

Personality Traits as Correlates of Job Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

Our personality is the combination of various unique traits and the way we react to the world around us is influenced by the interaction of each trait. It thus plays a big role in determining various aspects of our behavioural traits. This paper examined whether big V personality traits act as a co-relate and predictors of job anxiety. Anxiety involves stressful thoughts and feelings associated with physical symptoms. Job anxiety would thus involve being prone to anxiety in job related situations, which is a hazard for promoting a stable and optimistic environment in the workplace. A total of 97 IT & BPO employees were purposefully selected between the ages of 21-26 years. To interpret the results, descriptive statistics were computed followed by correlation and multiple regression analysis (stepwise). To analyze the data, SPSS (23). The findings concluded that emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and extraversion are negative co-relates of job experience. However, only emotional stability and agreeableness were proven to be predictors while the other traits were not. The need for further research is suggested in this category as the results are limited to this sample only.

Keywords: Big V personality traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, openness, job anxiety, predictors of job anxiety, organisational climate, IT & BPO employees

We are a unique representation of ourselves which is determined by the unique traits that are specific to us. These traits determine our personality and are a representation of whom we are, how we handle situations, and what characterizes us.

Personality has been a topic of interest for notable psychologists over the years. Sigmund Freud, through his work on psycho-sexual development, brought the early perspectives to personality by developing a structural model. Gordon Allport, one of the first prominent psychologists to study personality in-depth, defined it as “the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristics behaviour and thought. (1961). Our personalities influence how we look at the world and how we choose to interact with it. According to a study by Wong and Carducci (2015) who attempted to examine the relationship between financial risk tolerance and personality traits

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of locus of control, sensation seeking, ambiguity tolerance, and financial dishonesty, found that personality trait of sensation seeking has a direct and strong connection to risk tolerance while financial dishonesty does not influence financial risk tolerance.

What makes personality unique is that it is the sum of many unique traits. Every individual may have these traits in varying quantities present in them. The five-factor model by Robert McCrae and Paul Costa explained about five personality traits that determine one's overall personality. This paper explored these traits in depth. Openness to experience, refers to an individual's ability to look for and adjust to new experiences. Those who are high on openness to experience are usually better at accepting new experiences and people. Extraversion refers to an individual's capacity to get along with large groups of people. Agreeableness refers to the level of empathy one has. Neuroticism refers to one's emotional stability. Conscientiousness refers to the effectiveness and self-control of an individual. The overall personality we have as well as certain behavioural patterns are a result of these traits. A study conducted by Jason, Skues, Williams, and Wise (2012) examined the role of the big V personality traits of Neuroticism, Extraversion, and openness to experience along with self-esteem, loneliness, and narcissism with relation to the use of Facebook was examined. The results revealed that neuroticism and extraversion along with self-esteem and narcissism had no role in influencing the time spent on Facebook. Only openness played a role.

Today, big V is used as one of the most reliable personality measurement tools that give an all-around understanding of personality. Khan, Ahmed, and Abid (2016) investigated the role of extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability with relation to the performance level of national sports champions from Pakistan. Their results revealed that it was the role of these traits that set apart the top-performing champions from the rest. These traits were found to be equally important to genetics as well as talent and physical strength.

While it is established that personality influences our behaviour, it is also important to consider other psychological factors that contribute to our success and performance in our activities and everyday lives. It is established that we live in a competitive world where there is constant pressure to keep up with exceeding demands. This is the truest in our professional lives for we are required to adapt, learn and grow to various organizational customs and numerous job demands. This in turn creates a lot of pressure in the minds of employees which is not easy to cope with. This creates job anxiety which subsequently deteriorates the mental health of employees if left unchecked. The APA defines anxiety as "an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure." Job anxiety thus is a result of these symptoms in various job situations. Muschalla, Heldman, and Fay (2013) examined job anxiety and job avoidant tendencies and found that workplace job anxiety can be present as job avoidance and sickness absence emerged un-related to trait anxiety.

Judge. A. Timothy, Heller. Daniel and Mount..K. (2002) Michael examined the five-factor model of personality in terms of job satisfaction through a meta-analysis. The results revealed that neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness displayed moderate correlations with job satisfaction. The results of their study revealed neuroticism as the strongest and most consistent correlate of job satisfaction in the sense that the greater the job satisfaction, the lower would be neuroticism and its variants, and higher would be extraversion and related traits. Out of the big V traits, conscientiousness displayed the second-strongest correlation with job satisfaction. Their overall findings concluded that

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neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness displayed an appropriate level of correlations with job satisfaction and that the five-factor model is a fruitful basis to examine the dispositional source of job satisfaction. The results of this study thus proved that personality can even influence our attitude even in our work environment and plays a role to determine how motivated people are to feel satisfied with their current job situations.

Personality traits act as not only influencers of certain behavioural patterns but can also act as predictors. Gramstad, O. Thomas, Gjestad, Rolf and Haver Brit (2013) investigated personality traits as predictors of job stress, depression, and anxiety among junior physicians. From the results of their study, they were able to find that neuroticism indirectly predicted mental health as it was related to perceived stress as well as symptoms of anxiety and depression while extraversion, on the other hand, protected them against symptoms of depression. Furthermore, it was also reported that females reported higher levels of job stress than males, indicating gender differences.

Additionally, Nimmi P.M and Dr. Zakkariya K.A. (2017) also tried to investigate personality traits as antecedents of employability. Their results revealed that personality factors determining employability are crucial as they are the psychological variables determining employability. Furthermore, traits of conscientiousness, extraversion, and emotional stability seem to be major predictors of employability in most situations.

These studies reveal that the traits of extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism (emotional stability) do influence our mindset in our professional life, typically in terms of how satisfied we are and how good a fit we are for an organization.

The rationale of the study

Every organization has its own culture and job demands. Not every employee can meet the requirements exactly like others and not everyone can cope and adjust to the organizational culture as well as the next person. Additionally, there is an exceeding demand to grow with the organization in the present day and those who are unable to meet these required demands tend to feel a lot of pressure. In many situations, if this pressure goes unchecked, it can result in anxiety. Sometimes an individual is prone to anxiety while other times, it can develop because of an exceeding amount of job pressure. This in turn can affect the performance level of an individual in the long run. Our personality plays a role in determining how we cope with various situations.

This paper investigates the correlation between personality traits of openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism (emotional stability) with job anxiety and whether certain traits act as antecedents of job anxiety, to provide a scientific base for future research. Furthermore, this paper examines the relationship between job anxiety and personality traits which has not been commonly studied, and thus attempts to fill the literature gap. There is also a lack of empirical evidence that examines the big V traits with occupational factors, specifically among BPO, and IT employees, and this study also helps to cover that gap.

Objectives

The primary objective of the current research is to study the levels of job anxiety and personality traits followed by establishing the co-relation of job anxiety with the big V personality traits among IT and BPO employees.

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Hypotheses

Based on the available literature about job anxiety and big V personality traits following hypotheses were formulated:

H1-Agreeableness, extraversion, emotional stability, openness, and conscientiousness will have a negative correlation with job anxiety among the given sample.

H2-Agreeableness, extraversion, emotional stability, openness, and conscientiousness would emerge as the significant predictors of job anxiety among the given sample.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The research design incorporated for this study is a correlational research design under ex-post facto research design.

Inclusion v/s Exclusion criterion

Only young adults between the ages of 21-26 who could read and write in English and were currently employed in the IT and BPO sector were selected. Those who failed to satisfy these criteria were excluded from the study.

Scientific Tools

The tool used for studying the big V personality traits was the “Ten Item Personality Inventory” (TIPI) by Gosling, Rentfrow and Swann (2003). This scale is an efficient and valid scale for those who are trying the study the big V personality traits on a time crunch. It is a seven-point Likert scale where 1 indicates ‘not at all’ and 7 indicates ‘always’. Reverse scoring exists for items 2,4,6, 8 &10. The average reverse items and standard items gives the overall personality score.

Bristo-Costa Sonia, Moisa Ana, De Almeida Hugo and Castro Vicente assessed the psychometric properties of TIPI in 2015. They found low internal consistency but found it a reliable and efficient tool for personality measurement, based on the original model (the big V model).

To study job anxiety, the tool used for achieving the given purpose was the Job Anxiety Scale and Workplace Phobia Scale (JAS and WPS) by Srivastava (1977). It is a 70 item and five-point Likert scale which ranges from 0 to 4 where 0 stands for ‘not at all agree’ while 4 stands for ‘totally agree’. This scale has been proven to be reliable and valid for studying fearful situations in the workplace. Its validity was confirmed by Shaw, Kristman and Loisel in their study to measure “psychometric evaluation of a new measure of employer support for temporary job modification.”

Data Collection

To undertake the following study, 97 IT and BPO employees were selected through purposive sampling technique.

Variables

- Dependant variable- Job Anxiety
- Independent variable- Big V personality traits

Procedure

The current study investigated the relationship between personality traits and job anxiety. The investigator (first author) approached the organization on a prescheduled time and

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explained to the participants about their task at hand along with clearly explaining the terms of confidentiality. Detailed instructions about the scoring and the questionnaire at hand were provided before giving the floor for questions to be asked. Consent was taken before beginning the test and privacy was upheld at every step of the way. Following the scoring of the answer sheet, the results were scored and interpreted.

Statistical analysis

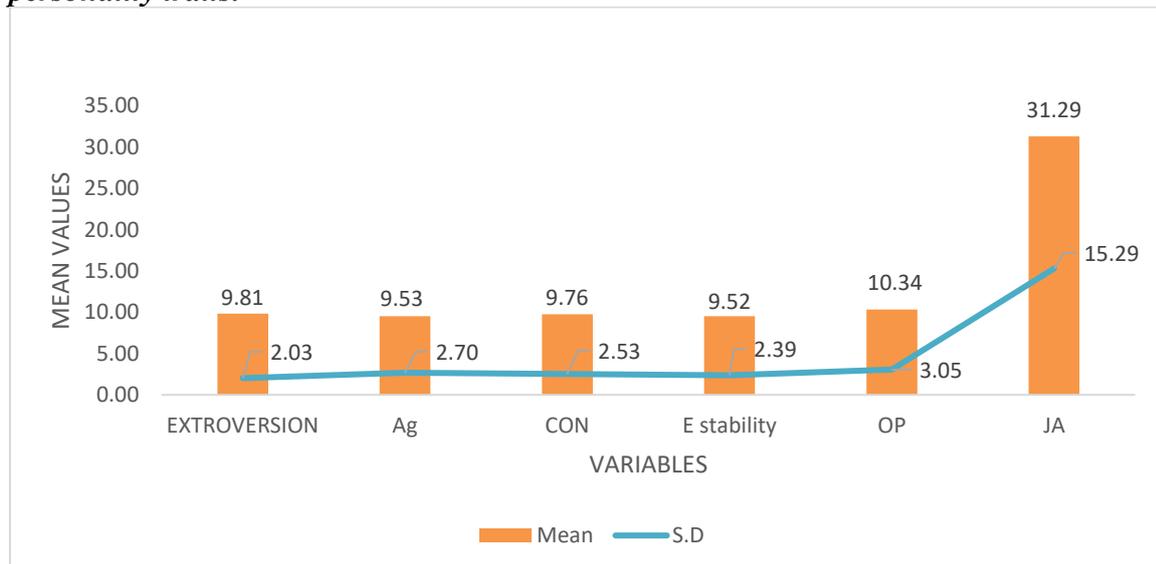
To accomplish the objectives of the present empirical research work, descriptive statistics were computed followed by correlation and multiple regression analysis (stepwise). To analyze the data, SPSS (23) was used.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Summary of descriptive statistics (Mean & S.D.) on job anxiety and big V personality traits.

	Mean	SD	N
EX	9.8144	2.02757	97
AG	9.5258	2.69681	97
CON	9.7629	2.52806	97
ES	9.5155	2.38971	97
OP	10.3402	3.05125	97
J.A	31.2887	15.29431	97

Figure 1 Histogram for descriptive statistics (Mean & S.D.) on job anxiety and big V personality traits.



The following figures show the mean score and standard deviation (S.D) score of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience and job anxiety among the participants.

The mean score of extraversion is 9.8 while the SD score is 2.0, the mean score of agreeableness is 9.5 while the S.D score is 2.6, the mean score of conscientiousness is 9.7 while the S.D score is 2.5, the mean score of emotional stability is 9.5 while the S.D score is 2.3, the mean score for openness is 10.3 while the S.D score is 3.0 and the mean score of job anxiety is 31.2 and the S.D score is 15.2

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Table 2 Summary of liner correlation of coefficient between job anxiety and big V personality traits

	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Emotional Stability	Openness	Job Anxiety
Pearson Correlation	-.230*	-.414**	-.284**	-.386**	-.244*	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.000	.005	.000	.016	
N	97	97	97	97	97	97

The above table shows the Pearson correlation of job anxiety and the personality traits. All the mentioned personality traits have a negative co-relation with job anxiety thus proving to be negative predictors of job anxiety and in turn validating the hypotheses.

Emotional stability, conscientiousness and agreeableness are negatively significant at 0.01 level while extraversion and openness to experience are negatively significant at 0.05 level thus validating the first hypothesis.

The results thus show that higher the openness to experience, agreeableness, emotional stability, extraversion and conscientiousness, lesser will be the job anxiety thus emerging as negative predictors at both 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance, validating the second hypothesis.

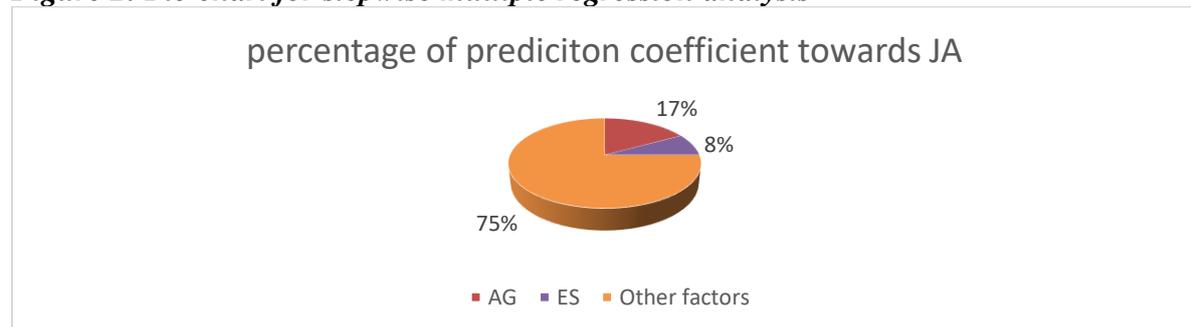
Table 3 Summary of stepwise multiple regression analysis (DV = JA)

Variables	a constant	Agreeableness (AG)		Emotional Stability (ES)		R ²	p value for R ²	R ² Δ	p value for R ² Δ
		b	β	b	β				
AG	53.67	-2.35	-0.41	--	--	0.17**	0.001	--	--
ES	67.42	-1.90	-0.34	-1.89	-0.30	0.25**	0.001	0.08**	0.002

NOTE: JA = Job Anxiety is the Dependent variable; AG = Agreeableness & ES = Emotional Stability are the independent variables; b = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; R² = predictive values; R²Δ = change in predictive values.

The above table depicts the results of the multiple regression analysis for the given sample. As discussed before, extraversion and openness to experience emerged as negative co-relates of job anxiety at 0.05 level of significance while agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability emerged as negative co-relates at 0.01 level of significance. The first hypothesis is thus completely validated by the given results.

Figure 2: Pie-chart for stepwise multiple regression analysis



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The graph displayed shows the major predictors of job anxiety among the participants. Emotional stability and agreeableness emerged as the most significant negative predictors among the personality traits accounting to 8% and 17 which is 25% of the predictor ratio for job anxiety in the given sample.

These results thus only partially validate the second hypothesis as only agreeableness and emotional stability emerged as negative predictors of job anxiety while extraversion, conscientiousness and openness did not.

The results thus reveal that higher the agreeableness to different situations and ability to understand other people's points of view and higher the emotional stability, lesser will be the likelihood to be prone to anxiety in the workplace.

However, the 75% is accounted for factors not studied in the given research which can be environmental, situational, one's own motivation and many more factors which can be positive or negative predictors in terms of job anxiety. These factors have not been involved in this current study, thus cannot be specifically denoted.

CONCLUSION

It can henceforth be concluded from the given results that the big V personality traits-emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and extraversion are negative co-relates of job experience. However, only emotional stability and agreeableness were proven to be predictors while the other traits were not.

The findings of this study are partially different from the findings of other studies in terms of negative predictability of job anxiety in comparison to negative predictability of job satisfaction and employability, respectively.

Implications

- The implications of this study give way for future research through the results obtained. The findings also contribute to help organizations improve the screening processes by identifying employees who can handle stress better and are less prone to anxiety by identifying those who score high in the given traits especially those who were identified as negative predictors.
- The organizations can implement an organizational climate that enhances emotional stability and agreeableness among employees which in turn can reduce job anxiety as revealed by the findings.

Limitation

The findings of this study are limited to the current sample. Furthermore, any psychological factors like mood, motivation to succeed as well as environmental factors could also contribute to anxiety which was not explored in this study.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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