

Big-Five personality traits and its effect on Emotional intelligence among public school personnel in Malaysia

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The aim of the present study was to examine the effect and contribution of Big Five personality traits towards emotional intelligence among high performance public school personnel carrying their role as school leaders. Sample of the study was comprised of 306 (Male =132; Female =174) public school personnel as leaders in their respective environments, such as principal, senior administrative assistant, senior assistant student affairs (HEM), senior assistant curriculum, the heads of the four departments set by the Ministry of Education i.e. Heads of Humanities and Religion, Science and Math, English, and Engineering & vocational as well as members of general committee from High Performance Schools (SBT) in Malaysia. Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) and The Revised NEO Personality Inventory were used to measure EI and personality traits accordingly. Regression analysis showed that personality traits was becomes a significant predictors and contributing significantly in order explain emotional intelligence i.e. Conscientiousness ($R^2 = .305$, $F= 133.528$, $P<0.05$), Extraversion ($R^2 = .357$, $F= 84.295$, $P<0.05$), Agreeableness ($R^2 = .414$, $F= 71.151$, $P<0.05$), and Openness to experiences ($R^2 = .428$, $F= 56.196$, $P<0.05$). The finding revealed that all four personality traits emerged as significant predictors of emotional intelligence. The finding also revealed that Conscientiousness emerged as best predictor of emotional intelligence. However, different traits play differential roles in predicting the emotional intelligence. Keeping in view the implications of personality traits towards EI among school personnel as leaders, finding of the present research can help to improve overall organizational behaviour and productivity resulting in optimum service delivery to the stakeholders within educational system in Malaysia.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Personality traits, school leaders

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Introduction

Nowadays, most of organizations including schools are facing the challenges to manage with the speedily changing environment. Many organizations included educational institutions are influenced by instability associated with globalization, rapid development, constant innovation and rapid changes in stakeholder's expectations. Earlier researchers have shown significant changes in human behaviour in response to the changes happening in their surroundings (Piderit, 2000). Most of these changes relate to the personality traits

and characteristics as well as emotional intelligence (EI). There is empirical evidence that personality traits and EI have been essential keys to achieve organizational goals and to succeed in changing environment (Beer & Nohria, 2000). An appropriate understanding of the pattern of relationship between personality traits and emotional intelligence among school personnel is important to ensure the effectiveness of their services that they can provide to the students as well as the overall educational system. When intended to enhance quality of education, work performance in the institutions and intellectual discourse, the emphasis is on the importance of EI and personality traits among school teachers playing their role as leaders in their respective organizational set up.

Statement of problems

Every year educational institutions in Malaysia has to experience changes in the pattern of administration and implementation of the educational system (Yahaya, 2009). This shows the importance of the need for changes in education to as it is central for development and civilization of a country. Such a change should ensure a better quality in the job performance. In fact, changes in the implementation of the educational system seek to improve school performance, often associated with the personality traits of quality teachers in the school organization. This is because the process of change requires emotional intelligence such as to be more proactive, adaptive and dynamic to make any changes for improvements within an organization.

Leaders should try to survive and remain competitive as they reorganize, implement and restructure a new approach. In other words, they constantly try to change in order to fulfil the recognition needs to be sustainable in the competitive environment to continuously improve in the face of changing conditions and to enhance education system in Malaysia. These ongoing and seemingly endless efforts can put a lot of strain not only on school organization but also an individual. According to Beer and Nohria (2000), 70 per cent of change process fail are due to the lack of strategy and vision, lack of communication and trust, problem in management (leaders), resistance to change, etc, which affects the individual work performance. Personality and emotional intelligence aspects are the key factor for school organizations to compete and sustain themselves personality and emotional aspect towards performances. Although in principle, the leaders already have long expertise in their respective fields and have long working experience time, but the fact that they still find it difficult to adjust to the demands of the changing pattern and challenge new work that results in an increase rebranding changes of educational institutions in Malaysia, thus it can interfere and affect their performance.

There are also some school leaders who are still struggling, and sometimes failing to adapt to the norms and culture of this fast-moving trends. Previous studies by Lucas and Murray (2002) have shown that even a member of the academic staff having an expertise in a particular field, it still does not guarantee them to perform work in effective, efficient and successful way. Thus, inefficient work processes creating barriers for quick and fast adaptation to the changes is not something to be taken lightly as it can affect the behaviour of a leader's personality as well as emotional intelligence.

Literature Reviews

Emotional Intelligence is the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions effectively in ourselves and in others. An emotional competence is a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that contributes to effective performance at work (Goleman, 1998). The EI construct has lately been defined as the ability to think intelligently about emotions and to use them to enhance intelligent thinking. According to Goleman (2000) emotional intelligence is a crucial determinant of job and career success. EI may even be more important than general mental ability for determining personality traits. According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000) EI makes an individual proficient to identify his own emotions as well as others'. Using and understanding those emotions, and having the ability to manage those emotions are also required to develop a strong personality. In the case of managing emotions well, one must understand and be aware of the individual differences. Individual differences can be seen in the characteristics and behaviors that are owned by a person and that can be described as personality (Maccoby, 2009).

Accordingly, the personality characteristics owned by the school personnel as a leader can affect his or her organizational behaviour in the educational setting. The personality traits of leader often become the center of attention due to its relationship with emotional stability while playing their role as a leader within an organization. Recent studies also demonstrate that personality traits are closely related to the achievement within an organization, especially with work performance, career development, leadership effectiveness, as well as evaluation and management of training (Barrick et.al, 2001, Judge et al., 1999). Even though existing researches provided empirical evidence that individuals

with high level of EI experience more career success, build stronger personal relationships and enjoy better health than those having low level of EI (Rahayu Imrani, 2004), there is limited research evidence available on this topic in relation to high performance public school personnel in Malaysia, so current study was a modest attempt in understanding the effect of EI and its contribution towards personality traits among school teachers playing their role as leaders.

Emotional intelligence and personality traits are two important constructs of psychology and there is substantial evidence that how these two constructs are related to each other. The role of these constructs on organizational behaviour of the leaders within an organization is of outmost importance. Looking at the current scenario in Malaysia, frequent changes in educational institution happens either in the pattern of administration or in the implementation of the educational system. In fact, changes in the implementation and administration of the education system which is aimed to improve school performance are often associated with personality traits of quality teachers in the school organization. In relation to these changes, leadership within an organization needs to be proactive, adaptive, dynamic, thus can adapt effectively with the crisis of change while making efforts to further improve the performance of an organization (Weinberger, 2004). Therefore the main objective of the present study was to explore the effect of emotional intelligence and its contribution towards *Big-Five* personality traits among school personnel as leaders in high performance public schools in Malaysia.

Justification doing research in high performance schools because it conferred to a group of school that have ethos, character and a unique identity to excell in all aspects of education. In fact, it was associated a high culture and excellent work and are competitive in the international level. Besides, it also facing a lot of changes compare to the others schools in many aspects.

Methods

The present research used exploratory design to determine the effects of emotional intelligence on Big five personality traits among school personnel as leaders in high performance public schools in Malaysia. Standardized self report questionnaires were used to collect data.

Sample

Sample of the study was comprised of 306 (Male =132; Female =174) public school teachers as school leaders in their respective environments, such as principal, senior administrative assistant, senior assistant student affairs (HEM), senior assistant curriculum, the heads of the four departments set by the Ministry of Education i.e. Heads of Humanities and Religion, Science and Math, English, and Engineering & vocational as well as members of general committee from High Performance Schools (HPS) in Malaysia.

Sample Procedure

Sample procedure refers to process of selecting individuals from the target population. The sampling frame for the study was acquired from 15 High Performance Schools (SBT) in Malaysia based on five selected location (Zone North, East, South, Middle, Sabah/Sarawak). Then, the sample was chosen by using purposive design that involved such as principals, senior assistant 1, senior assistant 2, Co-Curriculum of senior assistant, head of programme and also head of core- subject.

Location

The present research was conducted in 15 public schools in Malaysia. Location of the present research was selected based on the predetermined criteria related to geographical location and status such as all the schools selected were based on five selected areas entitled as High performance schools.

Instruments

The instrument of the present research contains of standardized self-report questionnaires. Part A of the questionnaire has--items related to the demographic information of the participants including age, gender, working experience and educational background.

Part B contains forty eight (48) item of The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R), arranged into four (4) subscales i.e. conscientiousness (12 items), extraversion (12 items), agreeableness (12 items) and openness to experience (12 items). The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) is a standardized measure of personality traits developed by Costa dan McCrae (1992). According to Costa dan McCrae (1992), NEO-PI-R has overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.869. As for the subscales of NEO-PI-R reliability measure, they found that conscientiousness has Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.855, extraversion

Cronbach's Alpha 0.742, agreeableness has Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.731, while for openness to experience Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be 0.742.

Part C of the questionnaire contains Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI). The ECI is a 360-degree tool designed to assess the emotional competencies of individuals and organizations. It is based on emotional competencies identified by Goleman in *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998), and on competencies from Hay/McBer's *Generic Competency Dictionary* (1996) as well as Richard Boyatzis's *Self-Assessment Questionnaire* (Wolff, 2005). The scale contains sixty three (63) items arranged into four (4) subscales i.e. Self-Awareness (9 items), Self-Management (18 items), Social Awareness (9 items) and Relationship Management (24 items). Overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability value for ECI was found to be 0.970. As for the subscales, it was found that Self-Awareness subscale has Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.819, Self-Management has Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.881, Social Awareness has Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.846, and Relationship Management has Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.940.

The standardized instruments used in the present research were translated to Malay language using Back to Back translation method by two bilingual translators who were Malay native speakers working independently of each other. The two Malay versions were revised by researchers and reconciled into one Malay version. This was then back-translated into English by a native English speaker who has a good command of the Malay language. Following this, further discussions and modifications were carried out by the researchers based on the forward and back versions before generating the final Malay instruments. It was found that after translation the questionnaire was comprehensive enough for the participants to respond.

Procedure

All the school in the selected areas were taken into consideration selecting the location of the present research. Potential participating schools were identified based on certain inclusion exclusion criteria. After identifying the location for the research relevant authorities were contacted to seek the approval for conducting research. After seeking the approval from the relevant authorities to conduct the present research, the school heads were approached to discuss the suitable day and time for data collection. The participants were given briefing about the objectives of the research and inform consent was sought before distributing the questionnaires. The self-report questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in their respective location and were given time period of three (3) days to fill

up. After three days questionnaires were collected back from the schools. All the necessary ethics related to data collection, confidentiality and data reporting were taken to ensure that quality of research.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed by using SPSS version 20.0. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the demographic information of the participant. While inferential statistics such as Regression was used to determine the effects of Big Five personality traits on EI.

Results

The descriptive statistics are presented to provide background information on the scales used and respondents. The analysis of the scales was done based on all respondents.

Table 1 : Demography of respondent

Aspect of Demography	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	132	43.1
Female	174	56.9
Age		
26 - 30 years	21	9.5
31 - 40 years	76	14.7
41 - 50 years	107	41.8
51 - 60 years	102	34
Level of education		
STPM	3	1.0
Diploma	4	1.3
Degree	255	83.3

Master	43	14.1
Phd	1	0.3
Duration of service		
Less than 5 years	21	6.9
5 - 10 years	76	24.8
11 - 20 years	107	35
More than 20 years	102	33.3

According to Table 1, the total number of respondents is 306 where the number of male respondents is, 132 and the female respondent is 174. Overall, there are slightly more female respondents (in terms of percentage) which indicated 13.8% difference. The data also show that the largest group of respondents from the age group of 41 to 50 years old makes up 41.8 percent of the total respondents. The second largest age group comes from the age group of 31 to 40 years old amounts to 34 percent from the group. The next age group of 51 to 60 years old has a percentage amount of 14.7 percent. Lastly, the lowest number of respondents in the current study respondents comes from the age group of 26 to 30 years old totalled 9.5 percent of the research respondents.

Table 1 shows the number of respondents grouped according to their level of education. The table also shows the number of respondent group accordingly in percentage. The number of respondents with the level of education of STPM amounts to 1.00 percent of the total study respondents. The respondents with the level of Diploma formed 1.3 percent of the study. The next category of Degree registered a percentage of 83.3. The following respondents with the level of Post- Degree make up a percentage of 14.1. Finally the percent of respondents with the level of PhD is 0.3. At the Table 2 shows, the largest group of respondents in this study belonged to the education category of Degree, followed by the category of Master. The third largest category belongs to respondents from the Diploma category.

With regard to length of service, 35% of respondents had more than ten years of working experience and it was the highest percentage, followed by 33.3% of respondents with working experience for more than 20 years. Meanwhile, 24% of respondents has working experience for 5 to 10 years. Only 6.9% of respondents have a term of less than five years. Overall, respondents' teaching experience as leading educators in high

performance schools was found to be scattered. From this data, it could be assumed that most of those who teach in high performance schools (HPS) had more than 10 years of working experience since the HPS program is introduced in Malaysia and their tenure track showed that most of them were willing to deal with the complex changes in the working environment.

Hierarchal Regression Analysis

Table 2 shows the results of multiple regression analysis using each and every sub scale in personality trait assumed as the significant predictors of emotional intelligence. Results given in Table 2 show that personality trait contributed significantly and positively towards emotional intelligence. It was found that Conscientiousness subscale of personality traits contributed 30.5% variance ($F= 133.528, P<0.05$), however when combine with Extraversion subscale of personality traits, it contributed 35.7% variance ($F= 84.295, P<0.05$). As for Agreeableness subscale of personality traits combine with Conscientiousness and Extraversion contributed 41.1% variance ($F= 71.151, P<=0.05$). While Openness to experiences subscale of personality traits when combine with Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Agreeableness subscales contributed 42.8% variance ($F= 56.196, P<0.05$) towards emotional intelligence scale scores.

To further explain the finding it could be stated that when independent variables were entered in the regression model with the emotional intelligence as a criterion, Conscientiousness itself contributed 30.5% of the variance, however a significant increase 5.2% was obtained in the R square when it was entered along with Extraversion in the regression model accounting for 35.7% of the variance. Another significant increase of 5.7% was found in the R square when these variables were entered along with Agreeableness in the regression model accounting for 41.4% of the variance. Lastly, a significant increase of 1.4% was found in R square when these variables were entered along with the Openness to experience in the regression model accounting for 42.8% of the variance.

Table 2: Regression Analyses of Personality Traits on Emotional Intelligence

Trait Personality	<i>B</i>	t- value	<i>P</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2
Conscientiousness	0.394	6.939	.000	133.528	.551	.305
Extraversion	0.343	6.214	.000	84.295	.598	.357
Agreeableness		5.402	.000			

	0.283		71.151	.644	.414
Openness to experience		2.656	.000		
	0.134		56.196	.654	
					.428

Discussion

Given the significance of Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Openness to experiences as important factors effecting emotional intelligence in earlier researches, this study also showed that traits of personality Conscientiousness, Openness to experience, Extraversion and Agreeableness influence emotional intelligence of employees especially in the school institution. Thus keeping in mind the contribution of personality traits towards emotional intelligence in today's fast moving world and changing educational system, the role of personality cannot be underestimated in determining one's emotional intelligence. The findings of the present study are consistent with the study of Ahmad Mohammed Mousa Mahasneh (2013) stated that personality trait significantly explains emotional intelligence. The overall significant effect of personality trait based on all four dimensions found in the present study point to the fact that individuals who possess higher levels of these trait dimensions will be better in their ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions as well as to discriminate among them and to use that information to guide one's own thoughts and action.

Analysis of multiple regressions revealed that dimension of Conscientiousness is a strong predictor of emotional intelligence. It is the most important trait of educator leaders that contribute the most in producing emotional intelligence. This was consistent with the study was done by Douglas & Frink (2004) indicated that person has a high level of emotional intelligence brings a positive effects on Conscientiousness trait personality. Finding from a study conducted by Skovholt & D'Rozario (2000) suggest that excellent teachers are those who display empathy toward other and have ability to interact socially with their environment. Moreover, school leaders with high emotional intelligence excel in their job because they are always open to new ideas, systematic, and welcome any feedback about any issue from others such as colleagues and students. This will open a

communication pathway as well as preserve future changes that can influence and contribute in explaining emotional intelligence.

It was also supported by the size of the correlation indicated that the generally high level personality trait is related to high level of subject's emotional intelligence. People high in EI are more tough minded, more emotionally stable, and outward oriented. This indicates that emotional intelligence goes hand in hand and effects with other positive personality traits. Indeed, it was supported by other researchers such as McCrae (2000), Day & Carrol (2004), Zadel (2004), Shulman & Hemeenover (2006) and Athota, O'connor & Jackson (2009) reporting a strong relationship between personality trait and emotional intelligence.

The results also suggest the particular measure of EI (Goleman, 2001) used during present research reflects emotional intelligence as a trait, however, this is in contrast with findings by Caruso et al. (2002). According to Caruso *et al.* (2002) EI is found to be an independent construct of personality. It is possible that the independence is observed because Caruso *et al.* used an ability based measure of EI. On the other hand, in discriminant validity study of EI conducted by Schutte et al. (1998), found that EI measure did not correlate with the big five personality measures except for openness to experience. These findings are in contrast with the present research; the reason for this difference could be that the focus of validation study conducted by Schutte et al. (1998) was 23 college students whose average age was lower than the present study sample. The results obtained by Schutte et al. (1998) could have been obtained due to the narrow range of data. Therefore, we might still conclude that the connection between personality and emotional intelligence depends on the type of measure used.

The present study result supported the assumption that the five personality dimensions relate to emotional intelligence aspects at a moderate level. These findings are consistent with Weisnger (1998) reported that the competence of monitoring, self-emotion and well managed emotion of emotional intelligence are influenced by proper self-expressive behavior where the individual's personality could be specified by the conduct of that individual. Khalatbari, Hasani Rahmani Ghorbanshiroudi and Keikhayfarzaneh (2011), and Besharat (2010), Petrides, Vernon, Schermer, Lightar, Boomsma and Veselka (2010) found that there is a strong relationship between personality traits and emotional intelligence.

Implication

The finding support the notion that personality trait and emotional intelligence will effect the leader performance. This study also supports that personality trait and emotional

intelligence at the organizational level is a prerequisite for successful schools setting. For example, it implies that school should provide an adequate conducive environment and training of EI for leaders. Emphasizing more training in emotional intelligence would help leaders to be more open in expressing their emotions thus will help them to manage their emotions to enhance their performance as well as to adjust their personality consistently. As for the suggestion, it indicates that emotion intelligence, and personality trait need to be pooled together to ensure an overall significant on competitive change and performance. This enables leaders to prioritize their work activity accordingly with respect to their potential as far as the objective and organization target. Nonetheless, the conceptual framework of this research provides leaders with a practical organizational model that can be utilized to assess and understand the internal strengths and weaknesses to improve the level of individual performance.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of personality trait i.e. conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and openness to experience, towards emotional intelligence. The research examined the variety of predictors from educator leaders' perspective. Overall, the result of this study shows that conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion, and agreeableness are useful constructs while predicting emotional intelligence. The findings revealed that openness to experiences emerged as the stronger significant predictors of emotional intelligence followed by agreeableness, extraversion and conscientiousness. Understanding precisely how personality traits and emotions relate may have several implications for human resources practitioner and leadership in school setting, particularly in the area of selection and leadership development. Specifically, aspects of personality and emotional intelligence identified as underlying attributes of effective leaders may provide an additional selection for identifying potentially quality educator leaders in school institution. Collectively, the results provide support for the relevance of the five-factor model and emotional intelligence in leadership school research.

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