

Personality Types of Dental Postgraduate Students of TUSDM

Alkathiri M, Swee G, Pagni S, Loo CY (Tufts University School of Dental Medicine, Boston, MA)

Introduction

What drives individuals to choose one professional path over another? Beyond clinical exposure and training experiences, underlying personality traits may shape how individuals think, interact, and ultimately define their careers. The Five-Factor Model provides a framework to evaluate these differences across five domains: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. Despite its broad use in behavioral research, little is known about how these traits vary across dental specialties. Identifying these patterns may offer valuable insight into the role personality plays in specialty selection among dental residents.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine personality traits among postgraduate dental residents at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine (TUSDM) and evaluate their association with dental specialty using the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI).

Methods

This cross-sectional study recruited a convenience sample of postgraduate dental residents at TUSDM. An anonymous electronic survey was distributed via Qualtrics. The survey included the TIPI, which assesses five personality domains: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience, along with demographic variables including age, gender, residency program, and year of training. No identifying information was collected. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 29.

Statistical Analysis

Normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. Non-parametric analysis was performed using the Kruskal–Wallis test with post-hoc Dunn’s test and Bonferroni correction ($P<.05$).

Results

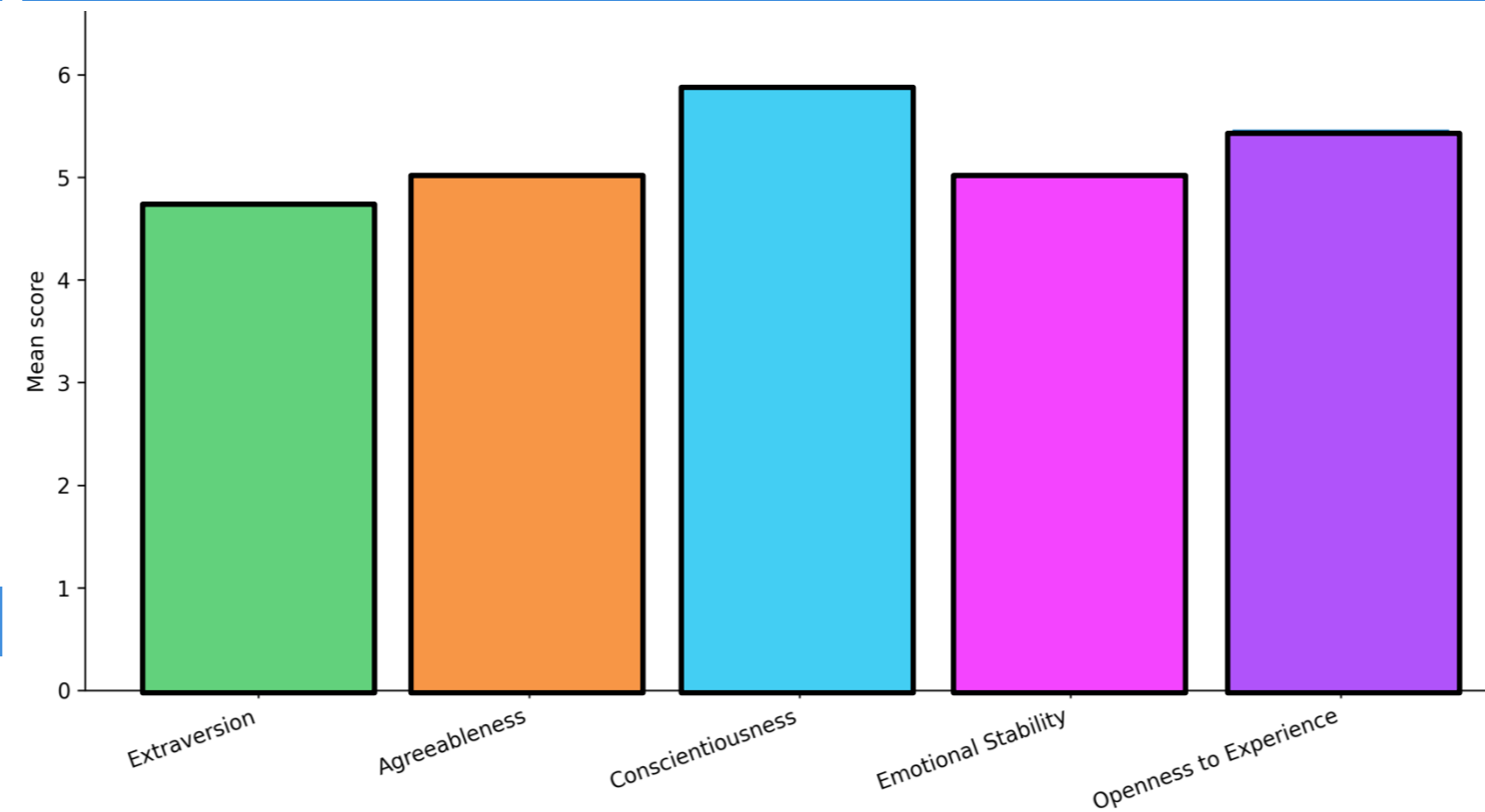


Fig.1 Mean scores for the five TIPI personality domains

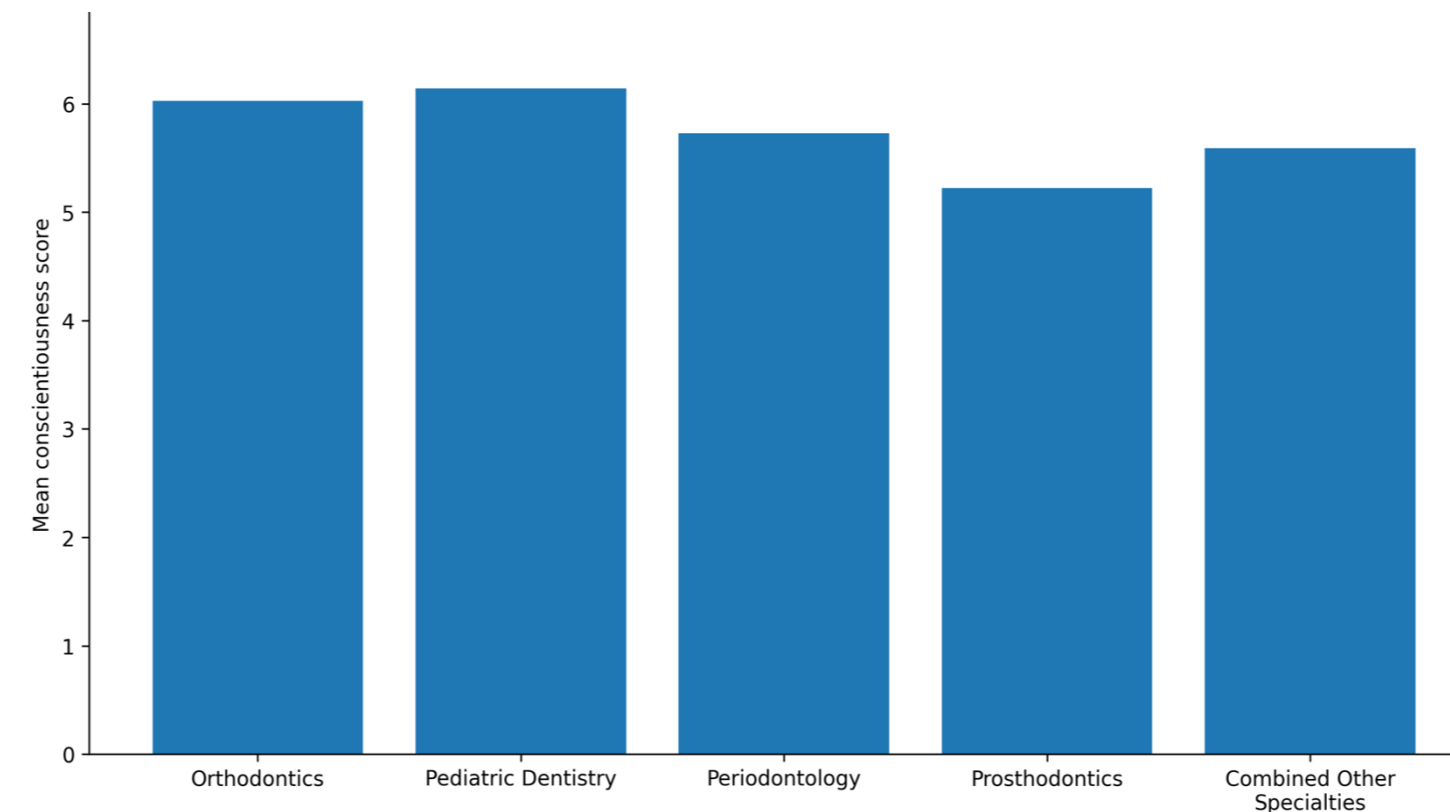


Fig.2 Conscientiousness by specialty



A total of 122 responses were collected. Valid responses ranged from 104 to 106 across personality domains, and the mean age was 29.7 ± 3.7 years. Conscientiousness had the highest mean score (5.88 ± 0.96), followed by openness to experience (5.47 ± 1.06), agreeableness (4.96 ± 1.17), emotional stability (4.87 ± 1.33), and extraversion (4.75 ± 1.43). Kruskal-Wallis analysis showed a significant difference in conscientiousness across specialties ($P=.041$). Extraversion ($P=.162$), agreeableness ($P=.148$), emotional stability ($P=.590$), and openness to experience ($P=.813$) were not significantly different across specialties. Post-hoc analysis with Bonferroni correction showed limited pairwise differences.

Conclusion

Conscientiousness differed across dental specialties, while extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness to experience did not. These findings suggest that conscientiousness may be associated with specialty selection among dental residents.

References

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