

The Big Five Personality Theory and Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

The purpose of the systematic review at hand is to study the connection between the personality traits of the Big Five personality theory, in correlation to organizational commitment. As a first step, we will focus on the theoretical background of the notion providing specific information from the literature. We will then, continue with describing the methodology that researchers have followed to study the analogies, and finally we will discuss our findings and we will try to interpret by posing recommendations for applications and further future research.

Keywords

Organizational Commitment, Personality, Traits, Big Five Theory

1. Introduction

Over the last years, organizational commitment has become a field that researchers are interested to explore in-depth. According to *De Cotiis and Summers (1987)*, organizational commitment is positively associated with performance. *Imran et al. (2014)* conducted a study, in which they concluded that the relationship between job satisfaction and performance are positively associated and that employee performance and positive attitudes towards their workplace create a positive relationship with organizational commitment (*Lee et al., 2020*). Organizational commitment is linked to employee turnover indicating that employees who pose a low level of commitment are more likely to leave the company. Although research has given us a lot of information concerning commitment, environmental antecedents have received increased attention but dispositional resources like job satisfaction, haven't been examined in depth (*Erdheim et al., 2006*). Modern organizations are facing multiple challenges, concerning

the rapid change of the business world. Nowadays businesses are required not only to increase productivity but also to develop and retain skilled employees. Hence, understanding the personality and the emotional intelligence of the employees has been a significant aspect concerning the organizational strategy. [Allport \(1937\)](#) defined personality as “Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his or her unique adjustments to the environment”. Big Five Personality theory was developed by [Goldberg \(1990\)](#) and has divided personality into five traits defined as openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism ([Thiruvvarasi & Kamaraj, 2017](#)).

2. Big 5 Personality Theory in the Workplace

For almost thirty years, psychologists were competing with each other creating conflicts which they were concerning personality trait models until the big five-factor personality theory emerged ([Syed et al., 2015](#)). Personality traits are considered to be significant key factors, that indicate and determine individuals’ behavior. Previous literature distinguishes personality traits from cognitive, that they refer to personal values, affective referring to attitudes and behavioral patterns ([Lee et al., 2020](#)). When we try to define personality, we refer to a combination of mental, behavioral, and physical characteristics that are unique for the individuals ([Harini et al., 2018](#)). People differ from each other in many ways. Many researchers have underlined the importance of personality traits at the workplace concerning leadership, management, teamwork, performance, motivation entrepreneurship and strategy. Personality traits include pattern characteristics, behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. The Big Five model is the predominant theoretical framework that can be used to investigate, connections between these personality traits and the workplace. These five traits are the following: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism ([Anderson, 2013](#)). Openness to experience also called “intellect” or just “openness”, signifies an individual who is curious, explorative, has a need for variety and aesthetic sensitivity, and it is a good predictor, of creativity. Conscientiousness is not surprising that is a reliable and strong predictor of job performance as it describes personality characteristics concerning being punctual, systematic, responsible, and hard-working. Extraversion, as a significant personality trait, is related to popularity and social success indicating an individual who is talkative, assertive, and sociable. Extraversion is also connected to a happier life and a higher lifetime income. Moreover, agreeableness is a personality trait that includes behaviors, such as being caring, collaborative, kind and well-mannered. Finally, neuroticism, is more familiar to clinical psychologists and psychiatrists, as one of the key factors that indicate mental disorders ([Syed et al., 2015](#)). Openness is referred to a person that is imaginative, curious, and open-minded. Openness to experience is an important trait for employees, as it indicates the response of the individuals to proactivity, creativity, and adoption to change. Conscien-

tiousness is a strong indicator for dependence, achievement orientation and task proficiency. On an organizational level, conscientiousness is an indicator for incorporate dedication, citizenship, and compliance. To continue with extraversion, it indicates someone who is sociable, decisive, and gregarious. Extraversion at the workplace can predict team spirit and team proficiency. Also, agreeableness can predict tolerance, cooperation, and contribution to the team. Can also be an indicator of the way that people correspond to the actions of others, and people with high levels of agreeableness, are more likely to comply, with the norms of the group? Finally, neuroticism is a trait that reflects a predisposition towards negative thoughts, emotions and cognitions. To sum up, openness to experience can predict adaptivity and proactivity, conscientiousness will predict individual proficiency and performance, extraversion is positively linked to team performance, agreeableness can predict adaptivity and proficiency to team in organizational levels, and finally, neuroticism is linked negatively with all performance dimensions (Neal et al., 2012).

3. Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to the emotional attachment that the employees have towards their workplace. It can also be described, as the desire of an employee to be part of the organization. The organizational commitment model has three dimensions, which we can distinguish in affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Harini et al., 2018). Affective commitment refers to the involvement, the emotional attachment, and the identification that someone feels towards his/ her organization. Continuance commitment is the perception that an employee has, concerning the costs of leaving the organization. Finally, normative commitment indicates the feeling of obligation that the employee feels towards his/ her workplace. Employee commitment is a strong indicator in predicting the behavior of the employees at work and it is a psychological state that characterizes the relationship that an employee has developed with his/ her organization (Erdheim et al., 2006).

4. Methodology

For the sake of the research, we will analyze some studies concerning findings related to personality traits and organizational commitment. The target population that has been chosen for describing the first sample, is the deans of faculty/school and the professors located in Islamabad, Pakistan. The study utilized 14 state-run universities, and the questionnaires were sent to 500 faculty members. In the end, 306 responses have been collected. Continuance and affective commitment have been measured using two six-item scales. The study found a positive link between affective commitment and extroversion. Also, agreeableness has been proven to have a positive association with affective commitment. Interestingly, highly conscientious individuals are more likely to develop an affective bond with their workplace. Moreover, a negative link has been proven

between neuroticism and affective commitment. Finally, a negative relationship has also been proven between affective commitment and openness to experience. An interesting finding is that agreeableness, is a significant predictor, for both affective and continuance commitment (Farrukh et al., 2017). In another study, that took place in Sultanate of Oman. The sample was 95 non-teaching employees, from government schools. The candidates had to answer a bilingual (English and Arabic) questionnaire. Response rate was 47.50%. The gender composition was 53.7% male and 46.3% female. The average age of the candidates was 35.85 years and the average working experience, 7.46 years. The results indicated that extraversion is positively correlated with affective commitment, and negatively correlated with continuance commitment. Furthermore, neuroticism is positively associated with continuance commitment. Conscientiousness is positively associated with continuance commitment and extraversion is positively associated with normative commitment (UK Essays, 2018). In another study, a sample of 183 employees from an automobile manufacturer has been acquired. The response rate was 80.61%, and the gender composition was 87.4% male and 12.6% female. The average age of the respondents was 37.19 years. On average the employees who responded, have worked in their present jobs, 2.06 years and for the organization, 7.05 years. The survey was distributed during work time, and it was clear that it would be confidential. Results showed that extraversion was positively associated with affective commitment and normative commitment and negatively correlated with continuance commitment. Neuroticism was positively correlated with continuance commitment, and conscientiousness was also positively correlated with continuance commitment. We found also significant correlations between conscientiousness and affective commitment and openness to experience with continuance commitment (Erdheim et al., 2006). In another study that took place in Lahore, Pakistan among 150 individuals, the data were collected from lecturers and supervisors working in public higher educational institutions. The results indicated that there is a significant association between agreeableness and normative commitment and that is because agreeableness is linked to communication with other people, which is related to affective intimacy, such affection is significant at the workplace because it can increase workers' social identity. Another important finding of the study was, that there is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and affective commitment and a significant relationship between conscientiousness and normative commitment; In the process of explaining these findings, we could assume that conscientious employees, can increase their attachment to the organization they are working for since they tend to be involved in their jobs.

Moreover, openness to experience and conscientiousness has the maximum role in predicting affective commitment. Similarly, openness to experience could predict continuance commitment. Finally, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism had the maximum role in predicting normative commitment (Syed et al., 2015). Let's continue with one more study that took place in Tamil Nadu

in India. The hypothesis of the research stated that Big Five personality traits have a strong relationship with the forms of organizational commitment. The population of the study was 536 executives of the public sector, who work, in a power-generating organization. The researchers found that personality is a significant aspect that plays an important role concerning organizational commitment (Thiruvvarasi & Kamaraj, 2017). Concerning the last research we are posing in this study, it took place in apparel industry in Trincomalee (Sri Lanka). The study was carried out by using a structured questionnaire, distributed to 200 employees, to collect primary data. The study concluded that there is a significant association between personality traits and organizational commitment (Herath & Shamila, 2018).

5. Critical Review and Limitations

Analyzing the samples we studied and their results, we should point out the existence of limitations that should be taken into consideration also for future research. First, as we observed, the studies are restricted to a specific area, meaning that all the results we could elicit, were from Asian countries and from mostly male employees. Secondly, the results may be biased because our data were collected through questionnaires, meaning that the measures used were self-report. Also, there were not a significant number of participants, or a big differentiation between workplaces, or employee status. Interestingly, different studies found different correlations between Big Five personality theory, and forms of commitment, but in all of them, extraversion was connected to all three forms. Finally, organizational procedures and practices such as job position, role characteristics, organizational reward system, and the way in which an organization supports and treats its employees should definitely be considered as antecedents of each form of commitment.

6. Discussion

The association between personality traits and organizational commitment at workplace, is in a very early stage of research, hence, it is a field for dearth of research. The literature indicates that the connection between organizational commitment and personality traits differs, depending on different professional groups and different cultures and industries. As it has been proven from the above study, organizational commitment is indeed, associated with personality traits concerning the Big Five personality theory. More specifically, in most of the cases, we found a correlation between extraversion and affective commitment. The researchers, of personality theories, examined variances and similarities in employees that can provide us collective attributes which can describe human performances and behaviors. Experts in the field state that individuals have stable and long-term traits that are able to affect work behaviors. Personality is also an effective tool to assist us in predicting employee job performance and an important aspect to take under consideration, during personnel selection procedures.

All these factors are important in modern competitive organizations. A wrong choice concerning personality during the selection process may be proven disastrous and could cause tension and worries, or even more be an obstacle, to the organization's attainment to set goals and objectives (Herath & Shamila, 2018).

7. Importance of the Study Suggestions for Applications and Future Research

Our findings from the study assist us in understanding how we could use and apply the Big Five personality theory in predicting organizational commitment. This research is of great importance because it gives us another tool and a more wide and holistic perspective that connects personality and commitment and adds a new line for organizations to follow and a new way of considering the antecedents of organizational commitment (Erdheim et al., 2006). This fact is significant because many times companies realize that there is considerable employee turnover regardless of the organizational resources that it offers to the employees. This can now be considered as a fact beyond organizational characteristics, for example, because neuroticism as a personality trait of the employee is high, can now be understood that these individuals can easily feel disconnected from social and organizational structures. Such a model, connecting the Big Five personality traits to organizational commitment, provides a more holistic perspective on the relationship between personality and organizational commitment than other typologies, and consequently, a new line of research in the antecedents' literature for organizational commitment. Finally, our findings can be used in the employee selection process, in a way that the recruitment and selection processes within an organization would be more effective and impactful for the organizational performance, and more predictable regarding the person and the organizational fit (Morley, 2007). Future studies may attempt to explore also other dimensions of personality characteristics and organizational attitudes, such as employee engagement, and motivation. More particularly, the Big Five personality theory in relation to motivation practices, could examine whether individuals with divergent personality traits are motivated by different motivators. Respectively, employees with different personality traits, within the big five factors, could have a diverse type of engagement with their organization. Additionally, more data and studies are necessary, specifically from multiple and divergent cultures and ethnicities, as well as from the spectrum of both male and female employees, that can provide us with a wider view of these correlations.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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