

# Personality Fit as a Human Resource Strategy in Long-Term Care: Implications for Retention and Organizational Sustainability

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## Abstract

This study, through qualitative interviews, explores how personality trait compatibility between care attendants and older adults influences care interactions, satisfaction, and retention intentions. Findings indicate that personality congruence fosters trust and positive interactions, enhancing attendants' willingness to remain, while incongruence often leads to friction, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention. Although care attendants attempt to adapt through communication adjustments and humor, these strategies increase emotional labor burdens. The study highlights the importance of incorporating personality matching into workforce allocation and care management as a strategy to reduce turnover and improve care quality. Future research may explore the integration of AI-driven scheduling systems that embed personality compatibility into staffing decisions, thereby strengthening workforce sustainability in long-term care.

*Keywords: Personality compatibility, care interactions, job satisfaction, retention intention, emotional labor, long-term care, AI scheduling*

## 1. Research Introduction

With the rapid global transition into an aging society, the World Health Organization (2015) projects that by 2050, individuals aged 65 and older will constitute 16% of the global population—nearly double the proportion in 2020. Taiwan exemplifies this demographic shift: it entered the stage of an aging society in 2018 and is expected to become a super-aged society by 2025. To address these challenges, the government implemented the “Long-Term Care 2.0” policy, which expands home-based services, day care centers, and institutional care (Ministry of Health and Welfare [MOHW], 2023).

Despite these initiatives, the long-term care (LTC) sector faces severe workforce instability. According to MOHW (2023), the annual turnover rate of care attendants exceeds 30%, threatening service stability and quality. Previous research has highlighted structural causes—low wages, long working hours, and insufficient professional recognition—as primary drivers of turnover (Chou et al., 2011). However, such explanations only partially capture the complexity of care work. Care attendants not only provide assistance with daily living but also engage in significant emotional labor, which often leads to psychological strain and burnout (Kuo et al., 2025; Lartey et al., 2020). These conditions reinforce turnover intention (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Personality trait theories offer additional insights into workforce retention. The Big Five framework identifies extraversion, agreeableness,

conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness as central traits shaping interpersonal interactions and workplace behaviors (Goldberg, 1990; Mount et al., 2005). When care attendants and care recipients exhibit compatible traits, smoother communication and greater trust are established, enhancing job satisfaction and retention. Conversely, mismatches often generate friction, conflict, and emotional exhaustion (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Building on this foundation, the present study explores the potential of “personality fit” as a determinant of retention in LTC. While prior research has largely emphasized institutional and structural dimensions (Chou et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2024), the psychosocial dimension—particularly personality compatibility—remains underexplored. By adopting a qualitative design, this study aims to illuminate how personality congruence between care attendants and recipients influences job satisfaction and willingness to remain, offering both managerial and policy implications.

## 2. Literature Review

Research consistently shows a close link between care attendants' job satisfaction and the quality of care provided. However, stressful work environments, low wages, and limited recognition frequently lead to psychological fatigue and increased turnover intention (Chou et al., 2011). Most existing studies have concentrated on structural factors such as salary, working hours, and institutional arrangements (Wu et al., 2024), while paying insufficient attention to the interpersonal dynamics that underpin daily caregiving.

Retention has long been regarded as a central issue in long-term care human resource management. Wu et al. (2024) demonstrated that organizational support and HRM practices can strengthen employees' commitment, yet such analyses primarily remain at the institutional level. In reality, the dynamics of caregiver–care recipient interactions also shape retention: harmonious interactions may buffer stress and create emotional rewards, whereas strained relationships often accelerate burnout and turnover (Kuo et al., 2025).

The Big Five Personality Traits framework—extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness—has been widely applied to explain individual differences in job performance and social interaction (Goldberg, 1990; Mount et al., 2005). In the context of LTC, these traits influence how caregivers communicate, manage conflict, and build trust with residents. For instance, extraversion may facilitate rapport-building, conscientiousness ensures adherence to care protocols, while emotional stability reduces stress reactivity.

Theories of fit further underscore the role of compatibility in employment relationships. Person–Environment Fit (P–E Fit) highlights how congruence between personal traits and contextual demands enhances satisfaction and lowers turnover risk (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Extending this perspective, Person–Person Fit (P–P Fit) emphasizes the importance of interpersonal compatibility, while Job Embeddedness Theory stresses that both perceived fit and relational ties anchor employees within organizations (Mitchell et al., 2001). These frameworks suggest that personality alignment between caregivers and recipients may have a decisive influence on retention.

Finally, qualitative studies shed light on the emotional dimension of caregiving. Research has shown that caregivers employ diverse strategies—such as emotional regulation and coping techniques—to maintain service quality despite stress (Lartey et al., 2020). Yet prolonged emotional labor often heightens psychological strain and undermines retention (Kuo et al., 2025). Despite these insights, few studies directly investigate personality compatibility within LTC, leaving a notable gap that this study seeks to address.

To guide this study, a conceptual framework is developed based on Person–Environment Fit theory, Person–Person Fit, and Job Embeddedness Theory. Given the exploratory and qualitative nature of this research, formal hypotheses are not proposed. Instead, these theoretical perspectives serve as analytical lenses to examine how personality compatibility influences care interactions and retention intention.

### 3. Research Design and Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to examine how personality compatibility

between care attendants and older adults influences care interactions, satisfaction, and retention intention. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables exploration of subjective experiences and provides rich contextual insights beyond what quantitative methods can capture.

#### 3.1 Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in three long-term care institutions located in southern Taiwan, including both residential and day-care facilities, to ensure diversity in service contexts. Participants consisted of two groups:

- Care attendants (n = 30): aged 25–55, with work experience ranging from less than one year to over 15 years, and educational backgrounds from vocational training to undergraduate degrees.
- Care recipients (n = 30): aged 70–90, with mild to moderate disabilities and basic verbal communication abilities.

This design allowed for capturing authentic dyadic interactions, as participants were paired according to the institutions' routine staffing arrangements.

#### 3.2 Data Collection

Semi-structured in-depth interviews served as the primary method, complemented by field observations and institutional document reviews to enhance triangulation and credibility. Interviews with care attendants lasted approximately 60 minutes, while those with care recipients averaged 30 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

The interview guide addressed five central topics:

1. Experiences of interactions with care recipients of differing personalities.
2. Strategies for managing personality incongruence.
3. Perceived influence of personality congruence on job satisfaction and retention.
4. Institutional practices regarding personality considerations in workforce allocation.
5. Care recipients' perceptions of care attendants' personality traits.

#### 3.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of subthemes, integration into broader themes, refinement of thematic structure, and interpretation in relation to theoretical frameworks. To ensure analytical rigor, the coding process involved iterative comparison and refinement, with themes continuously reviewed in relation to theoretical constructs. Core themes that emerged included: *the positive cycle of*

personality congruence, challenges of incongruence, adjustment strategies, and links to retention intention.

The analysis was further interpreted through the lens of Person–Environment Fit theory (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) and Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001), which provided explanatory depth for understanding how compatibility shapes both interpersonal dynamics and long-term commitment.

### 3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols were strictly followed. Participants were fully informed of the study’s objectives, and written consent was obtained prior to participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by de-identifying all transcripts, and data were used exclusively for academic purposes.

Table 1: Research Design and Data Collection Process

Research Stage	Participants	Data Collection Method	Main Purpose
Phase 1: Qualitative Interviews	30 caregivers + 30 older adults	Semi-structured interviews	Explore personality-fit experiences and interaction patterns
Phase 2: Observation	3 long-term care institutions	Field notes	Validate interview context and non-verbal behaviors
Phase 3: Thematic Analysis	All transcripts	Coding and theme development	Identify key themes and link to theoretical framework

Source: Author’s compilation

## 4. Research Findings

A total of 30 care attendants and 30 older adults participated in this study. The attendants were aged between 25 and 55, with an average of seven years of experience, while the older adults were between 70 and 90, mostly with mild to moderate disabilities. To ensure diversity of interactional contexts, participants were classified based on the Big Five Personality Traits.

### 4.1 Personality Congruence as a Positive Cycle

Most participants emphasized that when personalities matched, care interactions became smoother, trust was easier to build, and both job satisfaction and retention intention were enhanced. For instance, one attendant remarked:

“I’ve always been very talkative, and I happened to care for a grandfather who also enjoys chatting. I look forward to coming to work every day.” (Care Attendant C03, Extraversion)

Such experiences align with Person–Environment Fit theory, suggesting that compatibility generates positive emotional feedback loops, reinforcing work motivation and reducing turnover risk.

### 4.2 Friction and Stress from Incongruence

When personality differences were pronounced, attendants reported frequent friction, frustration, and emotional exhaustion. One respondent explained:

“One grandmother complained that I was too noisy, and it made me feel very frustrated.” (Care Attendant C01, Extraversion)

These accounts echo findings from Ghana-based studies on emotional labor (Lartey et al.,

2020), highlighting how sustained interpersonal tension heightens psychological burden and increases turnover intentions.

### 4.3 Adjustment and Coping Strategies

To maintain relationships despite mismatches, attendants adopted adaptive strategies such as slowing their speech, reducing interaction frequency, or using humor to ease tension. For example:

“I learned to speak less and slow down, and the relationship improved.” (Care Attendant C09, High Agreeableness)

These strategies underscore the role of specific personality traits—particularly agreeableness—in conflict management, consistent with the Big Five framework (Mount et al., 2005). However, they also increased the burden of emotional labor, raising concerns about long-term sustainability.

### 4.4 Personality Fit and Retention Intention

Congruent interactions significantly enhanced attendants’ sense of accomplishment and belonging, strengthening their willingness to remain in the job:

“The matching interaction makes me look forward to work every day. That’s the biggest reason I want to stay.” (Care Attendant C25, High Openness)

This finding resonates with Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001), which posits that psychological connectedness fosters stronger commitment. Conversely, prolonged mismatches often eroded enthusiasm and accelerated turnover despite short-term coping efforts.

Table 2: Summary of Key Themes and Representative Quotes

Main Theme	Subtheme	Representative Quote
Personality Fit and Positive Cycle	Trust and Smooth Interaction	"I look forward to going to work every day; it feels like taking care of a friend." (C03)
Personality Mismatch and Pressure	Frustration and Exhaustion	"She thinks I talk too much. I often feel frustrated." (C01)
Adjustment Strategies	Flexible Communication	"I learned to speak less and slow down. The relationship improved." (C09)
Personality Fit and Retention	Sense of Value and Belonging	"When I meet a compatible elder, I feel my work is meaningful." (C25)

Source: Interview Data, 2025

#### 4.5 Summary of Findings

Overall, the results demonstrate that personality compatibility plays a pivotal role in shaping care interactions, satisfaction, and retention. While adaptive strategies help mitigate short-term conflicts, they also intensify emotional labor. Integrating personality compatibility into workforce allocation and management could therefore serve as a practical strategy to reduce turnover and improve both employee well-being and care quality, complementing organizational support measures (Wu et al., 2024; Kuo et al., 2025).

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined how personality trait congruence between care attendants and older adults shapes care interactions, satisfaction, and retention intentions in long-term care settings. Findings from qualitative interviews revealed four key insights. First, personality congruence fosters trust and positive interactions, providing care attendants with a sense of accomplishment that strengthens their willingness to remain. Second, incongruence often generates friction and emotional exhaustion, which, if prolonged, increases the risk of turnover. Third, although attendants frequently adopted coping strategies—such as adjusting communication pace, reducing interaction frequency, or using humor—these adaptations added to their emotional labor burden. Finally, personality congruence was found to be strongly associated with long-term retention, while incongruence undermined motivation and sustainability in caregiving roles.

From a managerial perspective, three recommendations can be derived. First, workforce allocation should incorporate personality compatibility into staff scheduling and case assignments, supported by the use of simple profiling tools. Second, training and development programs should be tailored to equip attendants with communication and conflict-management skills suited to different personality dynamics. Third, retention strategies should combine personality-based matching with competitive compensation and supportive welfare policies. Relying solely on salary adjustments or the recruitment of foreign labor is insufficient to address high turnover.

At the policy level, integrating personality profiling into long-term care systems could

improve both service quality and workforce stability. Future directions should also consider how digital technologies can operationalize this concept. For instance, AI-driven scheduling systems could embed personality compatibility algorithms into daily workforce planning. Such integration would not only reduce mismatches and turnover but also optimize efficiency, strengthen care relationships, and enhance sustainability within long-term care organizations.

This study advances the theoretical understanding of workforce retention in long-term care by extending the *Person–Environment Fit (P–E Fit)* and *Person–Person Fit (P–P Fit)* frameworks to the interpersonal context between caregivers and older adults. Unlike prior studies focusing mainly on organizational or job-level fit, this research emphasizes the emotional and relational dimensions of personality compatibility as a key determinant of retention. Moreover, by integrating *Job Embeddedness Theory*, the study demonstrates how personality fit enhances caregivers' affective attachment and sense of meaning at work, providing a new theoretical linkage between individual psychology and organizational sustainability.

This study has several limitations. First, the data were collected from three long-term care institutions in southern Taiwan, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, as the study relied mainly on self-reported interviews, social desirability bias may exist. Third, this study adopted a cross-sectional qualitative design; therefore, it could not capture longitudinal changes in personality fit and retention intention. Future studies are recommended to include multiple regions and adopt a mixed-method or longitudinal design to verify the dynamic relationship between personality fit, care satisfaction, and retention intention. In addition, incorporating quantitative tools such as SEM could further strengthen theoretical validation and empirical robustness. Specifically, this study extends existing theoretical frameworks by shifting the focus from organizational-level fit to interpersonal caregiver–care recipient dynamics in long-term care settings.

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