings inform more targeted recruitment strategies. Organizations can design recruitment processes that assess personality traits alongside technical skills to better match candidates to roles where they are more likely to thrive. This approach enhances employee fit, reduces turnover rates, and improves overall workplace satisfaction.

Furthermore, these insights can shape employee maintenance initiatives by encouraging personalized development programs and wellness strategies. Understanding that factors like leadership styles and workplace environments interact with genetic predispositions enables HR teams to tailor employee engagement practices. For example, providing flexible work environments, customized leadership training, and mental health support initiatives can foster satisfaction and well-being among diverse employees. By leveraging these findings, organizations can proactively identify potential satisfaction risks, ultimately promoting a healthier, more productive workforce.

Social Implications

This research benefits society by promoting workplace environments that are better aligned with employees' intrinsic needs, improving overall job satisfaction and mental well-being. By understanding how genetic and personality factors interact with workplace dynamics, organizations can foster inclusive and supportive work cultures, ultimately reducing workplace stress, enhancing productivity, and improving quality of life. These findings support efforts to design policies that account for individual differences, thereby promoting fairness and equality in employee engagement and career development. Additionally, the research aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

Conclusion

The objective of this research paper was to consolidate existing studies and develop a comprehensive literature review on the influence of genetics on employees' job satisfaction. The major findings reveal that genetic factors, particularly personality traits like Extraversion and Neuroticism, significantly contribute to job satisfaction, with heritability estimates ranging from 30% to 50%. However, the research highlights gaps, including the need for cross-cultural, gender-specific, and occupational studies, and suggests future research directions that incorporate multidisciplinary approaches such as neuroscience, epigenetics, and sociogenomics.

For academicians, this paper provides a fresh perspective by redirecting the focus of job satisfaction research toward understanding intrinsic genetic factors, contributing to the development of multidisciplinary studies. For industry practitioners, it offers insights to design more personalized recruitment strategies, employee engagement, and retention initiatives. For society, this research promotes better workplace environments, enhancing mental well-being and fairness in employment practices.

In alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goal 8, the paper supports the creation of sustained, inclusive, and productive employment practices that benefit both individuals and organizations.

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