

Personality Traits and Work-Life Balance as Predictors of Employee Effectiveness among Non-Academic Staff in a Nigerian University

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ABSTRACT

This study examined personality traits and work-life balance as predictors of employee effectiveness among non-academic staff in a Nigerian federal university. The design adopted was cross-sectional survey. Purposive sampling was used to select the study population. Validated questionnaires were used to collect data from 366 participants. Multiple regressions was used to test the hypothesis and accepted $p < .05$ level of significance. The results revealed that personality traits and work-life balance jointly predicted employee effectiveness among non-academic staff ($R^2 = .296$, $F = 74.629$, $p < .05$). Also, personality traits ($\beta = -.520$, $p < .05$) and work-life balance ($\beta = .177$, $p < .05$) independently predicted employee effectiveness among study participants. The results of this study have empirically confirmed personality traits and work-life balance as predictors of employee effectiveness among non-academic staff in a Nigerian university system. The study recommended that work planning unit in higher institution should take cognizance of these predictors to achieve employee effectiveness for increase performance.

INTRODUCTION

Employee effectiveness is described as activity that offers the objectives and strategies for achieving organizational goals (Ibrahim & Al-Falasi, 2014). It is an employee's endeavor to accomplish a particular task (El-Saghier, 2012). It means how well an employee performs the assigned tasks to achieve organization goals. In order to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization, the effectiveness of an employee to perform their tasks adequately has remained the bedrock for organizational success both in profit and non-profit organizations (Vasumathi, 2018).

Some factors have been investigated as predictors of employee effectiveness. This study investigated personality traits and work-life balance. Personality refers to the relatively pattern of behaviors that explain an individual's behavioral tendencies (Costa & McCrae, 2017). The big five personality traits: extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness is used to explain human behavior (Costa & McCrae, 2017). Conscientiousness has traits of being dependable, organized, reliable, ambitious, and hardworking (Costa & McCrae, 2017). Extraversion has traits of sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, ambitious and expressiveness (Costa & McCrae, 2017). Neurotic traits are being anxious, depressed, easily embarrassed, emotional, worried, and feeling of insecurity (Costa & McCrae, 2017). Agreeableness traits are being courteous, flexible, trusting, having well natured, cooperative, helpful and sympathetic (Costa & McCrae, 2017). Openness to experience traits is that of being imaginative, well-cultured, curious, original, broad minded, intelligent and artistically sensitive (Costa & McCrae, 2017). Tan and Wahid (2011) concluded that personality traits have close relationship with employee effectiveness as it is the case with other aspects of human behavior. This was earlier confirmed by Dormann and Buchholz (2001) that while extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness directly predicts employee effectiveness, and neuroticism did not predict employee effectiveness.

Studies that investigated personality traits and employee effectiveness across different organizations including higher institutions gave varied results. For example, Johnson (2017) Study found extraversion to predict employees' effectiveness especially in work which involved high interpersonal communications. Conscientious individuals are responsible, organized, well-planned, disciplined and goal-oriented achiever. Studies have confirmed conscientiousness as a strong predictor of employee effectiveness. In the same way, Alderotti et al. (2021) found conscientiousness trait as a strong predictor of employees' effectiveness. Agreeableness trait has the attributes of cooperativeness, tolerant and courteous with others. Rubenstein et al. (2019) that confirmed agreeableness as a good predictor of employees' effectiveness when individual and team teamwork are required. Openness to experience sees individual as being curious, creative, broad-minded, intelligent and imaginative. These attributes make individual towards being active participant in training and development programs (Rothman & Coetzer, 2003). Finally, Rothman and Coetzer (2003) found personality trait of openness to experience as a good predictor of employees' effectiveness. However, studies investigating

neuroticism and employee effectiveness did not employee effectiveness (Dormann & Buchholz, 2011).

Work life balance refers to the degree to which individuals enjoy the work they do and the level of efficiency in their roles in the work and family (Greenhaus & Allen, 2016). Grzywacz and Carlson (2012) conceptualized work-life balance as the achievement of certain outcomes that are agreed between individuals' roles and the family domains. Therefore, when there is absence of work-family conflict or there is reduction in the frequency with which conflict with work exist, the employee is said to have work-life balance (Greenhaus et al., 2013; Roberts et al., 2024).

Studies on the work-life balance and employee effectiveness across populations and different samples have been carried out. For example, Agha et al.'s (2017) study on work-life balance and employees' satisfaction among academic staff in Oman found that while work-life conflict causes negative employee effectiveness (fulfillment), work and individual life enrichment significantly predicted job effectiveness and satisfaction. In addition, a study that investigated work-life balance among academic staff in a university in Nigeria found that the university lack policy to resolve issues emanating from work-life balance and staff effectiveness (Gachter et al., 2011). Finally, in a related study conducted among non-academic staff in a Nigerian higher institution, Hamidah (2019) found that with improvement in employees' work engagement schedules and environment in which they work significantly influenced their commitment and reasonable level of their effectiveness.

Studies conducted on the predictors of employee effectiveness among non-academic staff are lacking which left gaps in knowledge to be filled. Therefore, this study investigated personality traits and work-life balance as predictors of employee effectiveness among non-academic staff of the University of Ibadan. The study addresses the following research questions: Would personality traits independently predict employee effectiveness among non-academic staff? Would work-life balance independently predict employee effectiveness among non-academic staff? And would personality traits and work-life balance jointly predict employee effectiveness among non-academic staff?

The findings of this study would provide the basis for assessing the personality traits, work-life balance and employee effectiveness among non-academic staff in the study population. Also, the findings of this study would assist workforce planning unit to make informed decisions on the career path of the non-academic staff. Finally, the finding in this study would help to monitor and improve the personality traits and work-life balance among non-academic staff in the higher education sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical construct

The Role Theory This study used the role theory developed by Menezes and Kelliher (2011) to explain employee effectiveness in work environment. The theory posits that employee's role at work and elsewhere exists in relation to other employees who rely on the role played by that employee. Meaning that employees who live up to their expectations in the role they play whether at work

or in the family life, they would have succeeded in performing their roles in a balanced way (Katz & Kahn, 2016). This theory has been empirically tested and found to be valid. For example, Bakar (2024) linked work-life with the role an employee play at work and family, that is, the varying expectations tend to relate with different roles employees have to play daily. Also, Kanter (2017) confirmed that family and work dependent on each other and that there exists a correlation between these two constructs.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis stated in this study was that personality traits and work-life balance would jointly and independently predict employee effectiveness among non-academic staff.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Cross-sectional survey research design using validated questionnaires for data collection was adopted in this study. The two independent variables were personality traits and work-life balance while dependent variable was employee effectiveness.

Research Setting

The research was conducted among non-academic staff of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. Sources from the university registry put the population of the non-academic staff at 4350 employees.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the University of Ibadan and non-academic staff while accidental sampling method was used to administer research instruments to the potential participants. Cochran's formula was used to calculate the sample size which was arrived at 366.

Instruments

The following instruments were used for data collection

Employee Effectiveness Scale (EES, Chen & Davis, 2005) was used to measure employee effectiveness. It is an 18-item scale presented on a 5-point Likert's scale with responses ranging from strongly disagrees to strongly agree. Example of items include: "I managed to plan my work so that I finished it on time", and "I kept in mind the work result I needed to achieve". Chen and Davis (2005) obtained Cronbach's alpha of 0.871, and in the present study, Cronbach's alpha obtained was 0.824.

Big Five Personality Scale BFPT-10 Item (Goldberg, 1992) was used to assess personality traits. It measures extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience. BPT-10-item is scored on 7- point Likert's format from disagree strongly to agree strongly. Sample items include: "I see myself as someone who is outgoing" and "I see myself as someone who is reserved". The original author reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.822 while in this study, Cronbach's alpha of 0.781 was calculated.

Work-life Balance Scale (WLBS) developed by Hayman (2005) was used to evaluate work-life balance. The scale has two subscales: Work interference with personal life (WIPL) and personal life interference with work (PLIW). The 15-item scale is presented on a 5-point Likert's format that ranges from strongly

disagree to strongly agree. Sample items include: "I put personal life on hold for work", and "My job makes personal life difficult" Hayman ((2005) obtained Cronbach's alpha of 0.801, for this study, Cronbach's alpha of 0.820 was obtained.

Procedure

An introductory letter was collected from the Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria to identify the researchers. All the participants were approached in their respective offices where a brief introduction was made and a request to participate in the study was solicited. Explanation to the confidentiality of the responses given was assured to the potential participants. Based on this understanding, questionnaires were given to those who obliged to participate in the study. It took less than 10 minutes to complete the questionnaires. A total of 366 questionnaires were distributed over a period of five days of which 361 questionnaires were retrieved giving response rate of 98.6%. However, during data screening and coding, three questionnaires were half-filled and were subsequently discarded thus left with 358 questionnaires for the analysis.

Analysis

IBM^R SPSS version 26 was used to analyze data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were implemented on the data collected. Hypothesis one was tested using t-test for independent samples, hypothesis two tested using zero-order correlation statistics, hypotheses 3 and 4 were tested using multiple regression analysis. Furthermore, scale reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha. The hypotheses tested were accepted at $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Socio-demographic Variables

The descriptive statistics showed that 279(78%) of the participants were males while 79(22%) were females. A total of 90(25%) participants were between 20 and 30 age group, 108 (30%) were between 31 and 40 age bracket, 68(19%) were between 41 and 50 age brackets while 92(26%) were between 51- and 60-years age bracket. In terms of their marital status, 56(16%) of the participants were single while 302(84%) were married. The educational qualifications of the participants indicated that 17(5%) were Senior Secondary School Certificate holders, 10(3%) were Ordinary National Diploma holders, 201(64.4%) were first degree holders while 113(33%) were masters holders. Finally, in terms of years of experience, 227(63%) of the participants have between 11- and 15-years working experience, 76(21%) between 6 and 10 years of working experience while 55(15%) had between 1- and 5-years working experience.

Hypothesis Testing

Personality traits and work-life balance would jointly and independently predict employee effectiveness among non-academic staff. The hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented in Table 1.

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Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis of Personality Traits and Work-Life Balance as Predictors of Employee Effectiveness (N = 366)
Model Summary^b

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard Error of Estimate	F
1	.544a	.296	.292	.54307	74.629

- a. Predictors: (Constant) personality traits, work-life balance
- b. Criterion variable: Employees’ effectiveness

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	β		
1 (Constant)	4.931	.078		63.290	.000
Personality traits	-.167	.014	-.520	-11.681	.000
Work-life balance	-.074	.019	-.177	-3.977	.000

- a. Dependent Variable: Employee Effectiveness

Table 1 shows the multiple regressions of personality traits and work-life balance on employee effectiveness. The result showed that both personality traits and work-life balance jointly predicted employee effectiveness among non-academic staff of the University of Ibadan (R²= .296, F = 74.629, p <.05). This suggests that all the predictor variables accounted for 29.6 percent of the proportion of variance in employee effectiveness. Further analysis showed that personality traits (β =-.520, p <.05) and work-life balance (β =-.177, p <.05) independently predicted employee effectiveness among study participants. Therefore, the results supported the tested hypothesis.

The study examines personality traits and work-life balance as predictors of employees’ effectiveness among non-academic staff of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The hypothesis was tested and accepted at p < .05 level of significance.

The hypothesis that personality traits and work-life balance would jointly and independently predict employee effectiveness among non-academic staff

was supported. Personality traits and work-life balance contributed 29.6 % of variance in employee effectiveness among study participants. The result further demonstrates the independent predictors of personality traits and work-life balance on employee effectiveness among study participants. The results supported previous studies that employees' personality traits positively contributed to their effectiveness in their work environment. Specifically, the personality traits of extraversion (Johnson, 2017), conscientiousness (Costa, Jr., & McCrae, 2017), agreeableness (Alderotti et al., 2021) and openness to experience (Rothman & Coetzer, 2003) were found to be strong predictors of employees' effectiveness across different work settings including those in higher institutions of learning. However, neuroticism did not predict employee effectiveness (Dormann & Buchholz, 2011).

Also, the present findings lent credence to previous results that work-life balance significantly predicted employees' effectiveness in their work situations (Agha et al., 2017; Hamidah, 2019; Gachter et al., 2011; Roberts et al., 2024). All these studies supported the findings of the present study that work-life balance predicted employees in various organizations that includes both academic and non-academic institutions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Independent predictors of employee effectiveness among study participants. Employee with poor personality traits would tend to be less effective toward the performance of organizational tasks. Also, employee's work-life balance that resulted to work and family conflicts tend to cause low employee effectiveness.

It is recommended that the human resource functions of universities should do regular profiling of their staff in order to harness the potential of the best workers for training, promotion and compensation programmes. Also, non-academic who possess the requisite personality traits and work-life balance should be co-opted into the main stream lecturing when vacancy exists.

The following limitations need to be mentioned in this study. The study utilized self-reported questionnaires for data collection was not free of social desirability bias. Further studies should use focus group interviews and work records from the authority to triangulate data obtained from self-report. The study purposively sampled non-academic staff from one university which hindered generalization of the study findings. Further studies should include more universities to allow for greater generalizability findings. The independent variables investigated was not enough. Further studies should include job motivation, emotional intelligence, self-esteem and social support to explore employees' effectiveness.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so further research is still needed on this topic "Personality Traits and Work-Life Balance as Predictors of Employee Effectiveness among Non-Academic Staff in a Nigerian University".

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