Big Five Personality Factors and their Relationship with Job Performance of Public Sector Bank Employees

Ashutosh Verma
Assistant Professor
Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar-Delhi, G.T Road (NH-1), Phagwara, Punjab (India)-144411

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between Big Five personality factors and overall job performance of public sector bank employees. Survey method was employed for data collection. Respondents comprised of 302 public sector bank employees taken from Shimla city. Data analysis and interpretation was carried through Pearson’s product moment correlation. Results of correlation analysis indicate a significant positive correlation of all personality factors except neuroticism which indicated a negative relationship with overall job performance. Strongest relationship amongst Big Five was observed between conscientiousness and overall job performance. Findings and implications for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Big Five, Job Performance, Personality, Bank employees, Public sector

The importance of high performers in an organization is transpicuous. Modern organizations have a mammoth task of hiring the best talent, retaining the existing assets, giving them the best of training, keeping them well motivated and above all satisfied and happy. These are the crucial factors that eventually lead to high job performance. There has to be a perfect match of an individual’s personality with the job he takes care of in order to be satisfied at his workplace. Personality has a great role to play in predicting performance and is duly recognized in field of psychology, (Sternberg, 2000). The key role of HR managers globally is to hire and retain the best personnel in an organization. The best personnel are ultimately the top performers, thereby giving best of performance and adding value to the organization. During the early 1990’s the role of personality in terms of personnel selection was overlooked due to pessimistic view of few researchers, (Guion & Gottier, 1965). Recent times have seen an increasing usage of personality tests in personnel selection. Personality measures have further found to be valid predictors of job related criterion, (Goldberg, 1993).
The recent researches in this field also support the relationship of personality to job performance, (Hough et al., 1990; Vinchur, Schippmann, Sweizer & Roth, 1998).

The relationship between Big Five and job performance has been addressed by various research scholars in various occupations, (Barrick et al., 1993; Loveland et al., 2005) however limited research has been carried to examine the linkage of Big Five personality traits with job performance in context of bank employees, (Adefila et al., 2006; Forghani et al., 2013). The main objective of carrying this research was to examine the connect of Big Five and overall job performance specifically in context of public sector bank employees and add on to the limited research studies carried in this sector.

**JOB PERFORMANCE**

In the world of cut throat competition, no organization can afford to have non-performers. Performance is a crucial criterion for organizational success as well as a pathway for an individual’s growth. Motowildo, Borman & Schmit (1997), have defined job performance as “the behaviors or activities that are oriented towards the organization’s goals and objectives”. According to Campbell, Mc Cloy, Oppler, and Sager (1993), “performance consists of observable behaviors in which the employees are actually engaged”. According to Robbins (2000), job performance is defined as “the relative worth of an employee to the organization in terms of skills, competence and potential”. Borman and Motowildo (1993) classified job performance as task performance and contextual performance. Task performance is defined as “the behavior that is directly linked with completion of the task and is usually recognized as a formal requirement of an individual’s job”. “Contextual performance is an individual’s performance, which maintains and enhances an organization’s social network and the psychological climate that supports technical tasks”, (Borman and Motowildo, 1993).

Job performance could be affected by number of factors. As opined by House, Shane & Herrold (1996), dispositional variables such as needs, motives, preferences, and attitudes are some of the factors which lead to individuals reacting in a predisposed manner. On the other hand there are situational variables such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback as proposed by (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

**PERSONALITY & JOB PERFORMANCE**

Personality is defined as “more or less stable and enduring organization of a person’s character, temperament, intellect, and physique which determines his unique adjustment to his environment”, (Eysenck, 1953). Over the past decade, the researchers have shown an increasing inclination towards investigating the

Over the last two decades the five-factor model of personality (FFM), has emerged as one of the most extensively used models in terms of personality measurement. (Barrick & Mount, 2003; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993; Hogan, 1991; McCrae, 1989; Schneider, 2007; Tobin, Graziano, Vanman, & Tassinary, 2000). The five-factor model of personality, is normally referred as the Big Five (Costa & McCrae, 1985; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1990; Hogan, 1991; Norman, 1963), and is used to describe the most salient aspects of personality. The Big Five comprise of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, (Barrick & Mount, 1991, 2003; Costa & McCrae, 1992b; Costa & McCrae, 1995; Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991; King, George, & Hebl, 2005; McCrae & Costa, 1991; McCrae & Costa, 2003; Somer & Goldberg, 1999). These Big Five personality traits have been extensively evaluated and validated in a variety of cultures, languages, age-groups, and employment settings, (Loveland, Gibson, Lounsbury & Huffstetler, 2005).

NEUROTICISM

Neuroticism refers to the individual differences in emotional stability and adjustment. Fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt, and disgust are generally experienced by the individuals having this trait. Further individuals having high score on neuroticism tend to experience irrational ideas, have less stress coping ability, and are unable to control their impulses. People high on this trait tend to experience more negative events than others, are emotionally unstable, impulsive, worried and insecure. (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Magnus, Diener, Fujita, & Pavot, 1993; McCrae & John, 1992). On the other hand people low on this trait, tend to be more relaxed, emotionally stable, secure and calm. Neuroticism has shown mixed results as far as its relationship with job performance is concerned. While some researchers have found little or no relationship between neuroticism and job performance, (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002; Salgado, 2003), there are others who have found positive relationship between emotional stability and job performance, (Salgado, 1997; Tett et al., 1991). On the basis of above studies it can be inferred that high score on neuroticism will negatively affect the job performance.

Hypothesis 1: There will be significant relationship between Neuroticism and overall job performance of public sector bank employees.
EXTRAVERSION

The predisposition to experience positive emotions and experiences is termed as extraversion, (Costa & McCrae, 1992b). Extraverts like to make friends, go for social gatherings and be a part of large groups. Extraverts are sociable, assertive, active, talkative upbeat, energetic, gregarious and optimistic, (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Extraversion is one of the major dispositional factors of social behavior, (Barrick, Parks, & Mount, 2005). Extraversion has shown a significant correlation with job performance,(Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick & Mount, 1993; Conte & Jacobs, 2003 ; Furnham and Covency, 1996 ; Furnham and Miller, 1997 ; Stewart and Carlson ,1995 ; Salgado, 1997 ) .Although the relationship has been limited to certain occupations but the most significant positive relationship of extraversion with job performance has been observed in jobs having a social aspect to them, (Barrick & Mount, 1991 ; Conte and Gintoft ,2005). In light of the above studies, it is presumed that extroverts are better performers at their job place, hence it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2: There will be significant relationship between Extraversion and overall job performance of public sector bank employees.

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE

Openness to Experience is defined as one’s creativity, unconventionality and ability to reason, (Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001). Open individuals have the curiosity to explore both inner and outer worlds. They are always open for novel ideas. People exhibiting such trait have low religiosity and experience political liberalism,(Judge, T.A, Heller, D & Mount, M.K, 2002). Individuals with a low score on this trait tend to be conventional and stick to their old ways. Researchers have found mixed results in context of its relation with job performance. Tett, et al., (1991) did not find openness to experience to be a valid predictor of job performance whereas, Barrick & Mount (1991) reported it to be a valid predictor of training proficiency across all occupations. It was also found to have a positive correlation with creative ability and creative accomplishments, (King, Walker & Broyles, 1996). The past research suggests that individuals having this trait will have high job performance in occupations with autonomy, creativity. In context of the above discussion the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 3 Openness to experience will have a significant relationship with overall job performance of public sector bank employees.
AGREEABLENESS

Agreeableness “involves getting along with others in pleasant, satisfying relationships”, (Organ and Lingl, 1995). As opined by Graziano & Eisenberg (1997). “Agreeableness can be seen as a primary dimension of interpersonal tendencies”. Agreeable person tend to have altruistic and sympathetic attitude towards others. Such individuals tend to be kind, and cooperative, are warm and quite reliable, (Costa & McCrae, 1992b). They are generally considerate, friendly, and willing to compromise their interests for others, (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Agreeable people are generally flexible, courteous, and soft-hearted. Individuals having this trait like to maintain positive relation with others, (Barrick et al., 2002). This inherent nature of agreeable people makes them react in a positive manner even in case of conflicting situations. In context with the above studies it can be inferred that individuals high on this trait are successful in occupations which require social skills and dealing with individuals which can be hyper at times. Agreeableness, along with other predictors has emerged as a significant trait in the studies carried by (Forghani et al., 2013; Frei & McDaniel, 1998; Shaffer & Shaffer, 2005; Stewart & Carlson 1995; Tett et al., 1991; Loveland et al., 2005;)

Hypothesis 4 There will be a significant relationship between Agreeableness and overall job performance of public sector bank employees.

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

The tendency to display self-discipline is termed as conscientiousness. Person with high conscientiousness tends to be scrupulous, punctual, and reliable, (Costa & McCrae, 1992b). “The conscientious individual is purposeful, strong-willed, determined, hardworking and well organized”, (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Conscientiousness has emerged as the most significant predictor of personality in numerous meta-analytical studies, (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Mount and Barrick, 1995; Salgado,1997 and Tett et al.,1991). Further Conscientiousness has emerged as a consistent and significant predictor in various studies with regard to job performance, (Barrick & Mount 1991; Barrick & Mount, 1993; Barrick, Mount & Strauss, 1993; Mc Henry, Hough, Toquam, Hanson & Ashworth, 1990; Mkoji and Sikalieh, 2012; Oh, In-Sue, 2009; Salgado, 1997; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Stewart & Carlson, 1995)

In light of the above studies it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 5: There will be a significant relationship between Conscientiousness and overall job performance of public sector bank employees.
METHOD

Sample

The present study was carried on 302 public sector bank employees of Shimla city. The sample comprised of clerks, probationary officers and managers (all levels) excluding sub staff (fourth class employees). Survey method was employed for data collection. Out of 350 questionnaires distributed, complete data from 302 respondents was received, with a response rate of 86%. The sample comprised of 74.50% males and 25.49% females, 5.63% were in the age group of 21 & 30, 41.39% were between 31 & 40, 46.03% were between 41 & 50, while remaining 6.95% fell in the age group of 51 and above.

Measures

NEO-FFI was used to measure Big Five for the bank employees, (Costa & McCrae, 1992b). The short version of the NEO-PI is NEO-FFI. NEO-FFI is one of the most recognized and extensively used scale to measure Big Five personality factors, (Renner, 2002). The Big Five measures five broad dimensions of personality, namely Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. There are 12 items measuring each of the five domains, for a total of 60 items. Five-point likert scale is used for measurement that ranges from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Test-retest reliability for Neo-FFI has been reported to be uniformly high, ranging from .86 to .90 for the five scales (Robins, Fraley, Roberts and Trzesniewski, 2001).

Job performance of bank employees was assessed using self-reported version of Job Performance Questionnaire by Bharti Gandhi (2003). This questionnaire consists of 48 items measured on three point scale-yes, sometimes and No. This questionnaire has six factors of job performance viz, Punctuality, Public Dealing, Efficiency, Obedience, Interpersonal Communication and Banking Knowledge. There are eight items for each factor. Cronbach α for the tool was found to be 0.74.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Correlation analysis was carried to examine the association between Big Five and job performance. Table 1 presents the results of the Pearson’s correlation indicating the relationship between Big Five and overall job performance.
The results of coefficient of correlation as presented in Table 1 indicate that neuroticism had a significant negative correlation with overall job performance, (r=-.252, p<0.01). The result indicates that the bank employees obtaining high score on neuroticism seem to have low level of job performance and those scoring low on this trait are likely to emerge as better performers. The above results support the hypothesis 1, which stated that there will have a significant relationship between neuroticism and overall job performance of public sector bank employees.

The results further reveal that extraversion came out to be positively related with overall job performance, which is highly significant, (r=0.272, p<0.01). The results indicate that employees with high score on extraversion will most likely show high level of overall job performance in comparison to those who score low on this dimension of personality. In other words the bank employees who are more social, talkative and outgoing tend to exhibit better job performance in comparison to those who are confined to their own shell. In view of the results the hypothesis 2, which stated that there will be a significant relationship between extraversion and overall job performance of public sector bank employees is retained.

Positive correlation was observed between openness to experience and overall job performance. Similar result was found in case of agreeableness also, which was found to be positively correlated with overall job performance. The results were found to be highly significant. Where openness to experience had a significant positive correlation with overall job performance (r=0.223, p<0.01), agreeableness showed a positive correlation with overall job performance (r=0.221, p<0.01). In terms of openness to experience, bank employees who are more creative and innovative will tend to have a higher overall job performance in relation to employees scoring low on this trait. As far as agreeableness is concerned, bank employees who are more tolerant towards their customers and are cooperative in comparison to non agreeable employees are more likely to have better overall job performance. In context of the above results the hypotheses 3 & 4 th stands retained.

Table 1

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<td><strong>Neuroticism</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Extraversion</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Openness to Experience</strong></td>
<td>-.255**</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>.257**</td>
<td>.322**</td>
<td>.223**</td>
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<td><strong>Agreeableness</strong></td>
<td>-.494**</td>
<td>.162**</td>
<td>.257**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conscientiousness</strong></td>
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<td>.322**</td>
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<td><strong>Overall job performance</strong></td>
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<td>.272**</td>
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** p< 0.01
Out of Big Five, conscientiousness emerged to have the strongest positive relation with overall job performance ($r=0.420, p<0.01$). This indicates that the bank employees who are determined, punctual and dutiful tend to display high level of overall job performance in comparison to those who have a low score on this trait. In view of the results, hypothesis 5 is accepted.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the above study indicate not only a significant relationship between Big Five and job performance, but a significantly positive relationship except in case of neuroticism which was found to have a significant negative relationship. The above results confirm the fact that job performance is highly affected by the Big Five.

Significant negative relationship was observed between neuroticism and overall job performance of public sector bank employees. According to Barrick & Mount (1991), individuals scoring high on neuroticism tend to experience more negative events than others, are emotionally unstable, impulsive, worried and insecure. There have been mixed results as far as this trait is concerned. According to Barrick & Mount (1991), neurotic traits tend to act as an obstruction in the accomplishment of work tasks, whereas there are few researchers who have found positive relationship between emotional stability and job performance, (Salgado, 1997; Tett et.al, 1991). Since bank employees have a direct dealing with the customers, they need to be patient, stress free and focussed. In the above study, the results indicate that the employees who score high on this dimension will tend to have a low overall job performance.

Extroverts tend to be more social, talkative, and are filled with energy. This personality trait has been found to be of high importance in service occupations or the jobs having a social aspect to them, (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Conte & Gintoft, 2005). Extraversion was seen as a prominent factor affecting the overall job performance in case of bank employees. The above results are supported by prior studies in this field, (Barrick & Mount 1991; Barrick & Mount; 1993; Furnham and Covency, 1996; Furnham & Miller, 1997). The results are a clear indicator of the fact that bank employees scoring high on extraversion are better performers in comparison to their counterparts.

Openness to experience which denotes personality dimension of creativity, out of the box thinking, and not following traditional ideas emerged to affect overall job performance in a significantly positive manner. It was valued a little low in comparison to extraversion. The probable reason of low “r” can be attributed to the nature of the job. In banking there are fixed protocols and system, and when it comes to public sector bank it
gets more rigid delimiting the scope for innovation. The results are supported by previous studies where openness to experience emerged as as a prominent factor affecting sales performance, (Warr, Batterman & Martin, 2005).

Agreeable individuals wish to maintain positive relationship with others (Barrick et al., 2002). Although the findings of the study indicate a significant positive relationship with overall job performance but it is relatively low when compared to other variables such as extraversion, openness to experience and conscientiousness. The significant positive relationship is supported by previous studies (Forghani et al., 2013; Frei and McDaniel, 1998; Shaffer and Shaffer, 2005; Stewart and Carlson 1995; Tett et al., 1991; Loveland et al., 2005).

Conscientiousness came out to have the strongest positive relationship with overall job performance. The results of the study are supported by previous researches, (Barrick & Mount 1991; Barrick & Mount; 1993, Barrick, Mount & Strauss, 1993; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Mkoji & Sikalieh, 2012; Salgado, 1997; Stewart & Carlson, 1995). The results are a clear indicator, that the public sector bank employees who are dutiful, disciplined, respect the organization rules and regulation in spirit, tend to have a high overall job performance viz a viz their colleagues who lack somewhere as far this trait is concerned.

IMPLICATIONS

The present study investigated the association between Big Five and overall job performance of public sector bank employees. The results are a clear indicator that there exists a significant relationship between Big Five and overall job performance of public sector bank employees. The current study will play a crucial role in providing insight to the administrators while recruiting bank personnel. Candidates scoring high on neuroticism need to be eliminated from the selection process, while those scoring high on other traits preferably conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and openness to experience should be given weightage. In order to ensure high overall job performance, the administrators of public sector banks should focus on Big Five for identification of strengths and weaknesses of their employees. This will help in identifying the training needs, designing training programmes; facilitate succession planning and conducting workshops.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of the current study should be viewed in light of limitations of the study. Firstly, the study was conducted on bank employees and that too only on public sector. This delimited the study in terms of its objectives. Secondly the study focussed only on exploration of the relationship between Big Five and overall
job performance. The role of Big Five in prediction has not been considered in the study. Thirdly other variables like job satisfaction, motivation were not incorporated in the study.

In light of the above limitations, following suggestions are recommended for future research:

- This study may be replicated on larger samples to examine the phenomenon in further details with a view to arrive at more valid and extensive generalizations.
- Comparative studies may be undertaken to have a clear picture on the role of Big Five on overall job performance.
- The effect of moderating variables like job satisfaction, motivation, as well as demographic variables may be studied along with Big Five on overall job performance.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that Big Five has a significant relationship with overall job performance of public sector bank employees. Amongst the Big Five, conscientiousness emerged having the strongest relationship, followed by extraversion whereas neuroticism was the only factor which had a significant negative relationship with job performance. The results of the study are consistent with prior researches where Conscientiousness has emerged as significant predictor, (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997). The study highlights the importance of Big Five on overall job performance, and gives a valuable insight to the administrators of the banks to make their recruitment more effective by focussing on Big Five during the selection process. The study is not only important from the recruitment point of view but it will also act as a guide as to how the resources can be best utilized by designing training programmes and workshops that meet needs of their employees. To conclude it may be stated that the results of current study may be utilized by the bank authorities to improve and strengthen their human resource management in totality, thereby improving overall job performance.

REFERENCES


