

IMPACT OF BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS ON JOB PERFORMANCE (ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AS A MEDIATOR)

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Abstract:

This study examines the mediating role of multidimensional organizational commitment concept in determining the relationship between Big Five personality traits and job performance. A conceptual framework has been developed with multidimensional organizational commitment as a mediating variable linking the personality-performance relationship. It is hypothesized that affective commitment will mediate the relationship between extraversion and job performance. Affective commitment will also mediate the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance. It is also hypothesized that continuance commitment will mediate the relationship between neuroticism and job performance. Theoretical implications are discussed.

Keywords: big five personality traits, organizational commitment, job performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Most research has been done in the last decade on Dispositions i.e. the individual personality traits which will lead to certain kind of attitudes and work related behavior since Michele (1977) described individual behavior as a result of disposition-situation interaction. Research on dispositions really flourished after the emergence of Big Five personality traits model (Goldberg, 1990). Big Five personality traits model determined the broad five personality types which are very useful in predicting different kinds of work related attitudes and behaviors.

Organizational commitment is also one of the well researched topics for many years. John, Mathew and Zajac (1990) conducted a Meta analysis of the antecedents, correlates and consequences of organizational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1990) provided a three component framework of organizational commitment which includes Affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Meyer et al. (2002) conducted a Meta analysis of antecedents, correlates and consequences of Affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

Different studies have been conducted to determine the dispositional causes of different kind of work related attitudes and behaviors such as the relationship between Big Five personality traits and job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Judge (1997) gave the concept of core self evaluations to determine the dispositional causes of job satisfaction. Judge, Heller and Mount (2002) studied the relationship between Big Five personality traits and job satisfaction. These studies concluded that Big Five personality traits are a useful measure to determine work related attitudes and behaviors.

Some research has been done by treating organizational commitment as a mediating variable in determining different work related outcomes. Ferris (1981) found that commitment mediates the relationship between work-related characteristics and employee performance. It has also been found that commitment mediates the relationship between satisfaction and stay/leave decisions (Rusbult & Martz 1995). Clugston (2000) found out that multidimensional concept of commitment partially mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and intent to leave. It has been also found that affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between supervisor feedback environment and organizational citizenship behavior (Watts & Levy, 2004). I have found no study which has examined the mediating role of organizational commitment in personality-performance relationship. This study will fill this gap by examining the mediating role of multidimensional concept of organizational commitment in personality-performance relationship.

Little research has been done to determine the dispositional causes of organizational commitment. I found only one study which has linked Big Five personality traits with three component framework of organizational commitment (Erdheim, Wang & Zickar, 2006). The present study focuses on the relationship between Big Five personality traits and job performance with organizational commitment as a mediating variable.

First we will establish the development of literature regarding personality traits and organizational commitment. Secondly we will take into account the mediating role of organizational commitment in determining the relationship between Big Five personality traits and organizational commitment.

2. BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS

The Big Five personality traits are independent personality traits which determine five broad personality types including Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Openness to experience. Conscientiousness personality type includes traits such as hardworking, careful, thorough, responsible, organized, persevering (Barrick & Mount, 1991). High conscientiousness individuals are methodical, dependable, and risk averse (Goldberg, 1990). Extraversion includes traits such as sociable, talkative, gregarious, assertive, active, ambitious and expressive (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Neuroticism includes traits like anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, emotional, worried, and insecure (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Agreeableness include traits such as courteous, flexible, trusting, good natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft hearted, and tolerant (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Openness to experience include traits like imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad minded, intelligent and artistically sensitive (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

3. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Organizational commitment as an attitude is most often defined as (1) A strong desire to remain member of particular organization (2) a willingness to exert high levels of effort on behalf of the organization (3) a definite belief in, and acceptance of, the values and goals of the organization (Mowday, Porters & Steers, 1982). The most comprehensive definition of Organizational commitment was given by Meyer and Allen (1991) by developing a three component framework of organizational commitment. This three component framework of organizational commitment includes affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Normative commitment refers to a feeling of obligation to continue employment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

4. BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND JOB PERFORMANCE: ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE

The general theoretical model of the current study is shown in Figure 1, which shows that commitment mediates the personality-performance relationship. In this case personality will be an antecedent to organizational commitment and performance will be a consequence to organizational commitment.

Figure 1: Organizational commitment as a mediating variable



Figure 1 Here

Extraversion is a personality type which exhibits traits such as talkative, sociable, active and expressive (Barrick & Mount, 1991). They have a strong desire for praise, social recognition, status and power (Costa & MacCrae, 1997). Extraverts are positively related to affective commitment (Erdheim, Wang & Zickar, 2006).

Organizational commitment is a willingness to exert high levels of effort on behalf of the organization (Mowday, Porters & Steers, 1982). Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), therefore it will trigger positive work related behaviors and outcomes. An individual affectively committed to an organization will exert high level of effort which will result in positive outcomes such as job performance. Job performance is one of the consequences of organizational commitment (John, Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Affective commitment is positively related to overall job performance (Meyer et al., 1989). Meyer et al. (2002) conducted a Meta analysis of antecedents, correlates and consequences of Affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment and found out that affective commitment is positively related to overall performance. Organizational commitment is positively related to performance overall (Jaramillo, Mulki & Marshall, 2005). High extraverts are positively associated with extrinsic career success (Judge et al., 1999). Extravert is a personality types which is positively related to performance in jobs that require interpersonal skills (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001). Therefore it is argued that affective commitment will mediate the relationship between extraverts and job performance.

Hypothesis 1: Affective commitment will mediated the relationship between Extraverts and job performance.

Conscientiousness personality type includes traits such as hardworking, careful, thorough, responsible, organized, persevering (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Conscientiousness individuals tend to form relational contracts in their exchange relationship with the organization (Raja, Johns & Ntalianis, 2004). Relational contracts are long term contracts as they not only include purely economic exchange but also include terms for loyalty or growth in an organization (Rousseau & MacLean Parks, 1993). This type of psychological contracts is positively related to affective commitment (Raja, Johns & Ntalianis, 2004). Erdheim, Wang & Zickar (2006) found out a positive relationship between conscientiousness and affective commitment.

Affective commitment is positively related to overall job performance (Meyer et al., 1989). Meyer et al. (2002) conducted a Meta analysis of antecedents, correlates and consequences of Affective, continuance and normative commitment and found out that affective commitment is positively related to overall performance. Organizational commitment is positively related to performance overall (Jaramillo, Mulki & Marshall, 2005). Conscientiousness is one of the most consistent personality predictors of job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001). Therefore it is argued that affective commitment will mediate the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance.

Hypothesis 2: Affective commitment will mediate the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance.

Neuroticism includes traits such as anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, emotional, worried, and insecure (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Neuroticism is a personality type which is limited in social skills and avoids situations that demand taking control (Judge, Locke & Durham, 1997). Neuroticism is closely related to NA (Watson & Tellegan, 1985). They experience more negative feelings in life than other individuals (Magnus, Diener, Fujita & Pavot, 1993). These negative emotions and lack of alternatives will make them stick to the organization because of the costs associated with leaving the jobs, which would lead to negative work related behaviors and attitudes. They feel more apprehensive about facing a new work environment that could provide even harsher experiences (Erdheim, Wang & Zickar, 2006). Neurotics are positively related to continuance commitment (Erdheim, Wang & Zickar, 2006).

Continuance commitment is negatively related to overall job performance (Meyer et al., 1989). Meyer et al. (2002) conducted a Meta analysis of antecedents, correlates and consequences of Affective, continuance and normative commitment and found out that continuance commitment is negatively related to overall performance. Meta analysis suggests that Neuroticism is a personality types which is negatively related to job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Tett et al., 1991). Therefore it is suggested that continuance commitment will mediate the relationship between Neuroticism and job performance.

Hypothesis 3: Continuance commitment will mediate the relationship between neuroticism and job performance.

Agreeableness include traits such as courteous, flexible, trusting, good natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft hearted, and tolerant (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Agreeableness has a very weak relationship with job performance and it is not an important predictor of job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Agreeableness is not strongly related to any other criterion or occupational group except for teamwork (Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001). Moreover, agreeableness consistently reported the lowest average true score correlations across criteria and occupations (Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001).

Openness to experience include traits like imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad minded, intelligent and artistically sensitive (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Furthermore DeNeve and Cooper (1998) noted that "Openness to Experience is a 'double-edged sword' that predisposes individuals to feel both the good and bad more deeply". Openness to experience is a personality type which has been a subject of controversy among researchers (Costa & McCrae, 1997; Hough & Ones, 2001). Like agreeableness Openness to experience also has consistently reported the lowest average true score correlations across criteria and occupations (Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001). Agreeableness and openness to experience are not good predictors of job performance (Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001). Therefore these two personality dimensions have not been hypothesized.

5. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study has investigated the relationship between Big Five personality traits and job performance with a mediating role of multidimensional organizational commitment. A theoretical model has been developed in which personality is an antecedent to organizational commitment and performance is a consequence of organizational commitment. It has been argued that organizational commitment has a mediating role in determining the personality-performance relationship. It has been suggested that affective commitment has a mediating role in determining the relationship between extraversion and job performance. Similarly, it has been established that affective commitment will also mediate the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance. It has been argued that the relationship between neuroticism and job performance will be mediated by continuance commitment. This conceptual framework has certain future research directions.

Future research based on the current theoretical model can investigate the relationship of personality with other work related behaviors and outcomes by taking organizational commitment as a mediating variable. The other consequence of organizational commitment can be intention to leave, intention to stay and organizational citizenship behavior. Mediating role of organizational commitment can be investigated to observe that how organizational commitment mediates the relationship between personality and intention to stay, personality and intention to leave and personality and organizational citizenship behavior. The empirical confirmation of this conceptual model is another area of future research. This theoretical framework can be tested empirically so that the validity of the current model is confirmed.

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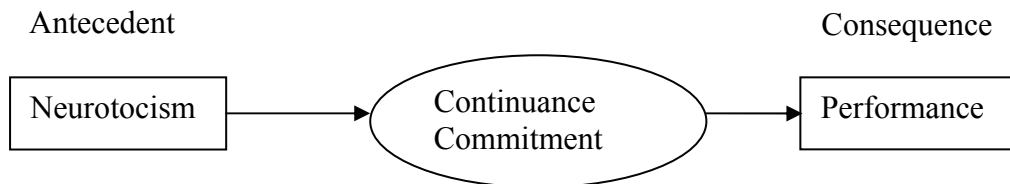
Figure 1: Organizational commitment as a mediating variable



Hypothesis 1: Affective commitment as a mediating variable



Hypothesis 2: Affective commitment as a mediating variable



Hypothesis 3: Continuance commitment as a mediating variable