

Personality Dimensions as a correlate of Work Engagement: A Study of working women in Indore city

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Abstract

Work engagement is a vital HR variable for all organizations to sail through in this cut-throat era of competition as engaged employees are brand representatives and help the organization deliver superior performance to gain competitive advantage. Different personality dimensions relate to satisfaction in a particular task (Judge, Heller & Mount, 2002), predict job performance in various types of jobs (Barrick & Mount, 1991), commitment (Erdheim, Wang & Zickar, 2006) and hence, work engagement. These dimensions from the Big Five Model increase or decrease the probability of experiencing a state of engagement at work. This study attempts to understand the influence of personality dimensions of the Big Five Model on work engagement. The study compares the overall personality dimensions and attempts to find particular dimensions of both, personality and work engagement, of married vis-à-vis single working women.

The findings of the study reveal that married working women are more dedicated and engaged, more extroverted, depict more agreeableness and are open to experience. Single working women are more conscientious and stand at par on emotional stability with married women. There exists a correlation between personality and work engagement.

Keywords: *Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Openness to experience, The Big Five inventory, Work Engagement, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale.*

Introduction

Conceptual Framework

Individuals show different levels of engagement at the workplace. Some are highly engaged employees while others demonstrate little or no signs of work engagement while working under similar conditions. The consequences of disengaged employees may cause a huge cost to any business. A survey by Gallup in 2017 reports that 87% of employees worldwide are disengaged.

Many previous research studies have been conducted to study the effect of various organizational variables on work engagement, but research studies on variables like personality impact on work engagement are scarce (Willson, 2009).

Personality

Understanding personality of employees is important because it affects perception, attitude and behaviour. Personality types affect interpersonal relations at the work place. Managers benefit from personality theories, which can be used for feedback to improve, adjust, train and make decisions about employee behaviour.

Researchers believe that in the study of organization behaviour, five-factor model of personality can be of utmost importance. This model is also called as Big Five personality framework (Goldberg, 1981, 1990; Costa and McCrae, 1992; John and Srivastava, 1999) and is a well known model in modern psychology to depict the prominent features of personality.

According to the Big Five Model, personality measures are categorized (Goldberg, 1990; Hogan et al., 1996) and are found to be relevant to different cultures (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Research shows that the Big Five Model has a genetic basis (Digman, 1989) and that personality traits are probably inherited (Jang, Livesley & Vernon, 1996). An impressive body of research supports that five basic dimensions encompass most of the significant variations in human personality. These five dimensions are Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness to Experience (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1997).

The “big five” is selected not to reflect their intrinsic magnitude, but to highlight that each of the factors is tremendously wide. Each of the five dimensions gives the widest level of abstraction and highlights a greater number of distinct, specific and personality characteristics for an individual (John and Srivastava, 1999). These big five dimensions are present in any measurement of personality (McCrae and John, 1992). They emerge in all cultures, languages and religions (Allik and McCrae, 2004; Heine and Buchtel, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2007) which means these five dimensions or characteristics or traits are universal (McCrae and Costa, 1997). They are for specific cognitive processes and behaviour, subjected to situations wherein the association between the situational personality and behaviour is mediated by cognitive process (Denissen and Penke, 2008; Mischel and Shoda, 1995; Canli, 2008).

An individual's response to situational features and the intensity of the response is shaped by his personality. Social attitudes and behaviour which are internal and are existing due to previous experiences can be explained using the five dimensions of personality (Medland and Hatemi, 2009; Yamagata et al., 2006).

Work engagement

In today's competitive world, survival and prosperity of any organization is certainly a function of healthy and engaged employees (Schaufeli, Baker and Salanova, 2006). To have effective players, companies - apart from recruiting the best talent - should also encourage, stimulate and facilitate employees to apply their full capabilities (Bakker, Albrecht and Leiter, 2011).

Organizations can create an edge over competition by employee work engagement (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). Most notably, employers who are focused on building and maintaining an engaged workforce, may experience beneficial outcomes such as increased business-unit performance, strong financial returns, and a positive corporate image (Bakker et al., 2011). In addition, the crossover of engagement among members of the same work team may prove valuable for organizational performance (Bakker et al., 2008). Looking into the advantages of work engagement, enterprises may want to promote and implement engagement programs that will certainly culminate into the achievement or organizational objectives like retention and performance (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008).

The former work of Demerouti (2006) gives evidence that personality may serve as a means in supporting the correlation between job performance and work engagement. Specifically, it has been reported that employees who experience “flow” at work (i.e., absorption, enjoyment and dedication) are able to positively impact their performance levels; however, they need to have certain personality traits (e.g., conscientiousness).

Latest studies have provided analogous findings which state that hard working, self-motivated and disciplined employees – (conscientiousness)- are confident, hopeful and positive, and decipher their levels of work engagement into augmented job performance (Bakker et al., 2012a).

Gap Identified

Studies show that various dimensions of the Big Five Personality Model are related to work engagement (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hough, Eaton, Dunnette, Kamp & McCloy, 1990; Salgado, 1997; Tett, Jackson & Rothstein, 1991; Vinchur, Schippmann, Sweizer & Roth, 1998). Conscientiousness is the best predictor of work engagement (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997). Results of a few research studies also show that Extraversion and Conscientiousness predict work engagement in various occupations (Schneider, 1999; Vinchur et al., 1998). These research studies were carried out in the United States of America, Europe and South Africa in different contexts. However, in India (specifically in Indore), the use of psychometric tests is still a controversial issue and has a long way to go. Hence, research regarding the impact of personality dimensions on work engagement is therefore necessary. Personality plays a role in the engagement process because individuals enter the workplace with their own set of personality characteristics (Nayyar R. J. et al., 2012). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to see if there is any relationship between the personality characteristics and various dimensions of work engagement among working women in Indore city. If there is evidence of a relationship, the results can be used by companies for recruiting, selecting and career development of these working women.

Research Methodology

The study was exploratory in nature. In this study, working women—both married and single—from Indore city were selected for data collection. Non-probability sampling method was used. It was a purposive sampling where respondents were chosen in the age group of 25-34 years, 35-44 years and above 45 years working in different sectors with minimum qualification being undergraduate.

Sample: 300 working women which includes 150 married and 150 single women.

Tools for Data Collection

Two questionnaires were distributed among the subjects for data collection: *The Big Five Inventory (BFI)* and *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)*.

Tools for Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS 20. Hypotheses were tested using z- test and correlation.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To find out the demographic status of working women of Indore.
- 2) To ascertain the Overall Work Engagement Levels of married working women and single working women.
- 3) To compare the overall personality dimensions of working married and working single women.
- 4) To find out particular dimensions of both, personality and work engagement, of married vis-à-vis single working women.
- 5) To study the influence of personality dimensions of Big Five Model on Work Engagement.

Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** *There is no significant difference in the Work Engagement levels of married working and single working women.*
- H_{01a}:** *There is no significant difference in the Vigour Dimension of married working and single working women.*
- H_{01b}:** *There is no significant difference in the Dedication Dimension of married working and single working women.*
- H_{01c}:** *There is no significant difference in the Absorption Dimension of married working and single working women.*
- H₀₂:** *There is no significant difference in the personality dimensions of married working and single working women.*
- H_{02a}:** *There is no significant difference in the Extraversion Dimension of married working and single working women.*
- H_{02b}:** *There is no significant difference in the Agreeableness Dimension of married working and single working women.*
- H_{02c}:** *There is no significant difference in the Conscientiousness Dimension of married working and single working women.*
- H_{02d}:** *There is no significant difference in the Emotional Stability Dimension of married working and single working women.*
- H_{02e}:** *There is no significant difference in the Openness to Experience Dimension of married working and single working women.*

Analysis of Data

Table 1: Reliability Analysis of all variables

Characteristics	Items	Cronbach alpha		
		Married Working Women	Single Working Women	Aggregate
Big Five Inventory	BFI 44-item	0.678	0.743	0.698
Extraversion	BFI 1,6R1,11,16,21R, 26,31R,36	0.700	0.822	0.739
Agreeableness	BFI2R,7,12R,17,22,27R, 32,37R,42	0.635	0.671	0.644
Conscientiousness	BFI3,8R,13,18R,23R,28, 33,38,43R	0.720	0.737	0.725
Emotional Stability	BFI 4,9R,14,19,24R, 29,34R,39	0.728	0.808	0.752
Openness to Experience	BFI5,10,15,20,25,30,35R, 40,41R,44	0.738	0.729	0.739
Work Engagement	UWES 17-item	0.945	0.937	0.946
Vigour	UWES 1,4,8,12, 15,17	0.841	0.865	0.860
Dedication	UWES 2,5,7,10,13	0.900	0.843	0.885
Absorption	UWES 3,6,9,11,14,16	0.841	0.885	0.865

Source: Authors' own research

From Table 1, it is seen that the alpha coefficients for the **Big Five Inventory** and **Utrecht Work Engagement Scales** are in line with the acceptable alpha coefficient cut off point of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 2: Demographic status of working women

CATEGORIES OF WORKING WOMEN	Married Working Women	Single Working Women
AGE GROUP		
25-34 years	63 (42%)	81(54%)
35-44 years	57 (38%)	45(30%)
Above 45 years	30 (20%)	24(16%)
TOTAL	150	150
EDUCATIONAL STATUS		
Under Graduate	21(14%)	27(18%)
Graduation	72(48%)	30(20%)
Post Graduation	51(34%)	69(46%)
Other than PG	06(04%)	24(16%)
TOTAL	150	150
PROFESSIONAL STATUS		
Government Jobs	45(30%)	29(19%)
Teachers	75(50%)	72(50%)
Business	21(14%)	44(29%)
Private Doctors	09(6%)	05(2%)
TOTAL	150	150
LIVING SYSTEM		
Single Home	84(56%)	42(28%)
Extended/Joint Home	66(44%)	30(20%)
Hostels	0(0%)	78(52%)
TOTAL	150	150
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS		
Higher Status	24(16%)	39(26%)
Economic Independence	126(84%)	111(74%)
TOTAL	150	150

Source: Authors' own research

Due to workforce diversity, it is crucial to explore demographic variables influencing work engagement. This can immensely help global organizations (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Although the relationship between personality and demographic variables has been explored in earlier studies in relation to work engagement, inconsistencies still exist (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Demographic characteristics of the employees like age, educational status, professional status, lifestyle, marital status and socio economic status significantly influence employee engagement (Swaminathan & Ananth, 2012). Also work experience was found to be a consistent predictor of employee engagement amongst all demographic variables like age, gender, educational qualification, work experience and grade (Mohapatra & Sharma, 2010). Thus, it is evident from literature survey that there is a link between the engagement level and demographic characteristics of the employees.

Organizational and personal resources reduce job demands and help in achieving goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). These resources are related to autonomy, positive self evaluation, self esteem and self efficacy which help employees control and impact the environment (Hobfoll et al., 2003) and their working style. This also influences their behaviour and expected outcomes (Salanova et al, 2010).

H_{01} : *There is no significant difference in the Overall Work Engagement levels of working married and working single women.*

Table 3: Overall Work Engagement Levels of Married Working Women and Single Working Women

Category	Mean	SD	Z –value
Married working women	47.28	6.49638	0.4177
Single working women	47.54667	7.317889	

$p < 0.05$

According to Gallup Report 2017, there exists a difference in the work engagement levels of employees with different marital levels. Married employees were found to be more engaged as compared to single employees indicating that a settled personal and professional life may be one of the reasons behind high engagement level.

As seen from Table 3, the calculated z - value (0.42) is less than the tabulated value (1.96) at 5% level of significance; hence, the Null Hypothesis is not rejected. It means that there is no significant difference between Work Engagement levels of married working women and single working women. The mean value for single working women is found to be 47.54 which is a little higher than the mean value for married working women (47.28); the reason for this - single women are less occupied at the home front, have less responsibilities, more time and are full of energy to spend on jobs, which leads to greater work engagement (Kong., 2009).

H_{02} : *There is no significant difference in the Overall Personality Dimensions of working married and working single women.*

Table 4: Overall Personality Dimensions of working married and working single women

Category	Mean	SD	Z –value
Married working women	132.367	12.44123	0.62107
Single working women	129.793	9.297684	

$p < 0.05$

From Table 4, the calculated z - value (0.62) is less than the tabulated value (1.96) at 5% level of significance; hence, the Null Hypothesis is not rejected. It means that there is no significant difference between Work Engagement levels of married working women and single working women.

It can be seen that 'married working' has a higher mean value (132.367) as compared to 'single working' women, which means that married women are naturally energetic, enthusiastic, and action oriented. They are reliable and engaged workers who can be creative and innovative (Kahn, 1990; Macey and Schneider, 2008). Engaged individuals tend to be helpful, trusting, considerate, and like to cooperate with others. Moreover, they are kind to almost everyone and have a forgiving nature (John et al., 1991; John et al., 2008).

Table 5: Personality Dimensions of Married vis-à-vis Single working women

Dimensions	Married Working Women		Single Working Women		Z –value	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Extraversion	24.75	3.73	23.66	3.52	0.271	Accepted
Agreeableness	26.64	4.05	26.48	3.77	0.717	Accepted
Conscientiousness	27.19	3.99	26.81	3.41	0.3786	Accepted
Emotional Stability	23.25	3.86	23.60	4.05	0.2992	Accepted
Openness to Experience	30.55	4.17	29.25	4.75	0.3425	Accepted

$p < 0.05$

Extraversion (24.75), Agreeableness (26.64) and Openness to Experience (30.55) for married working women have higher values as compared to single working women (23.66, 26.48 and 29.25 respectively). Once married, a woman is happy and starts sharing responsibilities with vigour and zeal - be it on the personal front or the professional front. Extraversion is characterized by positive feelings and experiences, and is therefore seen as a positive effect (Clark & Watson, 1991). Research shows that extraversion is a valid predictor of performance in jobs characterized by social interaction (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Bing & Lounsbury, 2000; Lowery & Krilowicz, 1994; Vinchur et al., 1998). Extraversion brings more positive effect due to greater social participation (Srivastava et al., 2008). With social interaction comes openness to experience and a higher score indicating that married working women are unconventional, willing to question and ready to entertain new ideas (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003). Open individuals are curious about both inner and outer worlds, and their lives are experientially richer. They are willing to entertain novel ideas and unconventional values. Openness to experience may not be a predictor to work engagement (Tett et al., 1991); the probable reason being these women, married or single, belong to different occupations having different requirements. Both married and single working women demonstrate Agreeableness (26.64) by being pleasant, warm and likeable, and tend to act in accordance with other people's interests (Graziano and Tobin, 2009).

Single working women were found to be a little more conscientious with slightly higher emotional stability. Conscientiousness indicates that individuals are goal oriented and more likely to be achievers (Barrick et al., 1993). They are more relaxed, calm, even-tempered and are able to face stressful situations without becoming upset (Hough et al., 1990). Emotional stability is the propensity to respond to threatening situations, frustration, and loss (Boyce, Wood and Powdthavee, 2013). Young single women may be shouldering only professional responsibilities; a few may be responsible at the personal front, but not at the same levels as married women.

Table 6: Work Engagement Dimensions of Married vis-à-vis Single working women

Dimensions	Married Working Women		Single Working Women		Z –value	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Vigour	1.96	1.42826557	1.97	1.42379599	0.0763	Accepted
Dedication	4.31	1.910881	3.30	1.907771	7.983	Rejected
Absorption	3.0344	1.185066	3.0347	1.185062	0.0016	Accepted

$p < 0.05$

Table 6 shows the work engagement dimensions for both the categories of working women. With continuous long working hours, resilience, attaching and immersing themselves in the task allocated, both married and single working women have the same engagement levels for the two dimensions – vigour and absorption. Hence, the Hypothesis H_{01a} and H_{01b} are accepted since the calculated z-values (0.0763 and 0.0016) are much lesser than the tabulated value of 1.96.

The difference lies in the Dedication dimension where the mean value for married women is more than for single women. Also the calculated z-value is 7.983, which is higher than 1.92 indicating the Hypothesis H_{01c} is not accepted.

Married women face dual responsibilities. Marriage provides emotional stability and support, which encourages a married woman to work upon career progression. They try to complete the task allocated to them, putting in as much effort on the given deadline. In a world dominated by e-mails, smart phones and flexible work schedules, the walls between work and personal life are falling. A smart woman finds ways to integrate them thoughtfully, making it a professional and personal boon (HBR: How Two-Career Couples Stay Happy by Jackie Coleman and John Coleman).

On the other hand, single women may have to bear pressure from society and family to get married; lack of emotional support may sometimes result in lack of effort and lower dedication at the work place. This can be due to various other situational variables (job related and/or organizational related) which may support or hinder engagement.

Engaged women are naturally energetic, enthusiastic, and action oriented. They adapt quickly to new surroundings and switch easily between activities. They also seem to have a disposition towards cheerfulness, sociability and high activity. As seen from Table 4, married extroverts' sociability and relationship building abilities can positively impact all three psychological conditions of engagement: meaningfulness, resilience, enthusiasm, and intense immersion in work (Kahn, 1990) which is very important to become a satisfied and committed employee.

Table 7: Correlation between Personality and Work Engagement Correlation

		Personality	Work Engagement
Personality	Pearson Correlation	1	.385
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.542
	N	300	300
Work Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.385	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.542	
	N	300	300

The result in Table 7 indicates that the correlation between Personality and Work Engagement of working women is .385. The p-value is .542 which is more than 0.05, the assumed level of significance. This implies that the correlation coefficient between Personality and Work Engagement is high and statistically significant. Hence, there exists a moderate correlation between Personality and Work Engagement.

Result

The calculated z - value (0.42) is found to be less than the tabulated value (1.96) at 5% level of significance; hence, the Null Hypothesis (H_{01}) is not rejected. It means that there is no significant difference between Work Engagement levels of married working women and single working women.

Extraversion, Agreeableness and Openness to Experience for married working women have higher values as compared to single working women.

Single working women were found to be a little more conscientious with slightly higher emotional stability.

Both married and single working women have the same engagement levels for the two dimensions – vigour and absorption. Hence, the Hypothesis H_{01a} and H_{01b} are accepted.

The difference lies in the Dedication dimension where the mean value for married women is more than that for single women. Also the calculated z-value is 7.983, which is higher than 1.92 indicating the Hypothesis H_{01b} is not accepted.

The correlation between Personality and Work Engagement of working women is .385. The p-value is .542, which is more than 0.05, the assumed level of significance. This implies that the correlation coefficient between Personality and Work Engagement is high and statistically significant. Hence, there exists a moderate correlation between Personality and Work Engagement.

Findings and Conclusion

In this study, all the five dimensions of the Big Five are found to be correlated with work engagement.

The findings of the study show that married working women are more dedicated and engaged, more extroverted, depict more agreeableness and are open to experience. Single working women are more conscientious and stand at par on emotional stability with married women.

For women professionals, apart from conscientiousness (Ones et al., 2007), agreeableness and openness to experience are other predictors of job engagement (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000).

Also emotional stability is significantly related to performance and productivity (Skyrme, Wilkinson, Abraham, & Morrison, 2005).

This is an unusual mix of personality traits leading to a very complex pattern of personality in women for work demanding interpersonal interactions.

There exists a correlation between personality and work engagement.

Limitations of the study

Since purposive sampling was used, the respondents selected may not be fully representative of the general population. Also the respondents were selected from a variety of occupations. This limits occupational, organizational or sector specific effects that might have resulted in bias in results. Longitudinal or time series data collection approach can add information in the relationship between personality dimensions and work engagement. Better tools like regression, multiple regression and ANOVA can be used for data analysis.

Scope for further study

Future studies can be occupational, organizational or sector specific for generalized outcomes since work engagement is an outcome of both individual and contextual factors. In such specific studies, contextual factors in work engagement can be controlled.

Personality has an outcome on performance and engagement. Organizations opting for selection and staffing of employees with certain personalities and “best fit” attributes need to keep in mind that apart from personality (especially conscientiousness and emotional stability), cognitive abilities, motivational levels, emotional intelligence of employees, past experiences and trait affectivity also have to be taken into consideration. A rigorous selection process should follow rigorous job analysis and multiple tools and techniques for evaluating employees. Psychometric testing can be used to assess the personality dimensions during the selection process.

This study has been carried out comparing married and single working women. It can also be carried out by comparing working men and women. A comparative study can further be carried out on working women aged 40 and above. The impact of personality can be studied on Work Engagement of various demographic variables.

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