

THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY TRAITS TOWARDS
JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Science (Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Management
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

AUGUST 2014

*Dedicated to my beloved husband, son, mom and dad.
Your love, understanding and support are always a great deal for me.
Words can't express my gratitude to you.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to thank Allah S.W.T for His blessing that I managed to finish this thesis successfully. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Siti Fatimah binti Bahari, for her knowledge sharing, her time and her encouragement along the completion of this thesis. Without her continuous support and guidance, this thesis would have never been successfully completed.

I am very thankful to my friends and all those who are directly or indirectly contributed towards the success of this work. I feel very much indebted for their kind help, opinion and comment.

Finally, thanks to my beloved husband Helmi bin Alias and my son Muhammad Iskandar Syah who has been very understanding and supportive by giving me continuous motivation. Your understanding and love helped me to overcome all the barriers in completing this thesis.

Thank you all.

ABSTRACT

This study is conducted to examine the influence of personality traits towards job performance among public secondary school teachers, specifically in Pasir Gudang town. The objective of this study is to identify the main personality traits, the level of job performance, the relationship between personality traits and job performance, and to identify the most dominant personality traits that influence job performance among secondary school teachers. A total population of 954 teachers from eight (8) public secondary schools in Pasir Gudang town were selected to be the respondents of this study. A cross-sectional survey was conducted using questionnaires which were distributed to the respondents. Descriptive analysis was used to identify the main personality traits and the level of job performance. Correlation test using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) was also used to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Besides that, the standard multiple regression was used to identify the most dominant personality traits that influence job performance among teachers. The findings revealed that the teachers possess personality trait of Agreeableness and has high level of job performance. In addition, it is found that there is a significant relationship between traits of Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism with job performance. Besides that, the findings also indicated that Neuroticism is the most dominant trait that influence job performance among teachers. Positive implications of this study suggested that understanding on the influence of personality traits towards job performance will guide the Ministry of Education to select the suitable candidate to be an educator. This eventually will assist the realization of ministry's aim to produce quality and effective teachers.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji pengaruh personaliti terhadap prestasi kerja di kalangan guru-guru sekolah menengah awam, khususnya di bandar Pasir Gudang. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti personaliti utama, tahap prestasi kerja, hubungan antara personaliti dan prestasi kerja, dan untuk mengenalpasti personaliti yang paling dominan mempengaruhi prestasi kerja di kalangan guru-guru sekolah menengah. Sejumlah 954 guru dari lapan (8) sekolah menengah awam di bandar Pasir Gudang telah dipilih untuk menjadi responden kajian ini. Satu kajian rentas telah dijalankan menggunakan borang soal selidik yang diedarkan kepada responden. Data yang diperolehi telah digunakan untuk mengenalpasti personaliti utama dan tahap prestasi kerja. Ujian korelasi menggunakan Pekali Korelasi Pearson (r) pula digunakan untuk melihat hubungan antara pembolehubah bebas dan bersandar. Selain itu, regresi berganda telah digunakan untuk mengenalpasti personaliti yang paling dominan mempengaruhi prestasi kerja di kalangan guru-guru. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa guru-guru mempunyai sifat keperibadian *Agreeableness* dan mempunyai tahap prestasi kerja yang tinggi. Di samping itu, didapati bahawa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara ciri-ciri *Openness to Experience*, *Agreeableness*, dan *Neuroticism* dengan prestasi kerja. Selain itu, hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa *Neuroticism* adalah sifat yang paling dominan mempengaruhi prestasi kerja di kalangan guru-guru. Implikasi positif daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pemahaman mengenai pengaruh personaliti terhadap prestasi kerja boleh dijadikan sebagai petunjuk kepada Kementerian Pelajaran untuk memilih calon yang sesuai untuk menjadi pendidik. Ini akhirnya akan membantu merealisasikan matlamat kementerian untuk melahirkan guru yang berkualiti dan berkesan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This initial chapter presents the detail background of the research, purpose of research including the important issues concerned which lead to the establishment of this research. In addition, the chapter describes the research questions, objectives and the scopes of research which explaining the variables and respondents involved. Furthermore, the significance and limitations of the research that will affect the research operation is stated as well in this chapter.

The current research is conducted to find out whether contradict between employees personality traits may resulted in different behavior of job performance. The central assumption of the research is that personality traits do have relation and influence towards teachers' job performance. The framework that assists to guide the research is Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality as well as Campbell's Theory of Job Performance.

1.2 Background of the Study

The vision and mission of the Ministry of Education in Malaysia (KPM) and the Teachers Education Department (BPG) is to implement a world-class teacher education in terms of quality to ensure that the teachers are competent to meet the national inspiration (Chee, 2008). Thus, one of the objectives of BPG is to produce teachers who has quality of personal characteristics to perform effectively as educators since quality teachers are considered as the first class human capital (Chee, 2008).

As stated in Bernama dated 13th March 2014, Deputy Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Malaysia Education Development Plan (PPPM) mentioned that government set a target to be in the top one-third group of the world's best educational system. However, this target is only achievable if the issue of quality teachers is successfully addressed. Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin added that studies done by Ministry of Education, UNESCO, and other education experts prove that the personal characteristics of quality teachers play significant factor in determining the success of students.

Studies on teaching and learning styles revealed that teachers behave and teach differently (Gary, 2004) due to their type of personality has an impact on their behaviors in the classroom (Erdle, Murray, & Rushton, 1985). This support by Harris and Rutledge (2007) who found that personality traits do predict the effectiveness of teachers in performing their job in teaching. Similarly, Rockoff, Jacob, Kane, and Staiger (2008) stated that teachers' personality traits serve as one of the determinants of students' outcome. It is said that the characteristics of teachers' personality is associated with the effectiveness in teaching whereby their personality has relationship on the behaviors that teachers choose to perform (Gary, 2004).

There is expanding evidence showing that among all of school resources, teachers possess the greatest effect on students' academic achievement (Barbara, Spyros, & Larry, 2004; Daniel, Lisa, & William, 2007) and the most pertinent factor affecting student learning is the teacher (Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Accordingly, educational research which has been conducted in recent years also reveal a significant relationship between the quality of teachers' personality characteristics and students' academic achievement (Hanushek, 1992; W. Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

A teacher's personality is often under the perusal of his or her students which become an example and model for the students (Khairul Anuar, 2012). However, do all teachers nowadays have what it takes or possess necessary personality characteristics to be an educator? Due to this reason, it is seen that personality trait is really matters among teachers because different trait of personality will impact on different result in teaching effort. In response to prior meta-analyses (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000), this current research is carried out to investigate the influence of personality traits towards job performance among public secondary school teachers, specifically in Pasir Gudang town. It is the essential aim of this research to identify whether respondents' personality is congruent with their job which finally influences them to behave or perform as educators.

1.3 Problem Statement

Work as a school teacher is considered as a highly stressful occupation (Constantinos, 2007) especially when teachers do not possess necessary personality as an educator (Fontana & Abouserie, 1993). Students nowadays are facing with numerous obstacles that hampering them to become successful students as one of the obstacles derived from ineffective teachers (Spencer, 2009). It is said that teachers who do not have the right characteristics as a teacher will affect on low personal accomplishment and fail to deliver effective teaching (Francisco, Eva Maria, & Miguel, 2005). Even failure of teachers in showing that they are really professional will contribute to the problem of teaching profession (Chee, 2008). Thus, the aspect of personality is crucial in delivering effective teaching (Zuhaili, 2009) and it is pertinent to identify teachers' personality characteristics as teachers are significantly impact their job performance and the student achievement (Douglas & Tim, 2010).

In recent years, measurement of work-related personality characteristics has become an increasingly vital function of human resources in the process of employee selection (Levy, 2011). Levy (2011) added that the domain of personnel assessment from only emphasize on job-related knowledge, skill, and abilities (KSA's) has expanded by including other personal characteristics, specifically personality traits. This is done due to the probability of someone to succeed in their career is high when their personality traits close with the needs in that particular career (Naemah, 2007). Prior to this, some school principals will select teachers who possessed characteristics which fit the school's needs (Deal & Peterson, 1999). As stated on the formal portal of Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia (MPM) on the website, personality is one of the important parameter as criteria in process of selecting teachers. In addition, it is supported by research in the area of Organizational Psychology that personality measurement is relevant and has value in selection process of teacher candidates as this occupation involves higher-level of interpersonal components (Barrick & Mount, 1991). With regard to that statement, researcher aims to identify the main personality traits possessed

by specific context of public secondary school teachers. Between various dimension of Big-Five personality traits, which is the main personality trait possessed by the respondents?

Given the existence of dynamic pressures and interdependent work for change in organizations, workers initiative or creativity in contributing on contextual-related performance is increasingly crucial to overall effectiveness of organizations (Motowidlo & Schmit, 1999). Referring to the news in Utusan Online (September 2013), consistent with the transformation of education, numerous programs have been implemented such as the latest Education Development Plan (*Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia*) which indirectly requires a strong commitment from every school teachers to perform well as educators (Zin, 2013). However, this plan is difficult to be achieved if teachers are unable to deal with their common work stress and indirectly hampering them to show good performance (Judge & Bono, 2001). Similarly, Azlina and Sew Lee (2008) mentioned that unstable emotion among school teachers might affect their achievement and job performance. It is still uncertain whether teachers can depends on some definite performance aspect (Lavigna, 1992). Mustafa (2013) mentioned that teachers who fail to show sincerity in performing their job as an educator will leads to poor performance of teachers. Therefore, researcher perceives a need to carried out a study in identifying the level of teachers' job performance as they play a significant role in nation building and develop leaders (Khairul Anuar, 2012).

Theorist of career development suggested that someone's personality has relationship with their commitment in their job (Naemah, 2007) and it is now recognized by researchers and practitioners alike that personality plays a key role in job performance (Levy, 2011). Findings by Salgado (1998) reveal the beneficial of personality as a selection tool to complement cognitive capability in predicting performance. Different trait of personality can have a positive relation with some dimensions of job performance and at the same time a negative relation with other dimensions of job performance (Jeffrey & Linn, 2001). It is said that certain teachers

who perform well in teaching and provide quality instructional are those who display certain traits of personality such as outgoing, humor, enthusiastic, and emotional stability (Radmacher & Martin, 2001). John, Donahue, and Kentle (1991) claimed that personality trait of conscientiousness are related positively with teachers job performance. However, which traits of personality do really have relations with teachers' job performance, specifically in the context of public secondary school teachers in Pasir Gudang town? Thus, it creates desire in researcher to further study the relationship between personality traits within teachers and their job performance.

Nowadays, more organizations are practicing personality test in hiring and selection process as these five features of personality can be pertinent when predicting the job performance of an employee Disha (2013). This happen due to the realization that different teachers have different capabilities and personality characteristics that later can influence their job performance directly (Siadat, Arbabisarjou, Azhdari, Amiri, & Aboeimehrizi, 2011). Several recent studies (Alen, 2012; Sanders, 2008) revealed that each traits of personality are not equivalent and has different value of impact on job performance (Disha, 2013). For instance, findings of research carried out by Sanders (2008) shown that attitude and age are the most important factor that influence job performance in the context of police officers. In other cases, it is reported that Conscientiousness is constantly the most trait of personality that influence the job performance for all jobs from sales and managerial positions to semiskilled and skilled work (Mount, Ilies, & Johnson, 2006). Prior to this, an issue arises in researcher about which is the most dominant personality traits that influence job performance, specifically in the context of public secondary school teachers in Pasir Gudang town?

1.4 Research Questions

In order to investigate whether personality traits do have relationship and influence towards job performance, the research will address the following specific questions:

Research Question 1: What are the main personality traits possessed by teachers?

Research Question 2: What is the level of job performance among teachers?

Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between personality traits and job performance?

Research Question 4: Which is the most dominant personality traits that influence job performance?

1.5 Research Objectives

The general objective of this research is to investigate the influence of personality traits towards job performance among public secondary school teachers in Pasir Gudang town. The specific objectives are:

- 1) To identify the main personality traits possessed by public secondary school teachers in Pasir Gudang town.
- 2) To identify the level of job performance among public secondary school teachers in Pasir Gudang town.
- 3) To examine the relationship between personality traits and job performance among public secondary school teachers in Pasir Gudang town.
- 4) To identify the most dominant personality traits that influence job performance among public secondary school teachers in Pasir Gudang town.

1.6 Scope of Study

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of personality traits towards employee job performance. In addition, the current research is conducted with the aim to provide an empirical data on the relationship and influence of personality traits towards job performance. The findings may provide valuable information to education bodies, schools, and teacher as well as to other researchers on whether personality traits should be consider as an important element in predicting job performance.

The area of current research is focus on a population of public secondary school teachers in Pasir Gudang town which is 954 teachers in total. From the total number of population, eight (8) public secondary schools in Pasir Gudang town are involved as respondents in this research. A quantitative research approach is applied to measure the variables by distributing a set of questionnaire to respondents. Education industry is chosen for this research to be conducted in conjunction of responding to the issue of passion for teaching which has been debated in Forum Konsep Baharu Pendidikan Abad Ke-21 at the University of Malaya on last 10th September 2013.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The findings or result of this research may provide pertinent and meaningful information to education bodies, schools as well as to other researchers in many ways.

First of all, the findings of current research may contribute in creating awareness to policy maker or management of education bodies in Malaysia to produce teachers who possess true quality and qualified to be educators. The academic excellence alone cannot determine who is more qualified to be an educator as the personality needs to be taken into account. As mentioned by Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin in his speech during convocation ceremony for Bachelor of Teaching in Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC), teachers need to be aware that educate skills are changing continuously which require them to work towards improving their performance and adapt with changing environment. Prior to this, the findings may provide useful insights to the policy maker or management of education bodies on the importance of analyzing one's personality characteristics to be an educator in teaching line. By having the right personality together with passion in teaching, a teacher is likely put an effort and strive to perform well in his or her job in teaching. Quality teachers who perform well in their job will indirectly produce successful students with better academic performance.

Second, the findings may provide useful insights to schools on how to select teachers in hiring process. Rely solely on the body language or high confidence level shown during interview session does not guarantee that the particular applicant has passion and suitable personality required to be an educator. Therefore, the findings of this research may develop new perspectives among schools on the importance to consider the aspect of personality characteristics among job applicants or candidates. It is believed that successful job performance is derived from appropriate personality traits. Hence, the findings are beneficial to schools by providing them useful insights when selecting teachers for available vacancies as educators.

Last but not least, the findings are beneficial as guideline or reference to other researchers who are interested to study the influence of personality traits towards job performance, perhaps in other different context.

1.8 Limitations of Study

A number of limitations need to be addressed when using the findings derived from this research. First, the present research is conducted focuses only on the context of teachers, which means that the size of respondent is limited. The study is only limited to public secondary schools in Pasir Gudang town and it may hinder the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, it is uncertain whether the findings of this research can be generalized or represents the general population of other public sectors.

Second, it has to be noted that the next possible limitation could be derived from distraction factors such as work stress, unstable emotion or different level of understanding among respondents. This might resulted in bias during the process of filling in the questionnaires by respondents.

1.9 Conceptual Definitions

1.9.1 *Personality Traits*

According to Julie (2012), personality is defined as enduring patterns of action or behavior. Personality traits are tendencies of individuals to behave in similar ways across settings and situations (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Dilchert, 2005). Furthermore, Ryckman (2004) suggests personality as a dynamic and organized set or characteristics possessed by an individual that uniquely influences his or her behaviors, cognitions and motivations in various situations.

Personality testing are often used at work for the purpose of recruitment, selection, promotion, appraisal as well as in research. With respect to personality traits, the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality (Goldberg, 1993) serves as the most widely accepted structure of personality among researchers and scientists. Costa and McCrae (1992) mentioned that the structure of the FFM is based on five broad main factors, which also known as the “Big Five” personality dimensions, as cited by Goldberg (1990). The Big Five personality traits have been preferably models used rather than other models, due to it is able to account for different personality traits without overlapping. The five main dimensions of personality are referred to as Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993). Each dimension of the “Big Five” personality is described as:

Extraversion – talkative, sociable, expressive, outgoing, and enjoy socializing.

Neuroticism – moody, temperamental, anxious, and irritable.

Agreeableness – sensitive, tolerant, affable, kind, trusting, and warm.

Conscientiousness – dependable, reliable, trustworthy, systematic, organized, achievement-oriented, punctual, as well as inclination to adhere to company norms, rules, and values.

Openness to Experience – receptivity and openness to change or new ideas, creative, innovation, intellectual, novel experience, curious, and new learning.

1.9.2 Job Performance

In general perspectives, job performance can be defined as all the behaviors employees engage in while at work (Jex, 2002). According to Murphy (1989), performance should focus on behaviors rather than outcomes. By solely focusing on outcomes, this could lead employees to find the easiest way to achieve the desired results (Murphy, 1989). Some researchers are generally agreed that job performance can be defined on a micro level as employees' behaviors and actions which contribute to the organization's goal (Campbell, 1990; Murphy, 1989).

In addition, job performance refers to the effectiveness of one's behavior that contributes to objectives of organizational (Motowidlo, 2003). Similarly, Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) support that job performance is based on how resourcefully he or she contribute with behaviors which are in line with the aim of organization. Campbell *et al.* (1990) added that job performance consists of the observable behaviors that a person do in his or her job that are relevant to the organization's goal.

1.10 Operational Definitions

1.10.1 Personality Traits

Personality traits in the context of this current research refer to Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality, also known as Big Five Model which comprised of: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (McCrae & Costa, 1986). The instrument used to identify personality traits among teachers is International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) which developed by Goldberg (1997). The Big Five Model is adopted to measure the main personality traits that possess by teachers. It is believed that the differences in personality traits may contribute to the dissimilarity in the level of perceived well-being (Judge & Hulin, 1993).

1.10.2 Job Performance

Job performance in the context of this current research refers to Campbell's Theory of Job Performance which proposed that job performance as behaviors of the employees that can be observed (Campbell, 1990). The instrument used to measure the level of job performance among teachers is Instructional Development and Effectiveness Assessment (IDEA) Form which developed by Canshin and Perrin (1978) from the Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development at Kansas State University. It is widely studied that teachers who possess different behavior will perform teaching differently in classroom (Canshin & Perrin, 1978).

1.11 Summary

In sum, this first chapter outlines the background, problem statement, objectives, scope, significance as well as limitations of current research. The conceptual and operational definitions of research variables (personality traits and job performance) are also discussed briefly. In the second chapter, the relevant literature with regards to the personality traits influencing teachers' job performance is reviewed. Previous empirical research, models and theories related to the research will be explained and discussed.

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