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Personality and career choices

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Personality has been viewed as source of person's attitude exhibited on the job workplace over the years. In this paper, propositions have been made about different kind of personality traits having relevance with nature of job requirements. The study tried to argue that prominent feature of personality traits can be successful in aligning with the particular job requirements. Implications have been raised by giving propositions for future researchers to validate these propositions.

Key words: Personality, career choices, five factors model, career success.

INTRODUCTION

Personality is the set of characteristics within an individual influencing his cognitions and behaviors in different contexts. Researchers have considered personality traits differently. Allport et al (1965) described different traits like central, secondary, common and cardinal traits while Cattell's (1966) research explored 16 primary and five secondary factors and Eysenck expressed that only three traits of extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism are enough to explain the personality of individuals (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1975). However, today Big Five of Goldberg (1992) is mostly accepted for the personality trait constructs which contain core dimensions of personality. Big five include openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (Costa and McCrae, 1985). Though, some personality researchers argue that this list major trait is not exhaustive but their criticism is not well established. Furthermore, clusters argued by these researchers beyond five cannot easily be determined as personality construct (Saucier and Goldberg, 1998). Therefore, we will take Big Five as personality describing traits in present article. Careers itself requires some kind of traits to be performed successfully (Gottfredson et al., 1975). Some career requires specific personality traits that related to attributes of on job requirements (Caldwell and Burger, 1998). Career success is highly dependant on the compatibility between personality of the incumbents and

the job trait requirements (Judge et al., 1999) and for that reason the study argued that alignment or synergy of these traits in accordance with these careers (Witt et al., 2002) can produce optimal goals (Roberts and Robins, 2000) and results in daily life (Judge et al., 1999). Career counselling agenda that help self motives and personality desiring needs seem to enable incumbents to renew uniqueness required on career success patterns for own augmentation (Mcoetzee and Schreuder, 2002). Therefore, there is need to compare career choices with personality traits and will give propositions about best match possible for success in life.

THE BIG FIVE MODEL

Five-dimension personality model presented by Goldberg is termed as big five model in personality research (Goldberg, 1992; Saucier and Goldberg, 1998). The big five personality dimensions include firstly, openness to experience which is the inclination to be imaginative, independent, and interested in variety. Secondly, Conscientiousness is the affinity to be prepared, chary, and disciplined. Thirdly, the propensity to be gregarious, fun-loving, and warm is known as extraversion. Fourthly, the tendency to be sympathetic, trusting, and supportive is termed as Agreeableness. Lastly, neuroticism is the tendency to be anxious, emotionally unstable, and self-blaming (Goldberg, 1993). Research suggests that there is a significant relationship between personality type and career choices but in practice wrong career choice are

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made due to the ignorance of specific personality type of the individuals (Hirschi et al., 2010; Onoyase and Onoyase, 2009).

Agreeableness

Agreeableness is a personality trait that holds people to be accommodating and helping (Burch and Anderson, 2008) them to resolve issues by creating win-win situation by their flexible attitude (Cattell and Mead, 2008). These people are usually highly social (Mount et al., 2005) and friendly and generous in negotiations in friendly environment to keep balance in opponents concerns (Ostendorf et al., 1992). These people have a propensity to attain cooperation and social harmony (Goldber, 1992). Helping others is their inbuilt feature and for that reason they believe others are also honest and trustworthy (Sucier and Goldberg, 1998). On the other side, people who rank low on this personality trait tend to be selfish, not caring for others concerns (Howard et al., Howard, 1995), unfriendly and rough in social relationships (Ostendorf et al., 1992). As they are selfish, so, they believe that others are also working on their personal motive and for that reason they would likely to be more suspicious (Goldber, 1992). Furthermore, these people do not have concerns for others; therefore, they are less likely to help others sacrificing their personal interests.

Openness to experience

People possessing this particular trait tends to be highly spatial, imaginative and creative (Howard and Howard, 1995) in their intellect. These people are sensitive to their inner thoughts, have capability to analyze matters differently (Cattell and Mead, 2008). They are curious to know hidden things and to be deductive from different angles (Mount et al., 2005). Average people are on average scale on this particular trait (Ostendorf et al., 1992). People who lack the openness to experience tend to be more conventional (Burch and Anderson, 2008) in their problem solving approach and do not try to be explorative in finding new ways to solve a particular problem (Sucier and Goldberg, 1998). They tend to dislike variety and change and rather love to stick to their old rigid routines (Goldberg, 1992).

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness personality trait highly influence on the career success in any organization (Judge et al., 1999). Conscientiousness trait holder people tend to be very careful about their future plannings (Burch and Anderson, 2008); they are cautious about their surroundings, compact and fully scheduled (Cattell and

Mead, 2008). They tend to be managed, prefer to be predictable and try to be risk free. They have propensity to work in such a way that have no flaw, where every thing get done rightly and chaos can give them mental stress (Ostendorf et al., 1992). They try to be neat, clean and would like every thing to be placed on right place (Sucier and Goldberg, 1998). People ranking low on this trait will be careless about their work. They are less likely to work in a mannared way which could be leading to stressful chaos. These people are not inclined to work in a concise way that can assure their work would be free of faults (Goldberg, 1992).

Extraversion

Some time we meet people who seem to be more talktive, arguing for their opinions (Howard and Howard, 1995), interacting with every one so frankly and seek excitement (Burch and Anderson, 2008) in every bit of life (Cattell and Mead, 2008). Extraversion is the personality traits which covers these kinds of people in our society (Ostendorf et al., 1992). Like agreeableness trait, this quality of personality also makes people more social (Mount et al., 2005) and the way going out to interact with people in the society (Sucier and Goldberg, 1998). A person who is more reserved, less likely to be social and tends to be uncomfortable with interacting with strangers is the trait opposite to the extraversion and is termed as introversion (Goldberg, 1992). These people are less likely to be opened with others easily and would prefer to be self centered and alone. Research suggests that this personality dimension have quite healthy role in predicting the success in a career (Judge et al., 1999).

Neuroticism

Frustrations, anger, depression, stress and self blame (Howard and Howard, 1995) is the personality symbol of the persons who rank high on the neuroticism trait of personality (Ostendorf et al., 1992). This is a fundamental personality trait which is associated with individuals who are passemestic approach, who always over react over mistakes and faults made by them. These people are easily trapped by stress and tend to be emotional and anxious (Sucier and Goldberg, 1998). Moreover, most of the time they are hopeless and frustated when showing there feelings and exhibiting their behaviors (Ostendorf et al., 1992). This personality trait holders lack on emotional intelligence, are easily caught by mental diorder and depression (Burch and Anderson, 2008) which may have a serious impact on their physical and psychological health (Goldberg, 1992). Due to neuroticism people usually fail to achieve success in their careers including extrinsic and intrinsic succes (Judge et al., 1999). On the other hand, people who rank low in this personality trait

are more optimistic, emotionally stable (Mount et al., 2005) and have more inner strength to face the stressful situations more soundly (Roberts and Robins, 2000). They seem to be mature, cool and not likely to over react in stressful environments (Cattell and Mead, 2008). They tend to be full of hope and self efficacy in blind holes. Yet they are thought to be having more control over themselves.

CAREER CHOICES

Personality have certain relationship with career goals (Roberts and Robins, 2000) and success in interview that helps them to join there personality type related careers in organizational context (Caldwell and Burger, 1998; Goldberg, 1993). Therefore, the study tries to find out the compatibilities among career choice decisions and the personality type of the incumbents opting for job because people make decisions of their career choices and their personality types (Onoyase and Onoyase, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to provide guidance to help new incumbents to choose the right career choice to make their life more successful (Moorjani et al., 2007).

Managers/executives

Managing or executing things perfectly demands strong social interaction ability in individuals and it demands attitude ready to accept changes in external environment. Secondly, it requires socially dominant behavior to rapidly adapt these changes in order to get things done efficiently and effectively. Thirdly, people who can control their activities and perform their tasks under stress and time pressures can manage their planned tasks according to their own will and mental satisfaction (Ackerman and Beier, 2003). As managers have to get things done by others for that reason they tend to be more social, warm and must be averagely able to interact and negotiate with others.

Matching with personality traits managers need to be highly efficient in time, resource and ability management which can be possible with the high ranking on conscientiousness scale as they have to manage the things on right time, be well predicted in an investigative style (Judge et al., 1999) and ready to perform their operations for smooth run of their organization. For successful negotiations, they tend to have at least moderate capability of arguing and clarifying their point of view easily and conventionally (Barrick and Mount, 1991), therefore, they should have average extrovert personality by which they can have a success in their career and in their life (Barrick and Mount, 1991).

Sometimes managers and leaders have to make decisions in some time, money and other resource pressures which can make them fright, traumatic and emotionally

destabilized. Therefore, there is a need to be emotionally strong and have capability to cope up with certain pressures in a well mannered and realistic (Judge et al., 1999) way. People have high scale on neuroticism may lead to nuisance (Howard and Howard, 1995) and may make some wrong decisions which can not only harm their organization but can also deteriorate their profession in the long run (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Moreover, if manager go on emotional in interacting with their colleagues and their customers, certainly they will not be able to get things done by others efficiently and successfully.

At last managers have to negotiate and bargain for control over their resources of all kind, therefore, they tend to have at least moderate personality trait on extraversion and agreeableness. These capabilities can help them to become strong negotiators and will help them to achieve positions more acceptable by both parties (Caldwell and Burger, 1998). In this way they can bring best of offered choices and alternatives in a very conventional and expert mannered way (Judge et al., 1999) to help out their company and at large to help them to achieve competitive advantage (Witt et al., 2002). Therefore, we can have following propositions about persons to choose managerial and executive posts in the organizations.

P₁: People ranking high on conscientiousness and agreeableness will perform better in managerial and executive posts in organizations.

P₂: People ranking low on neuroticism will perform better in managerial and executive posts in organizations.

P₃: People ranking average on openness to experience and extraversion will perform better in managerial and executive posts in organizations.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship requires personal efficacy to take initiatives and risk taking attitudes for going across stakes to reach to the climax of success. Secondly, initiating some thing requires some practical experience and openness to experience. People who capitalize new foundations must have great societal interactions and have a propensity to be dominant in their moves. Thirdly, there is a need to be watchful and creative in their actions and transactions to achieve optimal outcome in their each step forward.

High ranking on the openness to experience personality traits let the entrepreneurs be successful in taking broad initiative and risky moves (Howard and Howard, 1995) to start new projects and to expand their businesses in more dynamic world (Zhao and Seibert, 2006). More the experience and interactions they have, more they will perceive the pits and falls in operationalization of their new schemes and plans (Ackerman and

Beier, 2003). Moreover, high openness to experience of someone helps him out in learning and adapting new changes in their surroundings (Zhao and Seibert, 2006). In this way, they will more likely be effective in coping up hindrances and difficulties faced by them (Aldridge, 1997).

Entrepreneurs have to deal with risk and returns always, so, they must be very conscious and careful in their investments (Barrick and Mount, 1991) in order to achieve the optimal results and to maximize their returns. They need to be compact and managed in their acts for the smooth run of their business (Zhao and Seibert, 2006). Therefore, a high rank on the conscientiousness personality trait helps them to be very careful and best planners (Aldridge, 1997). They make always cost and benefits analysis to assure that they will win every battle played by them.

On other side, profit and loss may be the battle of nerves as well. Entrepreneurs may have to suffer situations that have stress, pressure and risk. Persons have low ranking on neuroticism may have better capability to cope up with such situations (Zhao and Seibert, 2006). People who are high on neuroticism scale will not be able to take risky initiative to broaden their business with respect to their rivals in the industry (Aldridge, 1997). Emotionally stable person can only achieve best results in the worst circumstances.

Based on researchers' arguments and view we can give following propositions about the individuals who are likely to make career choice as entrepreneurs.

P₄: People having high ranking on openness to experience and conscientiousness will perform better in career choice in entrepreneurs.

P₅: People who rank high on neuroticism personality trait will perform better in career choice in entrepreneurs.

Social/Non profit making professions

For adopting non-profit oriented and social professions there is a keen need to feel for others and have tendency to help out others sacrificing own rest, peace and some time resources (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Secondly, there must also be a propensity to trust others and to interact with others. Lastly, emotions are need of these professions but they should also be at least strong enough not to be depressed enough that can derail their will power and dominance to exhibit their internal strengths (Cattell and Mead, 2008).

Agreeableness is the personality trait that can help the individuals to move into the professions for the well-being of others and to feel for others (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Considering the concerns of others is not possible without a high ranking on this personality trait (Judge et al., 1999). These personality trait holders always tend to accommodate and help others on the cost of their

personal resources (Cattell and Mead, 2008). The personality trait asserts individuals to go beyond their self-interest and restrict them to become more selfish (Howard and Howard, 1995) and mean spirited.

Shy and self centered people are not likely to be successful in these professions as there is a great need to be social, friendly, interactive (Mount et al., 1998) and be familiar with others is the key requirement to help and accommodate others in very crucial moments (Cattell and Mead, 2008). Therefore, extraversion trait holders may have more inclination to choose and get success in these social services (Barrick and Mount, 1991) and can give them enthusiasm to work for others (Judge et al., 1999) to have satisfaction for themselves (Ackerman and Beier, 2003).

People who are low on neuroticism and have more propensities to be stable in emotionally hampering situations may not be able to feel for others and they will not have any concerns for others (Cattell and Mead, 2008). On the counterpart, people who rank too high may not excel themselves to cope up with events that demand some instantaneous response under stressful and depressive constraints, hence, they are less likely to control their own nerves that can decrease their capability to help others in these crucial moments (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Therefore, we argue that people ranking average on this particular personality trait are best for these help deserving occupations.

Based on some arguments we have following propositions about careers on non-profit making, social and help requiring professions.

P₆: People ranking high on agreeableness and extraversion personality traits are more likely to excel in non-profit making and helping careers in their life.

P₇: People ranking average on neuroticism scale are more likely to excel in non-profit making and helping careers in their life.

Public sector professions

Public sector professions demand for self-discipline, self-control, management and conscientiousness in each and every step to be successful. Punctuality and practicality are the key symbols of public sector organizations. People with sound emotional capabilities are more likely to be accomplishing their given assignments rather than who fail in stressful and time bound environment (Cattell and Mead, 2008).

Conscientiousness is the personality traits that can help the individuals to excel in these professions (Ackerman and Beier, 2003). A very high ranking on this personality trait may enable these persons to be time bounded assignment fulfillment, planned and organized in every transaction (Cattell and Mead, 2008). People who adopt their own way to handle things instead of their predefined

patterns are more likely to fail in these professions (Barrick and Mount, 1991).

People who are more calm, relaxed and emotionally stable are more likely to be successful in public sector organizations. To achieve this capability, people that rank high on neuroticism are not preferable as they are less likely to work with time (Mount et al., 1998), rule and attitude (Howard and Howard, 1995) constraints that are very important in public sector organizations.

Due to these restrictions, we may opt for following propositions about public sector career seekers in Pakistani context.

P₈: People who rank high on conscientiousness are more likely to excell in non-profit public sector careers in their life.

P₉: People who rank low on neuroticism personality trait are more likely to excell in non-profit public sector careers in their life.

Scientists/researchers, and engineers

Scientists and researchers or other practitioner have to cope up with different complex nature of problems and obstacles that need more than an ordinary look. For that, they need to be very experienced, sensitive, open to learn and perceive new things and to deduce newness from old rigid thoughts (Cattell and Mead, 2008). The more a person is exposed to an environment, the more he or she will have the capability and strength to cover all aspects of single problem. Therefore, he or she will be more likely to introduce new ways of solving a single problem (Ackerman and Beier, 2003, Capretz, 2003).

Sensitivity is key to get things deduce for which others seem blind, and the introversion is the personality trait that can help these people to have a multi angled look for a single problem (Capretz, 2003). Certainly, this personality trait will be more likely to have scientific exploration, new ideas and new theories to add in existing literature.

People who are high on extraversion are generally less sensitive to the exposed environment and they do not have strength to have special things from their exposed environment (Cattell and Mead, 2008).

However, having all rounds captured is not an easy task to do; it demands more effort and experience. People who are not exposed to environment and are not open to their societal interactions are less likely to have well equipped understanding of an issue (Capretz, 2003; Barrick and Mount, 1991). They will not be up to the mark to perceive pits and falls of old rigid thought and for that reason, they will miss the lackings and deficiencies in previous findings (Ackerman and Beier, 2003). Therefore, following are the propositions about the traits of these professions and personality traits for successful synergy.

P₁₀: People ranking high on openness to experience

are more likely to be successful in research, science and engineering cadres.

P₁₁: People ranking low on extraversion are more likely to be successful in research, science and engineering cadres.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This current paper made effort to conceptualize the importance of personality trait for matching the career choices in new candidates. However, researchers need to validate these propositions for the further usage and rectification of the proposed statements. Propositions presented in current paper will help new incumbents to excel in their careers, and before choosing their career, they will accurately assess their best match. For employers, these propositions will help them to find their optimal choice regarding their requirements so that can prevent their wrong choice to refrain from the future havocs (Carroll and Leavitt, 1984). They can use personality tests to recruit their incumbents to maximize their utility and to obtain best of their candidates (Howard and Howard, 1995) to run and attain the organizational competitive advantage.

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