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## Association between big five personality traits and job performance: A study on the sales personnel among the private companies of Bangladesh

**Mohammad Toriqul Islam Jony, Sharifa Akter and MD Atiqur Rahman Khan**

### Abstract

A Salesman's personality is a very important factor in his career to be productive and lead the high level of job performance. It is also challenging for employers to find qualified talents. However the purpose of this study is to determine the relation between the dimensions of personality and the performance of sales personnel among the private companies of Bangladesh. A well designed structured questionnaire was also developed and the data were collected through direct interview and email through from the randomly selected 220 sales personnel of various private companies located in different parts of Bangladesh. It was hypothesized that there is likely to be a significant positive relationship between big five personality traits and job performance of sales personnel and this was therefore postulated that personality traits are likely to be the major predictors of job performance. This study has used descriptive statistics, multiple regression and correlation analysis. The findings of this study revealed that Extraversion and Conscientiousness are closely linked to the sales personnel's job performance and they have a significant influence on the job performance of Sales personnel among Bangladesh's various private companies whereas Neuroticism or Emotional stability has a negative relationship to performance at work and the other traits: Openness and acceptability have no significant relationship with job performance and they have no major influence on the performance of sales personnel in the private companies of Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Big personality traits, job performance, factors, sales personnel

### Introduction

In the past century; the relationship between personality and job performance was a frequently studied topic in many fields like agriculture, industry and medical (Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001) [1]. However; the research carried out during this period was characterized by primary studies in which researchers investigated individual relationships from numerous personality inventories to different aspects of job performance. But the one big question organizations may find difficult to answer is how to distinguish individuals who perform well from those who don't. To some degree the response may be related to the type of personality one shows.

Basically people are blessed with a variety of characteristics that subsequently make up their personality through which they respond to the environmental stimuli and it includes the relatively stable feelings, thoughts, and patterns of behavior. Each of us has a unique personality that distinguishes us from others, and understanding the personality of someone gives us clues as to how this person is likely to act and feel in a variety of situations. To manage effectively, understanding the personalities of the various employees is helpful (Alsuwailem & Elnaga, 2016) [2]. Besides job performance is a multi-dimensional concept that demonstrates how well workers perform their jobs, the effort they take and the resourcefulness they exhibit in solving problems. It also shows the extent to which they perform tasks, how they use their available resources and the time and energy they spend on their tasks (Boshoff & Arnolds, 1995; Schepers, 1994) [3, 4]. There are few evidences in the past literature which suggest that the success or potential at work can be predicted through an individual's personality. Appropriate characteristics of a person's personality help him achieve the organizational goal, not only in the form of profit but also in maintaining the high level of performance.

The next question arises after perceiving the idea about this research as to how to measure the personality. There are numerous theories surrounding personality such as Psychoanalytic Theories, Humanistic Theories, Social Cognitive Theories, Biological or Genetic Theories and Trait Theories. One of the most commonly used models of trait theories is the Big Five Personality model, which incorporates five different measures of human cognitive qualities as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to change (McCare & Costa, 1989; Barrick & Mount, 1991 & Jabari *et al.* 2012). Extraversion is a measure of how energetic, sociable and outgoing an individual is. Agreeableness is a measure of how well the individual gets along with others, how skeptical or cooperative they are, and how they might interact within a team. Conscientiousness is a measure of how cautious, deliberate, self-disciplined and organized an individual is. Emotional stability measures the ways people respond to stress. The last trait is openness measures to what extent an individual is imaginative and creative, in contrast to down-to-earth and conventional.

Evidence from various studies and meta-analysis (Hough *et al.* 1990; Tett, Jackson & Rothstein, 1991; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997 & Vinchur *et al.* 1998) <sup>[5, 6, 7]</sup> showed that the job performance is linked to various big five personality dimensions. Extraversion and sensitivity predict the success of jobs in different occupations (Schneider, 1999 & Vinchur *et al.* 1998) <sup>[8, 7]</sup>.

Since several studies have come to a conclusion that there is a close connection between the big five personality dimensions and job performance. This study attempted to examine the relationship between the big five personality model and job performance among the salesperson from the perspective of Bangladesh

### Literature Review

Rusbadrol; Mahmud & Arif (2015) <sup>[9]</sup>; they investigate the relationship among Malaysian public secondary school teachers between personality traits and work performance. The results showed that Openness to Experience and Agreeableness and job performance have a positive relationship. On the opposite, Neuroticism and job performance have a negative association.

Rothmann & Coetzer (2003); they surveyed 14 retailers and 16 hospital pharmacies in the North West Province, Free State, Mpumalanga and Gauteng among 159 employees of a corporate pharmacy group. Their study asserted that management performance was significantly related to emotional stability, open-mindedness to learning, and agreeability. Managers who are emotionally stable, open to experience, and friendly tend to perform better than those who have evaluated these dimensions in lower. The negative association between neuroticism and managerial success can be explained by the fact that managers who score high on neuroticism are prone to irrational ideas, are less capable of controlling their impulses and are less able to cope with stress.

Yakasai & Jan (2015) <sup>[11]</sup>; They assessed the impact of the Big Five Factor of personality traits on the performance of salespeople, taking into account the mediating role of customer orientation, as well as exploring the moderating role of culture. This study found that no specific set of variables could result in efficient performance of salespeople in all circumstances since efficiency is a

context-based outcome. Only the big five factor alone cannot explain the performance of salespeople effectively. Consumer orientation of salespeople may play an important mediating role in predicting the success of salespeople within the big five-factor model.

Abdullah; Rashid & Omar (2013) <sup>[10]</sup>; their study investigates how the personality affects employee job performance so that the best performing workforce could be hired for Pakistan's banking sector through their personality analysis. The study outcome confirms personality is a good performance predictor. Extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and open-mindedness have a positive and significant effect on employee job performance while neuroticism has a negative impact on employee tasks and contextual performance.

Ahmad; Ather & Hussain (2014) <sup>[12]</sup>; they examined the relationship between Big Five personality traits and work performance with a multidimensional organizational engagement mediating role. A theoretical model in which personality is an antecedent of organizational commitment and performance is a consequence of organizational commitment has been developed for this study. It has been established that affective involvement often mediates the relationship between perception and job performance. It has been suggested that the relationship between neuroticism and work performance is influenced by a commitment to continuity.

Seddigh *et al.* (2016) <sup>[13]</sup>; they analyzed the joint impact of type of office (cell, living space, open-plan, and flex) and temperament, measured by the Big Five personality traits, on self-rated diversion, job satisfaction, and job performance (measured by professional effectiveness) among 1205 Participants working in 5 private and public sector organizations from Sweden. The results of the study revealed that only agreeability, emotional stability and open-mindedness were correlated with distraction in a mutually adjusted model: participants who were more agreeable, less emotionally stable and more open-minded showed greater distraction.

Hau & Bing (2018) evaluated the relationship between Big Five personality traits and work involvement of private university academic staff in Perak, Malaysia. They identified that acceptance, conscientiousness, and openness to experience had significant positive effects on the commitment to work.

Klang (2012) <sup>[14]</sup> examined the relationship between personality dimensions and job performance supervisory ratings, in Sweden's sales context. A sample of 34 telesales employees, working at two major telecom companies were also employed for this purpose. He noted that there was a significant positive correlation between conscientiousness and extroversion on job performance. Besides; he found that Agreeableness and Openness to Experience had no relation to job performance.

Alsuwailem & Elnaga (2016) <sup>[15]</sup>; they conducted a study to investigate the relationships between personality and job performance, based on collecting and analyzing articles, journals, newspapers and books to determine how the personality with different five traits affect job performance positively. They note that conscientiousness and extraversion tend to have a positive correlation with productivity and performance. Neuroticism and acceptability correlate negatively with the ability to lead.

Gupta & Gupta (2020) <sup>[16]</sup> analyzed the impact of five

personality traits on workplace performance of managers in India's FMCG Sector. They found that personality extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness trait have a strong positive association on job performance of FMCG sector managers. In addition to it; they also identified that Personality neuroticism trait had the lowest correlation with the job performance of the FMCG sector managers.

Masood *et al.* (2017); they also evaluated the impact of personality traits on job performance of police officers in the region of Lahore, India. The results of their study showed that positive personality traits (i.e., openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, and agreeableness) had an association with job performance, whereas neuroticism had a negative connection to job performance among the police officers of Lahore.

Eswaran, Islam & Yusuf (2011) [18] checked the relationship between the Big Five Personality Dimensions and job involvement. A sample of 105 sales/customer service staff was selected from a foreign-based banking/financial institution in Malaysia's northern region. The study results confirmed that extroversion and agreeableness are positively related to employment involvement. Emotional stability/neuroticism, Conscientiousness and open-mindedness to experience showed no significant relation to job involvement.

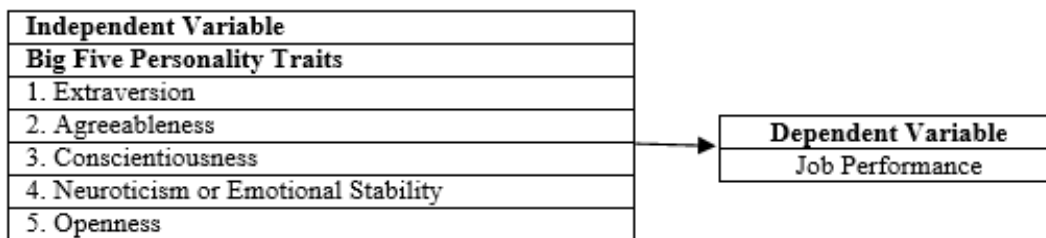


Fig 1: Conceptual framework of the study.

**Hypothesis of the study:** This study hypothesizes the following

- H<sub>1</sub>:** Extraversion has a positive impact on the sales personnel job performance.
- H<sub>2</sub>:** Agreeableness has a positive impact on the sales personnel job performance.
- H<sub>3</sub>:** Conscientiousness has a positive impact on the sales personnel job performance.
- H<sub>4</sub>:** Neuroticism or Emotional stability has a positive impact on the sales personnel job performance.
- H<sub>5</sub>:** Openness has a positive impact on the sales personnel job performance.

**Materials and Methods**

**Data collection, tools and respondents**

This study employed both primary and secondary data the data were collected by direct interview and email through a well-structured questionnaire from the randomly selected 220 sales staff of various private companies located in different areas of Bangladesh. This study also used the five point Likert-type scale, where 5= Highly Satisfied and 1= Highly Dissatisfied.

**Data analysis tools**

The responses of the participants were placed into SPSS version 17.0 software to arrive at the expected results and several sets of statistical analyzes were performed to

The above literature suggests that many studies have been executed in the field of big five personality traits and job performance, but there is a clear gap that only a few of them are conducted in Bangladesh and none of them has demonstrated the relationship between big five personality traits and the work performance of employees among the sales personnel of Bangladesh.

**Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship and impacts of the big five personality trait on job performance among the sales personnel from the perspective of Bangladesh.

The other objectives are:

- To identify the positive impact of big five personality traits on sales personnel's performance;
- To identify the negative impact of big five personality traits on sales personnel's performance;
- To offer some meaningful suggestions to the companies of Bangladesh.

**Conceptual framework of the study**

The big five personality trait is an independent variable and a dependent variable is job performance. The framework designed through analyzing the previous study is as follows:

interpret the data.

Descriptive statistics and correlations have been used to demonstrate the associations between big five personality traits and job performance and multiple regressions analyzes used to examine the influence of each personality trait factor on employee performance.

**Reliability of data**

The initial reliability of the items was evaluated by measuring alpha from the Cronbach. The higher the alpha coefficient of Cronbach is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the objects in the scale. The following thumb rules were provided by George and Mallery (2003): ">.9-Excellent, >.8-Good, >.7-Acceptable, >.6-Questionable, >.5-Poor, and <.5-Unacceptable". For all variables Cronbach's alpha value was.808 (Table 1). Therefore, as the alpha of the Cronbach was much higher than the.6, the constructs were deemed to be sufficiently reliable.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.808	22

**Validity of data**

A measuring tool is considered valid when measuring what it is supposed to measure (Kumar, 1999; Sekaran, 2003). It

involves asking the right questions, following the goals and obtaining the relevant information intended. The data gathered from the survey were nothing more than respondents' views. Questionnaire was conducted with the necessary care and caution to prevent prejudices from the respondent. The questionnaire on the research instrument was previously tested pre-and pilot. The questionnaire has been enriched with valuable professional recommendation in that field.

### Analysis and Discussion

Respondents' opinion regarding the factors of big five personality traits and job performance and analysis of the relations between them

**Table 2:** Opinion Regarding the Factors of Big Five Personality Traits and Job Performance

Traits	Mean	SD	Job Performance
Extraversion	4.12	.39	.614
Agreeableness	3.41	.29	.349
Conscientiousness	3.84	.41	.546
Neuroticism or Emotional Stability	3.12	.26	-.236
Openness	3.48	.34	.316
Job Performance	3.47	.36	1

Scale: 5= Highly Satisfied, 1= Highly Dissatisfied

The above table has shown the descriptive statistics and correlation analysis for each of the traits of big five personality and factors of job satisfaction based on the respondents' opinion. It shows that the highest mean value for the factors are extraversion (4.12), Conscientiousness (3.84), Openness (3.48), Agreeableness (3.41) and Neuroticism or Emotional stability (3.12) respectively. This demonstrates that these characteristics are adequately available among the sales staff of Bangladesh's private companies. The mean value for the job performance is 3.47 in the scale of 5. It has also been found out that the traits: Extraversion (.614) and Conscientiousness (.546) are significantly related with the job performance of the sales personnel among the private Companies of Bangladesh whereas the trait: Neuroticism or Emotional Stability has a negative relation with the job performance. The other traits: Openness and Agreeableness have no significant relation with the job performance since its value is lower than (.5).

### Influence of the big five personality traits on job performance

**Table 3:** Influence of the Big Five Personality Traits on Job Performance

Model	Under standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	6.237	.312		18.259	.000
Extraversion	.416	.083	.376	2.656	.001
Agreeableness	.079	.075	.016	1.788	.087
Conscientiousness	.324	.068	.236	2.369	.001
Neuroticism or Emotional Stability	-.365	.045	-.338	-.668	.763
Openness	.025	.049	.018	1.468	.148

$R = .749$  and  $R^2 = .560$

Dependent Variable: Job Performance

This analysis also used the multiple regression analysis to

demonstrate the effect of big five personality traits on the sales personnel's job performance among different Bangladesh private companies. The results of the analysis show the value of the coefficients of the regression model and Extraversion ( $t=2.656$ ) and Conscientiousness ( $t=2.369$ ) have significant influence on the job performance of Sales personnel among the different private companies of Bangladesh whereas Neuroticism has negative influence on the job performance. On the other hand; Agreeableness (1.788) and Openness (1.468) have no significant influence on the job performance of Sales personnel since its t vale is (1.96).

### Discussion

In this study we investigated whether the office type relationship with the job performance differed depending on the personality traits of the participants. In particular, the personality traits: Extraversion and agreeableness were found stronger in influencing the performance of sales personnel among the private companies of Bangladesh. The results of survey data showed a strong positive correlation and influence between personality extraversion tendency and job performance ( $H_1$ : Accepted). The personality trait of neuroticism had the lowest association and influence on work performance ( $H_3$ : Rejected). The third trait: conscientiousness showed a significant positive correlation and influence on job performance ( $H_3$ : Accepted). The second and fifth trait: Agreeableness and Openness to Experience have no significant relations and influence on the job performance of the sales personnel among the private companies of Bangladesh (i.e.  $H_2$  &  $H_5$ : rejected)

### Conclusion

Sales personnel are the organization's most important assets; they are especially the revenue generators that keep lighting the light of every dedicated organization. Without them, the overall organizational goals will be jeopardized; thus, assessing their success is of paramount importance to any successful organization. However based on the relationship between personality traits and job performance, human resource managers can look for ways to hire individuals based on their personality traits and abilities. Thus, considering the psychological and personality characteristics of the individuals will significantly improve the productivity and efficiency in performing the job. This study provides new and compelling evidence to support the notion that personality traits and job performance may affect the job performance of sales personnel in the private companies of Bangladesh. The major findings from the above results revealed that Extraversion and Conscientiousness exert the greatest influence on job performance positively and Extraversion trait was found to have the strongest relationship with the job performance of sales personnel in the private companies of Bangladesh. On other hand; Agreeableness and Openness to experience is unrelated and Neuroticism is related negatively to performance at work.

### Implications

In the initial employee recruiting and selection process, companies mostly ignore the use of personality as they are used to the conventional hiring practice of using bio-data screening, personal interviews, preliminary and written test, IQ tests and Final Viva etc. In addition, only a few recognize the importance of intangible factors such as

personality traits on work performance. This experiment suggests aspects such as personality traits have something to do with the amount of workplace success achieved. Therefore, this study indicates that workers having known that certain personality traits could yield better results and company should spend time and effort cultivating and improving them in order to have the right personality for their employment. The company could also provide training programs on such topics to inform and assist workers in improving their personalities and control their ability to deliver the best performance. This study suggests that managers conduct their recruiting processes, particularly those in human resources departments, by including the use of personality trait measurement instruments. Furthermore, managers in the human resources department should take greater consideration of making personality traits as a guide for hiring

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