

# Organizational Psychology Re-Invented— The Big Five Personality Traits Model as a Reliable Behavior Framework in the Workplace

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## Abstract

This paper presents reviews of contemporary research about the Big Five Personality Traits Model and its implementation in the working environment. Which personality traits are more predictive of job performance? Which traits should organizations take more into consideration during recruitment and selection processes? What is the meaning of Motivation in the workplace and how employers could locate individuals who can be more productive, efficient, and engaged in the organization's goals according to the Big Five personality model? The above questions are answered through the systematic review of previous but recent studies. The findings suggest that a whole lot is still to be discovered and maybe the Big Five Personality Model is in need of major improvements in order to follow current trends and changes in the workplace.

## Keywords

Organizational Psychology, Big Five Theory, Personality, Job Performance, Management

## 1. Introduction—The Big Five Model Theory

Many contemporary personality psychologists believe that there are five basic dimensions of personality, and they are usually presented as the “Big 5” personality traits. The five broad personality traits described by the theory are extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and neuroticism (Campbell, 1990).

Trait theories of personality have succeeded in tracking down how many personality traits do exist. The five-factor theory emerged to describe the essential

traits that serve as the building blocks of personality. We often use the acronym OCEAN (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) when trying to remember the big five traits. It is important to keep in mind that each of the five personality factors represents a range between two extremes (Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, & Weick, 1970). Many psychologists nowadays believe that the five personality dimensions are not only universal, but also have biological origins. Those personality traits represent the most important qualities that shape our social landscape (Cherry & Susman, 2021).

## 2. Openness to Experience

Openness indicates how open-minded a person is. A person with a high level of openness to experience enjoys trying new things. These individuals could be creative, curious, and imaginative. Besides, the ones who are low in openness to experience could be close-minded and usually prefer having a routine and not experiencing new things (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993). Having an elevated level of openness is required in jobs that need creative thinking and a flexible attitude. Advertising, research, and other artistic occupations can all benefit from high openness (Crant, 2000).

## 3. Conscientiousness

A personality trait such as Conscientiousness can be defined as a “tendency to respond in certain ways under certain circumstances”. In case we want to speak more generally, it is the tendency to behave, feel and think, according to the time that we are going through and in all different trait-affording situations (Feist, 1998). High leveled conscientious people are more likely to be more organized and more mindful of details (Cronbach, & Glaser, 1965). On the other hand, people with less conscientiousness could easily make messes and do not care about things that are structured, and they could usually fail to complete necessary or assigned tasks (Roberts, Jackson, Fayard, Edmonds, & Meints, 2009).

## 4. Extraversion

Extraversion can describe how social and outgoing a person is (Burke, Brief, & George, 1993). Extraverted individuals could be enthusiastic, and action oriented. In their workplace they prefer to be the center of attention in groups, and they can be really helpful for an organization. Being an Introvert could mean that we have to deal with less energised people, who are less involved and quieter as it comes to social activities (Ferris, Yates, Gilmore, & Rowland, 1985).

## 5. Agreeableness

An individual that can be characterized by Agreeableness means that he/she is trustful, moral, altruistic, cooperative, and sympathized (Barrick, & Mount, 1991). People who do not have these personality traits could usually be a problem for an organization (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001). They could not adjust to the

working environment and be less productive, due to the fact that they cannot be a part of a team (Inceoglu & Warr, 2021).

## 6. Neuroticism

Neuroticism is maybe the most debated personality trait (Bartram, 2005). Many people can see it as a compliment and some others not so much. It has to do with how well an individual can manage stress, and how he/she can experience negative emotions in relation to all different circumstances (Bell & Kozlowski, 2008). A person who can present neuroticism in the workplace could be calm and confident, or anxious and pessimistic (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Thus, it is an important personality trait that can help us predict future employees' performance (Borman, Penner, Allen, & Motowidlo, 2001).

## 7. Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Employee Voice: A Conversation of Resources Perspective

During research of the last years, the connection between Big Five personality traits and employee voice has been shown. More specifically, the research focuses on Extraversion and Neuroticism. The need of this analysis is because of the importance of employee voice within the workplace, and it was obvious that there was also the need to be connected and examined with the Big Five personality traits model, one of the most widespread personality frameworks.

Previous analyses have succeeded in answering mainly those who are likely (not) to voice in the workplace. But it was also necessary to explain the "why" question. Extraversion has been recognized as the most positive predictor of the employee voice in this model, while neuroticism appears to have no significant effect on voice. Studying of this connection can help organizations to build an open and trustful culture, managers to encourage and promote employee voice at work, and in addition, how employees can self-enhance their voice. A working environment that includes all these components can support a productive and efficient organization (Li & Xu, 2021).

It is really important to recognize the personality traits of employees and candidates because they associate with their capability to be engaged with the organization and its goals. Highly engaged employees tend to be emotionally stable, socially proactive, and achievement oriented. Employees' engagement levels can be increased through personnel selection procedures that are capable to identify these kinds of traits. The Big Five personality traits model can be helpful because it provides person-focused task assignments and targets that build on specific individuals' own strengths and energies (Inceoglu & Warr, 2021).

Identifying and knowing employees' personality traits can also be used for understanding how they will react in a secure and autonomous work base. A secure work-based environment can create a sense of security. Employees who feel autonomous and they are heard and valued are motivated and engaged, and therefore more productive and efficient. Employees need to feel that their efforts

and capabilities are being appreciated and affirmed. Autonomous task engagement can be facilitated by this secure work base which needs to be consisted by individuals with the appropriate personality traits, who can manage and utilize the given autonomy and transform it into motivation and high performance (Ronen & Mikulincer, 2014).

## 8. Personality and Job Performance: The Big Five Revisited

Many analyses of how we can increase job performance and personnel selection focus on the usefulness of the Big Five personality traits model. Most of them conclude that Conscientiousness can be a valid predictor of those two important domains in an organization. Big Five has recognized as the dominant personality framework for both highly job performance and correct personnel selection procedures.

Conscientiousness has to do with the way that individuals control their impulses. High scorers can achieve elevated levels of success through persistence and planning. They can also avoid problems. Conscientiousness can be related with sub-factors, such as Orderliness, Dutifulness, Self-Efficacy, Achievement-Striving, Self-Discipline, and Cautiousness. High scorers are self-controlled, driven to be successful, organized, they have strong sense of moral obligation, they are obsessed with work, they persist in accomplishing even unpleasant tasks, and they are taking time when it comes weighty decision making. On the contrary, low scorers tend to be disorganized. They do not feel effective; they are usually unreliable and seen as lazy. And in most cases, they cannot succeed in deliberating alternatives when searching for solutions to current problems (Inceoglu & Warr, 2021).

Recent years' research focuses on measuring the Big Five theory as a predictor of job performance and personnel selection and testing the criterion-related validities of this model for theoretically relevant dimensions of these domains. Conscientiousness has been widely accepted as the most predictive dimension of occupational performance. Even though, there have been scientists that have discovered that there are situations that this is not true. Therefore, we need continuous and variable measurements.

The relation between job performance and conscientiousness is robust. This is the reason why researchers identified some boundary conditions. For example, besides conscientious personalities can be well suited in low-complexity occupations, such as customer service jobs, it can be a weaker predictor of job performance in high-complexity occupations for job positions of an analyst or a lawyer.

To maximize employees' occupational potential, organizations have to build frameworks that can allow conscientious individuals to pursue their needs for acceptance, predictability, and motivation by status. Although there are many arguments, evidence from more than a century of occupational research, scientists recommended that companies and employers should prefer and select the valuable human capital resource that is conscientiousness (Travers, 2019).

## 9. Discussion

It is true, even if we have robust evidence, most of the research proves that Conscientiousness and Agreeableness are incredibly important for different occupations (Allworth & Hesketh, 1999) that require a variety of training and experience qualifications (Sackett & Walmsley, 2014). Nevertheless, all the elements can also prove that there is a need and an obligation for continuous research. Times are changing extremely fast. Thus, scientists need to be informed and ready to provide satisfactory help to individuals and organizations. The health and the well-being of employees, organizations and the whole market can promote the existence of a healthy and developed society.

The present study showed that the Big Five Model of Personality can indeed be considered as the most prominent theoretical framework for approaching personality, especially in the workplace. Based on Extraversion, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness, we can understand and sometimes predict specific work behaviors such as motivation, communication, leadership, reaction under pressure, resignation, conflict and non-productive attitudes.

Future studies may need to focus on the ways these 5 factors contribute to the working environment, enhance teamwork and prevent dysfunctional phenomena. Also, another subject to be addressed is the differential impact of these five factors on different organizational levels, sectors, industries, organizational cultures and countries.

## Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest exists.

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