

## Connecting Personality Traits to Career Interests Among Malaysian Undergraduate Students

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A growing number of graduates are underemployed or frequently switching jobs, reflecting challenges in achieving career stability and alignment. Individual personality and career interests serve as key determinants influencing employee retention within organisations. This study examined the predictors of six RIASEC career interest dimensions with the Five-Factor Model of personality traits. A total of 338 Malaysian undergraduates completed the NEO-IPIP-120 and the RIASEC Inventory. Multiple linear regression analyses revealed that Extraversion, Openness, and Agreeableness were significant predictors for all RIASEC dimensions. Extraversion showed the strongest positive association across all career interests, whereas Neuroticism demonstrated a non-significant relationship with most dimensions, except for Enterprising. Agreeableness exhibited a negative relationship, while Openness showed a positive relationship with all dimensions. Conscientiousness was not significantly related to Realistic and Enterprising interests. The findings of this study can be directed to employers and Human Resource personnel on implementing personality assessments for specific work positions to ensure alignment between both personality and career interest, which may boost accuracy in recruiting the most suitable candidate and reduce long-term turnover rate.

*Keywords:* career interest, Five-Factor Model, personality trait, RIASEC

In Malaysia, individuals typically graduate from tertiary education at the average age of 23, marking the beginning of their journey to seek meaningful careers. However, as of 2023, 23.6% of individuals aged 25 to 34 years remain unemployed (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). More concerningly, a growing number of graduates are frequently switching or job-hopping between positions. According to a study by Randstad Malaysia (2023), 33% of respondents expressed intentions to change jobs, with those aged 25 to 34 demonstrating the highest level of motivation to do so. Importantly, the report also revealed that 21% of respondents showed low interest in their current roles, while 17% indicated unwillingness to work for companies that do not align with their personal values (Randstad Malaysia, 2023). The study conducted shows the critical role of individual personality and career

interests as a driving force influencing employee retention within organisations.

In light of these trends, research on personality has gained increasing attention for its contribution to work-related outcomes, such as career development and performance, work engagement, leadership, and corporate social responsibility (Din et al., 2023). For these reasons, employers are progressively utilising personality assessments as a screening tool (Saleh et al., 2022), as these evaluations offer insights into the hidden aspects of a candidate that are not readily observable through interviews alone. An older study in 2015 suggested that employees with the correct traits for a specific job may show more satisfaction than those who showed a mismatch between personality traits and job roles (Loveland et al., 2015). Consequently, personality prediction systems have been

developed to evaluate candidates' personalities and match them with suitable positions, thus enhancing the recruitment process and minimising the expenses associated with poor hiring decisions (Satra et al., 2024). This also aids in identifying the appropriate individual capable of making significant contributions to the organisation's success (Remaida et al., 2021).

While personality traits explain behavioural tendencies, career interests capture motivational orientations. Alongside personality, career interests also play a pivotal role in influencing graduates' readiness for the labour market by aligning their aspirations with industry demands (Saleh et al., 2022). For instance, a study in India reported that conscientiousness and extraversion were significant predictors of career success and job satisfaction among teachers (Rao Muhammad Tauseef et al., 2024). In the context of the sales and marketing field, extrovert salespeople reported less occupational stress and higher job satisfaction, as compared to their introvert counterparts (Thakur & Jadhav, 2022). The result of this study may indicate that introverted individuals experience a discrepancy between personality and career interest, which results in higher occupational stress. Nevertheless, despite the increasing utilisation of personality assessments, the extent to which personality traits align with career interests among Malaysian graduates remains insufficiently explored.

The consequences of these limited findings are far-reaching, extending beyond individual graduates, who might suffer prolonged unemployment or underemployment, to the wider economy by reducing overall productivity and labour competitiveness (Kadir et al., 2020). Persistent graduate unemployment can also undermine the credibility of Malaysia's higher education system, leading to diminished employer confidence in

recruiting local graduates (Kadir et al., 2020). The disparity between the abilities of graduates and the expectations of employers stresses the necessity for improved alignment of personality and career interests. By positioning graduates' personality traits with suitable career paths, it is possible to enhance their marketability and job satisfaction (Saleh et al., 2022).

Moreover, incorporating personality traits with career interests is crucial for effective talent recruitment and management as it enhances the understanding of how individuals fit within specific roles and organisational cultures, ultimately leading to better job performance and satisfaction. Personality traits, particularly those measured by the Five-Factor model of personality, have been shown to significantly influence educational and occupational choices, as well as career outcomes. The Five-Factor Model of personality, also known as the Big Five, is a widely recognised framework for understanding human personality. It consists of five broad domains: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience (Kang et al., 2024). These traits have been extensively studied and validated across different cultures and populations, demonstrating their universality and applicability in various contexts, including Latin America (Cupani et al., 2024). The Five-Factor Model of personality is instrumental in predicting various life outcomes, including job performance, cognitive function, and occupational status.

For instance, Conscientiousness is consistently found to be the strongest predictor of job performance, with its facets such as order, deliberation, and self-discipline showing significant importance across different job types (Zell & Lesick, 2022). In the hiring process, understanding an applicant's personality can lead to better hiring decisions by aligning personality

traits with job requirements. For example, Conscientiousness is linked to higher occupational prestige and socioeconomic status, making it a valuable trait for roles requiring reliability and diligence (Liu, 2023). Moreover, personality traits such as low Neuroticism, high Conscientiousness, and Extraversion have been linked to early career success, including degree attainment, income, and job satisfaction, highlighting their long-term impact on career trajectories (Hoff et al., 2021). The incorporation of personality assessments in recruitment procedures might enhance the precision of personality evaluations derived from resumes, assisting Human Resource professionals in making informed choices (Hartel et al., 2023). The notion of person-job fit, which matches employees' personality attributes with job needs, is a crucial component influencing employee engagement and retention, as it provides a proper match between individuals' skills and their jobs (Mensah & Bawole, 2020). Additionally, personality assessments can help identify individuals who are better at detecting disinformation, a critical skill in roles that require information verification and decision-making under uncertainty (Wolverton & Stevens, 2020).

Along the same line, the RIASEC career interests, developed by psychologists (Holland, 1959), categorise people and work environments into six broad areas. The initial presentation of the idea highlighted the importance of finding a suitable match between a person and their environment. The RIASEC acronym stands for Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. The RIASEC framework is widely used in various fields such as human resources and training development. It is commonly applied in talent matching to match talents to roles where they are more likely to thrive and stay engaged, and in career growth, to align career paths and development plans with individual RIASEC profiles to enhance job satisfaction and performance.

RIASEC framework suggests that individuals are more likely to find satisfaction and success in careers that align with their intrinsic interests and personality traits (Fruyt & Mervielde, 1997). The relationship of IPIP dimensions with the RIASEC domains has been a focal interest in organisational research, to align personality traits with career interests and suitability.

Integrating vocational interests into the recruitment process can enhance organisational diversity and workforce alignment by matching individuals' preferences with suitable occupations (Wee et al., 2023). For graduates, cultivating their interests in subjects of study might result in improved career determination, since students who are engaged in their field are more inclined to follow associated occupations, hence augmenting their employability (Quinlan & Renninger, 2022). Consequently, RIASEC career interests can function as a key tool in recruitment processes and improving graduate employability by aligning individual preferences with professional positions, thereby facilitating more efficient workforce integration and satisfaction.

By addressing these challenges through personality-career interest matching, graduates can better align with employer expectations, leading to more effective recruitment and management processes (Ariffin et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2022). It is important to note that previous studies suggest that the dominance of specific personality domains varies across occupational types, as different traits may emerge as stronger predictors of positive work outcomes depending on the context (Zakaria & Yusof, 2021; Askim et al., 2022). For instance, Conscientiousness has dominantly been acknowledged as a strong predictor of career success across diverse occupational types (Alhendi, 2019), whereas Openness to Experience is the

most prominent trait among employees in the manufacturing sector (Zakaria & Yusof, 2021). Notably, there remains a significant lack of literature exploring these dynamics in the Malaysian context.

Despite the growing body of international research examining the relationships between personality traits and career interests, there remains a notable lack of empirical evidence within the Malaysian context. Understanding how these constructs interact is crucial for improving graduate employability, guiding effective recruitment, and enhancing suitable job alignment. Therefore, this study aims to identify the predictors of the six RIASEC career interest dimensions: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional, based on the five personality traits among Malaysian undergraduates, which are Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism. This study hypothesises that each of the personality traits will significantly predict the six RIASEC career interest dimensions. The following null hypotheses were formulated to test the objectives of the study, as follows:

H<sub>01</sub>: All five personality traits do not significantly predict the Realistic dimension of career interest.

H<sub>02</sub>: All five personality traits do not significantly predict the Investigative dimension of career interest.

H<sub>03</sub>: All five personality traits do not significantly predict the Artistic dimension of career interest.

H<sub>04</sub>: All five personality traits do not significantly predict the Social dimension of career interest.

H<sub>05</sub>: All five personality traits do not significantly predict the Enterprising dimension of career interest.

H<sub>06</sub>: All five personality traits do not significantly predict the Conventional dimension of career interest.

## Method

### Participants and Research Design

This research adopted a quantitative approach, specifically a survey design, to identify the relationship among all the personality and RIASEC domains. Using the G\*Power software version 3.1.9.7, a minimum of 204 respondents were needed to achieve a power of .95 and a medium effect size. This study obtained a total of 338 respondents aged  $M = 23.99$  ( $SD = 1.50$ ), recruited using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria for the respondents were as follows: (1) students studying for undergraduate degrees in Malaysia's universities, (2) Malaysian nationality, (3) having literacy in English, and (4) being able to have access to the internet to fill in the online survey. By the end of the data collection, the respondents consisted of a balanced male (58.6%) and female (41.4%), were mainly Malay (69.8%), and were studying Engineering (40.8%). Table 1 shows the characteristics of respondents in this study.

Table 1

Characteristics of respondent

Demographic Information	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>f</i>	%
Age	23.99	1.50		
Gender				
Male			198	58.6
Female			140	41.4
Race				
Malay			236	69.8
Indian			51	15.1
Chinese			36	10.7
Bumiputera Sabah			5	1.5
Bumiputera Sarawak			8	2.4
Others			2	0.6
Education Field				
Accounting			15	4.4
Architecture			80	23.7
Business Administration			9	2.7
Computer Science			28	8.3
Engineering			138	40.8
Financial			12	3.6
Information Technology			27	8.0
Science			12	3.6
Social Science			17	5.0
Total			338	100.0

**Instruments**

Two instruments were utilised in this study to identify the predictors of career interest from personality traits, namely IPIP-NEO-120 to measure personality, and the RIASEC Inventory to measure career interest. Both instruments were administered in the English language.

**IPIP-NEO-120**

The International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) was originally developed by Goldberg (1999) and comprises 300 indicators of personality. This study utilised the simplified version of IPIP by Johnson (2014) with a total of 120 items (IPIP-NEO-120), measuring six dimensions, which are

Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. IPIP-NEO-120 is measured on a Likert scale from 1 (very inaccurate) to 5 (very accurate) for the positive item type; meanwhile, for the negative item type, the scale will be reversed, that is, 1 (very accurate) to 5 (very inaccurate). Items were summed up to obtain a total score for each dimension, with a higher score indicating higher traits in the respective dimension. Examples of items according to dimensions include ‘Have a vivid imagination’ and ‘Prefer variety to routine’ for Openness, ‘Like to tidy up’ and ‘Am always prepared’ for Conscientiousness, ‘Make friends easily’ and ‘Seek adventure’ for Extraversion, ‘Trust others’ and ‘Sympathize with the homeless’ for Agreeableness, and ‘Get angry easily’ and

'Dislike me' for Neuroticism. This study obtained an excellent internal consistency index of  $\alpha = .92$  for the overall questionnaire, a slightly low reliability,  $\alpha = .58$  for Openness, and a satisfactory reliability index for other dimensions,  $\alpha = .88$  for Conscientiousness,  $\alpha = .76$  for Extraversion,  $\alpha = .81$  for Agreeableness, and  $\alpha = .87$  for Neuroticism.

### RIASEC Inventory

The RIASEC Inventory, developed by psychologist Holland (1959), categorises people and work environments into six broad areas. This study utilised a 60-item inventory, with 10 questions for each domain. The RIASEC acronym stands for Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. RIASEC is measured on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for all items. All items are summed up according to the six RIASEC dimensions to determine the three dimensions with the highest scores. Examples of items according to each dimension include 'Organising my surroundings' and 'Working with tools' for Realistic, 'Performing chemical experiments' and 'Researching a topic I am working on' for Investigative, 'Engaging in art e.g. music, dance, dramatic performance' and 'Writing poetry, short stories, or drama scripts' for Artistic, 'Giving advice and guidance' and 'Working with other people in a team' for Social, 'Promoting new products or services' and 'Selling goods' for Enterprising, and 'Tasks with clear instructions and known outcomes' and 'Keeping financial accounts' for Conventional career interest. This study obtained a high internal consistency index of  $\alpha = .96$  for the overall questionnaire, and a satisfactory reliability index for other domains,  $\alpha = .82$  for Realistic,  $\alpha = .78$  for Investigative,  $\alpha = .81$  for Artistic,  $\alpha = .80$  for Social,  $\alpha = .83$  for Enterprising, and  $\alpha = .77$  for Conventional.

### Procedure and Data Analysis

This study utilised convenience sampling for data collection. The online survey was disseminated using the MyNext Portal. The MyNext Portal is a comprehensive talent solution and analytics platform created by Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad, an agency of the Malaysian Ministry of Human Resources, to establish Malaysia as a global talent hub. Before completing the survey, prospective participants were required to input their basic demographic information into the system, including age, gender, ethnicity, current level of education and field of study, and nationality. Participants were considered to have given their informed consent to this study by registering and completing the survey. The data collection occurred over two months, from April 2023 to May 2023, resulting in a total of 500 respondents. Following the data cleaning process, 338 respondents proceeded to data analysis to identify the relationship between personality traits and career preferences via linear multiple regression analysis, utilising the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26.

### Results

Firstly, preliminary analyses were conducted to test the assumptions. These analyses included the normality assessment using skewness, kurtosis and multicollinearity assumptions. All variables showed normal values of skewness and kurtosis, within the ranges of -1 to +1 (Garson, 2012), satisfying the normality assumptions. Next, multicollinearity was checked using the correlation matrix between the variables, with values of more than .90 indicating the presence of multicollinearity (Pallant, 2016). The correlation matrix showed all correlations below .90, with the highest correlation between Enterprising and Realistic career interests, with a value of .89. Thus, no multicollinearity exists in this study. Table

2 shows the correlation matrix between all variables included in this study.

Table 2

Correlation matrix among personality traits and career interest

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11
1. Openness	1										
2. Conscientiousness	.31**	1									
3. Extraversion	.32**	.25**	1								
4. Agreeableness	.37**	.49**	-.10	1							
5. Neuroticism	.29**	.66**	.31**	.42**	1						
6. Realistic	.22**	.03	.48**	-.22**	.00	1					
7. Investigative	.29**	.24**	.41**	-.02	.15**	.70**	1				
8. Artistic	.24**	.17**	.52**	-.13*	.15**	.81**	.76**	1			
9. Social	.23**	.12*	.44**	-.16**	.06	.85**	.80**	.82**	1		
10. Enterprising	.26**	.10	.50**	-.17**	.06	.89**	.74**	.83**	.85**	1	
11. Conventional	.26**	.23**	.55**	-.12*	.16**	.82**	.80**	.82**	.83**	.81**	1

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$  \*\* =  $p < .001$

Once preliminary analyses were completed, data was proceeded to inferential analysis. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between the five dimensions of personality and the six dimensions of career interests. As such, the analysis was conducted six times, with all five personality traits as the multiple independent variables, and each of the RIASEC career interest dimensions as the dependent variable. For Realistic career interest, the regression model was significant,  $R^2 = .285$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .273$ ,  $F(5, 332) = 26.50$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the model explained 28.5% of the variance. Openness ( $\beta = .179$ ,  $t = 3.36$ ,  $p = .001$ ), Extraversion ( $\beta = .422$ ,  $t = 7.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and Agreeableness ( $\beta = -.211$ ,  $t = -3.41$ ,  $p = .001$ ) significantly predicted Realistic interest. Conscientiousness ( $\beta = .070$ ,  $t = 1.25$ ,  $p = .212$ ) and Neuroticism ( $\beta = -.065$ ,  $t = -1.33$ ,  $p = .184$ ) were not significant.

For Investigative career interest, the model was significant,  $R^2 = .227$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .214$ ,  $F(5, 332) = 19.45$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 22.7% of the variance. Openness ( $\beta = .192$ ,  $t = 3.34$ ,  $p = .001$ ), Conscientiousness ( $\beta = .236$ ,  $t = 3.53$ ,  $p = .001$ ), and Extraversion ( $\beta = .311$ ,  $t = 5.98$ ,

$p < .001$ ) were significant positive predictors, while Agreeableness ( $\beta = -.133$ ,  $t = -2.13$ ,  $p = .034$ ) was a significant negative predictor. Neuroticism ( $\beta = -.064$ ,  $t = -1.16$ ,  $p = .247$ ) was not significant. For Artistic career interest, the model was significant,  $R^2 = .299$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .288$ ,  $F(5, 332) = 28.32$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 29.9% of the variance. Openness ( $\beta = .136$ ,  $t = 2.57$ ,  $p = .011$ ), Conscientiousness ( $\beta = .145$ ,  $t = 2.23$ ,  $p = .027$ ), and Extraversion ( $\beta = .428$ ,  $t = 8.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were positive predictors, whereas Agreeableness ( $\beta = -.196$ ,  $t = -3.45$ ,  $p = .001$ ) negatively predicted Artistic interest. Neuroticism ( $\beta = -.059$ ,  $t = -1.06$ ,  $p = .290$ ) was not significant.

For Social career interest, the model was significant,  $R^2 = .252$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .240$ ,  $F(5, 332) = 22.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 25.2% of the variance. Openness ( $\beta = .186$ ,  $t = 3.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Conscientiousness ( $\beta = .163$ ,  $t = 2.70$ ,  $p = .007$ ), and Extraversion ( $\beta = .358$ ,  $t = 7.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were significant positive predictors, while Agreeableness ( $\beta = -.226$ ,  $t = -4.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Neuroticism ( $\beta = -.144$ ,  $t = -2.40$ ,  $p = .017$ ) were significant negative predictors. Next, the regression model for Enterprising interest was significant,  $R^2 =$

.304, adjusted  $R^2 = .293$ ,  $F(5, 332) = 29.06$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 30.4% of the variance. *Openness* ( $\beta = .195$ ,  $t = 4.41$ ,  $p < .001$ ), *Conscientiousness* ( $\beta = .129$ ,  $t = 2.12$ ,  $p = .035$ ), and *Extraversion* ( $\beta = .427$ ,  $t = 8.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were significant positive predictors, whereas *Agreeableness* ( $\beta = -.230$ ,  $t = -4.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and *Neuroticism* ( $\beta = -.120$ ,  $t = -2.07$ ,  $p = .039$ ) were significant negative predictors.

Lastly, for Conventional career interest, the regression was significant,  $R^2 = .352$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .341$ ,  $F(5, 332) = 36.04$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the model explained 35.2% of the variance. *Openness* ( $\beta = .135$ ,  $t = 2.65$ ,  $p = .009$ ), *Conscientiousness* ( $\beta = .228$ ,  $t = 3.97$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and *Extraversion* ( $\beta = .461$ ,  $t = 9.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were positive predictors, whereas *Agreeableness* ( $\beta = -.197$ ,  $t = -3.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ) negatively predicted Conventional interest.

*Neuroticism* ( $\beta = -.101$ ,  $t = -1.92$ ,  $p = .056$ ) was not significant.

Notably, Extraversion consistently emerged as the strongest and most significant positive predictor of career interest, followed by Openness and Conscientiousness, except for Realistic interest. In contrast, Agreeableness demonstrated a consistent negative association across all dimensions, whereas Neuroticism showed mixed findings, reporting as a significant negative predictor only for Social and Enterprising interests. Therefore, all six null hypotheses,  $H_{01}$  to  $H_{06}$ , were rejected. Table 3 shows the detailed findings between the five personality predictors and six career interests. Meanwhile, Figure 1 shows the standardised beta values of personality traits predicting career interest dimensions for easier readability.

Table 3

Regression analysis for predictors of career interest from personality traits

Variable	Openness		Conscientiousness		Extraversion		Agreeableness		Neuroticism	
	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.
Realistic	.179	.001	.048	.466	.422	<.001	-.211	.001	-.123	.056
Investigative	.192	.001	.236	.001	.311	<.001	-.133	.034	-.107	.111
Artistic	.136	.011	.145	.027	.428	<.001	-.196	.001	-.038	.553
Social	.186	.001	.163	.016	.358	<.001	-.226	<.001	-.120	.069
Enterprising	.195	<.001	.122	.062	.427	<.001	-.204	.001	-.129	.042
Conventional	.135	.009	.228	<.001	.461	<.001	-.197	.001	-.085	.164

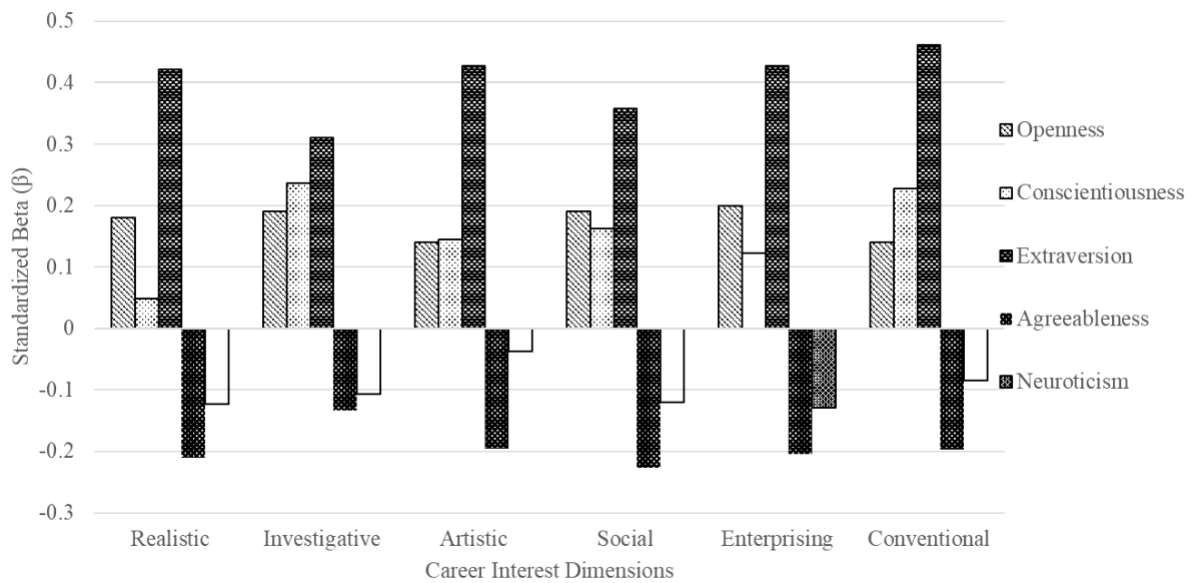


Figure 1 Standardised Beta Values of Personality Traits Predicting Career Interest Dimensions

Note. Bars coloured white indicate non-significant predictors ( $p > .05$ ).

### Discussion

This study examined the relationships between five personality dimensions and six career interest dimensions, intending to understand how the alignment between personality and career interests can enhance hiring accuracy and employee–job fit, ultimately contributing to greater retention. Overall, Extraversion demonstrated the strongest relationship across all career interest dimensions. This finding aligns with prior research showing that extroverted individuals are more likely to engage in activities involving leadership, persuasion, and social interaction (Hoff et al., 2021; Uslepp, 2020; Stoll et al., 2017; Hurtado et al., 2019).

Extroverts enjoy communicating with large groups of people and gatherings, are assertive, active, seek excitement, cheerful, upbeat, energetic, and optimistic (Watson & Clark, 1997). These characteristics contribute to effective communication and interpersonal skills, which are valued across a wide range of occupational fields. Consequently, individuals with high

Extraversion scores may perceive themselves as suitable for diverse career paths, reflecting their adaptability and comfort in environments that require collaboration, interaction, and engagement with others.

It is important to note that since this study does not assume causality, therefore, the findings do not imply that individuals with low Extraversion lack preferences or are unsuitable for any career interest. Rather, the results suggest that higher Extraversion scores are associated with greater preference across RIASEC career interests. Currently, there are no cut-off points to determine if an individual is an introvert or an extrovert, which reinforces the view that personality exists on a continuum. Past research has also shown that both extroverts and introverts may collaborate effectively in an organisation, and both showed a high need for achievement and a strong desire for growth, yet individuals with higher Extraversion showed a higher likelihood for success due to their expressive communication skills (Raja et al., 2020).

In contrast, individuals high in introversion are often described as quiet, reflective, and introspective. According to Petric (2022), introverts typically value solitude, prefer contemplation over verbal expression, and focus on depth rather than breadth in their interactions. They tend to share personal thoughts with a limited circle, prefer writing to speaking, and often seek solitude to recharge after social interactions. Compared to extroverts, introverts demonstrate a stronger capacity for self-reflection and independent work. As such, introverted individuals may be more effective in occupations that emphasise autonomy, creativity, and concentration, such as writing, research, art, and invention (Petric, 2022). Nevertheless, further research is warranted to better understand the distinctions and complementarities between introverted and extroverted tendencies in career contexts.

Furthermore, Neuroticism showed no significant relationship with any of the RIASEC career interests, except for Enterprising, where the relationship was negative. This suggests that Neuroticism may not substantially influence career interest preferences, apart from those related to Enterprising fields. The Enterprising field primarily involves activities in sales, marketing, and entrepreneurship, which typically require individuals who are ambitious, persuasive, confident, and willing to assume leadership roles. Effective leaders tend to be emotionally stable and self-assured, displaying enthusiasm and composure even under pressure (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Similarly, effective entrepreneurs have enormous ambition and passion and reflect driven businessmen and women in the profit-seeking sectors, such as being able to express and define an inspiring goal (Thompson, 2000). These attributes stand in contrast to individuals with high Neuroticism, who are typically anxious, moody, temperamental, and emotionally

reactive (Goldberg, 1999). Consequently, such individuals may perceive Enterprising careers as misaligned with their disposition, leading to a lower preference for this career interest dimension.

According to Stoll and colleagues (2017), Conscientiousness shows relationships with Conventional, Enterprising, Investigative, Artistic and Realistic interests. Usslepp (2020) and Batista and Gondim (2023) further supported this by linking Conscientiousness with Investigative and Enterprising interests, suggesting that individuals high in Conscientiousness are not only organised and reliable but also inclined towards roles that require careful planning, precision, and leadership. However, the findings of this study contradict the previous study in terms of nonsignificant findings regarding Realistic and Enterprising career interests. Conscientious individuals are characterised by being organised, systematic, having a strong sense of duty, efficient, disciplined and thorough (Goldberg, 1999). As such, Realistic careers may not provide the structured, detail-oriented environments in which conscientious individuals thrive (Wiernik, 2016; Vlad, 2018).

Similarly, these individuals tend to prioritise career paths that offer stability, predictability, and opportunities for advancement, which are more commonly found in careers that require planning and attention to detail, such as administrative or managerial roles (Liu, 2023). This contrasts with Enterprising individuals, who are motivated by influencing others to achieve organisational or economic goals but tend to avoid symbolic or methodical tasks (Barrick, 2003). Furthermore, the trait of Conscientiousness is often linked to a strong adherence to rules and guidelines, which may conflict with the flexible and occasionally risk-taking nature of Enterprising professions (Gartland, 2021).

Moreover, Openness to Experience showed significant findings with all six dimensions of career interests, suggesting that individuals with Openness to Experience have a general preference for most of the career pathways and no specific career inclination. The findings supported studies which highlighted that individuals high in Openness are more inclined towards creative and intellectual pursuits, aligning with the Artistic and Investigative types (Hurtado, 2019; Armstrong & Anthoney, 2009). However, no current studies were found to support the findings of Openness with all six dimensions of career interests. Thus, this study contributes novel empirical evidence demonstrating that Openness to Experience may serve as a universal predictor of diverse career interests. The preference for all career interests aligned well with the traits of Openness individuals, who are imaginative, Artistic, adventurous, intellectual, and open to new experiences (Johnson, 2014).

Meanwhile, this study observed a negative relationship between Agreeableness and all six dimensions of career interests, suggesting that individuals with low Agreeableness may exhibit broader preferences. In general, individuals with low Agreeableness may believe themselves to be able to thrive in most career fields due to their sceptical characteristics. Low Agreeableness is characterised by traits such as antagonism, uncooperativeness, and self-centeredness, which can lead to interpersonal and behavioural difficulties (Laursen & Richmond, 2014). Nevertheless, such individuals may still be drawn to Social careers because these roles can provide opportunities to engage in Social interactions that allow them to exert influence or control, aligning with their disputatious and manipulative tendencies (Laursen & Richmond, 2014).

Furthermore, the General Factor of Personality (Musek, 2007), which reflects Social effectiveness, has been shown to

relate to interest in Social jobs, suggesting that even those with lower Agreeableness might be attracted to Social roles if they perceive themselves as Socially effective in those contexts (Linden et al., 2022). Finally, research has shown that the broader configuration of personality traits, including aspects of Extraversion and Openness, can also influence a low Agreeableness individual's preference for all dimensions of RIASEC career interest (Yamashita et al., 2024).

### **Limitations and Strengths**

This study has identified several strengths and limitations that could be taken into consideration for future studies regarding personality and career interests. The strengths of this study lie in its focus on a specific cultural context and the application of established models, allowing for comparisons with existing literature. The findings contribute to the understanding of personality and career interest dynamics in Malaysia, a relatively underexplored topic. Conversely, this study utilised a quantitative survey with purposive sampling, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future studies have the option to replicate this study and include a more rigorous and systematic research design, such as random sampling, to allow for more representative findings for Malaysian undergraduates. Additionally, self-reported measures may be subject to biases, such as Social desirability. As such, incorporating qualitative methods could enrich the data and provide deeper insights into the motivations behind career choices.

In research, the truthfulness of the participants drives the analysis and results. Therefore, it is important to ensure that participants answer the self-report survey in their utmost truthful behaviour. With that, future studies may need to counter this self-report issue and ensure honest answers, such as answering the survey in a controlled environment (i.e., lecture hall, event) with

collaborative efforts of authorities such as counsellors and lecturers. Finally, this study adopted only a dimension-level approach to identifying the associations with career interests. Future studies might be interested in delving deeper by incorporating a facet-level approach to identifying a preference for career interests in hopes of a more aligned and specific personality-career fit.

### **Implication**

The results align with the Five-Factor Model (Goldberg, 1999) and the RIASEC framework (Holland, 1959), reinforcing the idea that personality traits can influence vocational preferences. The alignment of both personality traits and career interests may provide a future pathway for the integration of both theories, resulting in a person-career fit model. The personality and RIASEC integrated model was first used by Armstrong and Anthony (Armstrong & Anthony, 2009) in their study that identified the linkage between personality facets and the RIASEC model using property vector fitting. This study extends and supports the integrated model by using personality dimensions instead of facets and determines its linkage with career interests using multiple linear regression.

In addition, the findings of this study also provide several practical implications, particularly within the work and education context. For Human Resource practitioners, employers, and companies, these findings highlight the importance of considering personality traits in recruitment and career development initiatives. By recognising that Extraversion is a strong predictor of career interest, as well as the association between Openness and all career interest dimensions, organisations can tailor their recruitment strategies to attract individuals whose personalities align with their work environments. Furthermore, understanding the cultural context is crucial. Human

Resource initiatives should foster environments that promote collaboration and harmony, reflecting the values of Malaysian employees. For existing and future employees, awareness of their personality traits can aid in making informed career choices that align with their interests and values, ultimately enhancing job satisfaction (Törnroos, 2019), improving retention rates (Askim, 2022), and career success (Zakaria & Yusof, 2021; Rostyslav & Vsevolod, 2024).

Furthermore, employers and Human Resources could start implementing personality tests for specific work positions to ensure alignment between both personality and career interests, which may boost accuracy in recruiting the most suitable candidate and reduce long-term turnover rate. It is important to note that there are numerous commercial personality and career interest assessments; hence, the adopted assessments must be psychometrically sound, empirically supported, free of pseudo-psychology, and, if possible, contain guidance for the usage of companies and recruitment for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Finally, understanding the cultural context of career choices can enhance career counselling practices. Specifically, counsellors can help students identify roles that align with their personality traits and cultural values, promoting careers that facilitate collaboration and community engagement while still allowing for personal fulfilment. In detail, these assessments can be done periodically, for instance, at the start of a new school term and by the end of the school term, and can be a continuous assessment throughout the schooling years. On top of specialised guidance by the counsellors, ongoing personality and career interest assessments will aid students in accurately identifying the alignment between their personality and current career interests and by the end of the schooling years, aid in the search for

occupations that are suitable for these students. Besides that, educational programs could be designed to inform students about the range of careers available within their interests, emphasising those that align with their personality traits. By addressing the competitive nature of certain fields and reframing them within a collaborative context, educators can empower students to pursue careers that resonate with their values without feeling compromised.

### Conclusion

This study has successfully aligned each of the five dimensions of personality to the six dimensions of career interests. Findings showed a heavy emphasis on individuals who scored high in Extraversion and Openness to Experience and low in Agreeableness, preferring all career interests according to the RIASEC framework, while showing that Neuroticism may not play a role in determining career interest. This study serves as a foundation for subsequent research on person-occupation fit

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