

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE AND WORK OUTCOMES: EXPLORING THE MODERATING EFFECTS OF CONSCIENTIOUSNESS AND JOB COMPLEXITY

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Abstract. This study investigated the moderating effects of job complexity and conscientiousness on the relationship between openness to experience and work outcomes on a sample of 150 executives in a medical transcription company. Work outcomes were measured through job performance and job progression. It was found that openness to experience showed a positive relationship with performance in high complexity jobs and a negative relationship with performance in low complexity jobs. It was also seen that openness showed a negative relationship with progression when the individual was high on conscientiousness and a positive relationship with progression when the individual was low on conscientiousness.

Key Words: Big five theory, Job Performance, Job Complexity, Job Progression,

The context of operation of organizations has undergone tremendous changes in the past few decades. Increased competition has forced organizations to optimize innovation in products, services, and modes of production. Globalization requires that businesses adapt fast to dissimilar cultural influences. There is an increased need in the work environment to adapt, absorb, question, and create new things.

In this study, we explore the personality trait openness to experience, which describes these qualities in individuals. It details the extent to which an individual is creative, curious, and liberal. Openness to experience indicates a high level of intellectual and emotional development in a person. Hence, it would seem that openness be considered as a critical characteristic in professionals. On the contrary, however, openness has been shown to have a rather amorphous relationship with work outcomes. This relationship, its causes and nature, is explored in this study through the two contextual factors of job complexity and conscientiousness characteristic of the individual.

The first argument made here is that the relevance of openness to work outcomes will depend on the job characteristics and its design. Individuals who are more open will show a marked preference for unstructuredness in tasks and modes of operation. Moreover, such individuals value autonomy in their work and like to be constantly challenged. Thus, it is proposed that openness should be perceived as a positive attribute in only those individuals who are engaged in jobs that are more complex and entail a high level of independence, autonomy, and creative thinking. Furthermore, high openness may act as a deterrent in jobs that contain mechanical tasks with little independent thinking.

A second reason for the lack of visible correlation to work outcomes would be the moderation occurring due to other personality characteristics that may outweigh the effects of openness. A scientist who is low on openness may still show good performance if he or she is hardworking and dedicated. At the same time, the data entry operator may have good temperament and be hard working, but high openness will cause dissatisfaction with the job and subsequently lead to low output. Hence, it is proposed that the influence of openness can be offset by an interaction of the personality trait of conscientiousness. Consequently, we can see that the relation of openness to work outcomes is rather uneven and impinging on a number of external conditions and constraints. While it does exist, it is difficult to predict when and how it exists. These themes are studied in detail here.

In this study, we explore the influence of openness on work outcomes and its variation due to the complexity of the job and the conscientiousness of the individual. We also try to examine how the nature and effects of openness can be differentiated in men and women. In these contexts, we seek to find patterns of influence of openness to external and internal experience. This is the first study undertaken of its kind and hence it is mostly exploratory in nature. Work outcomes are measured through job progression and the quantitative performance of the employee.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Personality Studies in Talent Management

Personality is defined as the somewhat permanent and steady constitution of an individual's "character, temperament, intellect and physique" that is critical in constituting his or her responses to the

environment. This constitution is what makes the person unique and different from others (Eysenck&Eysenck, 1985). Personality assessments are one of the most prominent methods employed in selection and promotion over the years. Tracing the history of personality-performance studies over the last century, Barrick, Mount, and Judge (2001) cite a number of reasons for the negative conclusions regarding the predictability of personality given until the 1980s. One of the main factors was the lack of a classification model like the Five Factor Model(FFM) that has helped reduce the thousands of personality traits into a smaller number of well-defined factors. Another problem was that there was no clarity in identification of the traits, with the same labels being used for different traits and same trait being called by different labels. In addition, there was no concrete method used for the measurement of the traits. All of this contributed to the conclusion that personality had little or no power to predict work outcomes. Nevertheless, the second phase of research starting from the mid-1980s used some sort of classification like the FFM to discriminate between personality factors. This, along with the large number of meta-analytic studies, has helped in giving a more extensive and valid understanding of the predictive power of personality traits (Barrick et al., 2001). The FFM has so far been the most reliable model that has been used to establish the relation between the personality traits and work outcomes. McCrae and John (1991) claim that the advantage of the FFM is threefold, in that it helps to integrate a wide array of personality constructs, provides a global description of the personality in just five factors and still remains the most comprehensive basis of relating personality to other phenomena.

The five factor model of personality. The Five Factor Model (FFM) is a hierarchical organization of personality traits along five dimensions. The FFM originated from the study of natural language trait terms (McCrae & John, 1991) and it describes the personality traits in terms of five dimensions called the Big Five viz. extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Extraversion describes the level of assertiveness, activity, enthusiasm, and talkativeness in a person. Agreeableness indicates if the individual is appreciative, forgiving, trusting and kind. Conscientiousness describes the extent to which an individual is organized, reliable, efficient, hardworking, and responsible. Neuroticism measures whether an individual is unstable, anxious, tense, and worrying. The last factor openness measures the degree of artistic inclination, curiosity, imagination, introspection and the range of interests an individual possesses (McCrae & John, 1991). Openness is alternatively

defined as Intellect or Imagination in the lexical model operationalized by scientists like Norman, Digman, Goldberg etc (Goldberg, 1993).

Openness to experience in personality. Openness to experience has been the most controversial among the personality factors. Openness to experience is expressed by a need to expand and examine experience. It defines the extent to which an individual allows himself or herself to be affected by external or internal influences (McCrae, 1992). A person high on openness to experience is likely to seek novel experiences, initiate new ideas, and have a creative bend of mind. Fiske (1994) interprets openness to experience (referred to as culture) as “taking in, processing, weighing what the world offer.” Such individuals are capable of feeling deeper and more diverse emotions than a normal human being.

The different facets of openness are fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Fantasy corresponds to high imagination in an individual. Aesthetics measures an individual’s inherent interest in art and beauty. Feelings talks about the extent to which an individual is open to his/her own feelings. The above three facets form a factor called openness to internal experience (Griffin & Hesketh, 2004).

“The facet, actions corresponds to the willingness to do different and more varied activities. Ideas refer to individuals who are more open to ideas, are likely to think more creatively than others. Values indicate the tendency to question established political and religious dogmas. The facets of actions, ideas, and values form a factor called openness to external experience” (Griffin & Hesketh, 2004).

Work Outcomes and Factors Affecting Work Outcomes

There are various means of quantifying work outcomes. Barrick and Mount (1991) used three types of criteria to measure performance: personnel data that includes salary and status change, tenure etc, job proficiency that includes performance ratings and productivity, and training proficiency. Job performance can also be measured in terms of task performance, which deals with the ability to plan, organize, execute and control, or contextual performance relating to the behavior in social and psychological contexts like the ability to negotiate, mentor or coach etc (Oh, In-Sue, & Berry, 2009). Career success is defined as the “positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one’s work experiences” (Judge, Cable,

Boudreau, & Bretz Jr, 1994: 3). It is mainly measured in terms of objective or extrinsic success and subjective or intrinsic success. Objective success is measured in terms of pay and career progression while subjective success is measured in terms of career and job satisfaction (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001).

Personality has been shown to have an extensive influence in the context of work outcomes. This has been established primarily after the development of the FFM. It has been seen that conscientiousness is a valid predictor of performance across different jobs (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick et al., 2001). Emotional stability is also related to overall performance for different occupations though its effect is not as strong as conscientiousness (Barrick et al., 2001). A meta-analytic study conducted by Mount, Barrick, and Stewart (1998) found that while conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness were valid predictors in jobs that involved more client interactions, emotional stability and agreeableness were seen to be the predictors in jobs that required teamwork. Extraversion was seen as relevant to jobs that involved social interaction. Personality traits not only influence the quantifiable outcomes of the job but also predict desirable behavior that may have an indirect impact on the work outcomes like attracting organizational sponsorship (Turban & Dougherty, 1994).

The Role of Openness in Predicting Work Outcomes

Although there is no evidence that openness can positively affect overall work outcomes, it is seen to have implications on performance under specific conditions and within specific criteria. Openness is an important quality required for skill acquisition (Oakes, Ferris, Martocchio, Buckley, & Broach, 2001) and it affects overall training proficiency (Barrick & Mount, 1991). It was also seen that those who are high on openness showed better performance in unfamiliar environments (Bing & Lounsbury, 2000). Another interesting characteristic of open individuals is their bent for creative behavior. Scott Shane (1995) defined a group of four traits that he stated characterized persons who would be instrumental in bringing about innovation in any organization. These included value for autonomy that is needed to encourage innovative behavior and the ability to provide opportunities to violate organizational norms and standard operating procedures in order to facilitate experimentation. The openness to ideas facilitates these individuals to initiate new strategies while the openness to values helps in implementing new strategies by challenging the existing

norms. Facets of openness like imagination, spontaneity, risk-taking, and intuitiveness were seen as being relevant elements in the performance context of Organization Development consultants (Hamilton, 1988).

The natural ability to thrive in higher complexity would mean that open individuals would be preferred for higher positions in the hierarchy. This is supplemented by the correspondence of openness to ambition and need for achievement (De Jong, Velde, & Jansen, 2001). Open individuals also show a natural aptitude to emerge as leaders in a group since they are most likely to initiate new ideas, ask more questions, and give more opinions (Kickul & Newman, 2000). Therefore, in addition to predicting performance, openness is also an important quality in predicting career progress.

Thus, it can be concluded by analyzing previous studies that the relation of openness to work outcomes is visible but highly context dependent. Here, we test if openness will affect work outcomes in two ways: through job performance and through progression to higher levels. In addition, we test if the relation of openness to work outcomes will be moderated by job complexity and conscientiousness.

Openness and Job Complexity

Individuals high on openness are naturally suited to high complexity jobs. It is seen that individuals that are more open will be dissatisfied in jobs low in skill variety (De Jong et al., 2001). They also exhibit higher levels of creativity when the ends and means to their task are ill-defined (George & Zhou, 2001). High openness also indicates that an individual will be more tuned in to his environment and will be attentive to multiple influences while taking decisions (McElroy & Dowd, 2007). Not only will openness positively affect work outcomes in a complex environment, but also routine, mundane tasks can cause openness to influence work outcomes negatively. Open individuals will become dissatisfied and frustrated if they find their job mechanical and unchallenging. Thus, we predict that in high complexity jobs, high openness will produce better work outcomes whereas in low complexity jobs, high openness will adversely affect work outcomes.

Hypothesis 1: Job complexity moderates the relationship between openness and work outcomes, such that openness will be positively related to work outcomes in high complexity jobs and negatively related to work outcomes in low complexity jobs.

Moderating Effects of Conscientiousness on Openness

Conscientiousness is one personality factor that has been at the center of personality-performance studies. A conscientious individual is competent, well-organized, duty-bound, disciplined, and deliberative. Conscientious people tend to be highly achievement focused and show great perseverance, which explains the high significance of this factor in career success (Judge et al., 1999; Ng, Eby, Sorenson, & Feldman, 2005). The traits relating to openness and those relating to conscientiousness are seen to be quite opposite to each other. Conscientiousness talks about impulse-control, need for structure, organization, and conformity while openness describes risk-taking, low dogmatism, unstructured thinking, and comfort with ambiguity. We also see that in several contexts, openness and conscientiousness produce opposite impacts (Le Pine, Colquitt, & Erez, 2000; George & Zhou, 2001). It is possible that in the presence of conscientiousness, the influence of openness on work outcomes is reduced. This type of compensatory interaction has been seen between other factors affecting performance (Coté & Miners, 2006; Burke & Witt, 2002; Witt, 2002).

Thus we would like to explore here whether the presence of conscientiousness is one of the factors that reduce the influence of openness on work outcomes. In addition, we would like to examine if conscientiousness can compensate for a lack of openness and if it does, to what extent. Here, we predict that the effect of openness on work outcomes will be affected adversely by conscientiousness. Conscientiousness will thus compensate for the lack of openness in the work outcomes of an individual.

Hypothesis 2: Conscientiousness moderates the relationship between openness and work outcomes such that openness will be positively related to work outcomes when the individual is low on conscientiousness and openness will be negatively related to work outcomes when the individual is high on conscientiousness.

METHOD

Participants

One hundred and fifty participants took part in the study. All the participants were Indians. The participants were employees of a multinational medical transcription company. All of the participants were of executive level or above. Fifty two percent of the sample population was female. Seventy-six percent of the sample was graduates, 19% was postgraduates, 5% was diploma holders, and one participant was high school pass. The age group was from 20 to 42 years. Eighty four percent of the participants were under 30 years old and 46% of the participants were under the age of 25. All the participants of the study had completed one year in the company.

Procedure

The items that were used for the six facets of openness to experience were taken from the IPIP scales (Goldberg, 1999). There were ten items for each of the facets, both positively and negatively keyed. Ten items are used to measure each of the six facets of ideas, actions, values, fantasy, aesthetics, and values thus forming 60 items. One of the items measuring values was missed out while preparing the questionnaire. Thus, 59 items were used in the questionnaire. Three hundred questionnaires were distributed to the employees. The supervisors were directed to collect the completed forms within two days. As the employees were not allowed to complete the questionnaires on the work floor due to security reasons, they were directed to do so at home. One hundred and fifty four questionnaires were returned and were posted back. Among the questionnaires returned, two did not have an ID number and we discarded them. The performance data for two of the participants were not obtained and their questionnaires were discarded.

In the first hypothesis, since job complexity was taken as the moderator variable and job complexity is directly related to job level, work outcomes were measured through performance scores alone. In the second hypothesis, where the moderator variable was conscientiousness, both performance and job progression were used to measure work outcomes.

Measures

Standardized performance scores. The standardized score for individual employees for each month was calculated using the standard deviation and mean of the percentage target achievement of all the participants in each designation. The average of this score across twelve months gave the average standardized performance score for each employee. The maximum standardized score was also taken.

Job progression. The level of job occupied in the hierarchy was taken as the measure of job progression. A new joinee always started at the lowest level of medical transcriptionist before progressing to medical editor and then quality assurance specialist.

Openness. All the six facets of openness were combined together to find an overall score for openness. The three facets of openness to fantasy, aesthetics, and feelings were combined together as openness to internal experience (Griffin & Hesketh, 2004). The three facets of openness to values, ideas, and actions were combined together to form openness to external experience (Griffin & Hesketh, 2004).

Job complexity data. The job descriptions for the three jobs were obtained from the organization. The descriptions for the three jobs were also checked from O*Net (<http://online.onetcenter.org/find/descriptor/browse>). Using these two sources, a more comprehensive job description for each of the three jobs was developed which was then used for measuring the relative job complexities. The job descriptions were given to ten final-year students specializing in human resources management at a premier institute in India and they were asked to rate each job description on a scale of 1 to 4 on the following parameters: responsibility, complexity of task, independence, opportunities for creativity, self-development, ability to see the product of one's work, control over the work of others (Lopata, Norr, Barnewolt & Miller, 1985). These parameters were then checked for reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.953) and then averaged to find an overall score for job complexity.

RESULTS

The jobs were categorized according to the job complexity ratings obtained from ten independent raters. The reliability of the ratings was checked and the Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.95. The medical

transcriptionist obtained a job complexity score of 2.04, the medical editor obtained a job complexity score of 2.67, and the quality assurance specialist obtained a job complexity score of 3.09. The complexity scores strongly correlated with the respective positions of the jobs in the hierarchy. The conscientiousness scale was found to have a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.53.

Reliability was calculated for each of the facets, openness to internal experience (formed by the facets fantasy, aesthetics, and feelings), and openness to external experience (formed by ideas, actions and values) and overall openness. Since the initial reliabilities were very low, some of the items had to be dropped from each set. In total, there were 23 items in openness to internal experience scale with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.61 and 15 items in openness to external experience scale with Cronbach's alpha value 0.80. The complete openness scale had Cronbach's alpha value of 0.83

The performance data for each month was standardized and the average for 12 months was taken as average standardized performance or average performance. The highest out of the 12 months' score was taken as the maximum standardized performance or maximum performance. This was done in order to find the true relative performance. The performance of the employee was based on the target achieved. Given the exploratory nature of this study and the low sample size, correlation analysis has been used here to validate the hypotheses. Also, since there was no strong literature available on how openness facets differ between men and women, no hypothesis was formed for this. Nevertheless, we have examined the differences in the influence of openness on work outcomes for men and women separately.

In the first hypothesis, it was predicted that openness would cause better performance in high complexity jobs than in low complexity jobs. We found adequate support for this as Job 2 showed a significant negative relationship of openness to peak performance ($r = -0.49, p = 0.00$) and Job 3 showed significant positive relationship of openness to maximum performance ($r = 0.50, p = 0.04$). The results were echoed in the relationship with average performance too with Job 2 showing a correlation of $r = -0.44$, and $p = .02$ and Job 3 showing a correlation of $r = .45, p = .08$. An interesting finding here is that the effect of both internal openness and openness to external experience changed from negative to positive as the job complexity increased.

Table 1- Correlation of Openness with Job Performance across Job Levels

Variables	AvgStand	MaxStand
Grade 1	.06	.07
Grade 2	-.44*	-.49**
Grade 3	.45	.50*

Note: Avgstand = Average standardized performance; Maxstand = Maximum standardized performance; N=105

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2- Means, Standard deviations and Correlations among Study Variables for Employees with Low and High Conscientiousness

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gender	-	-	-	.03	.14		.05	.11	.03	.07	.09
Age	25.72	3.53	-0.1	-	.14	-0.01	.06	.06	.01	-0.11	-0.12
EduQual	-	-	.07	-0.01	-	-0.21	.07	.05	.09	-0.03	-0.08
Designation	-	-	-.28*	-.08	-.16	-	-.19	-.29*	-.02	-.17	-.20
Openness	3.70	0.38	-.05	.02	.12	.19	(.84)	.94**	.77**	-.02	.01
Internal	3.83	0.43	-.03	.06	.11	.13	.95**	(.61)	.56**	.02	.05
External	3.41	0.43	-.04	-.09	.10	.31**	.80**	.60**	(.80)	-.04	-.04
AvgStand	0.01	0.79	-.11	-.06	.04	.17	.06	.05	.07	-	.94**
Maxstand	0.71	1.21	-.08	-.02	.04	.10	.05	.03	.04	.92**	-

Note. The lower triangular matrix contains data for low conscientiousness, the upper triangular matrix contains data for employees with high conscientiousness, and coefficient alphas are in parenthesis along the diagonal. $N = 105$. For Gender, Male = 1 and Female = 2; Avgstand = Average standardized performance; Maxstand = Maximum standardized performance; Internal = Openness to internal experience; External = Openness to external experience; and EduQual = Educational Qualification.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis 2 was supported for job progression but not for performance. The relationship of openness to job level was significant and positive at $r = 0.19$, $p = 0.093$ in the case of low conscientiousness and was negative at $r = -.19$, $p = 0.114$ in the case of high conscientiousness. Though direction of the influence was similar in the case of performance, the relationship was not significant with the positive correlation at $r = 0.06$, $p = 0.61$ for low conscientiousness employees and the negative correlation of $r = 0.02$, $p = 0.88$ for high conscientiousness employees. Thus, it can be seen that while high conscientiousness or high openness can act as a significant advantage, high openness accompanied by high conscientiousness will negatively affect career growth.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the moderating effects of job complexity and conscientiousness on the relationship between openness and work outcomes -- defined by performance on the job and job progression. We found that openness relates negatively to performance in the case of low complexity jobs and positively in the case of high complexity jobs. We also found that openness and conscientiousness show compensatory effects in the case of progression to higher level jobs. There were also differences found in the effect of openness on the work outcomes of men and women.

Openness in Less Complex and High Complex Jobs

It was seen that openness relates positively to performance in high complexity jobs and negatively to performance in low complexity jobs. Individuals who are more open should be placed in jobs that would

keep them challenged and give them enough autonomy. High openness in individuals doing routine, mundane jobs will lead to job tension and depression. An important finding is that contrary to other studies that showed internal openness negatively affecting performance (Griffin and Hesketh, 2004); we found openness to internal and external experience as positively predicting performance in high complexity jobs and both dimensions negatively predicted performance in low complexity jobs. However, the facet of aesthetics, being the strongest predictor of performance in Job 3 ($r = .51, p = .03$) may have skewed the overall impact in favor of internal openness. In a job like quality assurance specialist of medical documents, aesthetics plays an important role, since it requires attention to the formatting and detailing of the document, and the other facets of internal openness may not be equally relevant. This means that it may not be wise to group the facets into two categories for all kinds of jobs. Rather, the relevance of the facets should be analyzed in isolation in relation to various job characteristics.

Openness and Job Progression

It was proved that conscientiousness moderates the relationship between openness and job progression. In highly conscientious individuals, openness has a negative influence on job progression. This implies that a data entry operator might have a fast job progress if he or she is persevering and organized. However, a wide range of skills and a high need for variety and creativity in such a job will offset the influence of such conscientious behavior reducing the progress. At the same time, we see that in low conscientious individuals, openness positively predicts progress. As explained earlier, a scientist who is lazy, unorganized, and open is likely to show better progress than a scientist who is lazy, unorganized, and closed. Thus, we see that conscientiousness can compensate for a lack of openness and vice-versa in determining growth in career. The caveat is that this relationship is dependent upon the nature of the job. The compensatory influence of openness on conscientiousness would be stronger in a high-complexity rather than in a low-complexity job.

It is possible that though these two factors are of opposite nature, both correspond to a high growth need or achievement motivation (De Jong et al., 2001; Costa and McCrae, 1992). The root of the correspondence is however different. Conscientious individuals achieve higher growth because they are highly result oriented and motivated towards success. Openness on the other hand is likely to correspond to higher growth as

it leads to greater autonomy and opportunities to increase the breadth of skills.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. We looked at a small sample size of 150 managers and the distribution was skewed across the three jobs. Most of the participants were in the medical transcriptionist jobs with only about 20 individuals each in the other two jobs. Since this was a first study of its nature and given the small size of the sample, an exploratory approach was followed. We have used only correlation analysis to validate the hypothesis. Yet another limitation of the study was in the method of data collection. Data were not collected from the individuals under supervision. Due to security issues, the questionnaires could not be distributed on the work floor and were completed at home by the participants.

The low reliability of the facet scales was another drawback of the study. This can be attributed to the lack of understanding of the items or in the misinterpretation of the meanings. For e.g., in the case of a facet like values, as the perception in the Indian context is widely different from that in the Western context, many of the items may have lacked validity for the current sample. The items 2 and 4 of the facet values were “I tend to vote for liberal/conservative candidates.” Such a measure may be more relevant in two party systems like in the U.S. Most people in India will not understand the difference between a liberal and a conservative candidate because of the widely different political system. A more suitable item to measure the openness in values would have been “I vote on caste/religious basis.” The lack of understanding could also be one of the reasons for the lack of reliability of the items. For e.g. certain items, like “creature of habit” or “attached to conventional ways” may have been difficult for the participants to interpret. The performance ratings obtained showed only the quantitative performance of the employees and not qualitative aspects like leadership initiative, creativity, ability to work in a team, interpersonal skills etc.

Implications for Practice

It is often seen that employees with high potential are not able to perform at the expected level once they move into a bigger role. While they might be highly efficient in completing a clearly defined task within a

prescribed period and set of standards, they may not be able to work under unclear objectives, take tough decisions, and obtain a multidimensional perspective to problems. This leads to not only ineffectiveness but also demotivation of the employee. Hence, the mapping of employees to responsibilities should take into careful consideration the environment of work and the ability of the individual to cope with the environment.

As most jobs today are becoming increasingly complex in nature, it is proposed that openness should be considered as an important criterion in selecting employees. Openness should be used as a selection criterion not only for higher-level jobs but also for any role that entail complexity in task or context. At the same time, it is recommended that caution be exercised while using openness as a selection or performance criteria. Openness should not be equated with traits like conscientiousness that can be seen as being more relevant for almost all jobs. While conscientiousness might be a desirable trait irrespective of the details of job, openness will create adverse effects in the wrong job.

On the other, we see here that openness can compensate for conscientiousness in determining progress. An employee who lacks the high level of efficiency or productivity might still be preferred for a promotion because he can work in high complexity tasks and handle ambiguous situations effectively. This compensatory influence is an interesting conclusion as it proposes that openness can act as a substitute for conscientiousness in selecting employees to certain jobs. However, the nature of such jobs should be carefully appraised. While a creative director may require higher openness, an accountant might require higher conscientiousness and a HR manager will require a moderation of both attributes. Overall, it is proposed that as the nature and content of jobs become more and more dynamic, the traditionally valued traits like conscientiousness may be replaced by other characteristics like openness (Le Pine et al., 2000; George & Zhou, 2001).

Implications for Future Research

Openness may not have yet emerged as a fundamental predictor in managerial success. However, in the current economic, social, and political contexts of organizations, there is a need to take a relook at how this factor manifests in individuals. The openness factor has to be carefully studied in a context sensitive manner. Openness, being one of the personality factors covering the greatest breadth, offers intriguing areas for future studies.

For example, how artistic/ aesthetic interests can interact with managerial qualities, whether a vast experiential knowledge has an advantage over deeper domain knowledge in a leadership context, can creativity be a positive attribute irrespective of the nature of the occupation, etc. are some of the questions that we can seek to answer.

In this study, only three jobs were examined in detail. These were a lot similar in context and content. It is proposed that future research on openness should focus on jobs across sectors and across the hierarchy. In addition, more complete measurement criteria of performance should be considered while evaluating work outcomes. There should be a more careful and detailed examination of the work context in order to discriminate the conditions in which each of the Big Five factors is likely to have the greatest effect.

As most work contexts of today are becoming increasingly dynamic, job complexity should be considered as an important work characteristic. The interaction of job complexity with other personality factors can also give interesting results. The compensatory influences among the Big Five should be studied more widely. Another important area for future research is how the openness facets influence performance in men and women.

Conclusion

Through this study, it has been shown that openness can significantly affect work outcomes in many ways. The fact that the relationship between openness and performance is context dependent is highlighted. Openness tends to be more significant in its influence, when the job context gives enough autonomy, demands unconventional thinking, and values individual freedom. The interaction of openness with personality was also explored here through the factor of conscientiousness. It was seen that there is significant variation in the influence of openness by the interaction of conscientiousness factor. We conclude that the Big Five factor of openness to experience, which has been rather controversial, is a dynamic and rich personality trait that contains much to be explored. Its influences on behavior, abilities, and attitude are poised to be an important area of future study.

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