PERSONALITY TRAIT: IT'S EFFECTS ON ORGANIZATION BEHAVIOUR IN PUBLIC SECTOR IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Personality plays a major role in the way we interact with others in the workplace and how it affects organizational behaviour. We spend considerable number of hours with our colleagues and it's their personalities that we interact with. The purpose of this study was to analyze personality trait and its effect on organization behaviour. The big five personality traits theory was used to guide the study and the ex-post-facto research design was employed. The target population comprised 100 individuals working in the education department in Nakuru County. A sample of 30 respondents was arrived at using simple random sampling. Qualitative content analysis focused on interpreting and understanding work done on personality traits and workplace behaviour was also carried out. Reliability of instruments was established through face validity as well as checking through content stability and accuracy using Pearson Correlation Coefficient of 0.70 that was deemed reliable. Validity was established by checking on closeness of the categories and conclusion of work done as well as through content and face validity. The study found out that there is a significant relationship between personality traits and organizational behaviour. Openness, conscientiousness, extroversion and agreeableness personalities have an easier time with workplace changes and are more adaptable as compared to neurotic subjects who perform worse, and have a tougher time managing emotions. Therefore, there is need to have a deeper understanding of personality traits in workplace to help coworkers and managers create trust, better relate to one another and cultivate a good working environment.

Key Words: personality trait, behaviour, organization

Introduction

Studies have been done on relationship between personality and workplace behaviour. Personality has been considered important in analyzing how employees behave in the workplace. It differentiates one person from another, in terms of job performance and how they will relate with one another. According to American Psychological Association (APA), Personality, is relatively enduring pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that distinguish individuals from one another (McCrae & Costa, 2003). Personality has been used to understand individual differences in work performance and career outcomes. It is not stable and static as it can change over time as indicated in a study done by (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2007). According to Gupta and Gupta (2020) personality of an individual influence how the react, perceive and how they behave towards others. It is the traits that influence how they behave in workplace. When people join work, they bring different personalities at work and they are these personalities, values and attitude that we interact with.

Traits are descriptive character features that are enduring and give identity to a person's behavior patterns (Kotze` & Lamb, 2012). These behavior patterns work together to determine the person's unique reactions to emerging incidences (Paris, 2015). They are responsible in shaping the person's attributes and controlling their general behavior. Traits help predict how

people will interact and behave with one another, but also how they will fit with the tasks and responsibilities required for a position (Caspi, *et al.,* 2005)

Personality traits therefore represent the fundamental characteristics that affect behaviour (Ismail *et al*., 2018). People are blessed with a number of traits that make their personality. Appropriateness of traits of a worker help them to improve performance and profit the organization as employees are the main resource for any organization. For any organization to be efficient, increase productivity and profitability. It needs employees who are committed to their work and accomplishes their responsibilities in a stipulated time, and thereby help the organization achieve its goals (Gupta & Gupta, 2020). Other factors that affect workplace behaviour include characteristics of the job (a function of organizing activities), how they are treated (in terms of Leadership actions). These includes the relationships they form with fellow workers and managers (also Leadership related), and the level of stress the job entails, (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2018).

There has been an increased interest in the role personality traits play in organizational behaviour. And therefore various organization have used personality test to hire their employees (Alhendi, 2019). This is because personality is essential not only in predicting how people interact and behave with one another but how they will fit in with their responsibilities required of them (Chartrand, 2015). When employers understand personality traits of their employees, it can assist them to be able to assign them appropriate work that matches their traits. Employers can also be able to understand what motivates them, because how we behave is a function of consistence individual difference in our personality. It is also a function of the situation in which we find ourselves (Robertson, 1998). According to Acaray and Yildirim (2017) there is a need for organizations to design their structure careful to reach their goals by making employees their main focus, improving their working conditions and job performance. Public sector play an important role as leaders in administration, making and implementing policies therefore employs different cadre of workers. According to Sharma (2015) every organization must understand the personalities of its workers to achieve its goals. Therefore, this study sought to understand the impact of personality traits on organizational behaviour among public servants in Nakuru County.

Research Objective

To examine the effect of the Big Five Personality Traits (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism/Negative affectivity) in influencing organizational behavior in the public sector in Nakuru County, Kenya.

Literature Review

Various studies have been carried out on personality traits and organizational behaviour. They have all agreed that it is important to understand the effects of personality on organizational behaviour. This can well be captured by the Big-Five Model, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness and neuroticism (Ganu & Kogutu, 2014).

Determine the effect of extroversion trait of personality on organizational behaviour

High extroversion trait has characteristics such as being social, talkative, very active, easy to communicate and interactive (McCrae *et al*., 2005 and Barrick & Mount, 1991). They are gregarious, positive, excited, assertive and seek stimulation in the company of others. They create energy from external means, socially confident and recharge from interacting with people (Blickile *et al*., 2015).

Such people tend to be enthusiastic, action-oriented individuals and possess high group visibility. A study carried out in Germany by Brown and Taylor (2015) on charitable behavior and the big five personality traits, found out that extroverts are prone to volunteering their time and donating their skills to those who are in need of them. They also possess contented personality, which is a key feature of contented life and job satisfaction (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998 and Judge et al, 2002). Extraverts are found to be happier at work, which may be because of the relationships they build with the people around them and their easier adjustment to a new job (Judge, Heller & Mount, 2002). Five-factor model of personality and job satisfaction: A meta-analysis, reported in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 530–541, established that extraverts don't perform well in jobs that deprive them of social interaction and are likely to have higher level of absenteeism as they interact with friends (Judge *et al.,* 1997).

They may appear more dominant in social settings as opposed to introverted people. Introverts have lower social engagement and energy levels than extravert (Niranga & Dharmadasar, 2019). They seem quiet, cautious, low-key, deliberate, and less involved in the social world (Atamanik, 2013). Instead they are independent of their social world than extraverts. They need less stimulation, and more time alone than extraverts. The lack of social involvement does not mean they are shy or depressed, unfriendly or antisocial, rather, they are reserved in social situation (Zhang and Dai, 2015)

Determine the effect of conscientiousness trait of personality on organizational behaviour

Conscientiousness is a tendency to display self-discipline, thorough, goal oriented, act commitment, and strive for achievement against measures or outside expectations (Barrick & Mount, 1991). According to Goldberg (1990) and mentioned by Hassan *et al.* (2016) Key adjective that describe conscientiousness are: orderly, neat, practical, prompt, meticulous and hard working as compared to those low in conscientiousness who are disorganized, disorderly, careless, sloppy, and impractical. This helps them to complete their task on time since they are self-focused. Therefore, they are very careful about their future planning, cautious about their surroundings, compact and fully scheduled and only chaos can give them mental stress (Burch & Anderson, 2008 and Cattell & Alan, 2008). Studies done by Hurtz and Donovan (2000) and Salgado (2010) found a relationship between conscientiousness and work performance. The studies portrayed, them as individuals who are always prepared, pay attention to details, tend to be resilient and good at overcoming failures. They also set achievable, yet ambitious goals, work hard towards them and overcome the setbacks that they may encounter whilst striving to reach these goals (McCrae & Terracina, 2005). These characteristics are key reason why conscientious people succeed. They are able to meet their goals with accuracy and quality, even when faced with adversity. Zhao and Seibert (2006) posit that conscientious person's degree of organization, hard work, persistence, and motivation to achieve a goal are some of the trademark of Conscientiousness. It has also been suggested that conscientious people are highly

integral, which means they are honest and have strong moral values (Hearther, 2018). They are also considered creative innovative imaginative and curios to develop new ideas (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000)

Finally, conscientious people like to follow rules and social norms, this makes them successful and likeable as they often stick to what is expected of them (Farrukh *et al*., 2017). When they socialise, it's not to draw attention to themselves, but to fit and interact in well with fellow employees. Once they are hired, conscientious people not only tend to perform well, but they also have higher levels of motivation to perform, lower levels of turnover, lower levels of absenteeism, and higher levels of safety performance at work (Judge & Ilies, 2002). However, they're also more likely to put work first over anything else and aren't as likely to adapt to changing situations.

Determine the effect of agreeableness personality trait on organizational behaviour

Employees who score high on agreeableness are compassionate and cooperate with other employee rather than being suspicious and antagonistic (He et al, 2015). They are generally considerate, kind, generous, trusting and trustworthy, helpful, and willing to compromise their interests with others (Furnham & Fudge, 2008 and McCrae *et al.,* 2005). Employees possess strong tendency to be corporate and complaint respect fellow employees (Ayub, *at el.,* 2017). These kinds of employees tend to be loyal and perform to the desired goals once they gain trust in their companies. In another study done by Choi *et al* (2015) it stated that there is a strong relationship between agreeableness and affective commitment.

People who score low on agreeableness place self-interest above getting along with others. They are unconcerned with others' well-being, and are less likely to sacrifice their interest for other people (Awadhi, 2012). They may manipulate others to get what they want and find it hard to interact with others. This causes them to be to be suspicious, unfriendly, and uncooperative. Persons who have low agreeable personalities are challenging and competitive which makes them be considered be argumentative or untrustworthy (Digman, 1990).

Because agreeableness is a social trait, studies done has shown that one's agreeableness positively correlates with the quality of relationships with one's team members. Thereby creating a good working environment (Fadillah, 2018). Agreeableness also positively predicts transformational leadership skills. In another study by Sackett and Walmsley (2014) posit that agreeableness and conscientiousness are important to success across many different jobs. This is because they are accommodating and helping according Burch and Anderson (2008) which makes them resolve issues by creating win-win situation by their flexible attitude (Cattell & Alan, 2008). Therefore, people who are high in this trait are usually social, friendly and generous (Mount *et al*., 2005) honest and trustworthy (Saucier & Goldberg, 2003). Whereas people low in this trait are less likely to show these positive behaviors, they can leave their jobs unexpectedly, perhaps in response to a conflict with a boss or a peer (Zimmerman, 2008).

Determine the effect of openness to experience trait on organizational behaviour

Individuals high on openness are considered good at grasping new ideas. It encompasses someone's desire to try new things, be open and think creatively (Awadh & Ismail, 2012). People who score high in this area are generally artistic and curious, develop ideas, eager to try

new things while those who score low tend to be conventional and stay in their comfort zones (Tuteja & Sharma, 2008). They are willing to consider and accept new ideas suggestions and opinions from others and create solutions (Thoresen *et al.,* 2004). They tend to create a good relationship with fellow workers and actively participate in decision making (Kluemper *et al.,* 2015).

People who lack openness to experience tend to be more conventional, less explorative, expose avoidance to variety and change (Burch & Anderson, 2008). When they join an organization, individuals who are open seek a lot of information on its operation and therefore built relationship and are quick to adjust to the new (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000).

Determine the effect of Neuroticism trait of personality on organizational behaviour

Neuroticism is also known as emotional stability. It measures how well a person can control emotions like anxiety and sadness. They experience negative emotions such as low confidence, anxious and pessimism (Barrick *et al*., 2001). Individual high in this area indicates someone may experience negative emotions and may also have low self-esteem. Employees with higher scores on neuroticism are negative in nature (Gridwichai, 2020). Therefore, they experience stress, high blood pressure, depression, anxiety (McCrae, 2005). They are conscious, vulnerable, anxious and get irritated easily. Employees scoring low on neuroticism are low to anger, calm and stable (Dunn, 1995). A study done by Ferreira and Nascimento (2016) found out that neurotics' people tend to dislike situations that demand long- term commitment, social skills and initiative skills. This shows lack of commitment in their work and low ability to focus on tasks for an extended period of time.

In contrast, people who score low on Neuroticism have a positive affective view on emotions, calm and don't get irritated easily. They are more satisfied with their jobs and more committed to their organizations (Connolly & Viswesvaran, (2000).

Research Methodology

The study used *ex post- facto* design. The study was predictive, as it determined the correlation between variables and investigated how personality traits affect workplace behaviour. The target population comprised the 100 civil servants in Nakuru County. Simple random sampling technique was used to select thirty respondents who represent 30% of the target population. A total number of 30 questionnaires were distributed among the sampled public servants in the county and all were responded to and returned. The questionnaire items were in three basic parts: demography, personality traits and workplace behaviour. Swedish version of NEO PI-R was used to assess personality according to the Big five model personality. The NEO PI-R consists 240 items each eight to measure each personality using the 5-point Likert scale. The mean of each section was summarized to create each of the 4 dimensions. The study showed the Cronbach alpha (Coefficient of reliability) for every factor of the questionnaire is more than 0.07 thus indicating goodness of the scale.

The second section used the JobMatchTalent (JMT) test to assess work related personality characteristics. JobMatchTalent comprises of 200 items using the 5 Likert scale organized in 10 main scales and 30 subscales. Cronbach alpha was 0.71. Data was analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics assisted by the SPSS version 24. Correlation analysis was done to find

out whether there was a relationship between personality trait and workplace behaviour. Qualitative content analysis focused on interpreting and understanding work done on personality traits and workplace behaviour. Reliability was checked through content stability and accuracy, using Pearson Correlation Coefficient of 0.70 that was deemed reliable. Validity was done by checking on closeness of the categories and conclusion of work done.

Results and Discussion

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of the Big-Five personality traits on workplace behaviour. Regression analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between the variables. Table 1 display the results of the correlation analysis of the study variables.

Table 1: Correlation for the Big Five Personality Traits

Traits	Correlation	Sig. value
Conscientiousness	0.051	0.036
Agreeableness	0.041	0.014
Extraversion	0.045	0.036
Openness	0.031	0.003
Neuroticism	-0.812	0.008

Table 1 indicates that the Cronbach's alphas for the main score was between 0.031 and 0.51 when it measures characteristics of the personality traits at workplace behaviour. The results show that Extroversion, Agreeableness, Openness and Conscientiousness have a significant positive correlation as compared to neuroticism. Openness to experience showed a correlation above .31 with three of the JobMatchScale in terms of motivation, contact creating, vision and being optimistic. This shows an individual who is curious, imaginative, inventive and enthusiastic, open hearted and can create relationship with others. They are also good at resolving conflicts, while respecting others point of view. Therefore, suggesting that JobMatchTalent test has construct validity in relation to four aspects being measured by NEO PI R. Employees who are low in openness at work dominate others rather than listening to their views.

The second aspect is related to extroversion, using regression analysis, the score indicated 0.045. Aspect measured included activity, drive, social interest, contact creating and openness. The JobMatchTalent subscale, describes the extraverts as creative and explorative, easy to bond with workmates and administration concurrently, giving personalized attention to both. These involvements by the extroverts create a conducive atmosphere at the workplace bringing about positive emotionality for them and for those they interact with. They also embrace new alternatives as they seek new friends. This concurs with a study done by McCrae et al (2005) which posits that individuals with high extroversion trait are social, talkative, very active, easy to interact with. Introversion, the opposite of extroversion is thoughtful, strive for own

development and have ability to take initiative. In leadership they promote initiative taking within teams composed of highly proactive co-workers (Grant, Gino & Hollmann, 2011)

The third regression analysis showed that the JobMatchTalent subscale indicates significant relationship between conscientiousness and workplace behaviour at .51 The significant predictor was being creative, thoughtfulness, persistence, initiative, hardworking. This describe an individual who is self-discipline, goal oriented, act dutifully, and strive for achievement against measures or outside expectations. The trait is also associated by a person who works with precision, diligence, commitment, industrious, and has the positive strengths that contribute to productive work. The findings relate to a study done by (Suejung & Pistole, 2017) which portrays a conscientiousness as a strong personality trait that draws attention and admiration from others because they are orderly and confident.

Using JobMatchTalent subscales to measure agreeableness. Regression analysis showed significant relationship scores 0.041,   between agreeableness and workplace behaviour. It measured five aspects physical activity, trust in others, developing motivation, risk taking, winning instincts. The results showed an individual who is considerate, kind, generous, trusting and trustworthy, helpful, and willing to compromise their interests with others. In a study done by He *et al* (2015) Support the idea that agreeable people are compassionate to their peers. Barrick &Mount,1991) showed a weak link between agreeableness and job satisfaction. In another study done by Choi, oh and Colbert (2015) showed a relationship between agreeableness and commitment to labor. Ayub, *et al.* (2017) showed that employees possess strong tendency to be corporative and complaint.

Regression analysis showed that JobMatchTalenta aspect explained a significant variance in neuroticism   at – 0.0182. The aspects measured included need for speed, displayed consideration, communication, diplomacy, persistence. They are also negatively correlated to mood stability, willpower, persistence, tolerant attitude and openness. Neurotics are irritated easily, worry, hostile self-conscious, restless and vulnerable. Study done by Meyer *et al.* (2002) showed that persistence commitment is negatively related to job performance and neuroticism is negatively interrelated. In another study done by Goldberg (1990) neurotics have no belief and faith in others. This makes them work extra hard in their job in order to meet deadlines and team mate expectations. The findings contrast with those of Van Aarde, *et al.* (2017) which posits that neurotics can perfect particular assignments as desired by the institutions or by the employer and pursue them to the successful end. That neurotics are competent workers, because of their ability to concentrate on their tasks at work which helps them perfect their skills of interest through determination.

Conclusions

The findings of the study indicate a strong relationship between personality traits and workplace behaviour. Personality traits are not the only predictor employee's organizational behaviour. There are other factors that influence how employees behave, among these are job characteristic, which entails the activities carried out in the organization, relationship among the employees and relationship with the managers. Conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness and extroversion show positive correlation to workplace behaviour in terms of performance and relationship, neuroticism is negatively correlated to workplace behaviour. Conscientiousness was a great predictor of workplace behaviour, in terms of commitment, extroversion in terms of being assertive and social agreeableness in terms of trust, corporative

and tolerant and openness trait persons bring new experience and new ideas that are important to the organization. Negative correlation was seen between neuroticism and job performance as emotional instability, makes them dislike tough jobs that require long term commitment.

Recommendations

i. Organizations need to understand the role that personality traits play in predicting workplace behaviour, in order to come up with activities that can promote positive working relationship and increase performance
ii. Personality traits are not the only factors that affect how people behaviour at workplace. There is need to consider other factors.

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