

Personality Factors and Effect on Employee Task Performance

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Abstract

The study was designed to examine the relationship between personality factors and effect on employee task performance because personality traits highly influence human behaviour in the task environment. Personality reflects an individual's characteristics and behaviours organized in such a manner to show the unique adjustment the person makes to his or her environment. Personality theory is primarily concerned with verifying, explaining, interpreting and predicting human behavior. Personality is a psychological concept that refers to the consistent characteristics and behaviours of an individual towards task achievement. Like organizations, individuals or groups have their goals. To this extent, individual goals differ from one person to another and the underlying cause of this difference is the individual's level of aspiration which on its own is determined by factors such as past experiences or social order. For example, individuals who have been consistently successful in their life's endeavours appear to have very high level of aspiration. Understandably, the high level of aspiration associated with the successful person is traceable to the fact that such an individual is very optimistic about life and the future and as a result tries to improve on past performance through goal-directed behaviour and high task performance and achievement. The study conducted through the survey research design involved 150 participants and the result showed positive relationship between the variables of interest. The study had limitations in terms of time and lack of current relevant literature, therefore, further study could examine the relationship between job satisfaction and employee behavior. It was recommended that selection interviews should take cognizance of candidate's goal direction to ensure proper placement.

Keywords

Goal-directed Behavior, Personality Characteristics, Task Environment, Past Experiences, Individual Goals, Organizational Goals, Personality Theory, Self-concept, Silent Generation, Employee Characteristics

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1. Introduction

Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of the psychological systems that determine an individual's unique adjustment to a situation or a particular environment. It is an integrated and organized self-concept, self-esteem, and self-ambition that governs how an individual behaves and performs specific tasks. Personality is also concerned with individual differences which distinguish one person from another. It is the totality of the qualities, abilities,

capabilities; skills and competences that an individual has that make impact on his or her task performance. Task performance is a positive behavior that results to the achievement of personal and organizational objectives [1-2]. Personality relates primarily to the individual's characteristics pattern of thinking, feeling, and behavior. The concept of personality has been explored using a variety of theories including psychoanalytic, humanistic, socio-cognitive and trait theories. One of the most predominant and well accepted personality theories is the trait theory, which attempts to explain personality in terms of the dynamics that

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underlie human behavior [3]. Traits are dynamic patterns of behavior or disposition to feel and act in a certain way which distinguishes one person from the next. They are hypothesized to be consistent and stable across a lifetime, and acting as a type of templates for an individual's behavior. For example, the well known Big Five Personality Factor Model proposes that personality can be factored into five dimensions: emotionality, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Further, it proposes that each individual falls between the two extremes of each dimension. It emphasizes also, that emotional stability contrasts with emotional instability; extraversion implies an energetic approach to the environment as against a passive approach, while openness examines an individual's approach to experiences as opposed to the level of close-mindedness. Also, agreeableness seeks to measure if co-operative disposition towards others or if he acts with antagonism, while conscientiousness includes the control of impulses which facilitates tastes and other goal-directed behaviours necessary for effective task performance [4-6]. An individual is distinguishable from another in various different aspects besides the obvious physical appearance or differences in other areas. Each individual behaves and thinks differently even in similar situations due to some inherent and developed mental qualities, feelings and processes. Many studies suggest that even though, in most cases physical recognition is very easy, mental recognition is exceptionally difficult. Personality psychologists state that the mental make-up of the individual consists of many facets which are often not perceived by others. For example, each individual has certain traits, mental barriers, ideas, concepts suspicions, or conflicting viewpoints, difficult to perceive. According to Agulanna and Madu [7] personality traits are the foundations for human behavior and individual differences affect how an individual reacts to a situation and efforts at task performance. It relates to the way in which factors such as skills, abilities, perceptions, attitudes, values and ethics differ from one individual to another. Understanding how to handle individuals who possess a multitude of individual characteristics is necessary in effective organization management and task performance. Early psychologists believe that the basis of understanding individual differences stems from *interactional psychology*, an approach in psychology that states that in order to understand human behavior, it is also important to understand something about the person, and again, something about the environment and situation. Nelson and Quick [8] explain that there are four basic propositions of *interactional psychology*. These include; behaviour, which is a function of a continuous multidirectional interaction between the individual and the situation, and where the individual is active in this process and is both changed by the situation, or changes the situation.

It equally involves the environment where people vary in many characteristics, including, *cognitive, affective, motivation* and *ability*, as well as where a situation is seen as an objective view of the situation holds. They further point out that the interactional psychology approach emphasizes the need to understand both individuals and situations, and that one unique and fascinating individual difference that can profoundly affect individual's task performance is *personality* [9]. Even though the trait theory, which is the personality theory which states that in order to understand individuals, there is need to breakdown behavior patterns into series of observable traits, it is often agreed that simply identifying traits is not enough, rather *personality* is dynamic and not completely stable, in view of the unconscious determinants of behavior. Therefore, understanding personality and task performance to a large extent hinges on the understanding and a focus on obvious unconscious influences on human behavior in the workplace. Despite some arguments against the potency of the trait theory the perspective in terms of personality and task performance is frequently resurrected. For example, in a meta-analysis, Judge and Bono [10] find some consistency around traits such as drive to achieve, motivation, self-confidence, emotional stability, cognitive ability and ability to withstand setbacks has positive correlation with task performance. Task performance is a reflection of goal-directed behavior. A goal can be defined as a desirable future state which an individual seeks to achieve. It is seen as anything that satisfies a need. It may refer to an organizational position, a given status level or recognition which an individual aspires to achieve. The goals of an individual determine the type of activities and behaviours he or she manifests in task performance.

1.1. Research Problem

A central challenge of management in effective task performance is on how to properly quantify tasks or jobs and to determine the personality profile that would quickly and easily lead to goal-directed behavior. For this purpose many successful organization tend to classify tasks into grades, such as grade, A, B, C, D, E and F. In this way they attempt to identify individuals with certain personality characteristics for the task. For example, grade, A, may involve simple tasks, requiring no previous experience, and performed under close supervision, grade B, involves tasks which because of their simplicity, are carried out in accordance with a limited number of well defined rules after a comparatively short period of training. On the other hand, grade C, tasks are of a routine character and follow well defined rules, but requiring either a reasonable degree of experience or a special aptitude for the task and which are carried out according to a daily routine covered by a timetable, and subject to short-period control. Grade D, task requires considerable experience, but

only a limited degree of initiative, and which are carried out according to a predetermined procedure and precise rules, and grade E, tasks may require significant but not extensive measure of discretion and initiative, or which requires a specialized knowledge and individual responsibility for the task. Then grade F, tasks could involve activities which require exercising an extensive measure of responsibility and judgment or the application of a professional technique, such as legal, accounting, statistical, engineering, and acting in close liaison with the management, or the head of department, as the case may be. Tackling this problem is very important because first, because issues like ability and experience affect individual performance and second, because of the serious adverse effect it may have on productivity. Consideration should also be given to the fact that many people are very unwilling to show their true motives or feelings; and generally, everyone wears a mask to some extent in the work situation. People often say what they do not mean their actions often are impulsive and governed by emotions, and behaviour prejudicial to the organizations. [11-14]

1.2. Research Objective

The study was designed to explore the relationship between personality factors and task performance.

1.3. Research Significance

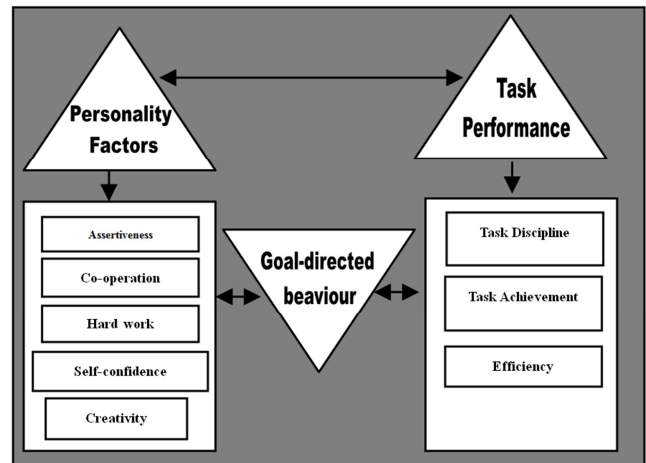
The result of the study will help students, researchers and the public to appreciate the importance of personality factors and task performance.

1.4. Research Questions

- i. Is assertiveness a personality factor?
- ii. Can co-operation help in task performance?
- iii. Does hard work lead to goal-directed behavior?
- iv. Can self-confidence lead to task performance?
- v. Is creativity associated with the Big Five Personality Factor Model?

1.5. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was developed based on the study assumption that personality involves different factors that lead to goal-directed behavior and task performance. A conceptual framework can be presented in a diagram or model. Models represent reality and facilitate theory building. They show the major variables of the study in relationship with the problem. Models are used to reveal and explain issues that would otherwise not be revealed and buried in an excess of words. The conceptual framework for the study is shown in figure 1.



Source: Author Designed (2020)

Figure 1. Personality Factors and Task Performance Model.

An examination of the Big Five Personality Factor Model reveals that some of the personality factors of this model are necessary for task performance. Across all occupations and almost in any human organization, task performance is a reflection of task discipline and task achievement. For example, extraversion implies an assertive personality and that the individual would very likely meet task demands. Self-assertiveness is closely related to creativity or constructiveness. People satisfy the urge to creativity, suggesting improvements, having job flexibility, preparing and discussing their plans and participating in decisions affecting their job. Co-operation is related to agreeableness, this implies that the individual is opposed to antagonism which paves the way for task performance. A hardworking individual exhibits conscientious personality, an organized person, who is goal-oriented, target and time conscious for task performance. Self-confidence reflects attributes of self-esteem which empowers the individual to continuously seek feedback necessary for accurate goal-directed behavior are not limited to these as earlier researchers had explored as many as sixteen or the 16 PF, but factor analysis is yet to identify the profiles that contribute most to task performance. Therefore, a careful exploration suggests that the factors of this model fall within those closely related to goal-oriented behavior and task performance. Previous studies reveal that in many different occupations, the Big Five Personality Factors are related to high task performance. For example, in customer service, employees in high emotional stability, agreeableness and openness to experience perform best. On the other hand, emotional stability and extraversion are critical factors for top management [15-16]. For many years, personality tests have been recognized as among the best ways to find the traits necessary for a particular job, and that certain competencies including self-confidence, self-discipline and initiative distinguish the star performers from the average performers, and this can be done by looking at

the stars and determining what competencies they display. This approach shifted attention to personality tests which is an approach to measure individual's competencies in terms of the specific task they are handling. According to Goleman [17] a *competence* in this tradition, is a personal trait or set of habits that leads to more effective or superior job performance; in other words; an ability that adds clear economic value to the efforts of a person on the job. He reports that in all the findings a common core of personal and social abilities has proved to be the key ingredients in people's performance and success, as reflected by emotional intelligence [18-20]. Most emotional intelligence factors such as agreeableness and conscientiousness correspond with the Big Five Personality Factors. Emotional intelligence provides an individual with the understanding of what people are feeling and experiencing and also permits one person to respond to the need of others. It is the index of empathy for others, self-awareness and social skills all necessary for goal-directed behavior and performance effectiveness [21]. The need to select a normal employee or detecting a more balanced approach in task assignment is an important but difficult task of management. This is because every employee has emotional problems, but some manage to cope with them easily while others fail. Normal people adjust readily to these problems provided there is support from management. A discussion on employee task performance should therefore take adequate cognizance of employee characteristics. These refer to those mental, psychological and personality characteristics that predispose some employees to highly structured organizations while others do not. Some of these factors include ego, education, intelligence, experience, and authoritarianism. It is also thought that in terms of age, young people prefer a flexible and permissive structure than old people who are more inclined to conservative and rigid structures. Also, highly educated people like flexible structures that make it possible for subordinate participation in decision-making. On the other hand, less educated subordinates are often opposed to flexible structures but would rather prefer formalistic organizations. This equally applies to inexperienced employees who due to their need for supervision and guidance would prefer greater formalization. These salient issues and the fact that most top positions in organizations are held by the *silent generation* coupled with little effort to reduce social inequalities in the work environment make a special management case for fostering and understanding moral rights and more activist position regarding employees' characteristics and task performance.

2. Literature Review

Personality is the unique patterns or characteristics and behaviours that set each individual apart from others but which

is somewhat stable overtime. In the context of personality analysis it is often observed that every person is like every other people in terms of the human race; the basic features of a human being is possessed by every person like some people in that he belongs to an ethnic or tribal group; like no other person because of his or her peculiar experiences, and traits. This explains the relevance of the word *unique* in the definition of personality because it may be analyzed from the point of the individual in terms of traits and characteristics. On the other hand, personality may also be evaluated in terms of the role a person plays. This implies evaluation from the point of view of the ultimate behavior exhibited by the individual which is determined by the traits and characteristics. However, current approaches to personality analysis or evaluation tend to reflect two broad dimensions that involve genetics and environment. For example, some of the basic personality characteristics are inherited at birth from parents. Such factors include physical features, intelligence, temperament, among others. There is a little controversy as to the influence of heredity on personality. However, the case of twins raised differently seems to support the thesis that heredity plays important role in personality development. Heredity has to do with biological factors which set the limit within which an individual's personality will develop. It is a situation where certain qualities of the parents are passed on the child in the cells of the body during the formative stage of the being. On the other hand, environment covers such factors as a person's place of abode or residential area. The major environmental factors that influence personality development of the individual include but not limited to: culture, life experience, school, among others. Environmental factors do not only influence a person's attitudes and perceptions but they also actualize genetic potentials, and provide opportunity for the full realization and progress of latent traits. In terms of interactional psychology, situation is critical in personality development. This refers to those obviously spontaneous and essential events that have significant influence on an individual's life; like certain events that have remarkable and discernable impact in the individual's behavior. For example, the loss of a dear wife or husband may seriously alter the life patterns of an individual. Over the years, different theories, have been postulated by different theorists to explain personality [22-24].

2.1. Theories of Personality

Theories of personality represent attempts at explaining personality development and some of these theories' include: psychoanalytic theory, trait theory, learning theory and humanistic theory. The psychoanalytic theory involves the three dimensional of levels of consciousness, structure of personality, and psychosexual stages of development. The levels of consciousness suggest that the human mind which

can be defined as a constellation of ideas is made up of three levels; the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious. The conscious level refers to thoughts that are known and do not require any effort to remember. The preconscious level relates to memories that could easily be roused. Such thoughts are not often on currency but can easily be remembered with minimum effort. The unconscious level involves ideas, desires, thoughts and urges which individuals are oblivious of. The unconscious level is the largest part of the mind while the conscious is the smallest part. According to Hergenhahn and Oslon [25] it is the pattern of structuring that lead to the characterization of the mind as a mental iceberg. Also, three structures of personality such as trait, ego, and super-ego may be identified. Trait is unconscious and the seat of all primitive and unborn desires and urges for gratification. On the one hand, the ego is conscious, and on the other hand, the superego is subconscious, and this is the human conscience. Obviously, the relationship between the ego and superego is conflict-oriented, and these conflicts reflect on the personality of the individual. The main stages of psychosexual development include: oral, phallic, latency and puberty. Essentially, these stages reflect the fact that as a person is growing, different parts of his or her body become the focus of their desire for pleasure and gratification. The learning theory of personality believes that personality is shaped through the learning process. In effect, behavior manifested by an individual are acquired through the instrumentality of learning, while the humanistic approach sees man as a reasoning being who is capable of influencing his environment. The humanistic theory emphasizes on the positive aspect of personality development. It is related to positive psychology and focuses on self-worth. Among the most celebrated personality theories is the trait theory. This theory focuses on those distinctive factors and characteristics and the aggregation of which represents personality. Early theorists believe that even though people look alike, there are certain traits that are peculiar to every individual and that trait account for the individual's unique adjustment to his or her environment. To a high degree, however, the trait theorists did not adequately recognize the influence of the situation on personality development [26-27].

2.2. Measurement of Personality

Personality measurement refers to the logical and formal attempts at identifying the characteristics and behavior pattern of the individual. It is of great importance to management especially in relation to employee selection and task performance. There are three major techniques used in measuring personality. These are observations, projective, and personality inventory. The observational approach involves a direct observation of individual's characteristics and the projective technique involves exposing an individual to certain

stimuli and requiring him to interpret the stimuli. The assumption is that from the individual's responses and interpretations, management will be able to gain some insight into the hidden aspects of the individual's personality. Another technique is the personality inventory which can be described as an inventory of a stock of personality profiles. The effective usage of the personality inventory will require management to first administer a questionnaire on an individual and on the basis of the answers supplied, management will attempt to identify the *type* of personality from the inventory. Traditional examples of personality types include type A, and B, authoritarian, extrovert, introvert, liberal, conservative, among other types and components. According to Agulanna and Madu [7] it is possible to notice people who are always in a hurry, walking fast, eating fast, writing fast and even praying fast. On the other divide, there are people who always take their time in whatever they are doing, they walk slowly, eat slowly, write slowly, talk slowly and perhaps pray slowly. The first group is called Type A behavior people, while the second group is called Type B behavior people. Type A^s tends to be impatient with people, they prefer to work by themselves or alone rather than with others who may waste their time, thus they are hardly team players. However, Type A^s tends to seek more challenge in their work and daily lives than Type B^s and understanding this categorization is necessary in matching the man with the task [28-29].

2.3. Self-Efficacy and Performance

According to Nelson and Quick [8] employees with high generalized self-efficacy have more confidence in their job-related abilities and other personal resources, such as energy and influence over others; which help them to function effectively on task performance. On the contrary, individuals with low self-efficacy often feel ineffective on the task, and may express doubts about performing a new task well. Task performance is one of the most important determinants of self-efficacy. Research evidence supports that individuals who have positive beliefs about their efficacy for task performance are more likely to attempt difficult tasks, to persist in overcoming obstacles, and to experience less anxiety when faced with adversity. Self-efficacy involves possessing the skills required to execute courses of action that will result in a desired goal. The concept of self-efficacy is reinforced by self-esteem and self-monitoring. Goleman [17] opines that self-esteem is an individual's general feeling of self-worth. Individuals with high self-esteem have positive feelings about themselves, perceive themselves to possess strengths as well as weaknesses and believe that their strengths are more important than their ultimate weaknesses. Conversely, people rated on low self-esteem are people who see themselves in the negative side of life. They are very strongly affected by what other people think of them. An

individual's self-esteem affects a variety of other attitudes which have important implications for behavior in organizations and task performance. According to Judge, and Bono [10] people with high self-esteem perform better and are more satisfied with their jobs, and they are more likely to be successful than those with lower average self-esteem. Self-esteem may be strongly affected by situations; it rises with success and falls with failure. Thus, self-esteem is a positive trait, and management should encourage employees to improve their self-esteem by giving them appropriate challenges and necessary opportunities for success. Current research in organizational behavior (OB) suggests that high self-monitors base their behavior on information from others and from the situation. Self-monitoring is a characteristic with great potential for affecting behavior in organizations and specific task performance. According to Mehra, et al [1] high self-monitors pay attention to what is appropriate in particular situations and to the behavior of other people, and they behave accordingly. High self-monitors accomplish tasks through meeting targets and expectations, seek out central positions in social networks and also use *self-promotion* to make others aware of their skills and achievements. These authors insist that because high self-monitors base their behavior on the information from others and the situation, they often demonstrate higher levels of managerial self-awareness in respect of task performance. Managerial-awareness promotes management efficiency and effectiveness in terms of quality, leadership and ensuring that specific tasks and both individual and organizational objectives are concurrently accomplished [30-31].

3. Research Methodology

This is the structure of the research process. It is the strategy upon which hypothesis may be evaluated.

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted the qualitative technique of the survey design, this method is appropriate for the study because it

offers the different variables the opportunity to be properly observed and measured with the aid of a structured questionnaire. A researcher designed 5-point Likert-type questionnaire adapted from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) was used to generate primary data. As a qualitative approach, the study relied only on primary data obtained through the administration of the structured questionnaire to the target population. The target population for the study included all employees of First Bank of Nigeria Ltd. in Aba and Owerri areas, Nigeria. The purposive sampling method was used to select the sample for the study while the sample ratio technique was used to determine the sample size, which is 150 or 1/10th of the sample. Data obtained through the administered questionnaire were analyzed by descriptive statistical method using figures, tables, frequencies, simple percentages and mean for easy understanding.

3.2. Decision Rule

The decision rule for the cut-off point for the analysis of frequencies and mean was set at 3.00 points [32].

4. Presentation of Result

Table 1. Profile of Respondents (n=150).

S/N	Description	Category	Total	Percentage
1	Sex	a) Female	60	40
		b) Male	90	60
2	Education	a) Diplomas	45	30.00
		b) Degrees	70	46.67
		c) Others	35	23.33
3	Age	a) 18-35	40	26.67
		b) 36-60	65	43.33
		c) 61-75 years	45	30.00
4	Experience	a) Less than 10 years	50	33.33
		b) 11-20 years	60	40.00
		c) 21-35 years	40	26.67
5	Status	a) Low	35	23.33
		b) Middle	75	50.00
		c) Top	40	26.67

Source: Fieldwork (2020)

Table 2. Analysis of Frequencies, Mean, Decision Mean and Grand Mean.

S/N	Restatement of Research Questions	Scores					Row Scores	No of Resps.	Mean	Decision @ mean 3 points	Grand mean
		SA	A	N	D	SD					
		5	4	3	2	1					
i	Assertiveness is a personality factor	90	30	5	10	15	620	150	4.13	Accepted	3.2
ii	Co-operation does not help in task performance.	20	05	3	12	110	263	150	1.75	Rejected	
iii	Hard work leads to good-directed behavior	85	50	2	3	10	647	150	4.31	Accepted	
iv	Self-confidence does not lead to task performance	9	10	2	9	120	229	150	1.53	Rejected	
v	Creativity is associated with the Big Five personality dimension	75	40	5	10	20	590	150	3.93	Accepted	

Source: Author Fieldwork (2020)

4.1. Discussion

Personality is the basic characteristics of human behavior. The psychometric model in figure 1 was used to express the conceptual view that personality traits like assertiveness, self-confidence and others can enhance goal-directed behavior necessary for task performance. The study has high psychological implications, therefore, qualified respondents as shown in table 1 were selected for the study. They provided useful information which was analyzed in table 2. In table 2 (i) with a mean score of 4.13 respondents agreed that assertiveness is a personality factor. As in table 2 (ii) with a mean score of 1.75 respondents did not agree that co-operation does not help in task performance. The respondents in table 2 (iii) with a mean score of 4.31 agreed that hard work leads to goal-directed behavior. The respondents did never agree at a mean score of 1.53 as in table 2 (iv) that self-confidence does not lead to task performance. The respondents as in table 2 (v) and with a mean score of 3.93 agreed that creativity is associated with the Big Five Personality Factor Model. This result supports Judge and Bono [10] that self-efficacy and emotional stability are associated with job satisfaction and job performance. With a grand mean score of 3.2 over the decision score of 3.00 it was found that personality factors have positive effect on employee task performance. This is the objective of the study. To buttress this result, it is critical to state that goal-directed behavior is the hallmark of task performance and achievement. Just like organizations, individuals or organizational members have personal goals. In effect, individual goals differ from one person to another and the underlying cause of this basic difference is the individual's level of aspiration which on its own is determined by factors such as past experience, social order and personality factors, such as self-esteem and self-assertiveness. Personal goals are essential in goal-directed behavior and task performance because personal goals and level of personal aspiration are equally influenced by what an individual thinks of him or herself, in terms of self-concept. The concept of goals is very relevant in personality analysis because the goals of an individual determine the type of activities and behaviours to manifest. By understanding an individual's goal-direction, management will be able to appreciate his or her actions in terms of task performance.

4.2. Scope for Further Study

Further study should examine the relationship between job satisfaction and employee behavior as a way of improving productivity in the agricultural sector so as to reduce hunger by year 2030 as envisaged by the UNs SDGs.

4.3. Recommendations

- i. Selection interviews should take cognizance of individual's goal-direction to ensure that the right candidate is selected for a particular job.
- ii. Management should try to accommodate dispassionate and assertive views from people so as to help in taking sound decisions.
- iii. Management needs to encourage co-operation and team building as a necessary strategy for task performance.
- iv. Creative and innovative employees irrespective of their levels in the organization should be encouraged to make constructive input in furtherance of organizational goals.
- v. Not every organizational member will be a leader, and it is important for organizations to identify those with leadership qualities as early as possible and encourage them to grow with the aim of enhancing the prosperity of the organization.

5. Conclusion

Personality characteristics are critical to individual's goal-directed behavior and task performance. Personality can be defined as an individual's characteristics and behaviours, organized in such a way as to reflect the unique adjustment the person makes to his or her environment or situation. Personality theory is primarily concerned with verifying, explaining, interpreting and predicting human behavior. As a psychological concept, personality refers to those basic and consistent characteristics and behaviours of an individual that sets him or her apart from other people. Just like organizations, individuals or organizational members have personal goals that influence their goal-directed behavior and task performance. For example, past experiences of successes or failures influence behavior and understandably, the high level of goal-directed behavior or aspirations associated with successful individuals can be traceable to the fact that such an individual is very optimistic about life and the future and as a result craves for improvement on past records through task performance and high achievement. The survey research design was employed for the study which involved 150 participants, and the result showed positive relationship between personality factors and employee task performance.

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Biography



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