

Personality Traits as Antecedent of Employee Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This review paper contributes to significant conclusions to previous literature, showing that personality is an antecedent or driver of Employee/Work Engagement. An organization cannot alter an individual's core personality. Understanding the relationship between personality traits and likely employee attitudes and Behavior can enable managers to achieve a better fit between employees and their jobs. Selecting employees based on performance-related personality criteria would increase the probability of creating a more engaged workforce.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Employee Engagement, Work Engagement

Personality traits mean an individual's patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The three criteria of consistency, stability and individual difference characterize Personality Traits. A person occupies a trait if he/she is consistent across situations, shows stable Behavior, and Behavior is different from others. Colquitt (2009) defines personality traits as the structures and propensities inside a person that explains his/her characteristic, patterns of thought, emotion and behavior. Employee engagement is an approach at workplace. Employee Engagement includes the right kind of conditions for all employees of an organization so that they can give their best every day. Therefore, employee engagement consists of an individual's work commitment and involvement as an employee towards the organization's values. An engaged employee is well aware of an organizational setup and works with team members to enhance the performance job for the organization's benefit. That is why the level of employee engagement has led researchers to identify antecedents to Engagement. Researchers have now realized both organizational and individual factors to be levers of employee engagement. This paper is an effort to study the role of personality traits on employee engagement.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Massive research was conducted and combined in the 1980s and 90s to support the 5-factor model of personality traits (Goldberg 1990, McCrae and Costa 1992 and McCrae and John 1990). Big five personality traits are based on a model of human nature in individual differences (McCrae & John, 1992).

The five super traits are generally described as follows, as developed by **Costa** and McCrae (1992), along with the test tool are

- Openness to Experience
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism

The Big Five personality traits, also known as the five-factor model (FFM), are represented by OCEAN or CANOE.

Openness to Experience-According to John and Srivastava (1999), Openness to Experience is related to the density of one's mental life and experiences. It is also referred to as intellect or imagination. Openness to Experience means an individual's willingness to try new things. It is also concerned with his ability to think outside the box.

Conscientiousness-Conscientiousness is a trait to control one's desires or impulses. John and Srivastava (1999) view that it is to act in socially acceptable ways, including behaviors that facilitate goal-directed behavior. Conscientious people work within rules within rules and always organize effectively. Sub traits of Conscientiousness include-Resourcefulness, Hard work, Energetic, Persevering, Planner, Persistence, Consistent, Predictable, Controlled, Ambitious, Thorough and Self-disciplined.

Extraversion-It concerns with how an individual draws his energy and how he interacts with others and environment. Extroverts seek out social interaction and draw their energy by interacting with others. Introverts get tired by interacting with others and gain their energy from solitude. The traits associated with extraversion are- Assertive, Sociable, Outgoing, Energetic, Talkative, Articulate, Affectionate, Friendly, and Fun-loving.

Agreeableness-This trait includes our behaviour with others. It is built on our orientation and interaction with others. An agreeable person has the following traits:-Altruistic, Trusting, Humble, Modest, Tactful, Loyal, Helpful,

Sensitive, amiable, Cheerful, Moderate and Considerate. People high in agreeableness are liked by others due to their sensitivity towards needs of others.

Neuroticism-High score on this trait indicates more negative traits. Neurotic people are not satisfied by themselves. They are not confident and comfortable in one's own skin. This trait includes emotional stability and general temper. The traits which are commonly associated with neuroticism are Awkward, Unconfident, Timid, Pessimistic, Jealous, Moody, Fearful, Nervous, and Anxious, Self- Critical, Insecure, Unstable and Oversensitive.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The concept of Employee Engagement was given by Kahn, (1990). He refers employee engagement as an individual's role in his work performance. This role includes varying degrees of their selves physically, cognitively and emotionally. Schaufeli, Salanova; Bakker (2003) defined employee engagement "as a psychological state". Employee engagement being a state of mind at workplace is portrayed by vigor, dedication and absorption. Vigor includes employee's efforts in his work. It means high levels of energy, determination to face difficulties and mental resilience on the job. Dedication of employee refers to when he or she is motivated to work, takes pride in work and enthusiastic even while facing challenges at work. Being deeply engrossed in work with full concentration and happiness is part of employee's absorption (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004).

Work Engagement is a term used synonymously with employee engagement many of times but the two are different. Work engagement is the relationship of the employee with his or her work, whereas employee engagement extends further to an employee's relation to not only to work but also to his organization. Hence term employee engagement is wider and requires both work engagement and organisational engagement to be present to work successfully. Work engagement mainly focuses on the relationship and role of the employee with his or her work. The main focus here is usually on the individual's own role within the organization. Organisational engagement rather than focusing solely on the individual, it instead encompasses an employee's emotional commitment to the employee to his the organisation and its goal.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT/ WORK ENGAGEMENT

In this study Databases: Google Scholar, Research Gate, Science Gate, and Wiley Online Library were used to search for published and unpublished studies containing data on personality and Engagement. Papers, thesis between 2011 and 2020 were included to study. A combination of the following keywords was used in search: "personality traits and employee engagement", "personality traits and work engagement/ job engagement".

S.No.	Author/Year	Sample	Statistical Techniques	Findings
1	Zaidi et.al (2013)	399 university teachers	Regression	Big Five Traits are correlated to work Engagement though the relation is not very strong.
2	Ongore (2013)	118 university personnel	Bivariate Co-Relation Analysis	Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness are positively related to Work Engagement but Neuroticism was negatively related to Engagement. But Highly significant predictors are positively related Openness to Experience and Agreeableness. Openness to Experience was found to be the significant predictor of physical, emotional and cognitive Engagement. Agreeableness was the predictor of emotional and cognitive Engagement.
3	Shukla, Aggarwal, Adhikari, & Singh.(2014)	90 respondents from B2C e-commerce company	Pearson Correlation	Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness were found to have significant and moderate positive relationship with employee engagement. Extraversion was found to have positive but weak relationship with employee engagement while Neuroticism

				had shown negative relationship with employee engagement
4	Gulati and Handa(2014)	333 frontline employees working in different retail formats	Regression Analysis	Positive relationship between extraversion, conscientiousness and employee engagement was found in this study. Employees scoring high on these traits are friendly, outgoing and so are more suited for retail jobs involving social interaction with customers.
9	Akhtar et.al (2014)	1050 working adults	Hierarchical multiple regression	Along with trait EI openness to Experience, extraversion and conscientiousness were found to be predictors of work engagement.
6	Gulamali (2017)	Portuguese citizens between the ages of 15 and 64 -	Regression	Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience have a positive relation with work engagement while Neuroticism has a negative relation. With Agreeableness results were not validated
7	Young et.al(2017)	114 studies	Meta-analysis	Proactive personality, conscientiousness and extraversion were found to be predictors of Engagementwhereas neuroticism, negative affectivity, agreeableness, and Openness to Experience was the least important.
8	Hau and Bing (2018)	102 academic staff of university	Structured Equation Modelling	Significant positive effects on work enagement were found by Agreeableness, conscientiousness, and Openness to experience. On the other hand, extraversion and neuroticism did not have a significant impact on work engagement.
9	Thavakumar (2018)	191 permanent employees of financial institutions	Regression	Personality traits were found to have influence on the employees' cognitive Engagement. Out of all the traits, Agreeableness had the highest influence. Agreeableness is needed to work in peace and resolve the conflicts.
10	Shaban (2018)	581 employees in Public Sector in Egypt	Regression	Positive relationships were found between Big-Five personality traits and EE dimensions.
11	Pandit and Ramachandran (2018)	30 working individuals	Correlation	Positive correlation between Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience and Neuroticism. However negative relation was found in Agreeableness and Job engagement
12	Brew and Machiha (2019)	157 university teachers	Regression	Conscientiousness and Extraversion were significant predictors of Work engagement. Honesty-Humility, Agreeableness, Emotionality and Openness were not significant predictors of Work engagement.
13	Meskelis and Whittington (2020)	100 participants	Regression	The results show that honesty–humility impacts employee engagement and that Authentic leadership functions as a substitute for honesty–humility.

14	Bansal, Bhushan, Gupta (2020)	150 Female Bank Employees	Bivariate Correlation	Correlation between Work Engagement and Extraversion, Agreeableness, conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience was found to be positive. Neuroticism was found to be negatively related to the work engagement.
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SUMMARY OF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Young et.al (2017) revealed that personality accounts for 48.10% of the variance in Engagement. Almost all papers predict relation between big five personality traits and employee engagement/work engagement. Though Zaidi et.al (2012) found this relationship not very strong. This may be due to other factors like job related and/or organizational related which may support or hinder Engagement. In all the researchers studied above in Table 1 extraversion was found to have correlation with work engagement. Agreeableness was found have strong g correlation with work engagement as mentioned by Ongore (2013) and Thavakumar (2018). This may be due to reason that agreeable employees possess traits to be optimistic and internally motivated to resolve the problems and conflicts. Hence, agreeable employees can be more engaged to their job.

Brew and Machiha (2019) found relation between employee engagement and honesty-humility non-significant whereas Meskelis and Whittington (2020) found honesty-humility impacts employee engagement and that authentic leadership functions as a substitute for honesty-humility. More studies are required to be done on this trait of personality to obtain clarity on this aspect. These studies incorporated are from different sectors varying from university teachers, retail sector employees, banking sector, employees from public and finance sector. This implies that relationship between personality traits and work engagement/employee engagement is applicable and useful in all the field ranging from HR to academic.

CONCLUSION

To conclude it is evident from above relationship that Engagement of employees is a function of employee's personality characteristics. Hence this relationship has implications at recruitment level of employees by authorities. Employers can use the Big Five Inventory to understand if a candidate has the potential to achieve the level of Work Engagement required for a certain position. Big Five can be one of the important instrument along with other tools while recruitment of employees.

Moreover, personnel development techniques and human resources strategies can be used to improve the traits which contribute more for Engagement. Training programs can be arranged to tackle employee's development opportunities and help them to reach their full potential.

At a personal level, each employee should use its own strengths to reach higher engagement levels and should know the level of each individual trait he or she possesses to better communicate with co-workers, subordinates or supervisors about challenges faced that might constraint the level of Engagement in certain assignments.

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