

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS AND JOB PERFORMANCE OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF MEMBERS OF NSBM GREEN UNIVERSITY TOWN

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between personality and job performance of the academic staff members of the NSBM Green University Town in Sri Lanka. Job performance is a matter of critical importance to contemporary performance-based organizations, which increasingly seek out employees of high calibre. Among many factors which influence job performance, personality plays a prominent role as it affects the efficiency and effectiveness of employee job performance. This study confirmed the findings of previous researches, as they have proven that personality is a valid predictor which has a statistically significant, strong positive relationship with job performance. The study also examined the relationship of each big five dimension namely, extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness with job performance of the academic staff members at NSBM Green University Town. Findings of the study confirmed that all of the aforesaid dimensions had a statistically significant strong and moderate positive relationship with job performance. Findings also confirmed that they were significantly valid predictors of job performance. Hence, this study provides new insights to the management of the education sector indicating that personality should be given due consideration in human resource management practices in their organizations.

Key words: *Personality, Job Performance, Big Five Dimensions, Academic Staff Members*

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1. Introduction

Today, high performing business organizations expect individuals to perform well. Thus, business organizations seek to find criteria to measure the employees' performance for the betterment of the organization. Among these criteria, measurement of personality traits is important to gauge employee performance as revealed in some research studies.

There is a growing literature on the relationship between the five personality traits and performance. Researchers have investigated the validity of these five personality traits in predicting various kind of performance, including academic and job performance. Furthermore, those investigations covered the relationship between these personality traits and performance in different job settings to assess the extent to which those settings moderate this relationship. (Suliman, Rahman & Abdalla, 2010)

The renewed optimism about personality traits as a predictor of job performance began shortly after McDougall (1932) wrote that, "Personality may to advantage be broadly analysed into five distinguishable but separate factors, namely intellect, character, temperament, disposition, and temper. . ." (as cited in Barrick & Mount, 1991). Although it is apparent that these early researchers had further investigated psychological traits without a significant classification to study the personality and to measure the employee performance, later researchers identified that Big Five personality model as a widespread support model on numerous grounds. In recent years, five personality traits have emerged in the literature on personality. Known as the big five or the five factor model of personality, these traits encompass agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, emotional stability, and openness to experience. (Suliman, Rahman & Abdalla, 2010)

1.1 Objectives of the Study

In this research, the research objectives were divided into two as; main and specific objectives. *Main Objective*

Main objective of the study is, to examine the relationship between personality and job performance of the Academic Staff Members of NSBM Green University Town.

1.2 Specific Objectives

- To identify the relationship between openness to experience and job performance

To identify the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance

To identify the relationship between extraversion and job performance

To identify the relationship between agreeableness and job performance

To identify the relationship between neuroticism and job performance

1.3 Conceptual Model

This study gathers data about the job performance of academic staff and major factors of personality that affect job performance as guided by research questions. Hence as per the conceptual framework, the independent variable is Personality. The dimensions under personality was included as per the Big Five Inventory (BFI Index) abstracted from the research conducted by John, O. & Srivastava, S. (1999). Dependent variable is Job Performance and variables were developed based on Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) as per the research done by Koopmans, L., Bernards, C. M., Hildebrandt, V. H., Van Buuren, S., Van der Beek, A. J., & De Vet, H. W. (2013). The entire dependent variable is based on task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviour.

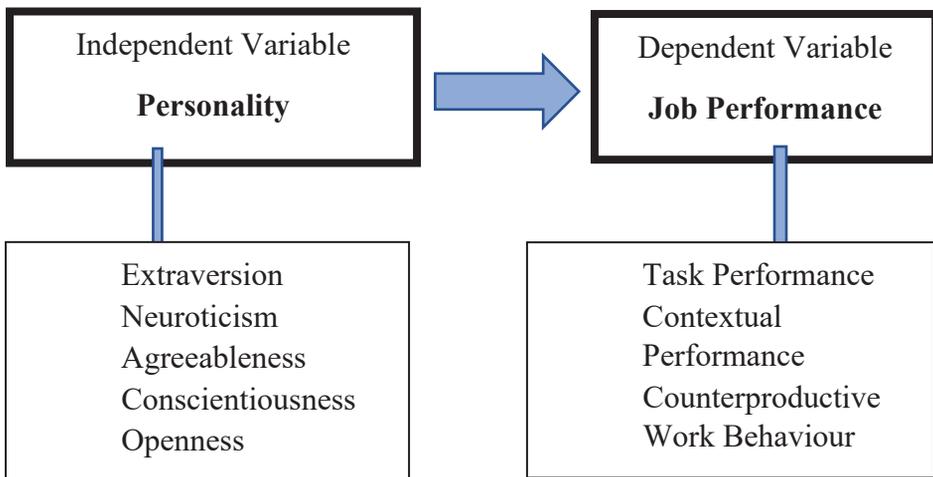


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Model

Source – Author constructed

1.4 Hypothesis

- H1: There is a relationship between personality and job performance
- H2: There is a relationship between extraversion and job performance
- H3: There is a relationship between neuroticism and job performance
- H4: There is a relationship between agreeableness and job performance
- H5: There is a relationship between conscientiousness and job performance
- H6: There is a relationship between openness to experience and job performance

1.5 Research Question

There are a set of factors that influence this study to be conducted which we consider as the gaps to be filled. When compared to the western world, the number of studies conducted in South Asian region regarding the above topic is relatively low. Moreover, the population that have been studied for these researches differ significantly from the local population due to many reasons such as differences in their culture, attitude, behaviours, skills, etc.

On the other hand, what subsequently matters is the ‘employee carder’ that has been chosen to conduct the research. Comparing with other areas (corporate employees) under same variables, academic carder has been given relatively lesser attention when conducting researches on personality and job performance.

Another vital factor is the retention rate of academics. Consequently, universities should assess the job performance of academics in order to retain them without letting the rivals to grab the resource. Therefore, universities should identify whether personality can impact job performance, so that they can come up retention strategies related to personality.

Other factor is that most researchers focus only on external motivational factors related to job performance. But internal factors are the ones which are much embedded and strongly linked performance of employees; in this case, personality will always receive insignificant consideration. Hence above motives can be considered as the causes to opt this study to be conducted.

Hence, the research question is; “Is there a relationship between personality and job performance of academic staff members at NSBM Green University Town?”

2. Literature Review

Today, many researchers agree that there is a significant relationship between personality traits and job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Goldberg, 1985; Viswesvaran, 2002). Moreover, Askarian & Eslami (2013) suggested that managers should seek for ways to ensure that individuals are employed according to their personality traits in job positions. They also suggested that the efficiency and effectiveness of the organizations will significantly improve if the mental and personality characteristics of the individuals are considered.

Researchers have highlighted many personality characteristics and argued that these characteristics played an important role in individual success. Among all personality characteristics, five factors are widely acceptable and most commonly used by researchers and practitioners to evaluate individual personality. These five factors are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness or intellect. Researchers labelled these five factors as the big five (Suliman, Rahman & Abdalla, 2010).

Emotional stability, also called neuroticism, refers to the degree to which the individual is calm, self-confident, and cool versus insecure, anxious, depressed, and emotional. (Suliman, Rahman & Abdalla, 2010). As Hogan and Holland (2003) explain, emotional stability makes the individual confident and positive, which helps them to meet job expectations and get along with HCNs. (Bhatti et al., (2014).

As per Barrick and Mount (1991) & Tett et al (1991), individuals with strong conscientiousness trait are mostly righteous and reliable earnest and responsible, careful and comprehensive, hardworking and good at planning, thus can perform better in most fields. Moreover, Matthews and Deary (1998) concluded that conscientiousness is the most consistent predictor of job proficiency. Meanwhile, Hurtz and Donovan (2000) showed that conscientiousness is positively relative to job performance in a meta-analysis. (as cited in Yang C. L., & Hwang M., 2014).

For instance, agreeableness is an important social attitude with which one interacts with other people within a group. This is an essential factor to social interaction, for a person with great agreeableness trait finds interpersonal relationship easier, and blends into a group faster. Hence, according to Mount's suggestion agreeableness can effectively predict job performance (as cited in Yang C. L., & Hwang M., 2014). Rothmann & Coetzer (2003) argued that agreeableness was practically significantly related to managerial performance (Rothmann & Coetzer, 2003).

However, it was concluded that agreeableness does, in fact, have a positive impact on the stability and consistency of job performance, especially in the service sector where facets of agreeableness such as compliance, modesty, trust can influence stability of performance of employees (Karthikeyan & Srivastava, 2012).

One of the early studies in this regard is Hogan's (1996) study. The study found that extraversion and agreeableness were highly predictive of job performance. Conscientiousness and agreeableness show positive relationship to job performance while extraversion and openness to experience are shown to be unrelated or in some cases negatively related to job performance (as cited in Suliman, Rahman & Abdalla, 2010).

Openness to experience, which is the last component of the five factor model, is considered as the most controversial and debatable amongst the five factors of personality. According to Salgado (1997), people with strong openness trait are inclined to try out new experiences and would gladly accept new challenges, thus attaining better job performance. (as cited in Yang C. L., & Hwang M., 2014).

3. Methodology

When describing about the methodology, the population is limited to employees who are working as internal academics and external/visiting academics excluding the administrative staff. The sample consisted of employees from fulltime internal academic staff members out of the whole population (Internal and External/visiting academics) excluding the external/visiting academic staff members due to the fact that most external academics are also engaged in the corporate sector fulltime professions. Thus, selected a sample size of forty-five (45) employees for this study. The researcher intended to carry out the research using questionnaires. Questions were close ended and Likert scale method was used to measure the results. The BFI index was used to measure personality while job performance was measured using the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ). Further, this study used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis. Following data analysis methods were used to derive the statistical results of this research. Firstly, Reliability Test was conducted to assess variable validation. Secondly basic analysis of Demographic Factors was done. Then correlation analysis was conducted to identify relationships and calculated correlation and coefficient. The answers received were analysed and presented in charts, tables, scatter diagrams etc.

4. Findings and Conclusion

4.1 Findings

The results of Cronbach's alpha test are shown in the table below. All the alpha values were all above the rule of thumb of 0.7 for a reliable scale, which suggests the internal validity of each instrument and sub instrument is satisfactory.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.827	6

Hypothesis one

H1: There is a Relationship between Personality and Job Performance

Table 2: Correlation between Personality & Job Performance

		Job Performance	Personality
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	45	45
Personality	Pearson Correlation	.656**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	45	45
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

According to table 2, Pearson's Correlation (r-value) is 0.656. According to Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, values which lie between $+0.5 < r < +1$ are said to have a strong positive relationship. Further table 2 also shows a significant value of 0.00. Normally when the Sig (2-tailed) value is less than or equal to 0.05 it is said that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Hence it can be concluded that there is a significant, strong positive relationship between personality and job performance.

Hypothesis Two

H2: There is a Relationship between Extraversion and Job Performance

Table 3: Correlation between Extraversion & Job Performance

		Job Performance	Extraversion
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.745**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	45	45
Extraversion	Pearson Correlation	.745**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	45	45
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

According to table 3, Pearson's Correlation (r-value) is 0.745. According to Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, values which lie between $+0.5 < r < +1$ are said to have a strong positive relationship. Further table 3 also shows a significant value of 0.000. Normally when the Sig (2-tailed) value is less than or equal to 0.05 it is said that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Hypothesis three

H3: There is a Relationship between Neuroticism and Job Performance

According to table 4, Pearson's Correlation (r-value) is 0.464. According to Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, values which lie between $0 < r < +0.5$ are said to have a moderate positive relationship. Further table 4 also shows a significant value of 0.001. Normally when the Sig (2-tailed) value is less than or equal to 0.05 it is said that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Table 4: Correlation between Neuroticism & Job Performance

		Job Performance	Neuroticism
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.464**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	45	45
Neuroticism	Pearson Correlation	.464**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	45	45
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Hypothesis four

H4: There is a Relationship between Agreeableness and Job Performance

Table 5: Correlation between Agreeableness & Job Performance

		Job Performance	Agreeableness
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.393**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.008
	N	45	45
Agreeableness	Pearson Correlation	.393**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	
	N	45	45
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

According to table 5, Pearson's Correlation (r-value) is 0.393. According to Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, values which lie between $0 < r < +0.5$ are said to have a moderate positive relationship. Further table 5 also shows a significant value of 0.008. Normally when the Sig (2-tailed) value is less than or equal to 0.05 it is said that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Hypothesis Five

H5: There is a Relationship between Conscientiousness and Job Performance

Table 6: Correlation between Conscientiousness & Job Performance

		Job Performance	Conscientiousness
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.540**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	45	45
Conscientiousness	Pearson Correlation	.540**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	45	45
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

According to table 6, Pearson's Correlation (r-value) is 0.540. According to Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, values which lie between $+0.5 < r < +1$ are said to have a Strong Positive Relationship. Further table 6 also shows a significant value of 0.00. Normally when the Sig (2-tailed) value is less than or equal to 0.05 it is said that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Hypothesis Six

H6: There is a Relationship between Openness to Experience and Job Performance

Table 7: Correlation between Openness to Experience & Job Performance

		Job Performance	Openness to Experience
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.330*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
	N	45	45
Openness to Experience	Pearson Correlation	.330*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
	N	45	45
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

According to table 7, Pearson's Correlation (r-value) is 0.330. According to Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, values which lie between $0 < r < +0.5$ are said to have a moderate positive relationship. Further table 7 also shows a significant value of 0.027. Normally when the Sig (2-tailed) value is less than or equal to 0.05 it is said that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

4.2 Conclusion

This study confirmed the findings of previous research, as it has proven that personality is a valid predictor which has a statistically significant, strong positive relationship with job performance. The study also examined the relationship of each big five dimension namely, extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience with job performance of the academic staff members at NSBM Green University Town. Findings of the study confirmed all of the aforesaid dimensions had a statistically significant strong and moderate positive relationship with job performance. Findings also confirmed that they were significantly valid predictors of job performance.

According to the correlation analysis of the current study, Extraversion obtained the highest correlation coefficient value (r-value) of 0.745 and a significant value of 0.00 indicating that it had a statistically significant, strong positive relationship with job performance. For instance, Barrick & Mount (1991) stated that Extraversion was a valid predictor for two occupations namely, managers and sales, in which interactions with others is a significant part of the job.

Most studies have suggested that two of the five factor model namely, Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability / Neuroticism are positively correlated with job performance in almost all jobs (Anderson and Viswesvaran 1998; Barrick and Mount 1991; Salgado 1997; Tett et al. 1991). Moreover, in this study, it is noted that there is a strong positive relationship between Conscientiousness and Neuroticism with job performance. In the study, Conscientiousness also obtained a high correlation coefficient value (r-value) of 0.540 and a significance value of 0.000 in the regression model indicating that it was a valid predictor. On the other hand, Neuroticism scored the third highest r-value of 0.464 in the correlation analysis, indicating that it too had a statistically significant, moderately positive relationship with job performance.

Agreeableness was the dimension which scored the fourth highest correlation and regression values. It scored an r-value of 0.393 in correlation analysis, indicating it had a significant, moderately positive relationship with job performance. Rothmann & Coetzer (2003) argued that agreeableness was practically significantly related to managerial performance. It was concluded that agreeableness does, in fact, have a positive impact on the stability and consistency of job performance, especially in the service sector. Barrick and Mount (1991) argued that agreeableness is in fact not an important predictor of job performance, even in jobs containing large social components.

Rothmann & Coetzer's (2003) study which constituted of 159 employees of a pharmaceutical company concluded that there is a significant relationship between openness to experience and managerial performance. But Tett et al. (1991) reported that openness to Experience is not a valid predictor of job performance. Finally, according to correlation analysis of this study, Openness to Experience was the lowest scored dimension. It scored an r-value of 0.330 in correlation analysis.

Furthermore, all the big five dimensions obtained significant values which were less than 0.05 in the regression analysis. This indicated that all the five dimensions were also statistically valid predictors or rather influencing factors of job performance.

Hence, this study provides new insights to the management of the Higher Education sector indicating that personality should be given due consideration in human resource management practices in their organizations.

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