

A Review of relationship between job stress and big five personality dimensions among employees of hotel industry

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Abstract

In today's competitive world job stress is becoming globalized and influence workplace environment of all the countries, all professions and all categories of employees, as well as tribes and society as a whole. So, employee faces job stress in one way or other and also deals with it individually. It hasn't left apart any employee whether belonging to primary, secondary and tertiary industry. In tertiary industry or in service industry, employee personality plays an important influence on the company's service quality, customer service skills, and overall performance of service providers, which in turn influences customer satisfaction, loyalty and ultimately organizational success. As the employees of hotel industry face stress due to long working hours and to meet day to day complexities .So, it is essential to study the personality dimensions of hotel employees as personality of an employee plays an important role in making him more or less vulnerable to stress. To reduce the stress the present study aims to contribute new knowledge to the existent literature of personality traits and job stress among hotel employees by conducting comprehensive literature review on the subject matter. Apart from this, the effect of Big Five personality dimensions i.e. extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience on employee job stress, including their interdependence was further discussed in detail.

Keywords: Big Five personality dimensions, Personality traits, Job stress, Tertiary industry.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is an evident part of one's life. Not even a single individual but the society as a whole suffers from stress. Absolute abandonment of stress is impossible. Every individual has different characteristics which help him to cope his stress in his own way. So, stress varies from person to person. This study deals with the stress, job stress, personality and different characteristics or traits related with personality. Further it focuses on how individual's capability to tolerate stress is influenced by a number of personality traits. The study continues with explanation of big five personality dimensions. Furthermore, the relationship of job stress and personality has been extracted from the literature and explained accordingly.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Stress

Stress is a part of day-to-day living of every individual. May it be college students, business men, house hold ladies and even the employees of an organization. As stress related cases has been growing phenomenally, so stress has been termed as a 20th century disease. Dr.Sanjay Chugh, a consultant psychiatrist reveals that the number of stress-related cases is about thousand times more now than it was ten years ago. The word stress has mental rather than physiological connotations. As Anandilyer, Deputy Director at German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) says, “Stress occurs when you are incapable of handling a given situation. For example, for soldiers constantly at border, the situation is no longer so stressful. But for others, it would be.” In the context of jobs, job stress is the condition which arises due to interaction between people and their jobs which force the people to deviate them from their normal functioning. Employees of every industry are stressed whether they belong to primary industry, secondary industry and tertiary industry. While talking about the service sector, the employees of hospitality industry are more stressed. In current scenario Hospitality segment in India is booming at an unprecedented pace. The personality of an employee is closely linked with performance of a hotel through its effect on employees’ behaviour, attitudes and service performance.

Employees with their knowledge and skills form the backbone of successful business. In the hotel management people create, offer and provide services, and the quality of service is associated with the quality of work relating to the special knowledge and skills in hotel management, general culture and etiquette, as well as technological knowledge and processes, through which the specificity of personnel in hotel management is reflected. (Cerovic, 1994). Employees at all levels are an essential part of an organization and their full involvement enables the use of their abilities to achieve well-being of the organization. All hotel organizations should be lead by the fact that it is not possible to develop a high level of guest satisfaction if the employees in the organization are not satisfied (Bordas, 2005). The stressed employees negatively affect the organizational performance. Personality of a particular person plays a significant role in coping with the stressful situations. So it becomes essential to study the personality traits of the employees.

Personality

Personality has been considered as an important factor which helps one to cope one’s stress. Morton Prince (1972) defines personality as "Sum total of all, the biological, innate dispositions, impulses, tendencies, appetites and instincts of the individual and the acquired disposition and tendencies acquired by experience”. According to Floyd L Ruch (1963) human personality includes individual behaviour and appearance or societal motivation, inner organizing force and organization of measurable traits. Some scholars refer personality as an interaction between person and his environment. So, in words of Stephen Robbins “personality is the sum total ways in which an individual reacts and interacts with others”.

G.W.Allport’s was the first psychologist to analyse personality traits. According to Allport, “The trait is a generalized and focalized neuropsychic system, peculiar to the individual with the capacity to render money stimuli functionally equivalent and to initiate and guide consistent forms of adoptive and expressive behaviour.” Whereas James Draver says “Trait is an individual characteristics is thought, feeling or act, inherited or acquired.”According to Murphy, “Trait is anything by means of which one person may be distinguished from another.”

These traits when exhibited in a large number of situations are called personality traits. There is different personality framework or instrument to measure personality among different individuals. For the present research, however, big five personality dimensions (also called “Big Five Model or Five Factor Model or FFM”) was considered appropriate based on its relevance to the topic. This model has also been considered as the highly accepted and widely known personality model from the last almost two decades.

The Big Five Model of Personality

The Big Five Model came into existence when McDougall (1932) stated that, “Personality may be broadly analyzed into five distinguishable but separate factors...”. The most ideal and a authentic measure of personality is Big Five Model (Costa P.T.Jr & McCrae R.R., 1995). The big five model consist of five major personality dimensions which include Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience (Goldberg, 1992; Barrick & Mount, 1991). The Big Five personality questionnaire has been used to investigate the influence of the learning style and personality to perception of work, workspace climate, stress, burnout and satisfaction within physician’s age around 30 years (McManus 2004).

1. Openness: This trait includes characteristics such as imaginative, artistically sensitive and intellectual. These type of people are highly motivated to learn new skills, and perform well in training settings (Barrick, M. R., & Mount, M. K., 1991). They also enjoy when they enter into a new organization. Their open-minded characteristic leads them to collect a lot of information and feedback about themselves which help them to build relationships, so that they can quickly adjust to the new job. (Wanberg, C. R. & Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., 2000). Open people never resist change, and teams which consists of such type of team members can perform well by creating unforeseen changes in their tasks. (Le Pine, J. A., 2003). High open people are more likely to start their own business as compared to people low in openness. (Zhao, H., & Seibert, S. E., 2006)

2. Conscientiousness: This trait includes features like thoughtfulness, good impulse control, responsible, and dependable. In fact, conscientiousness is the trait most desired by recruiters and results in the most success in interviews. (Dunn, W. S., Mount, M. K., Barrick, M. R., & Ones, D. S. (1995). This is not a surprise, because in addition to their high performance, conscientious people have higher levels of motivation to perform, lower levels of turnover, lower levels of absenteeism, and higher levels of safety performance at work. (Judge, T. A., & Ilies, R. (2002). It is observed that conscientiousness is a good trait for entrepreneurs. Highly conscientious people are more likely to start their own business compared to those who are not conscientious, and their firms have longer survival rates. (Certo, S. T., & Certo, S. C. (2005)

3. Extraversion: This trait includes characteristics such as excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and high amounts of emotional expressiveness. Moreover, they tend to be effective as managers and they demonstrate inspirational leadership behaviors. (Bauer, T. N., Erdogan, B., Liden, R. C., & Wayne, S. J. (2006) Extraverts find it easier to adjust in the new scenario as compare to introvert. Extraverts have an easier time than introverts when adjusting to a new job. Extraverts actively collect information from others which help them to build strong relationship and adjustment even to a new job. (Wanberg, C. R., & Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D. (2000). They do not perform well in all jobs especially the jobs depriving them from social networking. They are not certainly model employees. For example, they tend to have higher levels of absenteeism at work, potentially because they may miss work to hang out with or attend to the needs of their friends. (Judge, T. A., Martocchio, J. J., & Thoresen, C. J. (1997).

4. Agreeableness: This personality dimension includes attributes such as trust, altruism, kindness, affection, and other social behaviours. Not surprisingly, agreeable people help others at work consistently, and this helping behaviour is not dependent on being in a good mood. (Ilies, R., Scott, B. A., & Judge, T. A. (2006). They are also less likely to retaliate when other people treat them unfairly. (Skarlicki, D. P., Folger, R., & Tesluk, P. (1999). This shows their ability to demonstrate empathy with others. Agreeable people may be a valuable addition to their teams and may be effective leaders because they create a fair environment when they are in leadership positions. (Mayer, D., Nishii, L., Schneider, B., & Goldstein, H. (2007). Low agreeable people may like to leave their job unexpectedly due to conflict with their boss or colleague. Agreeable people are not always good for all types of jobs. Some jobs require a person to be pit bull for example a lawyer. Agreeable people are less likely to engage in constructive and change-oriented communication. (LePine, J. A., & Van Dyne, L. (2001).

5. Neuroticism: Individuals high in this trait tend to experience emotional instability, anxiety, moodiness, irritability, and sadness. People very high in neuroticism experience a number of problems at work. In other words, they suffer from adjustment problems and live under the influence of stress and depression. They tend to be habitually unhappy in their jobs and report high intentions to leave, but they do not necessarily actually leave their jobs. (Klein, K. J., Beng-Chong, L., Saltz, J. L., & Mayer, D. M. (2004). Being high in neuroticism seems to be harmful to one's career, as they have lower levels of career success. Finally, if they achieve managerial jobs, they tend to create an unfair climate at work. (Mayer, D., Nishii, L., Schneider, B., & Goldstein, H. (2007).

OBJECTIVES

As personality plays such a significant part of a hospitality organization's performance. So, the objectives of the present research are:

- To identify job stress and big five personality dimensions among hotel employees of an organization.
- To determine the relationship between big five factors of personality dimensions and job stress among employees of hotel.

HYPOTHESES

While reviewing the existing literature on job stress and personality traits the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Extroversion will have a positive relationship with job stress.

H2: Openness to experience will have a positive relationship with job stress.

H3: Conscientiousness will have a positive relationship with job stress.

H4: Agreeableness will have a positive relationship with job stress.

H5: Neuroticism will have a negative relationship with job stress.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the main objective of the present research paper is to determine the relationship between job stress and personality among hotel employees of hospitality industry. The research methodology of this research paper consists of review of twenty research papers related to job stress and big five personality dimensions of employees working in an organisation. These research papers provide information related to factors and causes of stress among employees and also information about five personality traits of the employees and also information about how a particular personality of an employee helps an employee to deal with stress.

BIG FIVE MODEL OF PERSONALITY AND JOB STRESS

Personality of a person is the most dominating factor which influences the way he or she reacts to all events and situations. Personality includes values, attitudes and behaviour pattern that make up the uniqueness of an individual and ultimately make him more or less accessible to stress. The beginning of personal stress arises from our perception or our concept of self. Low self esteem can result in number of stress enlisting problems, inability to adapt, placing high demands on ourselves and lack of assertiveness. It can also result in poor self expressions which lead to negative emotions like anger, fear, aggression and anxiety. People with high self esteem can handle stress with calmness like they have high self confidence in their abilities which help them to develop positive attitude towards the management of stress.

Personality types are important factors in determining stress, being thus capable of explaining how certain people manage to function for years while handling huge amounts of stress, whereas others collapse after several months under similar amounts of stress (Cooper 2005).

Research on personality and stress has its roots in studies on war stress reactions in the Second World War and thereafter. A model of neuroticism and extraversion was presented by Eysenck on the basis of factor analysis (Eysenck, 1947). People high on neuroticism experience more stressful events and more stress regardless of the level of stress. People high on extraversion, on the other hand, tend to experience more pleasurable events and more positive emotions (Watson & Clark, 1992). Later on, Costa et al. launched the 'Big Five' model including neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness (McCrae & Costa, 1989). Several descriptive models have been launched in personality research. Researchers have argued that the Big Five model is the most ideal (Costa P.T.Jr & McCrae R.R., 1995), and many studies have explored the impact of the 'Big Five' personality dimensions on stress. Neuroticism is consistently associated with stress. Reports on the effects of extraversion and conscientiousness are more inconsistent (Lee-Bagglely et al., 2005). Eysenck has launched the 'Giant Three' model, which includes neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness (low psychoticism) (Eysenck, 1994). Torgersen and Vollrath have argued that conscientiousness, which has been associated with planning and active coping, should be included in a model of personality and stress (Vollrath & Torgersen, 2000).

People with an optimistic outlook towards life experience everyday events in a positive manner and have positive expectations regarding the results of their actions (Kivimaki et al 2005). Both optimistic and pessimistic persons spontaneously employ various coping strategies to deal successfully with stressful events. Optimism is conceptually related to active, complex coping strategies and attracting supportive social relationships. Eysenck (1985) reveals the high degree of correlation between stress and neuroticism, introversion, and psychoticism. Mills & Huebner (1998) study states big five model developed by Costa & McCrae (1999) have significant relation between stress and neuroticism and introversion.

Watson et al., (2008) deduced that the individuals' personality traits describe higher levels of job burnout and job stress in them. It is obvious that positive personality traits such as openness to experience, extraversion and agreeableness play a major role in coping with the stresses in everyone's life and work environment, so that tendency to experience new situations can protect the person against stress in exposure with the ambiguous situations, or help the person to increase the supports and reduce the stresses. Besharat (2007) in his study perceived that personality traits can affect coping stresses. Further, Bosworth et al., (2001) reported that there exists a positive relationship between neuroticism and an inefficient coping style with stress; on the other hand, there exists a negative relationship

between extraversion and an inefficient coping style with stress.

The individuals who enjoy higher neuroticism traits rather than other big five personality traits definitely face more problems at emotional and cognitive areas, for this they face numerous stresses in their interpersonal, social and work environment relationships. In other words, the more the personality trait “neuroticism” increases, individuals’ interaction with environment decreases, and the person loses some his protective sources by others. On the other hand, the person’s inclination to gain new experiences and expose to new situations reduces, where this causes rise of a situational stress arisen from dissatisfaction with the current status and lack of change in the current situation, whereby this causes strengthening the personality trait “neuroticism” in the person. In this regard, Yoon and colleagues (2007) in their study perceived the strong relationship between high level of job stress and the personality trait “neuroticism”.

Extroversion-introversion represent intensely studied stress-shaping personality factors. Introverts get easily stressed out because of the anxious, pessimistic nature of their personal structure and their tendency towards perfectionism (Mc Crae & Costa 1986). Individuals characterized by high levels of extraversion are engaged in emotion-based coping strategies, as well as in self-blaming and avoidance. Other theories consider that both the introvert and the extrovert share characteristics that have equal impact on stress vulnerability, if these exceed the average (Iamandescu 1993). The design of stress reduction strategies must take into account stress factors and the psychological implications of stress as well as the individual’s personality type.

The two Big Five dimensions of openness and agreeableness, however, have been less strongly associated to stress and coping in other studies (Jelinek & Morf, 1995; Watson & Hubbard, 1996). The importance of considering the interactions among personality traits has been increasingly acknowledged in stress research. The interactions among the personality traits should therefore be considered to get a better picture of an individual’s response to stressful conditions

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In hotel industry the work of employees is a critical factor which is responsible for the success of a certain hotel or restaurant. Every individual has a unique personality which leads to their very different behavior in an organization. The personality of an individual determines its overall activity and profile and helps to overcome the stressful situations in an organization. From the above paper we concluded that the hypothesis formulated are significant that is there exist positive relationships between Extroversion, Openness to experience, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness traits of personality and employee job stress. But Neuroticism trait of personality is negatively related to employee job stress. Future study should be encouraged so that an experimental research is carried out to know the statistical relationship between the variables under study. The present study will help to enhance the existing literature of the topic under study and also help researchers and personnel managers by utilizing the results of the findings to design appropriate selection policy to recruit such hotel employees who can perform under the level of stress. This in turn would result in increased satisfaction of employees and their higher motivation which would contribute to creating a positive image of hotel in domestic and international market.

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