

BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AS PREDICTORS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated Big Five personality traits as predictors of emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers in Rivers State of Nigeria. Two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses were formulated to guide the conduct of the study. The participants in the study were 770 teachers drawn from public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Cluster sampling technique was used to draw the sample of the study. Two instruments were used for data collection. They are: Emotional Intelligence Behaviour Inventory (EQBI) by Akinboye and NEO Five Factor Inventory by Costa and McCrae adapted from Ata, Ather and Bano (2013). Data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level. Results of the study showed that: Big Five personality traits taken together statistically significantly predicted emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers; the relative contribution of agreeableness and extraversion personality traits in the prediction of emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers was statistically significant while the reverse was the case for others (conscientiousness, openness and neuroticism). Based on the findings, conclusions were drawn and recommendations made accordingly.

Keywords: Personality, traits, emotional, intelligence, teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers assume an enviable position in the curriculum implementation at any level of education. The teacher is a key facilitator of knowledge and plays a vital role in nation building. It is pertinent to call to mind that teachers play an important and consequential role in the development of any nation including Nigeria. The nation depends on the teachers for transfer of knowledge, manpower development as well as the realization of educational policies of the nation. The quality of any nation's economy depends to a very large extent on the quality of manpower and this manpower can only be developed by teachers.

More so, the performance of the students is largely a function of the behaviour of the teachers. Santibanez (2006) explained that the quality of the teachers has the greatest impact on the performance levels of students. Quality teachers are the valuable assets of any nation and they are the backbone of the nation in terms of developing human capital for a knowledge-based economy. According to DiPaola and Tschannen – Moran (2001), the success of schools fundamentally depends on teachers who are willing to go beyond role expectations voluntarily. Ukaegbu (2012) stressed that no nation develops without education and education is not possible without teachers because teachers inculcate what is worthwhile to learners who in turn utilize the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop the nation.

However, in the recent past, researchers (Goleman, 1998; Carmeli & Jozman, 2006; Wong & Law, 2002), have identified the importance of emotional intelligence of the workers as a crucial antecedent of work outcomes, work attitudes and other behaviours. The concept of emotional intelligence emerged in early 1990s when Salovey and Mayer (1990) in their academic papers defined emotional intelligence as the “ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p.189). Goleman who brought the concept of emotional intelligence to the world’s attention posited that emotional intelligence explains a higher proportion of variance in individual performance and effectiveness than intellectual intelligence. According to Goleman (2001), emotional intelligence can affect an individual’s success in an organization. Carmeli and Jozman (2006) observed that employees who are high in emotional intelligence are expected to attend higher achievements in both the work place and their personal life, as well as contribute significantly to the performance of their organization.

On the other hand, understanding an individual’s personality is very consequential to administrators since this understanding will help assign people into jobs as well as give them clues about how employees are likely to behave in different situations. Morris and Maisto (2002) stated that personality is the unique pattern of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that seems to persist overtime and across various situations. The unique differences referred to above are aspects of distinguishing an individual from everyone else. Some researchers (Organ, Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 2006; Judge, Heller & Mount, 2002; Kappagoda, 2012) stated that the personality of the person has directly correlated with many work outcomes and attitudes. According to Kumar and Bakhshi (2010), the dispositional factors are always referring to the five-factor model of personality namely agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion and neuroticism.

Agreeableness is the degree to which a person is affable, tolerant, sensitive, trusting, kind and warm (Kumar & Bakhshi, 2010). According to them, people who are high in agreeableness are likeable people who get along with others. Ilies, Scott and Judge (2006) posited that agreeable people help others at work consistently; a helping behaviour which does not depend on their good mood.

Conscientiousness refers to the degree to which a person is organized, systematic, punctual, achievement – oriented and dependable. Barrick and Mount (1991) explained that conscientiousness is one personality trait that uniformly predicts how high a person’s performance will be across a variety of occupations and jobs. According to Erdheim, Wang and Zickar (2006), conscientiousness personality trait can be referred to as self-discipline and ability to act obediently.

Openness to experience is the degree to which a person is curious, original, intellectual, creative, and open to new ideas. People high in openness seem to thrive in situations that require flexibility and learning new things. Those high in openness to experience are highly motivated to learn new skills, and they do well in trading settings (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Lievens, Harris, Van-keer & Bisqueret, 2003). Teng (2008) stated that the most prominent part of openness personality is originality and creativity whereby this type of person is mostly innovators and initiators.

According to Teng (2008), extraversion is the degree to which a person is outgoing, talkative, sociable and enjoys socializing. People with this type of personality have the tendency to

have more friends and spend more time in social circumstances. Extraverts have an easier time than introverts do when adjusting to a new job. Wandberg and Kammeyer-Mueller (2002) explained that extraverts actively seek information and feedback and build effective relationships, which help them in their adjustment.

Neuroticism or emotional stability refers to the degree to which a person is anxious, irritable, temperamental and moody. It is considered the only Big Five dimension where scoring high is undesirable (Teng, 2008). Klein, Beng-Chong, Saltz and Mayer (2004) posited that people very high in neuroticism experience a number of problems at work. According to them, such people have trouble forming and maintaining relationships and are less likely to go for advice and friendship.

Lopes, Salovey and Straus (2002) carried out a study on emotional intelligence, personality, and the perceived quality of social relationships. This study explored links between emotional intelligence, measured as a set of abilities, and personality traits, as well as the contribution of both to the perceived quality of one's interpersonal relationships. In a sample of 103 college students, they found that both emotional intelligence and personality traits were associated with concurrent self-reports of satisfaction with social relationships. Another study examining self-report ability and other ratings of emotional intelligence loosely based on the ability model of emotional intelligence found strong relationships between the emotional intelligence dimensions and the big five personality dimensions, particularly extraversion and neuroticism (Van Der Zee, Thijs, & Schakel, 2002).

Vakola, Tsaousis and Nikolaou (2004) examined the role of emotional intelligence and personality variables on attitudes toward organizational change. This study explored how emotional intelligence and the Big Five dimensions of personality can facilitate organizational change at an individual level by exploring relationship between these attributes and attitudes toward organizational change. The sample consisted of 137 professionals who completed self-report inventories assessing emotional intelligence, personality traits and attitudes toward organizational change. The results confirmed that there is a relationship between personality traits and employees' attitudes toward change. Bracket and Mayer (2003) in their study found that emotional intelligence is highly significantly correlated with neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness, but moderately related to openness to experience.

Warwick and Nettelbeck (2004) conducted a study in which eighty-four tertiary students completed questionnaires measuring emotional intelligence (EI) and personality traits. Among personality variables, extraversion and agreeableness correlated moderately with total Trait Meta- Mood Scale (TMMS) ($p < 0.01$) and weakly ($p < 0.05$) with openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism. Day, Therrian and Carroll (2005) found high emotional intelligent individuals tended to be considerably more extraverted and conscientiousness than low scorers on emotional intelligence. Singh and Sharma (2009) in their study intended to observe the effect of emotional intelligence on neuroticism. It was assured that emotionally high intelligent subjects would be low on neuroticism while emotionally low intelligent subjects would be high on neuroticism. Petrides, Varnon, Shermer, Ligthart, Boomsma, and Veselka (2010) investigated the relationships between trait emotional intelligence and the Big Five personality dimensions (NEO-FFI) in two Dutch samples. Neuroticism was the strongest correlate of trait EI in both samples, followed by extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience.

Hundani, Redzuan and Hamsau (2012), found that conscientiousness, openness, extraversion and agreeableness are positively correlated with emotional intelligence. Athota, O'Connor and Jackson (2009) stated that emotional intelligence significantly predicted big five personality traits of extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, agreeableness and neuroticism. Shulman and Hemeenover (2006) in their study found that emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with the extraversion and openness domain of personality. Besharat (2010) found that the correlation and conscientiousness is significant and positive. The study further found negative relationship between emotional intelligence and neuroticism. McCrae (2000) posited that all the big five personality dimensions have correlate at least moderately with emotional intelligence. Matthews, Emo, Funke, Zeidner, Roberts, Costa and Schulze (2006) found that emotional intelligence has positively correlated with extraversion and negatively correlated with neuroticism.

From the relevant literature reviewed, the researcher observed that the conduct of research on personality traits and emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers is very uncommon and rare among researchers in Nigeria. However, this present research on personality traits as predictors of emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers in Rivers State was intended to fill such gap.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used for this study was multiple prediction design. Kpolovie (2010) explained that multiple prediction design is a high order correlational research design that extends the least-square association principle to the study of relationship between one dependent variable and two or more independent variables.

Participants

Seven hundred and seventy (770) secondary school teachers were randomly selected for the study using cluster sampling technique. The subjects were grouped according to their local government areas, then a simple random sampling was conducted to select ten local government areas (clusters) for the study. Finally, seventy seven (77) secondary school teachers were selected from each cluster, totaling seven hundred and seventy (770).

Instruments

Two instruments were used for data collection. They include Emotional Intelligence Behaviour Inventory (EQBI) by Akinboye and NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) by Costa and McCrae.

The EQBI was used to measure the degree of the participants' emotional intelligence. The EQBI consist of 17 items which were answered on a five point likert type scale ranging from 1 = Very Much Unable to 5 = Very Much Able. Higher scores indicated higher levels of emotional intelligence. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for the scale was .88.

NEO-FFI was used to measure five domains of personality that is, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. Alpha reliabilities of five domains in NEO-FFI is a five point scale, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4

= Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree and consists of 60 items, divided in five domains of personality. NEO – FFI was adapted from Atta, Ather and Bano (2013).

RESULTS

Rq1: What is the extent to which Big Five personality traits (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness to experience) taken together predict emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers?

H₀1: Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness and neuroticism personality traits taken together do not significantly predict emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers.

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis Between Big Five Personality Traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism) and Emotional Intelligence of Secondary School Teachers

R = 0.419 R ² = 0.176 Adjusted R ² = 0.154 Std: Error of Estimate = 44.266						
Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P-Val	Result
Regression	80196.399	5	16039.280	8.185	.00	Significant
Residual	376219.601	764	1959.477			
Total	456416.000	769				

Table 1 shows correlation coefficient (R-value) of 0.419 which indicated a positive relationship between Big Five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism) and emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers. The coefficient of determination (R-square) is 0.176. This implies that all the Big Five personality traits taken together accounted for 17.6% of the total variance in emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers. Furthermore, the table shows F-ratio (5, 764) = 8.185; and P<.05 which means that Big Five personality traits statistically significantly predicted emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers.

Rq2: What is the extent to which Big Five personality traits (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness to experience) taken separately predict emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers?

H₀2: Each of the Big Five personality traits taken separately does not significantly predict emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers.

Table 2: Relative Contribution of Each Big Five Personality Trait (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism) to Emotional Intelligence of Secondary School Teachers

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		P-Val	Result
	β	Std. Error	beta	t		
(Constant)	86.791	22.687		3.826	.000	
Agreeableness	.335	.079	.292	4.221	.000	Sig.
Openness	.096	.074	.088	1.298	.196	Not Sig.
Conscientiousness	.102	.078	.092	1.311	.191	Not Sig.
Extraversion	-.043	.082	-.035	-.526	.041	Sig.
Neuroticism	-.234	.114	-.148	-2.055	.040	Not Sig.

Table 2 shows the individual Big Five personality traits contribution to the prediction of emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers. They are; agreeableness ($\beta = .292$, $t = 4.221$, $p < .05$), openness ($\beta = .088$, $t = 1.298$, $p > .05$), conscientiousness ($\beta = .091$, $t = 1.311$, $p > .05$), extraversion ($\beta = -.035$, $t = -.526$, $p < .05$), neuroticism ($\beta = -.148$, $t = -2.055$, $p > .05$). Agreeableness and extraversion personality traits were statistically significant at .05 while openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism were not statistically significant.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first hypothesis which states that extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism personality traits taken together do not significantly predict emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was upheld. Also, analysis of data showed correlation coefficient (R-value) of 0.419 which implies that there is a positive relationship between Big Five personality traits and emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers. Furthermore, analysis of data on hypothesis one revealed that all the Big Five personality traits taken together accounted for 17.6% of the total variance in emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

Finally, it was hypothesized that each of the Big Five personality traits taken separately does not significantly predict emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers. The finding of the study indicated that agreeableness and extraversion personality traits statistically significantly predicted emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers in Rivers State, while openness to experience, conscientiousness, and neuroticism were not statistically significant at .05. This present finding agrees with Matthews et al (2006) who in their study found that emotional intelligence has positively correlated with the extraversion and negatively correlated with neuroticism. Warwick and Nettelbeck (2004) also found that among personality variables, extraversion and agreeableness correlated moderately with total Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS). This finding is not surprising. This is because those high in agreeableness and extraversion personality traits make good interpersonal relationships; which afford them the opportunity to understand the emotions and feelings of others.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the findings elucidated that: All the Big Five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, openness, neuroticism and conscientiousness) taken together accounted for 17.6% of the variance in emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers in Rivers State; agreeableness and extraversion personality traits statistically significantly predicted emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers. Based on the major findings, it was recommended that: Secondary schools should organize periodic personality development programmes for providing training in emotional skills that will help prepare teachers for greater productivity; secondary school teachers should endeavour to have an understanding of their own emotional intelligence and use it for better and effective communication with their colleagues and students in order to create a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

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