

Obstetricians more emotionally stable than most in Sweden

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Swedish obstetricians and gynecologists are noticeably more emotionally stable and conscientious compared to the majority of the Swedish population. Based on the doctors' personalities, their decision-making

styles differ in emergency situations. The research study from Lund University is now published in *Scientific Reports*.

Personality is usually summarized in five traits—the so-called "big five": Emotional stability (neuroticism), extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness. Our personality then shapes our decision-making style. In a research study from Lund University, Swedish obstetricians' and gynecologists' personality profiles and [clinical experience](#) are linked for the first time to their decision-making styles in acute childbirth situations.

"Obstetricians and [gynecologists](#) have a personality profile that differs significantly from the population at large. On average, 85% of Sweden's population has significantly lower [emotional stability](#), extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness than the obstetricians in our study. It's hard not to be surprised when the differences are so clear," says Petri Kajonius, associate professor of personality psychology and behavioral measurement at Lund University.

It is our personality that defines what we will enjoy in our professional life, and the consequence is likely a self-selection of people who seek a certain profession. Swedish obstetric-focused physicians' personalities make them comfortable in an environment where a childbirth situation can quickly shift to something acute and potentially escalate into a crisis. Here, traits such as emotional stability and conscientiousness are prominent:

"Neuroticism is the opposite of emotional stability and is characterized by anxiety and vulnerability to stress. Someone with high neuroticism may have a harder time handling stress in acute situations, but a small amount of it can increase the inclination to collaborate and make decisions together with others, which can be advantageous," says Gabriel Raoust, doctoral student at Lund University and consultant in obstetrics

and gynecology at Ystad Lasarett, Sweden.

It has been previously established that women exhibit greater levels of [neuroticism](#) than men, which coincides with the fact that they are often more inclined to cooperate and less prone to taking risks. The study also showed that the more clinically experienced doctors are—especially men—the more comfortable they are taking the lead and making individual decisions. Traits like agreeableness combined with conscientiousness are beneficial in situations where one must follow checklists and procedures while interacting with others on the team.

"To increase understanding of decision-making processes and the factors that influence doctors' behavior, it is important to realize that it is normal that there are different personalities. An individual-centered or team-based approach depends on the person's 'big five' [personality](#) and can be surprisingly relevant even in a highly organized and protocol-driven environment like acute obstetrics," concludes Gabriel Raoust.

More information: Gabriel Raoust et al, Personality traits and decision-making styles among obstetricians and gynecologists managing childbirth emergencies, *Scientific Reports* (2023). [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-023-32658-6](#)

Provided by Lund University

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