The impact of personality traits on work performance

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Abstract. With the growth and advancement of business, organizations are focusing more on the well-being of individual employees as this can improve work performance, and reach team goals more effectively and efficiently. Studying the impact of employees’ individual differences of personality traits (PT) on work performance is one of the key research topics today. For their investigation on the relationship between the Big Five personality traits (BFPT) and job performance—which focuses on leadership, employee well-being, and employee burnout—researchers gathered data from a variety of studies. There is a lack of consensus regarding the relationships between BFPT and leadership, employee well-being, and employee burnout, despite research showing that PT have an impact on work performance. According to the study’s results, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness to new experiences all have a good impact on leadership and employee well-being and a negative impact on employee burnout. Conscientiousness does not have any significant relationship with employee well-being. Neuroticism negatively affects leadership and employee well-being, but it positively affects employee burnout. Research has demonstrated that all five personalities are directly correlated to employees’ work performance. This is precisely because different personalities have different ways of dealing with interpersonal relationships, workload, and stress management, resulting in positive or negative impacts on their work performance.

1 Introduction

With the advancement of corporate culture, organizations are paying more attention to the impact of the well-being of employees’ work job performance. The impact of that becomes a social issue that received great concern from organizations and society. Organizations are focusing more on how to enable employees to discover their potential and break through their limitations at work. Individual differences in personality traits (PT) have become one of the important factors that allow organizations to understand employees’ performance and well-being. A diverse body of literature shows that agreeableness, extraversion, openness to experience, and consciousness are positively associated with employee work performance, but neuroticism is negatively associated with that [1]. Studies indicated that PT acts as an active motivational mechanism that enhances work engagement, thus influencing work performance at different levels [2]. Employees with different PT may have different levels of goal attainment that can affect their leadership performance to achieve their goals [3]. Research suggests that different PTs may result in various feelings, thoughts, and behavior patterns of values that can affect employees’ well-being at work [4]. Research also pointed out that employee burnout is a stress-related problem that may vary on an individual level because of differences in PTs [1]. It is crucial to understand how PTs play a major role in influencing burnout outcomes and risk factors. However, because they have looked at these issues independently, the existing literature does not consistently characterize how BFPT are perceived in relation to various areas of work performance. Instead of focusing on every facet of job performance, this literature review will critically analyze the complex relationships among leadership, employee well-being, and burnout in organizational contexts as they relate to BFPT. In order to provide insights for a deeper comprehension of the underlying causes of the events, this examination will illustrate many ways in which BFPT interact with and influence effective leadership performance, employee well-being, and employee burnout.

2 Relation between personalities and leadership

Leadership has been considered the driving force behind achieving results with and through others [3]. Leadership is not an ability to stand alone but an ability to guide and influence a team. The nature of leadership effectiveness is a crucial role to guide and collaborate toward achieving common goals [3]. Agreeableness is positively associated with effective leadership performance. A study used a convenience sampling method to select participants from public servants who worked at the State Administration agencies [5]. Researchers used the reliability test, scale, HTMT ratio, and the structural model to find out that agreeableness positively impacts leadership performance [5]. Leadership performance is a process of social influence, and agreeableness is a socially desirable PT that can

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facilitate healthy and positive leader-subordinate relations. As a result, agreeableness can weaken the status and authority differences between leaders and subordinates, thus effectively contributing to achieving common goals.

Extraversion is a significant predictor of effective leadership performance because it is related to being strong and providing positive emotions in reaching team and organizational goals [2]. The characteristics that a leader should have, including sociability, friendliness, talkativeness, and assertiveness, are consistent with extroverted individuals [2]. A study used questionnaires to collect data from different Chinese industries to measure extraversion and team performance. The result shows that extraverted leaders impact others through social interactions to guide and inspire them to achieve common goals [2]. They are more likely to form social interactions and give opinions that can dominantly influence others and navigate complex organizational dynamics. It shows their assertiveness to facilitate effective leadership performance. Since extroverts are more ambitious and influential compared to the people around them, they can be perceived as leaders to provide guidance and help their team to overcome challenges and reach common goals, highlighting that extraversion is positively related to effective leadership performance.

Conscientiousness is positively associated with employee work satisfaction and loyalty in the workplace, thus affecting work performance outcomes in the team [6]. Conscientiousness is regarded as the moral assessment that can improve work-environment qualities and employee retention [6]. A study used 380 questionnaire surveys collected from nine industrial manufacturing in Malaysia to examine the correlations between conscientiousness, leadership, turnover intention, ethical climate, and emotional exhaustion [6]. The result suggests that there is a strong correlation between conscientiousness and ethical leadership. Those leaders exhibit moral conduct among their employees, establishing themselves as the role model for their subordinates. [6]. This not only fosters a sense of trust in their leadership and encourages such conduct but also provides a sense of commitment to the employees, causing them to be more willing to have a positive relationship with their job throughout the workplace. Conscientious leaders contribute to enhanced management skills for employees and positively influence their leadership performance.

Higher levels of openness have a significant impact on leadership performance. Individuals with such PT can take dominant roles in the team because of their innovative ideas and knowledge [7]. An experiment used sixty-five groups from twenty-six firms in six different areas to examine openness to experience, knowledge sharing, and leadership behavior [7]. The findings show that openness to experience is related to creativity and knowledge sharing within a team, thus influencing leadership between leaders and employees. High openness to experienced leaders tends to quickly accept knowledge and fulfill curiosity, which accelerates the speed of sharing these ideas with employees, thus creating a productive work performance. Since leaders develop employees’ full potential at work to the greatest extent, they share and exchange knowledge in the idea development. Hence, it facilitates team knowledge and effective work performance between leaders and employees.

Neuroticism challenges leadership performance. Neurotic individuals are more likely to be insecure and avoid difficulty overcoming challenges in their daily lives and at work [8]. 164 participants were recruited in the study, the Big Five Inventory was used to measure neuroticism, and the Skills Inventory was used to measure leadership skills, including human skills and conceptual skills [9]. The result finds that there is a negative relationship between neuroticism and leadership skills because neurotic leaders have the tendency to generate negative emotions, negative thoughts, and worries about the surrounding [9]. They experience emotional fluctuations, which can negatively create an uncomfortable and unpredictable atmosphere within their teams because of heightened emotional reactivity and anxiety. Such leaders put excessive worries on interpersonal relationships and potential problems at work, causing overthinking and indecision. Neurotic leaders’ insecurity and self-doubt cause them to lack the ability to establish multifaceted social interactions with their employees, thus harming leadership and work performance.

3 Relation between personalities and employee well-being

Leadership has been considered the driving force behind achieving results with and through others [3]. Leadership is not an ability to stand alone but an ability to guide and influence a team. The nature of leadership effectiveness is a crucial role to guide and collaborate toward achieving common goals [3]. Agreeableness is positively associated with effective leadership performance. A study using Employee well-being refers to the overall well-being of individuals at the workplace. It can develop the psychological strength of employees to be productive and implement innovative ideas in the workplace [4]. The overall quality of employees’ work experience, including job satisfaction and positive effect, can influence individual performance at the workplace. It is important to recognize that BFPT may play a crucial role in shaping their experiences. BFPT will affect the overall happiness and job satisfaction of employees from different levels, thereby promoting or fracturing a healthy and more efficient working environment. Agreeableness positively influences employee well-being. A study used 117 academicians from a public university in Malaysia, and participants were randomly assigned from three major academic colleges [10]. The NEO-FFI Personality Inventory was utilized to evaluate BFPT, and correlations between BFPT and employee well-being were computed [10]. Questionnaires were utilized to gather and analyze the data. The findings indicate a beneficial correlation between agreeableness and employee well-being. Agreeableness helps to improve a better interpersonal relationship, and agreeable employees are more sympathetic, indulgent, and cooperative. Such prosocial behaviors increase intimacy among employees, thus enhancing employee well-being at the workplace.

Extraversion is positively associated with employee well-being. Utilizing the International Personality Item Pool to examine BFPT, the Self-report Emotional Intelligence test to assess employee emotional well-being, and the Moral Foundations Questionnaire to assess how much a person
relies on the five moral foundations of harm, fairness, in-group, authority, and purity, researchers gathered 195 responses from students at the University of New South Wales in Australia [4]. The findings demonstrate that extraversion is related with employee well-being through moral foundations. Extraverted employees exhibit energetic behaviors that can be rewarded in social situations, which develops their moral foundations toward caring for other people’s wellbeing, reinforcing empathy, compassion, and fairness, which are important elements to produce positive outcomes at work [4]. Employees’ positive emotions reinforce their moral foundations and values. It will increase prosocial behavior that can enhance their welfare and happiness at work, thus fostering better employee well-being.

Openness to experience decreases job insecurity, thus improving employee well-being. A study used a cross-sectional design to examine how openness to experience, well-being, and job insecurity interrelate with one another and how these factors impact employees [11]. The result shows that high openness employees are more motivated to find new experiences, unfamiliar situations, and experience diverse social attitudes and career changes [11]. They are less likely to be affected by job insecurity which might negatively influence their well-being. Work engagement not only is a positive part of employee well-being but also shows a significant effect on openness to experience. Openness to experience decreases job insecurity but increases work engagement. Although employees may still have job insecurity, they experience more engagement at work. Demonstrating how being open to new experiences can reduce the negative correlation between job instability and work engagement, enhancing employee wellbeing at the workplace.

Employee happiness is not inversely connected with conscientiousness. The NEO Five-Factor Inventory was used in a study to gauge conscientiousness. The Occupational Positive and Negative Affect Scale's negative affect dimension, which consists of seven items, and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire's abbreviated version were used to gauge psychological stress and job satisfaction for employee well-being [12]. The study evaluated the relationship between conscientiousness and workers' well-being in terms of dependability and self-control [12]. Conscientiousness is a major predictor of contextual performance, according to the results, but it does not directly predict employee well-being, such as psychological distress and job satisfaction [12]. High conscientious employees know their positions and responsibilities better, so they engage in behavior that shows self-discipline at work, creating a positive work environment. As a result, they may have high job satisfaction and lower psychological stress. Showing that knowing responsibility and roles are more important for enhancing employees’ well-being. Although conscientiousness does not straightforwardly influence employees’ well-being, it can influence contextual performance and the interplay between conscientiousness and the work environment to impact well-being outcomes.

Neuroticism has a negative correlation with employee well-being. Neuroticism shares similar traits with low well-being, including irrational ideas, instability, anxiety, and moodiness, which shows that neuroticism creates anxiety, leading to negative well-being [10]. A cross-sectional design was used for 42 nurses who worked in the emergency room [13]. They used the NEO Five-Factor Inventory, the Job-Related Affective Well-Being Scale, and the Job Stress Questionnaire Structural Equation Modeling to examine whether neuroticism predicts employee well-being under stressful conditions [13]. The finding shows that neuroticism has negative predictive power toward employee well-being and a positive predictor of job stress. It shows that perceived job stress produces negative outcomes at work that adversely affect employee well-being including job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and anxiety at work. As a result, neuroticism significantly and negatively correlated with employee well-being. Since instability, anxiety, and moodiness demonstrate an incapability to manage stress, employees are unable to cope with the problems that arise at work, thus affecting their well-being and lowering their work performance.

4 Relation between personalities and employee burn-out

Employee burnout is an unfavorable emotional reaction, including emotional exhaustion and low personal accomplishment, to employees’ work performance because of a stressful workload [14]. Employee burnout is related to low levels of employee well-being in which PTs play a major role in affecting employee burnout’s development. Agreeableness does not have a significant correlation. A study was conducted voluntarily and used The Big Five Questionnaire 2 to measure the relationship between employee burnout and PTs [14]. The result shows that agreeableness does not significantly predict employee burnout factors, and the researchers did not find a significant statistical relationship between the PT of agreeableness and burnout factors among employees [14]. In other words, the researchers did not find a strong link between how agreeable a person is, including the tendency to be cooperative and friendly, and their levels of burnout, including emotional exhaustion and inefficacy, in this participant population. Although agreeable employees can cooperate effectively with others and show trust and affability with others, it does not play a significant role in predicting burnout symptoms among employees. It does not predict a negative correlation between employee burnout and emotional exhaustion but predicts a positive correlation with personal accomplishment at the workplace.

Extraversion reduces the level of employee burnout. Study 1 used online Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform to recruit participants from different industries, and the researchers collected data three times a year to measure the correlation between extraversion and employee burnout in the context of the “Great Resignation” trend during the COVID-19 pandemic [15]. The finding shows that highly extroverted employees are more likely to experience less burnout because they are more sociable and outgoing and less likely to feel emotional exhaustion and inefficacy at work [15]. Extroverted employees have better interpersonal skills and a large social circle, so they are better at dealing with stress and difficulties in social relationships and at
work. They are better able to deal with difficult problems and come up with better solutions. Hence, they are more likely to have better emotional and subjective well-being because of their ability to deal with stress and difficulties in social relationships and at work. High levels of extraversion are associated with lower employee burnout, thus reducing employee turnover. Extraverted employees are better at adapting to different social environments and managing work stress; as a result, they generate positive effects to overcome challenges because of their natural personalities.

Conscientiousness had a negative correlation with employee burnout. A study recruited participants across different industries (36,627) and employed various research methodologies and burnout assessment tools to determine how conscientiousness is related to employee burnout in different work contexts [16]. The finding shows that conscientious employees tend to be organized and disciplined, which helps them to experience less burnout [16]. Conscientiousness acts as a protective factor against employee burnout because it regulates emotional exhaustion. High conscientious employees are more success-oriented, and they persevere with their goals at work, mitigating emotional exhaustion, unproductiveness, and stress. This increases their sense of professional accomplishment at work. However, research shows that conscientiousness might increase emotional exhaustion in certain circumstances possibly because such employees invest too much effort and commitment into their work, but the reason behind it remains unknown [16]. Conscientiousness shows an overall negative correlation with employee burnout, but this correlation may vary based on unexpected in certain burnout situations.

Openness to experience is negatively related to employee burnout. The link between employee burnout and BFPT among staff members at Tehran Atiyeh Hospital was examined in the study using a questionnaire-based methodology [17]. They employed the Big Five Personality Standard Model to assess openness to experience and other PTs, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory format to assess employee burnout as evidenced by emotional tiredness, impaired personal accomplishment, and depersonalization [17]. The result shows that high openness employees tend to experience less burnout at work. They are more likely to be curious, creative, willing to experience new things, and explore new situations. Therefore, they can handle challenges and stress at work better and more effectively, reducing employee burnout because of their coping strategies and adaptability to new and stressful situations.

Neuroticism increases the levels of employee burnout. It can easily trigger negative emotions among employees which increases the chances of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization [1]. The study used an adaptive causal network model to measure the correlation between job demands, employee burnout, and PTs [1]. It utilized three levels of adaptations in which they investigated how PTs affect employee burnout dimensions through excitability threshold; they then used simulation experiments to measure how the interplay of different factors can influence burnout outcomes [1]. High neurotic employees are also associated with lower autonomy because of their anxiety and lack of stress management, causing high depersonalization and more interpersonal conflict. It increases the likelihood of employee burnout [1]. Hence, neuroticism hurts their professional accomplishment. Neurotic employees are more likely to have job demand that is associated with interpersonal conflict, thus increasing the possibility of employee burnout. It is hard for neurotic employees to manage their stress and workload, and because of their lack of stress management, they are more likely to be more neurotic and even more sensitive to stress at work.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that agreeableness, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and neuroticism had diverse effects on leadership, employee well-being, and employee burnout. This effect is because employees' PTs differ in the way they handle workload, interpersonal relationships, and stress management, which has a significant impact on their work performance. The importance of individual differences in increasing leadership and employee welfare and avoiding employee burnout is highlighted by an understanding of the complex interactions between BFPT and work performance. The results demonstrate that all five dimensions of BFPT all have favorable effects on leadership, employee well-being, and burnout. The association between conscientiousness and employee well-being, which affects work performance, is, however, not statistically significant. On the other side, neuroticism has been proven to negatively impact a variety of work-related performance metrics. In order to better understand how each PT influences overall work performance, the current study first gathered data from numerous studies on BFPT, leadership, staff well-being, and employee burnout. The finding sheds light on various ways to foster a high-quality and healthier work environment, thus bolstering work performance, enhancing leadership and employee wellbeing, and mitigating burnout. Finally, the study’s investigation did not adequately consider other factors that can influence work performance. Future studies could synthesize these studies and explore the relationship with other factors that can influence work performance and BFPT. Additionally, potential interventions can be developed to cultivate effective performance at work to reach organizational goals.

References