

Big Five Personality trait, Psychological Capital and Job Performance: A Closer look



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This article provides an analytical view of the relationship between Big Five personality traits (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness to Experience) and Job work performance. This article also discusses about the combination of the Big Five traits and Psychological Capital (hope, optimism and resilience) as an important factor of job performance. This also explores the importance of Big Five Factors and Psycap in personnel selection, performance appraisal, motivation, training management on the basis of contemporary research.

Keywords: Job work performance, Psycap, training management, performance appraisal.

Introduction

A number of researches and surveys have already indicated that there is a very significant relationship between personality (especially traits) and work performance and also success in professional and personal Life. Paul Harris rightly said -“Personality has the power to uplift, the power to depress, the power to curse, and the power to bless”.

Though it has been considered as crucial attribute there is no universally accepted definition of the personality. We commonly say that a person has a very strong personality or simply his personality is weak. According to Trait Theory Personality is observable patterns of behavior that last over time. According to Freud’s psychoanalytic or psychodynamic theory Personality is the unconscious determinants of behavior. (Fred Lathan’s Organizational Behavior). Indian literature also speaks about Triguna of mind mainly Satta, Raja, and Tamo and there are Indian versions of definition of personality

Sri Aurobindo in his “Essays on the Gita says “We have before us three powers, the Purushottama as the Supreme truth into which we have to grow, the Self and the Jiva. The supreme spiritual nature of being, the Para Prakriti, free from any limitation by the conditioning ignorance, is the nature of Purushottama. In the impersonal self, there is the same divine nature, but there it is in its state of eternal rest, equilibrium, inactivity, Nivriti. Finally, for activity, for Pravriti, the Para Prakriti becomes a spiritual personality, the Jiva.”

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There was a long standing debate, whether human personality is driven more by nature or nurture. No doubt environment (nature) has a great impact in a person's personality development, but also most of the behavioral scientist now agreed that gene (nature) has a significant contribution in a person's personality. As American Psychological Association says "Studies over the past 20 years of twins and adopted children have firmly established that there is a genetic component to just about every human trait and behavior, including personality, general intelligence and behavior disorders." (Fred Lathan's Organizational Behavior).

In fact environment, gene or heredity, education, grooming, learning and brain all plays a significant role in a personality development.

Different research on this topic says personality traits are most relevant factors to deduce the relationship between employee's personality with productivity and work performance. With the lights of existing research and literatures, this article tries to explore this relationship. In particular between job performance and Big Five personality traits (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness to experience).

This article also tries to find connections between the employee personality traits and latest concept of Psychological capital (Positive psychology of hope, optimism and resilience).

Theoretical Foundation to the Big Five

In simple language this is basic or fundamental five self-determining dimensions of the personality discovered by Norman, Tupes and Christal (1963). This consensus was created as a result of comprehensive study and a lot of effort invested in this over last 50 years in research. Big Five are Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience.

These five traits have been identified from using almost every major personality inventory and analyzing 1500 adjectives in adjective English (Goldberg, 1990) and also in many other languages and generalized across the culture, source of ratings, measures, heritability of traits.

(Relationship of Personality to Performance Motivation: A Meta-Analytic Review by Timothy A. Judge and Remus Ilies University of Florida)

There has been a number of research is done in this area of behavior science Study of "Heckman and Rubinstein 2001", the Five Factor Model of Personality (Costa and McCrae, 1992) DelVecchio, Goldsmith; Jones et al., 2006, Study by Luthans, Barrick and Mount, Tupes and Christal and many are very good contributor for the gradual maturation of this concept.

Here are the characteristics of Big Five personality traits on the basis of different research literatures and scientist like Barrick & Mount, Goldberg and others.

Extraversion: Extraverts are Sociable, Expressive, and spontaneous, outgoing, talkative, assertive, gregarious, confident, determined persons.

Agreeableness: Cooperative, kind, merciful warm, polite sympathetic, caring, courteous, trusting, sympathetic, and affectionate.

Conscientiousness: Trustworthy, systematized, self-disciplined, persistent, responsible, thorough or comprehensive, hardworking, observant, vigilant responsible, systematized and determined

Neuroticism: stressed, moody, nervous, annoyed, petulant, unsociable, nervous, embarrassed, unclear, disbelieving, unconfident, fearful, and unhappy. Neurotic person find it hard to believe other.

Openness to Experience: Inquisitive, academic, innovative, creative, cultured, flexible, imaginative, out of box thinker, cultivated, curious, open-minded, keen to diversity, artistic

Importance of Big Five

If we see the above Big Five personality traits and their characteristics we can easily think that these characteristics of a human being or an employee in an organization must have some impact in his or her performance and productivity for his or her specific job role without the help of any supportive research data. We can guess that all of these traits are not suitable for all types of job and surely some of these qualities support to perform well in some specific type of job. As an example, high neuroticism seems to be a problem for job performance and conscientiousness seems to be supportive to job productivity and performance. Importantly personality traits not only supports for measures in predicting job performance but also it can be used for

- Personality based motivational strategy.
- Personality Trait based selection system.
- Personality Trait based job assignment.
- Conflict management.
- Managing team dynamics and team building.
- Developing psychological capital and implement Positive psychology
- Managing organizational BULLIES.

It is a personality which makes the person different from another and it determines how a person reacts to a situation or stimulus in environments, hence it is crucial for an organization when they deal with its most important asset 'human asset'. These days personality assessment is very commonly used method for employee selection process. Big Five inventories (Goldberg, 1993) are inventory of 44 items to assess an individual on the Big Five dimension of personality. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a very popular personality test during recruitment in the USA. A person's personality is not constituted only with a single (100%) type of trait. In reality a personality contains all types of traits with a certain degree. We consider a person of a particular trait based on that degree. So a healthy neurotic can be a person with significant conscientiousness it can be good for his performance if he can channelize his worry to practicing a positive behavior. As a neurotic person's health anxiety may help or motivate him to do daily healthy eating and physical exercise more than other trait.

Research Findings: Personality Traits vs Job Performance

The following information is summarized after doing an extensive literature survey of contemporary research articles, reviews and relevant books on the subject. List for the same is being given in Reference and bibliography section. Discussion of detail result with meta-analysis is not in the scope of this article hence only key fact and findings have been highlighted below.

Key facts and findings:

Extraversion (Sociable, Expressive, and spontaneous, outgoing, talkative, assertive, gregarious):

- High extraversion tend to be associated with successful management and sales but not be a good predictor in skilled, semi/skilled production worker, engineer, accountant type of job
- High extraversion shown a positive correlation with job performance in man, but opposite in women
- It shows positive correlation with job performance when working as a team member and not as an individual contributor.
- Extraversion has positive correlation with Training Proficiency.

Agreeableness :(Cooperative, kind, merciful warm, polite sympathetic, caring, courteous, trusting, sympathetic)

- It has less impact on job performance compare to extraversion and the correlation is very weak
- A recent study shows a positive correlation with job performance when working as a team member not an individual contributor.

Neuroticism (Reversed is emotional stability):

- It has a strong negative correlation with performance and productivity. It is true about high neurotic.
- With some exception in some job like a high neurotic employee in the accounts section with high neurotic attitude may have a high value for the company

Conscientiousness

- It has strongest positive correlation between conscientiousness personality trait and productivity compared to any other trait. This is universal agreement that conscientious employee who are trustworthy, tenacious, goal mouth, and systematized most likely to be to be higher performers on any job. The employee who exhibit this trait is always performing better than who are not.

Openness to Experience:

- The relationship between this trait and employee performance is controversial. Significant disparity found it considered with the interaction of the other personality trait consciousness.
- It has positive correlation with training proficiency. An individual who is the highest scorer in this trait are "Training ready".
- The job where it demands non-conventional thinking it has positive correlation with performance.
- Another research found that this trait has weak negative correlation with job performance, especially in those job types is mechanical and repetitive with a low requirement of creativity, innovation and learning opportunity.

All these researches say Big Five personality traits have very significant correlation with job performance. It is found in the latest trend of organizational behavior which is called positive organizational behavior and PsyCap also has a very significant correlation with job performance in combination with Big Five personality traits. It is important to know all big five which are natural traits, works in coordination with employee's subjective well being and state of physical and mental health. Here is comment from C. Peterson, 2006 "what is good about life is as genuine as what is bad and therefore deserves equal attention"

Positive Organizational Behavior (POB): is defined as "the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace(Luthans (p. 59)

PsyCap: Hope, Optimism and resilience combination of these three creates a higher level of factor which called PsyCap.(By Luthans) or Psychological capital.

Hope –It is a positive psychological state consist of two elements where two basic goals oriented fortitude and planning to achieve these goals.

“A positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of success (1) agency (goal-directed energy) and (2) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson,1991: 287)

Optimism – It is a style of thinking positive naturally in all positive events as permanent and global and thinking negative event as situational or temporary.

Resilience – “the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, and failure or even positive events, progress, and increased responsibility” (Luthans 2002a p. 702)

Combination of Big Five and PsyCapworks

Some recent study reveals in some cases employee's psychological capital overpowers (which is related to work satisfaction and employee's subjective well-being) the impact of big five personality traits. Other research shows that with regards to coping mechanism in the work environment, both Big five and Psycap are significantly related and an important construct to measure this.

Conclusion

By analyzing the outcome of the multiple research, we find for an employee's 5 basic dimension of personality known as the Big 5 are very crucial for job performance. All traits are not fit for all types of job. So if these traits can be used properly, then management can optimally select appropriate workforce for a job. Also an appropriate job can be assigned based on the personality trait and it can enhance productivity and performance and can be very helpful to achieve organizational goals. It can provide a framework for selection,

performance appraisal, training and development. This study also finds that other than the Big Five the latest concept of Positive Psychological Capital (HOPE, OPTIMISM, and RESILIENCE) is also very impactful in employee job satisfaction and in turn job performance. Psycap is related to a person's subjective wellbeing (Health, Relationship and work satisfaction) and it can overpower Big Five traits. Some research reveals that combination of Big Five and Psycap is a good construct can be very significant to measure some aspect of behavior like coping mechanism. Combination of Big Five and Psycap and their relationship contain the future scope of research.

In today's business world the teams or groups are more significant than an individual contributor. A manager should be equipped with this knowledge of behavioral science to effectively manage his team, which consist of different individuals with different personality trait and having different level of Psychological capital. So this is not only a subject for the people in the HR department, but also very crucial, even for a technical manager in his journey from "*GOOD TO GREAT*"

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