

Examining Role of Personality in Professional Success in South Asian Employees

Dr. Shalini Wadhwa

Assistant Professor, MPSTME, NMIMS, Mumbai

shalini.wadhwa@nmims.edu

Orcid Id- 0000-0001-5422-4438

Abstract

Recent studies suggest that 45% of millennials are not satisfied with their jobs. In India alone 80% percent of employees are not satisfied with their jobs. Employees feel that certain factors like frequent technological advances fear of losing jobs, relations with colleagues, work-life balance etc. However, a lot depends on how a person takes it, personality is considered as a determining factor in defining career success of employees'. This study investigates the relationship between an individual's personality traits from the Big Five model and professional success. Career success is categorized as intrinsic success consisting career satisfaction, and extrinsic which includes income, status, or position of an employee.

Keywords: "Career success, personality, traits, openness to experience, Big 5, neuroticism, emotional stability, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness."

INTRODUCTION

Since 20th century, scientists are trying to decipher how personality of an individual maps and correlates with career success. Career success is generally split into intrinsic and extrinsic career success factors wherein intrinsic relates to non-tangible component and extrinsic to the tangible component like money, security etc. Early studies are inclined towards not so strong relation between the two factors. However, the newer and complex studies beg to differ on this [16]. "The observed validity of personality measures, then and now, is quite low even though they can account for incrementally useful levels of variance in work-related criteria" commented Schmitt [48]. The research has evolved over time to consider various different circumstances and variations in personality traits. Evolution of various different models, attempting to explain personality, changed the view on connection between personality traits and career success. There are multiple loopholes with the early research. Consistency of results tops the chart. Majority of the early research was based upon mapping all the personality traits to career success, but that may not always be the case. Generally, not all traits contribute equally, if at all, to the career success. Some of these might negatively affect the variable. In addition, due to lack of benchmarks and due to ever-variable circumstances, results of certain studies

confirming a particular trait to be predictive of career success might change. If a particular research confirms the hypothesis, some other would not accept it, more so due to difference in experiment settings and different candidates under study. Many a times even under same setting it is impossible to replicate the research, as traits vary with people and a different set of people may yield different outcomes. Another reason for this might be dynamic nature of traits. With age and many other factors at play, person's understanding of likes, dislikes, responses and reactions change, behaviour evolves and the underlying personality traits might shift causing same sample to yield a very different result. Past research states that conscientious, extroverted, emotionally stable individuals tend to succeed professionally under both intrinsic as well as extrinsic factors. It leaves minimal significance to agreeableness and openness. However, qualitative research on the same topic considers openness to be a great contributory factor to career success.

Effective psychological or work-associated consequences or achievements one has accrued due to one's work experiences are considered as professional success [33]. Promotions, compensation, and management degree positions are considered as tangible factors when analysing career success. [9]. Job satisfaction or fulfilment is traditionally measured in terms of promotion one receives

during the career tenure. [4][23]. It is observed that promotions with a bonus or pay grade raise eventually provide more perceived job satisfaction to the individuals[42].

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

BACKGROUND

Previous studies specify career success as objective and subjective. Tangible accomplishments of individuals over a span of their professional life form a part of Objective career success [31]. These professional achievements are evaluated under societal norms and factors [11], consisting of promotion rate, income, and organizational level [26]. Existing literature breaks down the objective career success under four assumptions. First being pay and promotions. The idea is to understand that the income from a job is the primary goal outcome of an individual. [13][57]. Second, the way the society reacts to an individual's profession choice and career graph [14]. Third assumption is the fulfilment and satisfaction achieved when an individual completes an important milestone in their career graph. Last one is the perspective towards professional aspirations and their social standing.

Many personality models have been developed from time to time such as Cattell's 16 Personality Factors, MBTI, Eysenck's 3 dimensions of personality, Gordon Allport's model etc. The most popular and widely used personality model is Big-5 model. It is also known as five-factor model. This model identifies five universal traits that define a human personality. These traits are "1. Agreeableness; 2. Conscientiousness; 3. Extraversion; 4. Neuroticism; and 5. Openness."

Main reason for preferring five-factor model to other models is that it is not binary in nature and uses a point scale to measure the traits. Therefore, this method gives more accurate results.

Personality of an individual can define his/her career success at least to a certain extent. The five-factor model helps identify the traits of an individual, which can be then statistically compared to prototype personalities.[51]

According to a study, agreeableness factor of Big-5 model is negatively correlated to career satisfaction, extraversion is positively related

to income, career advancements, and career contentment. Neuroticism has negative association with career contentment & openness is found to be negatively associated with income. [50].

Across various studies, Neuroticism (Emotional Stability) emerges as a common trait that affects a person's objective career success. Income levels of neurotic employees are found to be less as compared to those who are emotionally stable [12][31][42] & employees scoring high in neuroticism trait work usually don't reach high level positions in organizations [38]. 2007). In case they reach higher levels of management, their income levels remain low as compared to emotionally stable employees [3]. Employees high in extraversion receive promotions quicker and faster [3][50], and enjoy good standing in organisations [38]. Extraversion's relation with salary, which is one of the most important factors for objective career success, is variable. Some sources mention it (salary) to have positive association with extraversion [12], whereas some state a negative correlation between the two[42], and some studies found no relation between the two [3]. Openness to experience follows the suite. Openness is found to have both positive association [39] as well as negative association [12][52] with income levels. Qualitative research points to no association between open-mindedness and extrinsic career success [30] or level of management [38] or career advancements[50]. Agreeable employees have lower salaries and lower chances of promotions in career. Salary and promotions are not dependent on conscientiousness trait[3][50][42]. These inconsistent results can be attributed to variation in setting of the experiment or in the process of data collection – cross sectional and longitudinal or in incorrect population representation.[57]. Optimism and emotional stability are significantly and positively correlated with career satisfaction [35]. A study claims conscientiousness and extraversion to be positively correlated with "general career self-efficacy" and open-mindedness with "specific career self-efficacy" [23]. However, "career self-efficacy" does not always result in career success [16].

As opposed to "objective career success", "intrinsic or subjective career success" is more intuitive and inclines more towards

satisfaction that a person derives from one's work. Subjective career success again can be measured through self-referent and other-referent indices, however most of the studies use self-referent criteria to measure career success, this study also leveraged self-referent criteria for measuring career success [25]. The traits that are prominent in understanding intrinsic element of career success are Neuroticism and Extraversion. Individuals with an extrovert streak tend to enjoy their jobs over others, whereas people ranking high on neuroticism end up getting frustrated with their jobs, responsibilities and work environment[29][49][50]. The remaining three traits do not show up much in the research results but from a qualitative point of view, an individual high on agreeableness and conscientiousness traits tend to be more satisfied with his work, whereas Open-mindedness is not associated with career satisfaction [29].

Previous research on job satisfaction indicate that female workers are more satisfied and contended with the career graph as opposed to the male workers [6] [7][55][59]. Women earn less than what men earn, are less often promoted, and are largely underrepresented in leadership positions [8][37]. Age has a U-shaped relationship with success. It has been observed that older women are more successful in their career. Impact of age varies with success measure and country. [59].

Traits theory is the foundation to understand people based on various traits. It helps in understanding the characteristics of successful employees or leaders [59]. The theory of leadership was conceptualised on the lines of

traits theory. We wanted to know about the personality traits that contribute towards career success of leaders and managers specifically in Asian setting.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

We have considered BIG 5 personality model for this study, so, hypothesis building is based on individual factors of this personality model. This is because each of these individual personality traits differ from each other and has varied impact on overall career success of an individual. Thus, it is essential to study these separately. Therefore, the following hypothesis will have five sub-hypotheses based on five personality traits.

H0: Big 5 personality traits impact overall career success.

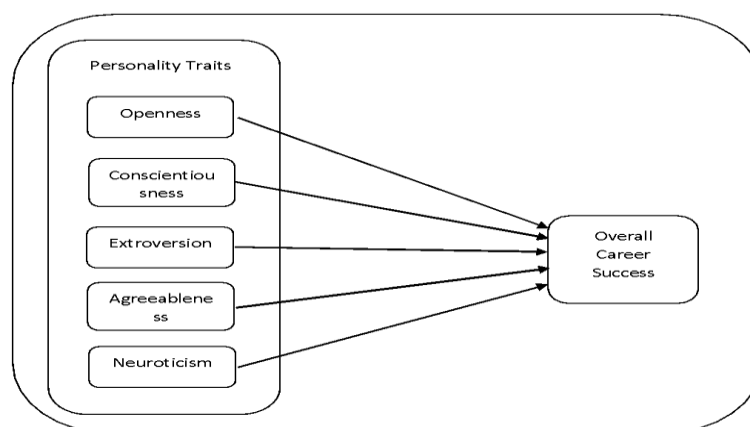
H1: Big 5 personality traits do not impact overall career success.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The conceptual research framework is explained in Figure 1. Researchers have focussed only on personality and career success removing all the other factors like demographics from the research scope. The block of overall career success is symbolic for career satisfaction.[30]

Conceptual diagram explains the dependent and independent factors of the research. The independent factors are the BIG five personality traits. These factors help to define career success both in subjective and objective manner, in turn, helps understand job and career satisfaction. This is necessary because success is relative and varies from person to person. The dependent factor for the research is overall career satisfaction.

Figure 1 Conceptual Research Framework



METHOD

DATA AND SAMPLE

A survey was constructed based on past research and studies. Sample population constituted people from different organizations, occupations, cities, age groups, gender, marital status and income categories. Questionnaire was sent to 250 respondents out of which 205 respondents returned the filled questionnaires.

MEASURES

Questionnaire having 7-point Likert scale is used for measuring variables. In this study, overall career success is taken as dependent variable and the Big 5 personality traits as independent variables. The PsyToolkit 15-item Big Five Inventory (BFI-S) has been used for measuring personality. Overall Career Success is measured using a five-item scale of career satisfaction developed by [14]. Refer Appendix-I.

DATA ANALYSIS, TECHNIQUES AND RESULTS

The problem at hand has been analysed through Smart PLS 3.2 software. It helped in analysing the reliability and validity and testing the research hypotheses. PLS SEM model is better traditional CB-SEM model. The first advantage is that here a smaller sample and non-parametric data can yield a reliable result. [20]. PLS-SEM is a multiple linear regression modelling technique and is considered good for explaining variance of dependent variables on the basis of maximization. [2]

PLS-SEM is used instead of CB-SEM because it can be performed on small sample sizes and any no. of parameters [45]. Other reasons for using PLS-SEM are:

(1) the study is in its exploratory stage for theory building and prediction. The

relationship between personality and career success is still under study and early stages of theory development and thus researcher can explore a new phenomenon under this study. As the focus is more on an optimized R square value over goodness of fit or model fit, so PLS – SEM is employed. (2) To identify the traits of personality that affect the career success over theory testing. (3) Model contains lot of indicators and constructs (4) It help in making non-parametric assumptions too [21].

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this study, researchers utilized the PLS-SEM algorithm, Bootstrapping algorithm and the Blindfolding algorithm using SmartPLS 3 application to formulate the model and derive conclusions based on different models. The reason for using PLS-SEM over CB-SEM is that PLS-SEM fits a composite model to the data rather than a common factor model, thus maximizing the variance explanation. PLS-SEM evaluates the partial structures of the model by combining the analysis of the main components with OLS regressions[37]. It is an alternative to the CB-SEM method of Jöreskog (1973), which includes many hypotheses – usually very restrictive [19]. The basic difference between CB-SEM and PLS-SEM is that CB-SEM uses covariance matrix and the estimation of model parameters is done on the basis of common variance while in case of PLS-SEM, it takes total variance into account [20].

Bootstrapping algorithm allows to estimate the statistics on a population data by sampling our data with replacement. When the asymptotic distributions of the test statistics of interest are unknown or statistically too difficult to determine, the Bootstrap approach comes in handy [34].

Blindfolding is used to calculate Stone-Geisser's Q^2 value [55], which indicates the predictive capability of the PLS path model.

RESULTS

Figure 2 PLS Algorithm Model



Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 1 Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Agreeableness	0.816	0.817	0.891	0.732
Career Satisfaction	0.898	0.899	0.924	0.710
Conscientious	0.760	0.762	0.893	0.807
Extroversion	0.795	0.842	0.905	0.827
Neuroticism	0.854	0.859	0.932	0.872
Openness	0.809	0.813	0.887	0.725

Examining the standardized factor loadings is necessary for determining the item's individual reliability. Reliability can be ensured from higher values of composite reliability. [28]. Values between 0.60 to 0.70 are acceptable in exploratory study while values from 0.70 to 0.90 are considered good, 0.95 and above indicate redundancy in items.(Jeff Risher et al, 2018). As depicted in Table1 all the values are

in the range of 0.7 and 0.9, therefore, reliability can be termed as “satisfactory to good”. Other indicators of reliability are Cronbach's Alpha and Rho_A which are under acceptable limits as per Table1.

Average Variance Extracted or AVE measures indicate the convergence validity of each construct. In this case, it is higher than 0.50 , therefore, can be considered as valid.

DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

Table 2 Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Agreeableness	Career Satisfaction	Conscientious	Extroversion	Neuroticism	Openness
Agreeableness	0.855					
Career Satisfaction	0.436	0.843				
Conscientious	0.631	0.526	0.898			
Extroversion	0.264	0.266	0.391	0.909		
Neuroticism	-0.255	-0.445	-0.311	-0.205	0.934	
Openness	0.599	0.587	0.703	0.392	-0.429	0.851

The shared variance of constructs is slightly higher than the AVE of each individual construct.

1. **Table 3** Cross Loadings

	Agreeableness	Career Satisfaction	Conscientious	Extroversion	Neuroticism	Openness
A2	0.899	0.366	0.479	0.194	-0.155	0.459
A3	0.797	0.408	0.602	0.308	-0.315	0.660
C1	0.556	0.459	0.892	0.277	-0.274	0.581
C3	0.577	0.486	0.904	0.420	-0.285	0.679
CS1	0.339	0.782	0.435	0.053	-0.402	0.446
CS2	0.394	0.854	0.389	0.166	-0.465	0.428
CS3	0.266	0.848	0.428	0.335	-0.463	0.431
CS4	0.426	0.868	0.509	0.332	-0.258	0.581
CS5	0.406	0.858	0.451	0.226	-0.300	0.575
E1	0.217	0.204	0.345	0.882	-0.216	0.315
E2	0.259	0.272	0.365	0.936	-0.166	0.390
O1	0.511	0.466	0.643	0.294	-0.286	0.826
O2	0.472	0.504	0.516	0.383	-0.348	0.825
O3	0.545	0.526	0.639	0.323	-0.452	0.901
RA1A2	0.867	0.332	0.524	0.155	-0.164	0.382
RN1RN3	-0.279	-0.434	-0.339	-0.214	0.940	-0.409
RN2RN3	-0.192	-0.395	-0.237	-0.167	0.927	-0.391

The cross-loadings indicate that all the items are loaded more on their constructs than on other constructs.

Table 4 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Agreeableness	Career Satisfaction	Conscientious	Extroversion	Neuroticism	Openness
Agreeableness						
Career Satisfaction	0.502					
Conscientious	0.794	0.636				
Extroversion	0.316	0.314	0.499			
Neuroticism	0.293	0.511	0.383	0.253		
Openness	0.721	0.685	0.896	0.483	0.511	

Collinearity Statistics (VIF)2. **Table 5** Outer VIF Values

	VIF
A2	3.172
A3	1.377
C1	1.603
C3	1.603
CS1	2.266
CS2	2.867
CS3	2.745
CS4	4.495
CS5	3.750
E1	1.769
E2	1.769
O1	1.802
O2	1.649
O3	2.289
RA1A2	2.939
RN1RN3	2.245
RN2RN3	2.245

Table 6 Inner VIF Values

	Career Satisfaction
Agreeableness	1.806
Career Satisfaction	
Conscientious	2.360
Extroversion	1.222
Neuroticism	1.228
Openness	2.423

VIF below 5 is generally acceptable and shows that there is no collinearity. The VIF results show that all the values are below the

threshold value of 5 and hence shows minimal collinearity in the structural model.

Evaluation of Structural Model

Table 7 R-Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Career Satisfaction	0.417	0.403

The model predictability is calculated using the R^2 value. Since the $R^2_{(\text{Career Satisfaction})} = 0.417$, therefore the values are considered to be moderate and acceptable. Refer Table 7.

Table 8 Q-Square

	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Career Satisfaction	1025.000	727.584	0.290

Q² value after Blindfolding is .290 which means prediction accuracy of our model is approximately 30% which can be termed as accuracy of medium level as the value is above 0.25.

Using 5000 bootstrap samples and 205 bootstrap cases, the following significance levels were calculated using the bootstrapping algorithm.

Table 9 Path Coefficients

	Path Coefficients (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Agreeableness → Career Satisfaction	0.070	0.073	0.085	0.829	0.407
Conscientious → Career Satisfaction	0.190	0.187	0.102	1.870	0.062
Extroversion → Career Satisfaction	0.004	0.006	0.065	0.063	0.950
Neuroticism → Career Satisfaction	-0.235	-0.235	0.061	3.845	0.000
Openness → Career Satisfaction	0.309	0.312	0.101	3.054	0.002

The p-values show that only neuroticism and openness are statistically significant.

MODEL FIT

Table 10 Fit Summary

Fit Summary

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.089	0.089

The overall model fit is calculated using the “Standardized root-mean square residual” (SRMR). SRMR value of 0.1 and below is considered acceptable. Since the SRMR value is 0.089 hence it is acceptable and thus confirms the overall fit of our PLS model.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the study that personality traits has some role to play in career success of an individual. Particularly, Open-mindedness and Neuroticism have been found to influence career success.

As per NCBI (National Centre for Biotechnology Information, USA), “Neuroticism is the trait disposition to experience negative effects, including anger, anxiety, self-consciousness, irritability, emotional instability, and depression”[1]. And after analyzing all the data points gathered researcher found that Neuroticism is inversely proportional to career satisfaction. Hence,

having a lower score on Neuroticism can significantly increase satisfaction. Early screening of Neuroticism can be really helpful in these cases followed by proper medication since Neuroticism responds well to pharmacological intervention as mentioned in the Handbook of Individual Differences in Social Behavior. (2009).

Individuals who are open minded & imaginative do not refute unusual ideas and art. Contradictorily, non-creative people have closed minds, are analytical in approach and show resistance to change. In this study, we found that openness is directly proportional to career satisfaction, which implies that being optimistic and having a flexible attitude can really help in increasing the career satisfaction of an individual.

Organizations can conduct training sessions focused on these traits, thus, improving overall performance and behaviour of their employees

and ultimately bringing more satisfaction in their professional careers.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH

Responses can be affected by the mood of the participants taking survey. There is a high chance that the meaning of career and job satisfaction may be different for people from different educational backgrounds. Factors like supervisor's leadership style, organization climate etc. may have a mediating effect, which has not been explored in current research and so account for further research.

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- (6) is reserved.
- (7) is original & comes up with new ideas.
- (8) values artistic & aesthetic experiences
- (9) has an active imagination.
- (10) is sometimes rude to others.
- (11) has a forgiving nature.
- (12) is considerate & kind to almost everyone.
- (13) does a thorough job.
- (14) tends to be lazy.
- (15) does things efficiently.

APPENDIX-I

Career Success

The five items for measuring career success are:

- (1) I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career;
- (2) I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals;
- (3) I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income;
- (4) I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement;
- (5) I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.

The scale has an acceptable level of internal consistency at $\alpha = .88$ [42]. The scale measures career success in terms of career satisfaction [54].

Big -5 Personality Traits

The PsyToolkit 15-item Big Five Inventory (BFI-S)

I am someone who.....

- (1) worries a lot.
- (2) gets nervous easily.
- (3) remains calm in tense situations.
- (4) is talkative.
- (5) is outgoing & sociable.