



Association between Personality Traits and Job Performance among Secondary School Teachers

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Abstract

This paper examines the association between personality traits and job performance among Malaysian public secondary school teachers. It focuses on Big Five personality dimensions: Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. A total of 954 questionnaires were distributed to teachers in eight public secondary schools, however only 489 usable responses were used. Descriptive, correlation and multiple regression statistics are used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that there is a positive association between Openness to Experience and Agreeableness and job performance. On the contrary, there is a negative association between Neuroticism and job performance. The most predictive trait that influences job performance is Neuroticism and followed by Openness to Experience. The implications of this study suggests that understanding the influence of personality traits on job performance is essential and its justify the use of personality test by the Ministry of Education Malaysia for recruiting and selecting suitable candidates to become an educator. The Ministry of Education Malaysia is aiming to implement a world-class teacher education to ensure that the teachers are competent to meet the national inspiration.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, measurement of work-related personality characteristics has increasingly become a vital function of human resources in the process of employee selection (Levy, 2011). The domain of personnel assessment from only emphasizes on job-related knowledge, skill, and abilities (KSA's) have expanded by including other personal characteristics, specifically personality traits (Levy, 2011). Assessment of personality characteristics may increase the probability of someone to succeed in their career, if their personality traits match with the career needs (Naemah, 2007). According to Julie (2012), personality is defined as enduring patterns of action or behavior. Personality traits are tendencies of individuals to behave in similar ways across settings and situations (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Dilchert, 2005). Furthermore, Ryckman (2004) suggested personality as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by an individual that uniquely influences his or her behavior, cognitions and motivations in various situations. For example, personality traits may have an effect on job outcomes such as job performance. The findings from one meta-analysis suggested that personality traits can be dispositional predictors of job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001). This situation might be true among teachers, where they have different capabilities and personality characteristics that later can influence their job performance directly (Siadat, Arbabisarjou, Azhdari, Amiri, & Abooeimehrizi, 2011). It is

said that certain teachers who perform well in teaching and providing quality instructional are those who display certain traits of personality, such as outgoing, humour, enthusiasm, and emotional stability (Radmacher & Martin, 2001). Thus, personality traits are one of the factors that is crucial in delivering effective teaching (Zuhaili, 2009).

Previous study supported the notion that there is a positive association between personality traits and teachers' performance. The findings from one study reported a positive association between nine personality traits such as Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Extraversion, Openness, Adaptability, Self-Efficacy, Tough-Mindedness and Work Drive and online teaching performance (Holmes, Kirwan, Bova, & Belcher, 2015). One study showed mixed findings on the association between Big Five traits on performance. It was found that extrovert, agreeableness and conscientiousness have significant relationship with teaching effectiveness. On the contrary, neuroticism and openness have no significant relationship (Fauziah, 2009). This is supported by the study done by Espinola and Francia (2015), in which the results showed that Emotional Stability has a positive relationship to teachers' job performance while apprehension is negatively correlated to job performance.

In addition, the association between Big Five traits and work engagement has also been explored. Work engagement is considered as an important factor that influences job performance (Bakker & Bal, 2010) whereby, employees who are engaged in their work, will perform well in their designated job. One study conducted among public sector university teachers of Lahore reported that Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience were found to be positively related to work engagement. On the contrary, it was found that Neuroticism was negatively related to work engagement (Nayyar, Rana, Farheen, Ghazala, & Mohammad Taqi, 2013).

Besides teachers, study done on other professions such as telesales, pharmacists and non-pharmacists also revealed an association between selected Big Five traits and performance. Findings from Andreas (2012) showed that Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Extraversion were moderately correlated with job performance among telesales workers of two major telecom companies. On the other hand, there was no correlation found between job performance with dimensions of Openness to Experience and Agreeableness. A study conducted among pharmacists and non-pharmacists reported that only personality dimensions of Openness to Experience, Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion were related to task performance (Rothmann & Coetzer, 2003).

Certain personality traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience could have a positive association with teachers' job performance. Despite the facts there are also studies that reported an inconsistent finding and therefore warrant for further exploration. Given the importance of the influence of personality traits on job performance, therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the main personality traits possessed by public secondary school teachers, level of job performance and examining the association between personality traits and job performance. Finally, the most dominant personality trait influencing teachers' job performance was also investigated.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a cross-sectional study and employed quantitative approach using a close-ended questionnaire. Teachers from eight public secondary schools were invited to participate in the study. A total of 954 questionnaires were distributed with a return rate of 489 (51.26%). The questionnaire consists of demographics characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, academic qualification and length of service), Big Five traits and teachers' job performance. The Big Five Traits was measured using Goldberg's International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg, 1992). It consists of 50 items and is divided into five dimensions; Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Respondents were asked to evaluate their personality traits based on 5-point scale ranging from 1=Very Inaccurate to 5=Very Accurate. Job performance was measured using Instructional Development and Effectiveness Assessment (IDEA) developed by Canshin and Perrin (Canshin & Perrin, 1978). Respondents were asked to evaluate their job performance based on 5-point scale ranging from 1=Definitely False to 5=Definitely True.

Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse personality traits and level of job performance. The relationship between Big Five personality traits and job performance was calculated using Pearson correlation analysis. Multiple regression analysis was used to compare the contribution of each personality traits (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) towards job performance.

FINDINGS

Demographic characteristics

Overall, majority of the participants were female (85.9%), aged between 25-30 years old (43.8%), of Malay ethnicity (93.7%), and possessed minimum a degree qualification (91.0%). Most of the participants are permanent teachers (96.7%), and possess teaching experience between 1 to 5 years (45.4%).

Personality traits

The mean scores for each personality traits are presented in Table I. The findings showed that Agreeableness has the highest mean (3.21), reflecting on the main personality traits possessed by the teachers, followed by Openness to Experience (3.20), Extraversion (2.87), Conscientiousness (2.85) and Neuroticism (2.68).

TABLE I
DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF PERSONALITY TRAITS

Variables	Mean	SD
Openness to Experience	3.20	0.35
Conscientiousness	2.85	0.39
Extraversion	2.87	0.39
Agreeableness	3.21	0.36
Neuroticism	2.68	0.59

Level of Job Performance

The findings presented in Table II reveals that overall, the level of job performance among the respondents is at a high level ($\mu = 4.29 \pm .445$). Teachers perceived that they have a good teaching methods and ability to understand students' idea and questions well.

TABLE III
DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS FOR LEVEL OF JOB PERFORMANCE

No.	Items of Job Performance	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1	Understand student ideas and questions.	4.41	.67
2	Express interesting and challenging ideas about the subject.	4.10	.66
3	Use tests, papers, projects, etc., that closely relate to the course purposes.	4.14	.68
4	Care about students as people.	4.45	.62
5	Give understandable explanations of course materials.	4.40	.62
6	Ask interesting and stimulating questions.	4.23	.64
7	Give tests, projects, etc., that cover the important points of the course.	4.20	.66
8	Show interest in student ideas.	4.32	.60
9	Speak in an understandable voice.	4.45	.62
10	Suggest clearer ways for students to express their ideas.	4.33	.63
11	Give quizzes, papers, projects, etc., that help students to learn.	4.34	.63
12	Make helpful comments about student work.	4.33	.62
13	Review material in ways that help students remember it.	4.28	.64
14	Give projects, tests, or assignments that require original or creative thinking.	4.20	.67
15	Create opportunities for students to use the material they learn.	4.22	.67
16	Make helpful suggestions about what kinds of things to study for a test.	4.26	.61

17	Show how the subject relates to other areas of knowledge.	4.30	.66
18	Speak with expressiveness and variety.	4.25	.70
19	Am sensitive to student feelings about the subject.	4.32	.64
20	Provide helpful instructional materials (such as worksheets, study questions, unit objective).	4.29	.66
21	Identify strong points of student work.	4.28	.62
22	Use good examples and illustrations.	4.24	.65
23	Try different ways of teaching when students have trouble learning.	4.22	.67
24	Enjoy teaching.	4.60	.64
TOTAL		4.30	.45

Relationship between Personality Traits and Job Performance

The result shown on Table III reveals that there is a weak, positive association between Openness to Experience ($r = .199, p < 0.05$) and Agreeableness ($r = .101, p < 0.05$) and job performance. There is a weak, negative association between Neuroticism ($r = -.246, p < 0.05$) and job performance. However there is no association between Conscientiousness ($r = -.006, p > 0.05$) and Extraversion ($r = .024, p < 0.05$) and job performance.

TABLE IVVI
CORRELATION BETWEEN VARIABLES

Variables	r value	Sig. value
Openness to Experience	0.199**	.0001
Conscientiousness	- 0.006	.886
Extraversion	0.024	.603
Agreeableness	0.101*	.026
Neuroticism	- 0.246**	.0001

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The Most Dominant Personality Trait Influencing Job Performance

Findings showed that only Openness to Experience and Neuroticism influencing teachers’ job performance respectively (Table IV). Neuroticism is the most dominant Big Five personality that negatively influence job performance among teachers ($B = -.335$).

TABLE VIV
MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS PERSONALITY TRAITS WITH PERFORMANCE

Model	Understandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.653	.204		17.885	.000
Openness to Experience	.362	.070	.283	5.160	.000
Conscientiousness	-.043	.063	-.038	-.684	.494
Extraversion	.030	.059	.026	.504	.614
Agreeableness	.063	.066	.051	.956	.339
Neuroticism	-.253	.037	-.335	-6.892	.000

a. *Dependent Variable: Total Job Performance*
**Significant at $p < 0.05$*

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted with the intention to examine the association between Big Five personality traits and job performance among Malaysian public secondary school teachers. The study indicated that Agreeableness is the most dominant personality trait among teachers. This finding is consistent and supported by previous research done by Azlina and Sew Lee (2008). It indicates that teachers at the public secondary schools are inclining towards a pleasant, sympathetic, cooperative, friendly and helpful behaviour towards their students. It can be concluded that since Agreeableness teachers are idealistic and dedicated, they perceive greater job performance and personal accomplishment in teaching line (Constantinos, 2007). Teachers scored high in all items related to job performance which suggest that they possess high level of job performance. The findings implied that teachers in the public secondary school have a good teaching method and strategies in terms of delivering and understanding students' capability to achieve the desired learning outcomes. The result is consistent with the study carried out by Supian and Khadijah (2014), where teachers' level of job performance should be incline with the aims of National Education Philosophy (NEP). The aims of NEP can only be achieved through teachers who are dedicated and aspired to produce individuals who are socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually balance.

Furthermore, the finding of this study revealed that only personality traits of Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism are significantly associated with job performance. On the contrary, there was no correlation found between personality traits of Conscientiousness and Extraversion with job performance. This indicates that by having personality trait of Openness to Experience, it will lead teachers to have an intellectual curiosity and be creative in performing their teaching process to ensure that they achieve the quality of interaction with students (Kevin, 2007). In addition, personality trait of Agreeableness will lead teachers to establish a caring atmosphere and take a personal interest in each student' needs (Laura, 2008). On the other hand, the negative correlation which found between traits of Neuroticism indicates that when traits of Neuroticism increase, teachers' job performance will decrease. Personality trait of Neuroticism may affect teachers to perform their teaching well when they are unable to control their stress and transfer their stress to students (Constantinos, 2007). These findings are in slight contrast to results of research carried out by Andreas (2012) who found that the personality traits which have correlation with job performance are Extroversion, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism. Differences between the findings of research conducted by Andreas (2012) and this study may be due to contrast in terms of research context, whereby Andreas (2012) was focused on telesales workers, whereas this study focused on secondary school teachers.

Moreover, the result of this study indicated that Neuroticism is the most dominant personality trait influencing teachers' job performance. The negative correlation found between traits of Neuroticism with job performance explains that when traits of Neuroticism increase, teachers' job performance will decrease. Neuroticism, as opposed to emotional stability was the most dominant trait that affects teachers' personal accomplishment (Constantinos, 2007). It further explains that Neuroticism will lead teachers to inability to cope with stress which indirectly hampering teachers to maximize their potential in teaching (Azlina & Sew Lee, 2008). This finding proves that traits of Neuroticism emerged as having the strongest unique contribution on teachers' job performance. This finding is in contrast with a study done by Andreas (2012) who found trait of Conscientiousness as the strongest predictor of job performance. It explains that individuals who are persistent, dependable, organized, and goal directed tend to be higher performers, specifically in the occupation of sales. This suggests that trait of Conscientiousness gives greater emphasis in respect to job performance in the context of sales related job, but not in teaching profession as referred to our findings.

CONCLUSION

The current study is an attempt to examine the association between personality traits and job performance among Malaysian public secondary school teachers. In sum, it can be concluded that all questions and objectives of the study have successfully been addressed. The findings of this study provide positive implications towards the teachers' profession and the schools. Suitable personality trait as an educator contributes in ensuring teachers to perform their job well and deliver teaching process effectively. Therefore, personality assessments should be continued as one of the assessment tools in recruitment and selection of teachers by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia.

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