

Management Performance and Individuality Property against to Middle School Superintendents in Kuantan Province, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine personality traits versus management performance among middle school superintendents in Kuantan school system. This study was a descriptive-correlation research. Statistical population included all middle school superintendents in Kuantan school system during academic year 2015-2016. The study sample included 130 subjects (61 females and 69 males) selected randomly through stratified sampling. Data collection was performed by administering two questionnaires, namely, Personality Trait Questionnaire (NEO-Five Factor Inventory with 60 items) and Management Performance Questionnaire (with 30 items). Cronbach alpha was used to evaluate consistency reliability of the questionnaires which were measured at 0.96 and 0.95, respectively. Data analysis was through descriptive statistics including frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Study variables were evaluated by Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis. Study findings revealed significant positive correlation between personality traits and management performance in studied school superintendents. In ranking the predicting variables for management performance, openness to experiences ranked the highest with neuroticism ranked next in the predictive model.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Neuroticism, Extroversion, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Management Performance.

Introduction

Social progress and advancement are dependent on performance of various active organizations. Most organizations are established with the objective to provide for certain human needs. They need professional and efficient human resources in order to fulfill their predetermined objectives. Organizations are increasing in diversity and number. Furthermore, individuals who work for these organizations are turning more complex in terms of behavior, personality traits, and motivations making their understanding all the more difficult (Shabani, B., et al, 2004).

Management scholars believe success or failure of organizations is rooted at the various management styles that are governing those organizations. Peter Drucker viewed management as

the main and critical element of an organization. Harold Koontz considered management as a major human activity. Organizations rely on strong management as a crucial vehicle to drive them out of crisis (Dalvi and Jamshidian, 2000, P. 25).

Managers are responsible for directing employees, pursuing improvement, implementing strategies, and organizing various functions. They are responsible for development and improvement of organizational culture (Hansaker and Cook, 2009, p. 84). Managers do not function the same way. Individual differences, talents, motivations, preferences and tendencies influence management practices. Managers have diverse attitudes, knowledge, and value systems (Naderian, et al, 2007).

Problem Definition

Human behaviors are exhibited because of different motivators and may vary from one person to another. Even when two behaviors exhibit similar characteristics, they can be perceived differently by various individuals. Conversely, similar behaviors may have different motivators. Human behaviors are, nevertheless, dependent on individual personalities and personal reaction under influence of various situations and conditions. The exhibited behavior represents the strength or weakness of this influence (Gohari Moghaddam, 2007).

Personality affects behavior, decision making, and performance of managers (Naderian, et al, 2007). Personality traits are certain characteristics that help individuals in their endeavor to discover self and gain a better understanding of others. These traits make an individual pleasant for others and strengthen interpersonal relationships (Alavi, 1992).

Costa and McCrae (1985) identified five main personality traits, namely, neuroticism (N), extraversion (E), openness (O), agreeableness (A), and conscientiousness (C).

1. Neuroticism is the general tendency toward negative emotional experiences such as fear, sadness, anxiety, anger, guilt, and aversion. Neuroticism is more than being receptive to psychological predicaments. Males and females who score high in neuroticism are prone to have irrational beliefs, uncontrollable impulses, and poor reactions to stressful stimuli (Garoosi Farshi, 2001).

2. Extraverts are sociable individuals. They love people and prefer group activities. They are daring, active, and talkative. Extraverts welcome arousal and excitation. They tend to be joyful, energetic, and optimistic (Costa and McCrae, 1985).

3. Openness is a less known personality dimension. Fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions (experiences), ideas (curiosity), values (judgments) are openness elements. These traits are mentioned in personality theories and evaluations. However, their collection into a wide spectrum and formation as a personality trait were rarely subject of discussion (Costa and McCrae 1985).

4. Agreeableness is another form of interpersonal tendency similar to extroversion. Agreeable individuals are compassionate and cooperative. They view others as having similar properties.

5. Conscientious individuals are objective oriented, decisive, and determined. Successful individuals, great musicians, and famous athletes show high levels of conscientiousness (Costa, McCrae, and Bush, 1986, as quoted in Garoosi Farshi, 2001).

Research Literature

Management includes a set of activities that are organized in the direction of achieving defined objectives. Management is the task of establishing relations between available resources and organizational performance through active decision making and participation of others. The principal objective of management in an organization is to coordinate various resources toward achievement of organizational objectives. For example, objectives of educational institutions are advancement of education and learning (Alagheband, 1995, p. 15). Management tasks have historically been involved in planning. Organizing, directing and coordinating tasks require planning because they materialize over time (Gilbreth, Taylor, and Gantt, 1990, p. 46). Management scholars have defined management as a collection of responsibilities that every manager should undertake. Some of them emphasized on specific responsibilities and some others have only mentioned general responsibilities for managers. Gulick and Urwick were the first ones to list management responsibilities and dubbed them POSDCORB. Their list included planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. Most management experts agree on four responsibilities, namely, planning (decision making), organizing, directing (leadership), and control. A manager performs these tasks in an endeavor to achieve organizational objectives. Actual performance of these functions represents the effectiveness of organization and management.

This study examines five management responsibilities, namely, planning, organizing, coordinating, staffing, and evaluating.

1. Planning. Planning involves selection of the most suitable approach among various alternatives for achieving organizational objectives. Planning process defines organizational objectives, sets departmental goals, and selects the proper approaches for achieving those objectives and goals. Planning is central to management activities and involves other management responsibilities (Alvani, 1999, p. 138).

2. Organizing: Organizing is defined as identification and classification of the required tasks, grouping of necessary activities into achievable goals, assignment of each group to a manager, delegation of authority for supervision, plus vertical and horizontal coordination of activities within an organization (ibid).

3. Coordinating: Coordinating means unifying departmental activities within an organization toward effective realization of defined objectives and goals. Departmental activities may swerve from organizational objectives if the required arrangements and provisions are not planned and projected (Alagheband, 1995, p. 54).

4. Staffing. Staffing represents the overall human relations in an organization. Proper staffing helps organizations to boost employee morale which is a collection of feelings, emotions, and thoughts. Employee morale translates into job satisfaction which is a collection of spiritual and material satisfaction employees draw from their organizational activities (Safi, 2000, p. 75).

5. Evaluating: Evaluating is required to measure the effectiveness and quality of performance. Evaluation process help managers to determine how much of objectives have been realized. Quality control also requires evaluation. Evaluation knowledge and experience should be one prerequisite for individuals who are being appointed to managerial posts (Acheson and Gall, 1999,

p. 59). Managing these five functions requires leadership. Leadership is the art of directing and energizing others in voluntarily pursuing and committing to leader's views (Cutler, 1990, p. 14). Leaders determine objectives and perspectives, then, organize members to voluntarily commit to those objectives and perspectives (Cheng and Filzah, 2011, p. 908).

Leadership in education has special standing because of diverse activities, various implementations, and complicated objectives. Today's complicated educational system requires attention to personality characteristics when selecting educational managers.

The objective of this study was to examine the relations between personality traits of educational managers and their performance in order to determine which personality traits may be good predictors of educational managers' effectiveness in performing their responsibilities.

Research Background

Kaykhanejad (2008) studied the relationship between philosophical intellect and performance of responsibilities in middle school managers of Zahedan school system. She found a significant direct relation between the two variables. The direct relationship means the higher philosophical intellect the higher performance of managerial responsibilities.

Naderian Jahromi and Amir Hossieni (2007) examined the relationship of job skills versus personality traits and demographic information of sports managers. They reported significant relation between introversion personality traits and perceptual and technical skills. Extroversion personality traits had significant relation with human skills. Demographic variables such as age, gender, marriage status, management experience, and sports background did not have significant relation with human skills. Education and management experience had significant relation with perceptual skills. Sports experience and field of study had significant relation with technical skills. Khakpour (2004) in his thesis studied the association between personality traits and job performance in superintendents of Hamedan intermediate schools during academic year 2003-2004. The findings of this study revealed that job performance had significant relations with extroversion, emotional stability, and agreeableness personality traits. Job performance had no significant relations with age or job experience. Khakpour study found no significant difference in job performance of female and male superintendents. Bazr Afshan Moghaddam (1996) studied the relations between personality traits and performance in elementary school superintendents. The findings showed no significant relation between effective and non-effective superintendents and their personality traits. Byrne, et al (2005) examined the relationship between personality traits and job performance. They reported that conscientiousness as a good predictor of job performance (as quoted in Na'ami, 2005). Kurk et al (2003) analyzed the relationship between five personality traits and job performance. They found that conscientiousness had the highest correlation with job performance. Friedson (1999) concluded in a study that introverts reacted better to tensions. This characteristic helps an introvert individual to perceive and assess problems and difficulties as controllable. Introverts resort more to problem solving approaches and less to emotional strategies when facing stressful situations when compared to extroverts. Yvonne (1993) studied 87 male and female managers to discover that gender is only effective in decision making but not in job or professional performance. Lewin (1965) concluded in a study that extrovert managers are mostly sociable. They are more effective in establishing successful relations with

colleagues, subordinates, and customers. They live in complete conformance to requirements of their surrounding environment.

Research Objectives

The objective of this study was to identify the relationship between personality traits and management performance in middle school superintendents working for Kuantan school system.

Research Questions

- 1- Is there a significant relation between personality traits and management performance?
- 2- Are personality traits good predictors of management performance?

Research Methodology

This study used descriptive-correlation method as determined by its subject and objectives. Statistical population included all middle school superintendents in Kuantan school system totaling 189 persons. The size of study sample was determined to be 130 by Morgan table. Study subjects were selected randomly using stratified sampling.

This study used NEO-FFI for examining personality traits. This questionnaire had 60 items divided into five areas (neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and Conscientiousness), each having 12 items. This study used a researcher-made questionnaire adapted from the one used by Kaykhanejad (2008) for examining management performance. This questionnaire had 30 items divided into five areas (planning, organizing, coordinating, staffing, and evaluation) each having 6 items. Cronbach alpha was used to evaluate consistency reliability of the questionnaires which were measured at 0.96 and 0.95 respectively.

This study used both descriptive and inferential methods for data analysis. Descriptive method used statistical measures such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation to describe available data. Inferential method used statistical tests including Pearson correlation coefficient, regression analysis, and one-way analysis of variance to evaluate study questions.

Research Findings

Question 1: Is there a significant relation between personality traits and management performance?

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation for personality traits and management performance obtained from the study sample.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics
Personality Traits versus Management Responsibilities

Variables		Mean	Standard Deviation
Personality Traits	Neuroticism	49.08	4.89
	Extroversion - Introversion	40.75	4.61
	Openness to New Experiences	49.80	3.87
	Agreeableness	49.73	5.14
	Conscientiousness	49.31	4.62
Management Responsibilities	Planning	26.29	3.33
	Organizing	23.96	2.43
	Coordinating	23.80	3.44
	Staffing	25.51	3.12
	Evaluating	23.80	3.81

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine question one. Table 2 shows the results of inferential statistics.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficient
Personality Traits versus Management Responsibilities

Personality Traits	Management Responsibilities				
	Planning	Organizing	Coordinating	Staffing	Evaluating
Neuroticism	0.648	0.509	0.611	0.489	0.552
Extroversion - Introversion	0.583	0.341	0.622	0.466	0.379
Openness to New Experiences	0.707	0.529	0.704	0.580	0.582
Agreeableness	0.534	0.415	0.535	0.516	0.503
Conscientiousness	0.611	0.441	0.613	0.476	0.536
$p = 0.000$					

Table two indicates that the relations between personality trait and management responsibilities are significant at 99 percent level of confidence ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, we conclude that personality traits have significant direct relation with management performance.

Question 2: Are personality traits good predictors of management performance?

This study used step-by-step regression analysis for analysis of personality traits versus management performance. Table 3 shows the results of this analysis.

Table 3.Regression Analysis
Personality Traits versus Management Responsibilities

Step	Variable	R	R ²	F	β	t	Sig
1	Openness to New Experiences	0.70	0.49	127.20	0.70	11.27	0.000
2	Openness to New Experiences + Neuroticism	0.75	0.57	85.56 16.74	0.50 0.34	7.03 4.74	0.000
		N = 130		$p < 0.01$			

In ranking the predictable variables for management performance, openness to new experiences could predict 49 percent of management performance variance. In the next step, neuroticism was added to the predictive model. These two variables together could predict 57 percent of management performance variance. This means that neuroticism can only add 8 percent to prediction variance. Standard beta coefficient in regression model is 0.50 for openness to new experiences and 0.34 for neuroticism. Both of them are significant at 99 percent level of confidence ($p > 0.01$).

Discussion and Conclusion

Management is a critical function of an organization. Organizations rely on strong management as a crucial vehicle to drive them out of the crisis they may face. The examination of the first research question showed significant relation between personality traits and management performance. The relationship is significant at 99 percent level of confidence ($p > 0.01$). Therefore, we can conclude that personality traits have significant direct relation with management performance. This conclusion conforms to the results reported by similar studies (Kalantari, 2007; Naderian Jahromi and Amir Hosseini, 2007; Khakpour, 2004; Bazafshan Moghaddam, 1996; Byrne, et al, 2005; and Kurk, et al., 2003). The examination of the second research question and the ranking of predicting variables of management performance indicated that openness to new experiences could predict 49 percent of variance. In the next step, neuroticism was added to the predictive model. These two variables together could predict 57 percent of management performance variance. This means that neuroticism can only add 8 percent to prediction variance. Standard beta coefficient in regression model was measured 0.50 for openness to new experiences and 0.34 for neuroticism. Both of them are significant at 99 percent level of confidence ($p > 0.01$). This conclusion conforms to the results reported by similar studies (Kalantari, 2007; Naderian Jahromi and Amir Hosseini, 1999; Khakpour, 2004; Bazafshan

Moghaddam, 1996; Byrne, et al, 2005; and Kurk, et al., 2003). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that personality traits affect management performance. Those managers who enjoy positive personality traits are most likely to be more successful managers. They can make higher contribution to achievement of educational objectives and plans. They are able to establish better relation with school employees, teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders. Openness to new experiences and neuroticism could predict a relatively higher percentage of management performance among personality traits under study. This confirms the effect of personality traits on management performance. The findings of this study show that organizations, in general, and educational institutions, in particular, should consider personality trait of the candidates for managerial positions before making their final selection. This approach can guarantee better performance for our school system. Organizations should ask psychologists and specialists to administer personality tests on employees in order to identify those who may qualify for managerial positions. After identifying candidates, organizations should invest on their further training to prepare them for the managerial positions they are most qualified for.

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