

Different ways to success at work for women and men?

Relationship between personality and work success for women and men

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Topic

Big 5 related to work success [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

Big 5 personality characteristics are related to objective (e.g.: salary, prestige) and subjective work success (e.g.: satisfaction with work). Both, objective and subjective success, are negatively related to *Neuroticism* and positively related to *Extraversion*, *Openness*, and *Conscientiousness*. *Agreeableness* is negatively related to salary level, but positively to satisfaction.

Sex as moderator

Sex is an important factor when discussing personality [6, 7, 8] and work success outcomes [9, 10]. However, up to now little is known about the moderating effects of sex on the relationship between personality and success at work. According to the Role Congruity Theory, women are evaluated less favorably if there is a lack of fit between gender and occupational roles [11]. Drawing on this theory personality traits such as Openness could be perceived as less appropriate for women than men at work, resulting in less favorable evaluations which could in turn be reflected by lower work success.

Put the other way around the range of acceptable personality expression is possibly wider for men than women, leading to less sanctions and barriers due to gender role expectations. Another reason for moderating effects could be that men's compared to women's work success depends more strongly on personality compared to other factors like non-work demands [12]. To know if sex moderates the relation of personality and success is especially important in regard to equal chances for women and men at work such as pay equity.

Method

Sample

Working population of the German Socio-Economic Panel SOEP 2013 who answered all Big 5 questions ($N = 10,673$): 50.6% female participants, mean age of 44.3 years ($SD = 12.7$), ranging from 17 to 85 years.

Measures

Big 5. SOEP contains 15 items measuring the 5 personality dimensions.

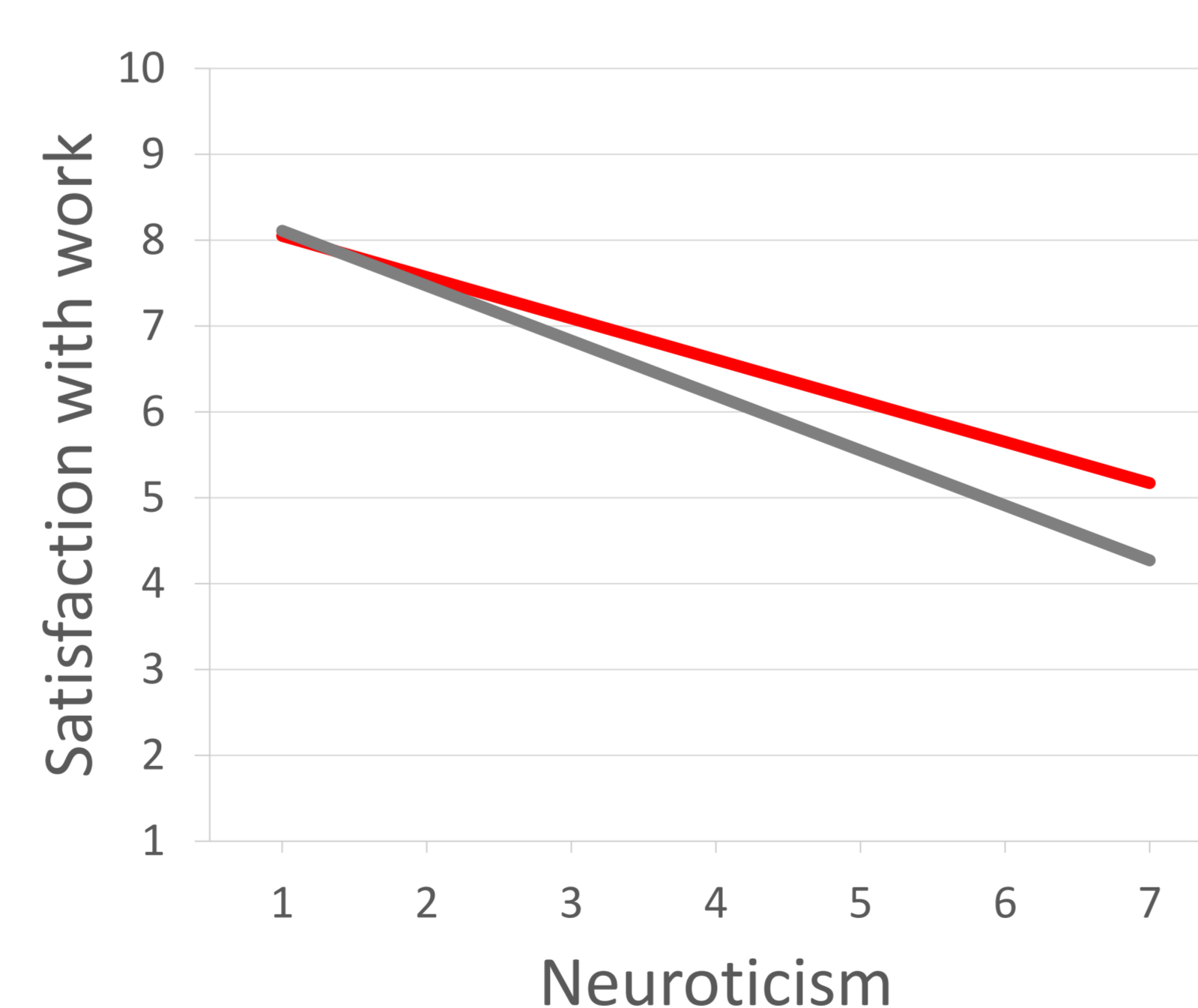
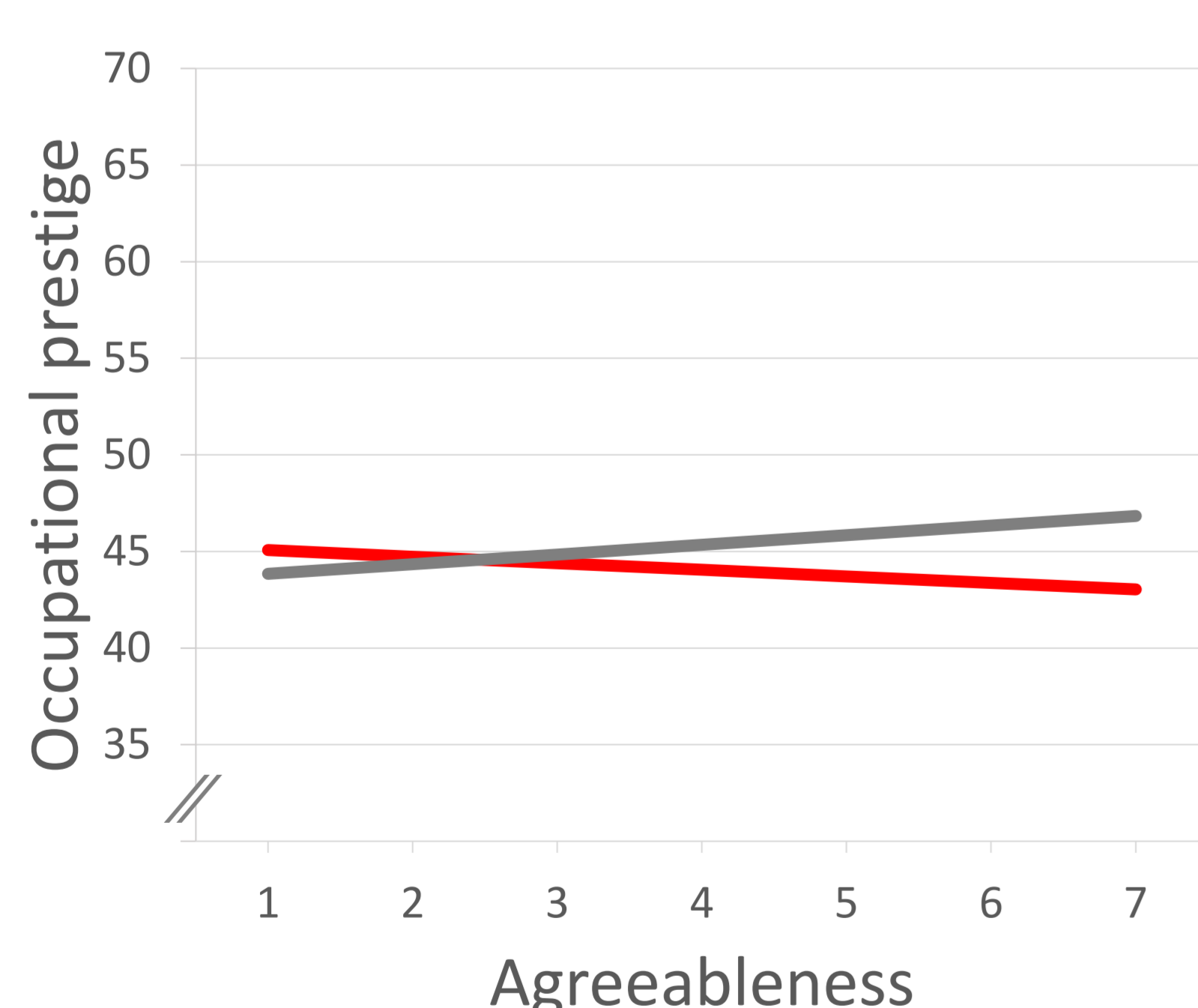
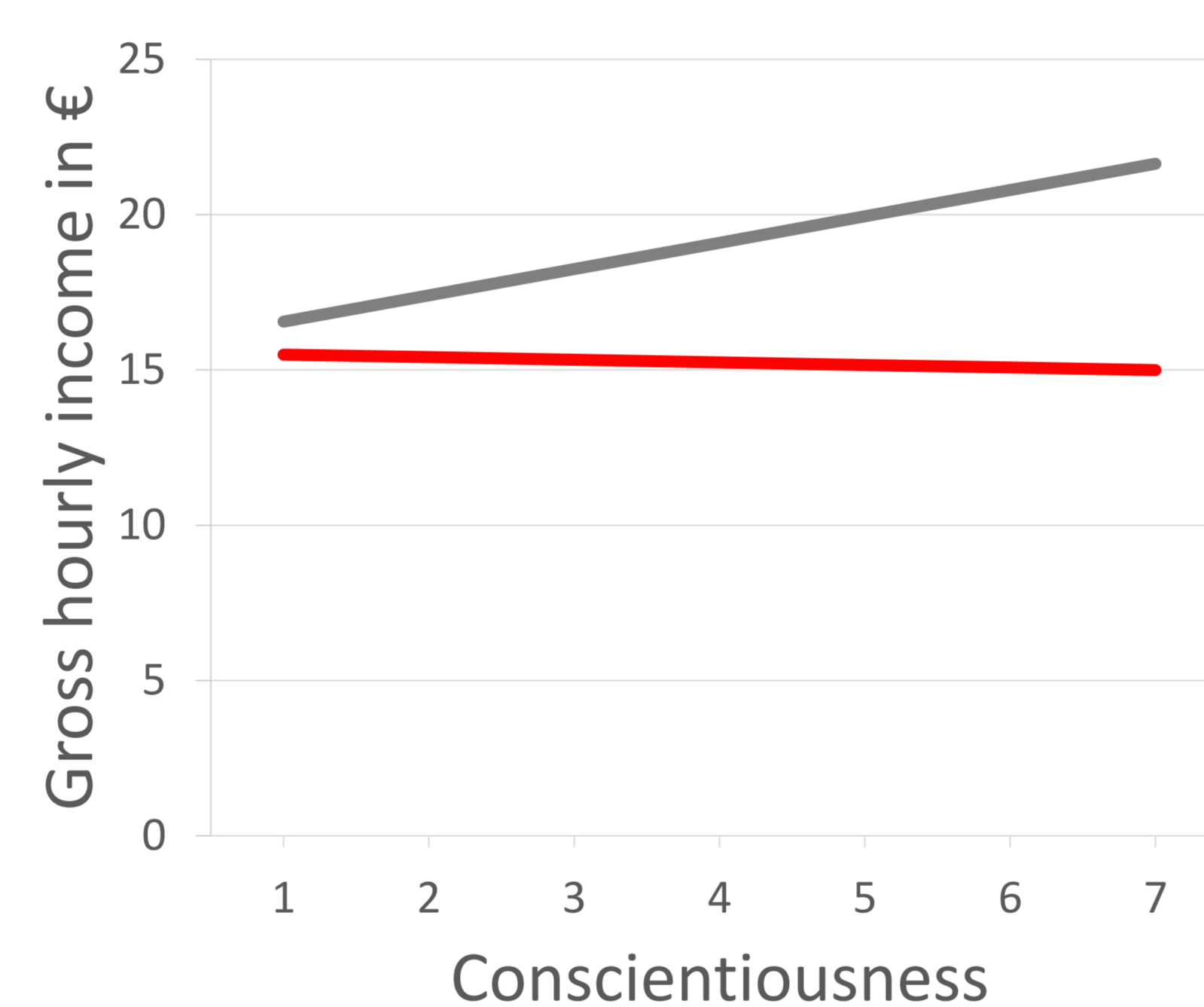
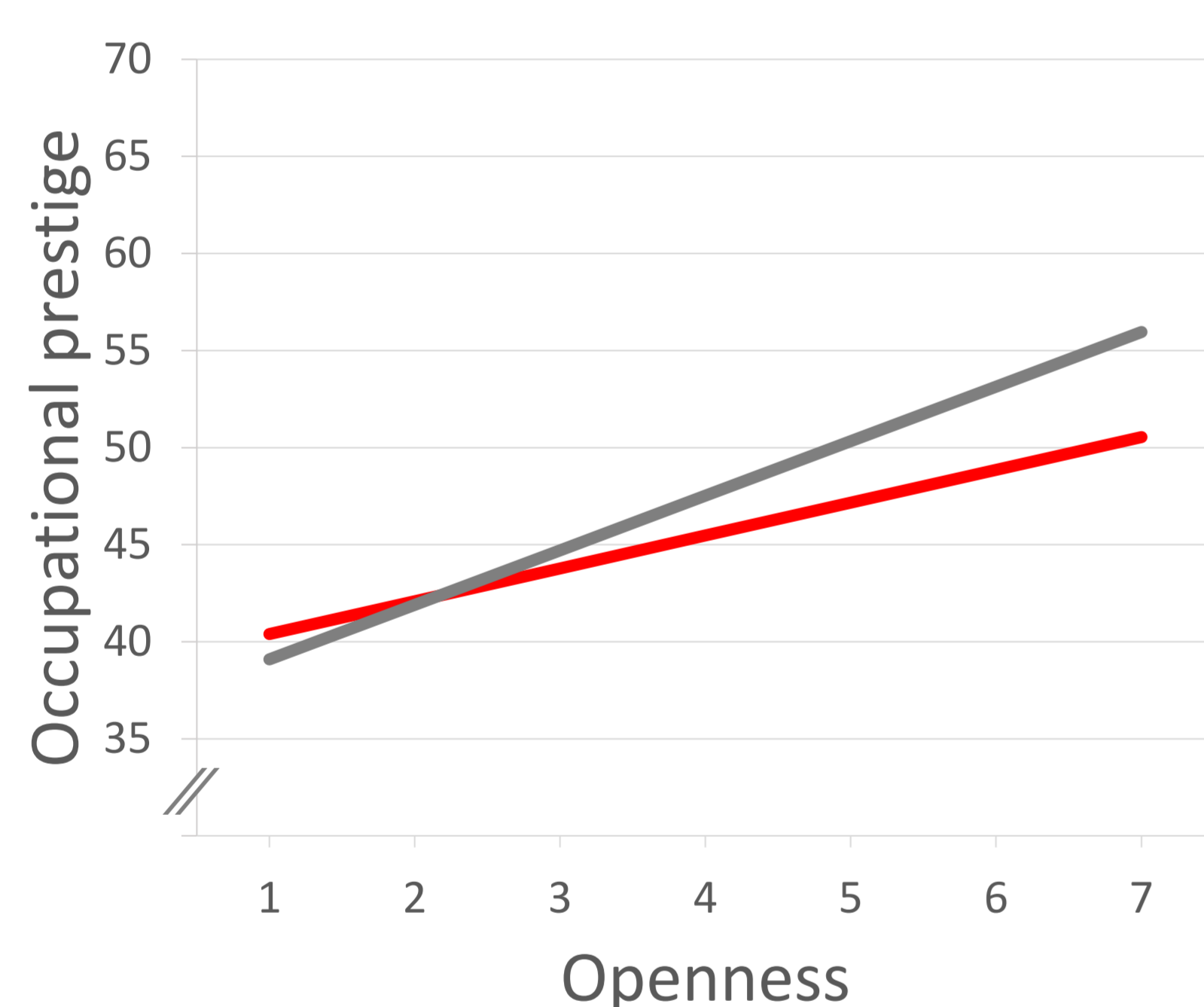
Work success. Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale SIOPS (0 = low; 100 = high) [13], gross hourly income in € scaled to full-time employment, and satisfaction with work (1 = low; 10 = high).

Analysis

Moderation analysis using PROCESS macro for SPSS with Big 5 as predictor, sex as moderator and work success as criterion.

Findings

— Women
— Men



Moderation analysis with Big 5 as predictor, sex as moderator and work success as criterion

Predictor Criterion	Sex ^a B (SE _B)	Big 5 trait B (SE _B)	Interaction term B (SE _B)
Neuroticism			
Gross hourly income	-4.81 (0.87) ***	-1.65 (0.49) ***	0.42 (0.30)
Prestige	-1.15 (0.85)	-1.71 (0.48) ***	0.28 (0.30)
Work Satisfaction	-0.22 (0.12)	-0.79 (0.07) ***	0.15 (0.04) ***
Extraversion			
Gross hourly income	-5.75 (1.19) ***	-0.76 (0.50)	0.47 (0.31)
Prestige	-2.81 (1.18) *	-0.93 (0.49) †	0.53 (0.31) †
Work Satisfaction	0.05 (0.18)	0.33 (0.07) ***	-0.04 (0.05)
Openness			
Gross hourly income	-2.71 (1.11) *	1.58 (0.55) **	-0.46 (0.34)
Prestige	2.44 (1.08) *	3.93 (0.53) ***	-1.12 (0.33) ***
Work Satisfaction	-0.25 (0.16)	0.07 (0.08)	0.06 (0.05)
Conscientiousness			
Gross hourly income	-0.13 (1.89)	1.78 (0.69) **	-0.93 (0.44) *
Prestige	1.79 (1.83)	-0.27 (0.66)	-0.59 (0.42)
Work Satisfaction	0.40 (0.27)	0.58 (0.10) ***	-0.11 (0.06) †
Agreeableness			
Gross hourly income	-3.03 (1.52) *	-0.16 (0.66)	-0.26 (0.42)
Prestige	2.07 (1.48)	1.33 (0.64) *	-0.84 (0.41) *
Work Satisfaction	-0.14 (0.22)	0.39 (0.10) ***	0.01 (0.06)

^a1 = men, 2 = women.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Implications

Men's compared to women's work success depends more strongly on personality

- » Openness is more strongly correlated with prestige for men than women
- » Conscientiousness is weakly related to women's income but strongly to men's
- » Agreeableness relates to lower occupational prestige for women, but higher for men
- » Neuroticism is more detrimental for work satisfaction of men than women
- » Extraversion does not relate differently to work success for men and women

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