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THE BIG FIVE OF PERSONALITY, JOB PERFORMANCE,
AND PERCEIVED AUTONOMY ON THE JOB

A thesis submitted to the Graduate School in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Science (Management),
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by
Regina Woon Ai Leng

**GRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT (BAHASA MALAYSIA)

Kajian ini mempunyai dua matlamat, iaitu: (1) mengkaji hubungan di antara lima dimensi personaliti ataupun lebih dikenali sebagai ‘the Big Five of personality’, dengan dua dimensi prestasi kerja, iaitu prestasi tugas (*task performance*) dan prestasi kontekstual (*contextual performance*); dan (2) mengkaji kesan penyederhanaan tanggapan autonomi (*moderating effect of perceived autonomy*) ke atas hubungan di antara kelima-lima dimensi personaliti dengan kedua-dua dimensi prestasi kerja.

Sampel kajian ini terdiri daripada para pekerja yang tergolong dalam kumpulan “Sokongan” di semua jabatan di Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Kedah. Sampel ini telah melengkapkan dua set borang soal selidik yang dikendalikan oleh pengkaji sendiri.

Hasil kajian yang diperolehi daripada borang soal selidik set pertama (QA1) menunjukkan hubungan-hubungan yang positif dan signifikan di antara *conscientiousness* dengan kedua-dua dimensi prestasi kerja. Hubungan di antara *extraversion* dengan prestasi kontekstual juga adalah positif dan signifikan. Sebaliknya, hubungan di antara *extraversion* dengan prestasi tugas adalah negatif dan tidak signifikan. Hubungan-hubungan di antara *openness to experience* dengan kedua-dua dimensi prestasi kerja adalah signifikan tetapi negatif. Walaupun hubungan-hubungan di antara *agreeableness* dan *emotional stability* dengan kedua-dua dimensi prestasi kerja adalah positif, namun hubungan-hubungan ini adalah tidak signifikan. Hasil kajian daripada QA1 juga menunjukkan bahawa kesan penyederhanaan tanggapan

autonomi ke atas hubungan-hubungan di antara *agreeableness* dengan prestasi tugas, dan di antara *conscientiousness* dengan prestasi kontekstual adalah signifikan.

Hasil kajian yang diperolehi daripada borang soal selidik set kedua (QA2) menunjukkan hubungan-hubungan yang positif dan signifikan di antara *agreeableness*, *conscientiousness*, dan *openness to experience* dengan kedua-dua dimensi prestasi kerja. Hubungan-hubungan di antara *extraversion* dengan prestasi tugas, dan di antara *emotional stability* dengan prestasi kontekstual juga adalah positif dan signifikan. Hasil kajian daripada QA2 juga menunjukkan bahawa kesan penyederhanaan tanggapan autonomi ke atas hubungan-hubungan di antara *agreeableness*, *extraversion*, dan *emotional stability* dengan kedua-dua dimensi prestasi kerja adalah signifikan.

Hasil kajian ini menonjolkan beberapa kesignifikanan. Pertama, hubungan-hubungan di antara ‘the Big Five of personality’ dengan dimensi-dimensi prestasi kerja berkemungkinan besar adalah bersifat dwi-hala (*bidirectional*) dan bukan sehala (*unidirectional*), seperti yang ditemui oleh kebanyakan kajian lepas. Kedua, tanggapan autonomi boleh memberi kesan ke atas hubungan di antara personaliti dan prestasi. Akhirnya, alat-alat yang digunakan dalam kajian ini merupakan di antara alat yang terawal diuji di negara ini. Oleh itu, diharapkan kajian ini dapat membolehkan bakal-bakal kajian untuk memantapkan lagi hasil dan alat kajian ini, terutamanya dalam kontek tempatan.

ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

This study has two purposes: (1) to examine the relationships between the Big Five of personality and both task and contextual performances; and (2) to examine the moderating effect of perceived autonomy on the job in the relationships between the Big Five of personality and both task and contextual performances.

The sample chosen for this study comprised of the Support Group employees of the various departments in Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Kedah, who completed two sets of questionnaires administered by the researcher.

The findings obtained from the first set of questionnaire (QA1) showed positive and significant relationships between conscientiousness and both task and contextual performances. The relationship between extraversion and contextual performance was also positive and significant, but the relationship between extraversion and task performance was negative and insignificant. The relationships between openness to experience and both task and contextual performances were significant but in the negative direction. Although positive relationships were found for agreeableness and emotional stability with both task and contextual performances, these relationships were insignificant. The findings of QA1 also showed that perceived autonomy on the job significantly moderated the relationships between agreeableness and task performance, and between conscientiousness and contextual performance.

The findings obtained from the second set of questionnaire (QA2) showed positive and significant relationships for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience with both task and contextual performances. The relationships

between extraversion and task performance, and between emotional stability and contextual performance were also positive and significant. The findings of QA2 also showed that perceived autonomy on the job was a significant moderator between the relationships for agreeableness, extraversion, and emotional stability with both task and contextual performances.

This study brought forth several significances. Firstly, the relationships between the Big Five of personality and the dimensions of job performance are most likely bidirectional and not unidirectional as found by most past studies. Secondly, perceived autonomy on the job could affect the personality-performance relations. Lastly, the instruments used in this study were among the first to be tested in the Malaysian context. Thus, it is hoped that this study could enable future research to build on these findings and instruments, especially in the local context.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Agr. = agreeableness

Consc. = conscientiousness

CP = contextual performance

DV = dependent variable

Emo. = emotional stability

Ext. = extraversion

IV = independent variable

MV = moderating variable

Open. = openness to experience

QA = questionnaire

TP = task performance

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

In this chapter, the introduction, research problem, study context, objectives, and significance of the study are presented.

1.1 Introduction

Research in the last decade has shown that personality characteristics are valid and useful predictors of performance at work. Much of the support for personality traits as performance predictors can be attributed to two recent developments. The first is the emergence and widespread acceptance of the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality. The FFM has emerged across different theoretical frameworks, using different instruments, in different cultures, using ratings obtained from different sources, and with a variety of samples (Mount, Barrick, & Stewart, 1998; Barrick & Mount, 1991). The five dimensions of the FFM are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. These five dimensions of personality are also commonly known as the “Big Five”.

The second development is the use of meta-analyses based on the FFM. Through these meta-analyses, progress has been made in understanding which personality traits are relevant for predicting specific criteria across different jobs. This has enabled researchers and practitioners to take a more theoretical approach to

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