

## A Study of Job Position and Personality In Organizational Setting

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The present study was aimed at studying the relationship between job position and personality in the Indian organizational settings. 283 officers (all men, age: 22-58 yrs) belonging to the middle management of large manufacturing units participated in the study. The officers were grouped into three job positions: Low, middle and high based on their hierarchical position. The participants answered the Neo Five Factors Inventory (NEO-FFI, Costa & McCrae, 1992), and Job in General (JIG, Balzer et al, 2000). The results of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed that Job positions differed significantly on neuroticism showing lower neuroticism scores for higher job positions,  $F(2, 280) = 6.30$   $p < 0.01$ . similar significant results were obtained in the case of agreeableness ( $F(2, 280) = 9.17$   $p < 0.001$ ) where higher agreeableness scores were obtained for higher job positions and in the case of conscientiousness showing higher scores for higher job positions ( $F(2, 280) = 6.53$   $p < 0.01$ ). Extraversion and openness yielded non-significant results.

**Key words:** job position, personality & organizational setting

Organizational structure is one of the key features of any organization. Organizational designs differ according to several parameters. I/O psychology studies various aspects and issues involved in different organizational structures. The organizational structure defines the functions of various elements in the organization and their interrelation to each other.

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Hierarchy or job levels are the key elements of many organizations. A substantial body of research exists in this area. Researchers have tried to measure individual differences in various behaviors of employees belonging to different job positions. These studies are in areas like job attitude, performance, various personality factors, social interactions between members belonging to different levels, etc. The variable job position or job level is closely related to occupational status.

The needs and responses to various job demands of an individual can change as a function of his/ her job level. Based on stage theory, a study by Flaherty and Pappas (2002) showed how the job level affected different job attitudes. In particular area of satisfaction and turnover rate, in relation to pay, results indicated that employees in exploration stage of career reported higher satisfaction and lower scores on intentions to quit when paid a fixed salary, whereas those in establishment stage reported higher satisfaction and lower scores on intentions to quit when given incentives.

Last century, particularly before mid 1980s, witnessed personality research in industries, which consisted measurement of a number of traits like need for achievement, locus of control, self-esteem, type A, etc. The variety of these traits and the tools measuring them created a picture which was not of a concise shape. Moreover, the findings too were not explanatory, especially in the area of personality performance research. The findings were that personality and job performance were not related in any meaningful way across traits and across situations (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

Evidence for situational specificity of personality job performance relations calls for better understanding of how personality is expressed as a valued work behavior (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Jeong Kim, Shin, & Umbreit, 2007; Crede, Chernyshent, Stark, Dalal, & Bashshur, 2007; Ehrhart, 2007).

The personality assessment is becoming an integral part of human resource management functions (Burke & Witt, 2004). Personality testing is used in various tasks such as selection, team building, career development,

management development, and personal development (Peiro, Melia, 2003; Goddard, Patton, & Creed, 2004, Smith, & Canger, 2004; Wayne, Musisca, Fleeson, 2004).

Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTTI; Myers, 1962) based on Jung's theory of personality, was and is still the most popular personality test in industries, but not among the researchers MBTI is criticized severely for its approach of typology. MBTI has received little support by industrial psychologists since the advent of Big Five Factor model (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and its much grater use in industrial research in the field of personality assessment.

FFM (or its variant) is the most researched personality model in industrial settings. Siebert, Kraimer & Grant (2001) found that proactive personality was significantly and positively associated with employee's current salary and with the number of promotions the person received and his or her career satisfaction. Studies have shown that personality can predict one's job position. De-Fruyt and Mervielde (1999) conducted a study on college graduates. The participants were administered the NEO- personality Inventory-Revised (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and Holland's self-Directed search Holland (1979), data were collected from the participants regarding their job status. The results showed that extraversion and conscientiousness were the only valid predictors of employment status and that vocational interests did not show incremental validity.

Judge, Higgins, Thoresen and Barrick (1999) conducted a study using the Intergenerational studies in which data were obtained from participant's early childhood to retirement. The major finding of the study showed that conscientiousness positively predicted intrinsic career success i.e. job satisfaction and extrinsic career success i.e. income and occupational status, whereas neuroticism negatively predicted extrinsic success. The research showed the effect of dispositional variables on the job level as well as job satisfaction.

Bernadi and Nydegger (1999) found that locus of control became more internal as staff level increased. There was also a dramatic reduction in the locus of control profiles across higher staff level. Having a job, and the kind of job one has is also a matter of self-esteem. In a study of young adults, Snein, Newcomb and Bentler (1990) reported that participants having full time jobs had higher self esteem than those who had part-time or no job. A study trying to investigate relationship between job position and personality can throw light on important causal connections which can prove to be significant in not only enhancing the understanding of individual variables and their interrelations but can lead to meaningful application of the findings to various human resource management functions, right from selection, recruitment to training and development, promotions and demotions. The study has high significance for economical as well as humanitarian considerations. The study aimed to provide furthering of already existing knowledge in the field (which has several unresolved or less clear findings in terms of relationship between the variables under study) by testing several relevant hypotheses on the Indian sample, which is less studied in this context and at the same time compellingly important, considering the new global economy and its implications to the organized sector. The purpose of this study is to find out the differences between personality scores across different job positions. The following hypotheses are proposed:

- 1- Officers in higher job position will be lower on Neuroticism than officers in the lower job position.
- 2- Officers in the higher job position will be higher on conscientiousness than officers in the lower job position.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The participants consisted of 283 men who were randomly chosen from pune (India). The age range was 22 to 58 years, which is normally the age

band of people working in the organized sector. The average age was 34.88 years. All the participants were employees working in organized corporate sector in manufacturing industry. These were officers in the middle management. The participants had education bachelor.

Amongst this middle management cadre, three job positions were identified in the hierarchy and were classified and labeled as low, middle and high. The distribution of the sample across these job positions is as follows. There were 90 officers in the low job position, 86 in the middle and 107 in the high position.

## **Tools**

### **1-Neo Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI)**

The Neo Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) was constructed by Costa and McCare (1992). It is a personality test which is based on the five-factor model of personality: Neuroticism: This factor basically measures one's negative emotionality or emotional instability.

Extraversion: This dimension measures an individual's position on the introversion-extraversion continuum. The major ingredients of extraversion are warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement-seeking and positive emotions.

Openness: This domain is about the openness to experience. The major components of this factor are fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas and values.

Agreeableness: Agreeableness is related to interpersonal tendencies. The domain consists of trust, straight forwardness, altruism, compliance.

Conscientiousness: Conscientiousness consists of competence, order, dutifulness, achievement striving and self discipline. The response of "strongly disagree" gets a 0 and as we move from disagree to strongly agree, the respective response gets one of the scores from 1 to 4 in the increasing order.

NEO-FFI has 60 items in the form of statements. Each statement can be

responded on a likert scale on which responses range from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The test is not timed and usually takes 15-20 minutes to complete. There are 12 items for each factor.

The internal consistency of the NEO-FFI as calculated using coefficient alpha was 0.86 for Neuroticism, 0.77 for Extraversion, 0.73 for Openness, 0.68 for Agreeableness and 0.81 for Conscientiousness. NEO-FFI is a shorter form of NEO PI-R scale (Costa and McCrae, 1992). The correlations between NEO PI-R. Various studies have already shown validity and reliability of NEO-FFI and the domain scales of NEO-PI-R were 0.92 for Neuroticism, 0.90 for Extraversion, 0.91 for openness, 0.77 for agreeableness and 0.87 for conscientiousness.

## **2- Job in General (JIG)**

An individual, apart from variation in the satisfaction on different facets, also had an overall attitude about the job. This can be seen as an overall measure of job satisfaction or in other words, a global measure of job satisfaction. JDI doesn't give this score; hence, Balzer et al (2000) constructed JIG keeping this in mind.

Besides this, there were also some other valid concerns which made it necessary to have a separate measure of overall job satisfaction JIG assesses individual long-term evaluation of job and also incorporates interactions of individual's and situational factors affecting global job satisfaction. JIG was constructed according to the principles of Item Response Theory. It had 18 item, all in form of adjectives to which a similar response option is provided as in JDI. The scoring of JIG is the same as that of JDI. All the favorable items, when responded with Y get 3 points, an N gets 0, whereas, a? Gets 1 point. This is reversed for unfavorable items, in which an N gets 3 points, Y gets 0 and ? Gets 1 point again. In the both kinds of items of items,? gets 1 point. The minimum score for satisfaction in General is 0 and maximum is 54. Higher scores indicate higher satisfaction. Several samples having N greater than 100

(Total (N= 3566), showed the coefficient alpha reliability estimate greater than 0.90, thus establishing the reliability of JIG. JIG showed correlations ranging from 0.66 to 0.80 with other global measures of job satisfaction.

The construct validity was demonstrated by the high correlations of JIG with other global measures like intention to leave, life satisfaction, identification with the work organization, and trust in management.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using statistical techniques of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) along with the contrast analyses.

### **Results**

In order to find out how different personality factors differed across the three job positions, the data were analyzed using the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Here the (categorical) grouping variable was job position having three levels: low, middle and high. The (interval) dependent variables were the five factors of the personality, namely, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness as measured by NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The first step in the multivariate analysis of variance is the omnibus *F*-test to see if the dependent variables differ for different categories of the factor. This multivariate test was conducted using Wilk's Lambda, as the most suited test when there are more than two categories of the factor variable. In the present study there were three such categories of job position.

The results obtained showed that the three job positions differed significantly on their scores on the five factors of personality, Wilk's Lambda= 0.87,  $p < 0.0001$ . Thus, noting this significance, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there were differences in the personality factors across the job positions.

The second step of the analysis was the analysis of variance, which gave *F*

values for each personality factor, the results of which are presented in Table1.

After carrying out the analysis of variance, in order to further find out how each job position differed from the immediated next (or previous) job position, trend analysis was carried out. The investigator's interest here was to see the trend of scores acroess the different job positions. In order to find out wether scores on a particular personality factor increase or decrease across the job positions, polynomial contrast analysis was carried out. Here, the number of groups being three, Linear as well as quadrilateral trends was possible.

Thus, these trends were examined for those factors for which a significant *F* was obtained. The results for each personality factor are described below.

**Table1**

**Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Personality Factors (N=283)**

| Personality       | Job position | Mean  | SD   | df | F       | P      |
|-------------------|--------------|-------|------|----|---------|--------|
| Neuroticism       | Low          | 20.01 | 6.36 | 2  | 6.30**  | 0.002  |
|                   | Mid          | 18.78 | 6.59 |    |         |        |
|                   | High         | 16.68 | 5.71 |    |         |        |
| Extraversion      | Low          | 31.94 | 5.71 | 2  | 0.80    | 0.45   |
|                   | Mid          | 31.38 | 5.24 |    |         |        |
|                   | High         | 32.45 | 6.34 |    |         |        |
| Openness          | Low          | 26.09 | 5.38 | 2  | 1.33    | 0.27   |
|                   | Mid          | 26.40 | 5.13 |    |         |        |
|                   | High         | 25.25 | 4.77 |    |         |        |
| Agreeableness     | Low          | 28.10 | 4.77 | 2  | 9.17*** | 0.0001 |
|                   | Mid          | 29.55 | 4.16 |    |         |        |
|                   | High         | 30.93 | 4.86 |    |         |        |
| Conscientiousness | Low          | 35.96 | 5.10 | 2  | 6.53**  | 0.002  |
|                   | Mid          | 37.92 | 4.73 |    |         |        |
|                   | High         | 38.50 | 5.34 |    |         |        |

\*\*  $p < 0.001$     \*\*\*  $p < 0.0001$

The low, middle and high job positions differed significantly on neuroticism,  $F(2,280) = 6.30$   $p < 0.01$ . The trend analysis using polynomial contrasts showed a significant linear trend ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Thus, the hypotheses stating that officers in higher job position will be lower on Neuroticism than officers in the lower job position was supported.

Extraversion did not show any significant difference across the job positions,  $F(2,280) = 0.78$   $p = 0.45$ , openness too, did not show any significant difference across the job positions,  $F(2,280) = 1.33$   $p = 0.27$ .

The low, middle and high job positions differed significantly on Agreeableness,  $F(1,280) = 9.17$   $p < 0.001$ . The trend analysis using polynomial contrasts showed a significant linear trend ( $p < 0.001$ ).

The low, middle and high job positions differed significantly on Conscientiousness,  $F(2,280) = 6.53$   $p < 0.01$ . The polynomial contrast showed significant linear trend ( $P < 0.001$ ).

Thus, the hypotheses stating that officers in the higher job position will be higher on Agreeableness and Conscientiousness than officers in the lower job position were supported.

It was noted that the overall personality did show a significant difference among the low, middle and high job positions. To comment on specific personality factors, there were significant differences on Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness across the job positions. Whereas, Extraversion and Openness did not differ significantly across the three job positions.

### Discussion

The low, middle and high job positions differed significantly on Neuroticism. It can be seen that (see Table 1) managers in higher job positions have lower Neuroticism scores. Personality is often studied in I/O psychology as an important antecedent to various job attitudes and beliefs.

Overall, neuroticism is known to be trait associated with maladjustment and

dysfunctional emotionality-behaviors that hinder performance in all areas. Studies have already shown the negative relation between Neuroticism and performance (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). Managers low on Neuroticism (or high on emotional stability) are capable of effective behavior especially in the organizational settings. As one has to work in teams and often had to lead them, experience of negative emotions (worry) or display of them (anger) seldom proves to be effective in the long term. It can be argued that, from what the results point at, employees having lower, Neuroticism have greater chance to be in senior positions owing to greater effectiveness in terms of work and a better reception from others when it comes to teams of coworkers, subordinates and superiors. Extraversion and openness did not show any significant difference across the job positions.

Extraversion, which is otherwise seen to be associated with positive interpersonal relationships, is in general favorable for effectiveness at workplace. But seeing more deeply, this may be true only in specific jobs like those of marketing or those involving interactions with people.

Openness is a factor which consists of facets of fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas and values.

It will be difficult to say that this factor is completely unrelated to one's job position. Of course, it is definitely less related than other factors like Conscientiousness and Neuroticism. An explanation for finding difference on Openness, can again be based on the nature of work and activities that go on in a large manufacturing unit.

The low, middle, and high job positions differed significantly on Agreeableness.

Keeping in mind the limitation of this analysis, which doesn't involve all the factors that may contribute to one's job positions, results are discussed on the basis of personality as a single major dispositional variable which contributes to important job related variables in different and meaningful ways.

Businesses today are moving towards more and more team fashioned activities, where decisions are taken in groups. The old dictatorial model with a strict pyramid hierarchy and greater autonomy to the top people are becoming less popular and concepts like cross functional teams, strategies to involve many people in important procedures are sounding to be a better and a more effective way of working. People high on Agreeableness definitely have the necessary (but not sufficient) qualities needed to be pro-people. On the other hand, being too critical and aggressive definitely leads to being cornered at lower levels and if one is too important to be cornered, it does attract unpopularity. The findings of the present study have shown that Agreeableness was positively related to job position. Senior managers reported higher Agreeableness than middle managers, and middle were higher than junior managers. The difference is explained in terms of the pro-people attitude which involve trust in others which could be an important feature exhibited by the senior managers as contrast to more dominating and individualistic nature of employees in lower job positions.

The low, middle, and high job positions differed significantly on Conscientiousness. Table 1 shows that the difference between junior managers and middle managers on Conscientiousness is much higher than that between middle and senior managers, the senior managers being highest in Conscientiousness.

Along with Neuroticism, Conscientiousness is one factor which is studied most for its obvious importance to various job behaviors. As we see the nature of work of employees of different job positions, one can note that responsibilities increase as one climbs the ladder of job positions. The behavior of a senior person has greater impact on the outcomes than of those in lower positions. The characteristics of competence, order dutifulness, achievement striving, and self-discipline are obviously ones which aid in successful and effective functioning. These qualities result in better performance and exhibit a sincere attitude often reflected by punctuality, will

and determination. As expected, the current study showed a trend indicating high mean Conscientiousness scores of job positions.

One should note that obviously the officers under the study have different years of experience and this can also have some impact on the results, however the aim of this work is mainly focused on different levels of job positions rather than the years of experience. The relationship between the years of experience and personality factors in organizational setting can be subject of future studies.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The findings of the current study can be confirmed using samples from different- working populations e.g. service, etc. Also, studies can be undertaken to measure gender differences in job positions, if any. There exist different approaches to assess personality. There are type as well as trait theories. Further research studies can be designed using such different theoretical backgrounds and corresponding tools in order to broaden our current understanding of the variables under investigation. In five- factor model itself, in India, a similar study with the tool of NEO PI-R can give detailed information on how different facets of each factor relate to specific facets of job position.

### **Limitations of the study**

The current study focused on working men in manufacturing industry. There were no female participants in the current study. Though previous research with five-factor model has shown relatively consistent findings across the different industries, there may be differences in job position-personality in different industrial sectors, which need to be examined.

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