The Relationship of Big Five Personality Traits on Counterproductive Work Behaviour among Hotel Employees: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of Big Five personality traits towards counterproductive work behaviour (CWB), specifically focuses on organizational (CWB-O) and individual (CWB-I). The results were analyzed from a sample of 178 hotel employees from various departments. For CWB-O, the result showed positive relationship between employees with high neuroticism and openness to experience, whereas negative relationship with agreeableness. As for CWB-I, the result showed positive relationship between employees with high neuroticism and openness to experience, whereas negative relationship with extraversion and agreeableness. On the other hand, extraversion showed no relationship with CWB-O, and conscientiousness has been found to have no relationship with both CWB-O and CWB-I.

Keywords: personality; Big Five; counterproductive work behaviour; hotel;

1. Introduction

Organizations are increasingly interested in measures assessing CWBs, in addition to discerning how certain personality traits may increase the likelihood of committing these behaviours. CWB are destructive and injurious to the health of an organization. These diverging behaviors have serious adverse affects on the overall productivity, efficiency and profitability of an organization (Nasir and Bashir, 2012). Cases involve...
CWB had more than doubled in 10 years, to about 11,700 cases in 2003, from 5,200 cases in 1994 (Khalizani et al., 2011). In 2005, PWC Global had reported Malaysian companies seem to be more vulnerable to corruption and bribery (35 per cent) than those in the Asia and Pacific region (33 per cent) and the rest of the world (24 per cent). Thus, it can be concluded that CWB can give a negative effect on the investors supporting the company.

Personality has the potential to influence the CWB process. It can affect people's perceptions and appraisal of the environment, their attributions for causes of events, their emotional responses, and their ability to inhibit aggressive and counterproductive impulses (Spector, 2010). Penney et al., 2011, also argued that personality is an important determinant of individual behavior in the workplace. The personality-CWB was supported by the attitude-behaviour theory (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). The hotel employees are under great stress and their turnover rate is considerably high because of their poor work environments, long working hours, lack of authority, mandatory work on holidays, and low wages (Jung and Yoon, 2012). In 2003 National Productivity Corporation had released a report in which from the year 1998 to 2002, the industry had an impressive output growth of 4.3 per cent. One of the sub-sectors of service is the hotel industry. In Malaysia, studies on CWB pertaining hotel industry were still scarce. There were few other researchers from Malaysia had studied on CWB and personality traits before such as Faridahwati Mohd. Shamsudin et al., 2011; Krishna Moorthy et al., 2011; Abdul Rahman and Aizzat, 2008; Zauwiyah Ahmad et al., 2008. Nevertheless, most of the researches have not focusing on the influence of personality traits on CWB in hotel industry.

The study was conducted and focusing on hotels in Shah Alam area. The focus of this study were focusing in the specific area because the population distribution by the state indicated that Selangor was the most populous state with 5.46 million people and the capital city of Selangor, Shah Alam alone amounted to 671,282 people (Census, 2010). According to Elizabeth Wong (2012), the State Exco Tourism, Consumer Affairs & Environment, it was reported that the numbers of tourist in Selangor increased to 6.04 million in 2011 as compared to 5.83 million in 2010. The numbers of tourist visiting places in Shah Alam are also increased as Masjid Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, Galeri DiRaja Sultan Abdul Aziz and I-City are currently among ten of the places listed for tourist attraction. As such, this study investigated the influence of Big Five personality traits on CWB among employees in the hotel industry specifically in Shah Alam area.

2. Theoretical Perspective

2.1 Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB)

CWB is defined as volitional behaviors that harm or are intended to harm organizations or people in the organizations (Spector and Fox, 2005). CWB can be classified in five dimensions as suggested by Spector et al., 2006, which include abuse, production deviance, sabotage, theft and withdrawal. This behaviour can be in many forms, such as aggression, deviance, retaliation, and reverse (Sackett and DeVore, 2001; Spector and Fox, 2005; Vardi and Weitz, 2004) indicated that CWB can range in terms of severity from minor to serious offence. Some of the terms used in referring to CWB are workplace deviant behaviour (Robinson and Bennett, 1995), employee deviance (Warren, 2003), organizational misbehaviour (Warren, 2003), and workplace incivility (Cortina, 2008). Robinson and Bennett, 1995, proposed that CWB can vary based on its target either organizational (CWB-O) or individual (CWB-I). CWB-O can be categorized into property CWB and production CWB (Mikulay et al., 2001) while CWB-I is categorized as political deviance and personal aggression. CWB has been considered as a negative aspect of performance in which can cause significant negative impact to both individuals and organization as empirically demonstrated by Dalal, 2005, and Rotundo and Sackett, 2002. Hence, evidence from past research has shown that the amount of losses arising from misconducts at the workplace is huge. As emphasized by scholars such as Griffin and O'Leary-Kelly, 2004; Vardi and Weitz, 2004; Penney and Spector, 2005; Spector et al., 2006; and Cortina, 2008, more
studies are needed to understand the determinants and occurrences of CWB at the workplace.

2.2 Big Five Personality Traits

**Extraversion** can be categorized as a positive emotion of personality (Bakker et al., 2002) because individual that have a high extraversion tend to be self-confident, dominant, active and excitement seeking. Employees higher in extraversion are less likely to experience anger (Jensen-Campbell et al., 2006). As such, this study assumes that employees that high extraversion are more likely to demonstrate lower CWB-O as well as lower CWB-I.

**Agreeableness** is a tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others. Havill et al., 1998, define agreeableness as the ability to inhibit disagreeable tendencies. Agreeableness also has been linked with orienting sensitivity, which is related with associative sensitivity as well as sensitivity to internal, affective, and external perception (Rothbart et al., 2001). Study made by Bolton, 2010, and O’Neill et al., 2011, shows a negative relationship between agreeableness and CWB. As such, this study assumes that employees high agreeableness are more likely to demonstrate lower CWB-O as well as lower CWB-I.

**Conscientiousness** is a tendency to show self-discipline and aim for achievement above expectations. It is composed of numerous characteristics associated with self-regulation (Ahadi and Rothbart, 1994). Individuals with high conscientiousness tend to show self-discipline and aim for achievement above expectations. Previous study made by O’Neill et al., 2011; LePine et al., 2004; Witt et al., 2004, showed a negative relationship between conscientiousness and CWB. As such, this study assumes that employees high in conscientiousness are more likely to demonstrate lower CWB-O as well as lower CWB-I.

**Neuroticism** is the personality trait in which related to a person’s emotional stability. Hochwarter, 2000, found that of the Big Five personality dimensions, only neuroticism significantly predicted emotional exhaustion in a study that uses a sample of nurses working in a large American metropolitan hospital. Study made by Bolton, 2010, and O’Neill et al., 2011, showed that there is a positive relationship between neuroticism and CWB. As such, this study assumes that employees with high neuroticism are less likely to demonstrate lower CWB-O as well as lower CWB-I.

**Openness to experience** shows that the individual is more creative, imaginative and have interest in experience new things due to the feeling of curiosity. Deary et al., 2003, stated that employees with more open personalities were more likely to be emotionally exhausted and will lead to CWB. Bolton, 2010, stated that higher openness to experience has associated to more CWB event. As such, this study assumes that employees high in openness to experience are less likely to demonstrate lower CWB-O as well as lower CWB-I.

![Conceptual Framework](image-url)

The conceptual framework for this study demonstrates that Big Five personality traits may influence employees’ CWB in hotel industry.
3. Methodology

A number of 730 questionnaires have been distributed to five hotels listed in Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH), rank three stars and above in Shah Alam area. A simple random sampling procedure was utilized. Out of the total questionnaires distributed, 239 were returned, 61 were discarded due to end piling and only 178 were useable for further analysis.

A 33-item CWB Checklist (Spector et al., 2006) has been used to measure CWB (CWB-O = 16 items and CWB-I=17 items). The reliability was reported 0.80 for both CWB-O and CWB-I. Personality traits were measured by using 44-item Big Five Personality Inventory developed by John and Srivastava, 1999. This assessment measures the five main personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. Out of the 44-item, 16 reverse-scored items of the questions were recoded. The reliability of Big Five personality traits was range from 0.74 to 0.86. Responses indicated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1= “strongly disagree”, to 5 = “strongly agree”.

4. Results

A total of 178 respondents (employees) participated in this survey, which encompassed of 59 per cent female and 41 per cent male. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted, two items were deleted from CWB dimensions (only 33 items were analyzed) and 14 items were deleted from Big Five personality traits dimensions (only 30 items were analyzed). The means, standard deviations, reliabilities and correlations for the measures used in the study are reported in Table 1. The reliability coefficient for all variables is acceptable as it is higher than 0.7. The correlation showed that all of the variables are statistically significant at 0.01 level.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations.

| Vr | Mean | SD  | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
|----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1  | 2.0  | .84 | (.96)|     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 2  | 1.9  | .88 | .89**| (.98)|     |     |     |     |     |
| 3  | 3.4  | .56 | -.55**| -.58**| (.77)|     |     |     |     |
| 4  | 3.13 | .38 | -.69**| -.69**| .74**| (.81)|     |     |     |
| 5  | 3.14 | .38 | -.53**| -.50**| .79**| .73**| (.77)|     |     |
| 6  | 2.87 | .45 | .64**| .61**| -.55**| -.66**| -.46**| (.68)|     |
| 7  | 3.41 | .67 | -.39**| .34**| .69**| .63**| .71**| .42**| (.96)|

Notes: N= 178, **p < .01, Reliabilities are provided in parentheses. Vr = Variable, 1 = CWB-O, 2 = CWB-I, 3 = Extraversion, 4 = Agreeableness, 5 = Conscientiousness, 6 = Neuroticism, 7 = Openness to Experience.

Table 2 showed the relationship between studied variables with CWB-O and CWB-I. The model variables were significant at 95 per cent (p<0.05) for both CWB-O and CWB-I. The result indicated that there were positive relationships between CWB-O and neuroticism (β = 0.32, p<0.01), openness to experience (β = 0.13, p<0.10) and negative relationship between CWB-O and agreeableness (β = -0.41, p<0.01) while extraversion and conscientiousness have no significant relationship with CWB-O. As depicted in Table 2, the result showed that there were positive relationships between CWB-I and neuroticism (β=0.26, p<0.01), openness to experience (β = 0.21, p<0.01), a significant and negative relationship between CWB-I and extraversion (β = -0.19, p<0.10), and agreeableness (β = 0.46, p<0.01). In contrast, conscientiousness have no significant relationship with CWB-I.
5. Conclusions and Discussion

This research investigated the influence of Big Five personality traits towards CWB, targeted on CWB-O and CWB-I. The findings showed there was a relationship between CWB-O and Big Five personality traits, except for extraversion and conscientiousness. Agreeableness was found to have a negative relationship with CWB-O, which indicated employees with high agreeableness were more likely to demonstrate lower CWB-O, this was similar with the study made by Bolton, 2010, and O’Neill et al., 2011. Extraversion and agreeableness also showed a significant negative relationship with CWB-I. The result of this study for agreeableness was similar with the previous study made by Bolton, 2010. Big Five personality traits have been found to influence CWB-I, except for conscientiousness. This was contradicted with study made by Bolton, 2010, and O’Neill et al., 2011, which showed that there was a relationship between conscientiousness and CWB-I.

The regression model showed that all research questions had been partially supported. Agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness to experience did influence employees’ CWB while extraversion only influenced CWB-I. Agreeableness had been found to have the strongest influence on employees’ CWB. This result was contradicted with the study made by Michielsen, 2004. Findings for conscientiousness was contradicted with study made by LePine et al., 2004, and Witt et al., 2004, but similar with the results obtained by Deary et al., 2003. The differences of findings from previous study were due to the different industry, geographical area and employees perception towards the organization.

This study has contribute to those involve in service industry in which specifically hotel industry to understand the situation involve in CWB that relate to the personality of employee. Future study should investigate the relationship between Big Five personality in wider population or scope, focus on specific demographic background, based on hotels in all rank, or by making comparison between two different ranks of hotel. The respondents were very tactful and careful not to disclose the negative information about themselves (Mehta, 2004). Thus, future study can use peer-reported measure instead of self-report measure as recommended by Skarlicki and Folger, 1997. To avoid any biases, future study must ensure equal distribution on respondents according to their ethnic. Lastly, the research design is cross-sectional and the data were collected only once. Thus, in order to determine the consistency of findings, a longitudinal study might be more appropriate instead of exploratory study to see if there are any changes in the way respondents answering the survey.
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