Does personality predict employee performance?

To what extent does personality predicts employee performance?

Introduction:

An employee need to perform well in the role and activities listed in the job description. Also for a better performance an employee need to have the skills, knowledge and the right attitude needed for the job. In order to get the best performance from an employee, personality assessment is been carried out during the recruitment process. There are many types of personality assessment such as MBTI personality test, MMPI, FIRO-B personality assessment model, Kelly's personal construct theory, Eysenk's personality dimension, Raymond cattell's two types of personality traits, the big five factors and many more. However, this essay will only discuss about the big five model as it is one of the personality assessment that is most commonly used in a work place to predict employee performance. It is essential to understand that there are some criticism about the big five factors as well as the other personality assessment. However, despite the criticism the big five factors was successful in predicting employee performance.

It is important to know that there is a close relationship between employee performance and personality. This connection between both employee performance and personality depends on the characteristic of the Job, the organisation and co-workers. It is also important to keep in mind that the success of an organisation would depend on the employee performance.

This coursework will address the extent to which personality is used to measure employee performance as well as the relationship between the big

five personality and Job performance. Furthermore, this essay will discuss about the two main approaches of personality and will further investigate how personality link into career success and furthermore, predict employee performance. In addition, this essay will briefly address the nature and nurture approach.

Main body:

The nature and nurture approach may both have an effect in an individual personality. Nature is mainly about genetic inheritance, whereas Nurture is mainly about environmental factors. Researchers found out that genes plays an important role in the development of personality as well as the environment as it help to shape the personality of an individual.

According to Funder (2001), " personality is an individual's characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour, and together with the psychological mechanisms-hidden or not-behind those patterns". He proposed that personality is a predictor of work. Personality can be divided into two main approaches: Nomothetic approach and Idiographic approaches.

The nomothetic approach is a measurable and specific perspective that looks at the identification of traits and personality as a collection of characteristics (Mullins 2013). Nomothetic approach view personality as consistent, mainly inherited and resistant to change. Nomothetic theorist believes that it is possible to measure individual personality through personality assessment without diminish the difficulties that measuring personality brings, as it will help employer to identify employee personality types and how individual

would behave in a given certain circumstances. Whereas, Idiographic approach is a self-motivated perspective which insists that managers should take into account a ' whole' understanding of the individual at work (Mullins 2013). An individual attitude towards his or her work is affected by his or her personality. Idiographic theorist believes that individual are unique and it is vital to understand such uniqueness and are also concern about the development of personality as it is a process that is open to change. Furthermore, they regard that individual responding to the environment and people around them like friends and families or co-workers can shape and affect individual personality. Idiographic approach suggest that using personality assessment to measure the unique ways in which a person understands and responds to the world is inappropriate and is not valid (Mullins 2013). So therefore, it is vital to understand individual personality in order to predict individual performance.

Personality plays an important role in predicting how an individual will work. Hence, using personality assessment, employers can simply identify whether a potential employee will work, happily, intelligently, attentively or even willingly. Personality assessment is used by many companies. Employers make use of personality assessment in order to improve their decision making with respect to future applicants. They have recognized that through personality assessment; high-potential applicants can easily be identified. At this stage, we can state that an employee's personality does predict the level of performance (Ferguson, 2009). However, Schmitt et al. (1984) found that personality tests were among the least valid types of selection tests. Additionally, Spillane & Martin (2005) stated that personality and

performance are not related as the efforts of using personality test to predict performance have been spectacularly unsuccessful. Furthermore, it can also be argue that personality assessments are not a good method for predicting employee performance, as individual can give false answers to any question asked in order to meet the company expectation and get the Job (Buchanan, Huczynski, (2010). Pp. 173-189).

Many studies have been carried out in order to find the relationship between personality and employee performance. Employee performance is the job related activities expected of a worker and how well those activities were performed. Researchers in both personality and industrial-organizational psychology have touched on a five factor model (FFM) which is commonly recognised as personality framework. The FFM can be linked to predict performance (Barrick and Mount 1991) and it can also be linked to career success (Tharenou, 1997). Furthermore, the FFM are vital when predicting the job performance of an employee on the basis of personality. The FFM includes Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Openness to experience, Emotional Stability and Agreeableness.

Extraversion contains traits such as confidence, activity, and friendliness. Extraverts are active and cheerful. Extraversion is considered to be positive frame of mind and capabilities and is therefore seen as a positive effect (Clark & Waston, 1991). Research suggests that extraverted personalities are expected to surpass in occupations that involve individuals to socialize and communicate with other individuals (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Barrack and Mount (1991) also decided that Extraversion predicts not only overall job performance, but mainly sales performance as well. Agreeableness refers to

individuals who tend to be innocent, caring towards others, merciful, soft hearted, and kind (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Previous research has found no relationship between agreeableness and overall job performance (Barrick and Mount, 1991). However, Barrick et al. (2001) found that the measurement predicts teamwork and that the dimension respectively can predict success in specific jobs. This shows that, depending on the type of occupation, agreeableness may still be theorised as a contributing factor to job performance. Tett et al. (1991) stated that Openness to experience is not effective in predicting job performance. Openness to experience applies to individuals who tend to be productive, inspired, and interested to experience new things amongst other things (Costa& McCrae, 1992). Barrick et al. (2001) found no major relationship between openness and performance. Research has shown that openness to experience is linked to success in accessing (Hamilton, 1998), training (Barrick & Mount, 1991) and adapting to adjustment (Horton, 1992; Raudsepp, 1990). Emotional stability indicates that individuals who tend to be protected, peaceful and thus more likely to control their desires and survive with stress (Costa& McCrae, 1992). Dunn, Mount, Barrick and Ones (1995) indicated that emotional stability is the second most important characteristic that affects the employability of candidates. Out of the big five model, conscientiousness is recognised as the most valid predictor for measuring performance for most jobs. Factors included in conscientiousness lead to excellent job performance. Recent experimental evidence supports the importance of conscientiousness at work, relating the construct to counterproductive work behaviours (Hogan & Ones, 1997), effective job seeking behaviour (Wanberg, Watt, & Rumsey,

1996), Maintenance (Barrick, Mount, & Strauss, 1994), and attendance at work (Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997).

A relationship exists between the big five traits and career success which in returns lead to employee performance. However, out of the five big traits neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness is the most relevant to career success. It can be argued that to some extent, employee performance is predicted by personality. However, to some extent career success can also predict performance through the personality of the employee. For example, if a person career is to become an accountant and they work in a bank, it is most likely that the performance of that person would be positive. Nevertheless, if the career of that individual does not align to the job he/she is doing then it can be argued that performance of such individual might be affected. Career success is defined as what an individual achieved as a result of their work experiences (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz 1995). Career success depends on two things such as intrinsic success (job satisfaction) and extrinsic success (income and status). Job satisfaction has been defined as the comprising between the actual outcomes and desired outcomes of an employee reaction based on the Job (Egan et al., 2004). Research shows that neuroticism which is the opposite of emotional stability has a negative correlation when link to Job satisfaction and in terms of income and status. Judge and Locke (1993) found out that employees with a negative emotions were likely to have a low job satisfaction which can lead to bad performance as low job satisfaction indicate that employee are not happy with the jobs they are in which can further lead to job stress, poor morale and lack of productivity. On the other hand research shows that Extraversion will be

positively related to intrinsic career success and extrinsic success. Watson and Clark (1997) note that extraversion individual has a positive emotion which can lead to a high job satisfaction, and can further predict employee performance. Furthermore, another positive personality related to extrinsic career success is conscientiousness. Barrack & Mount (1997) research shows that conscientiousness may influence extrinsic career success through its high predictor factor on job performance.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this essay has found out that out of all the personality assessment used in a company to predict performance, the big five model is the most reliable method of predict employee performance despite all the criticisms of the FFM. This FFM is used by many researchers to predict performance and it has been researched that the most strongly trait that can be used to predict all job occupation is Conscientiousness. It can be argued that FFM is accurate when predicting employee performance as it has also been used for personality assessment. However, one negative effect of using personality assessment to predict performance is that candidate can give false answer in order to meet the job description of the company so that they can get the job. So therefore, it is recommended that companies should not depend on one factor to predict performances as they are other factors that can lead to high performance such as cognitive intelligence/Ability (CI), Emotional intelligence/ Ability (EI) and Motivation – related attitudes/ competencies.

It is important to know that although there are some advantages of using personality to predict employee performance, there are also some disadvantages. One advantage would be, it helps to choose the right candidate for the job which will lead to high performance as the employee will be motivated to work hard as their personality is link to the job they are doing (Buchanan, Huczynski, (2010) . pg. 189). Whereas, one disadvantage would be employee giving false answer on the personality test in order to score high so that they can be given the job which might lead to bad performance for the organisation if the employee actual personality does not link to the job description.

This essay has also identified the two main personality approach which are idiographic and nomothetic approach. Idiographic approach tells us that personality is unique and the theorist of this approach believes that employee personality should be open to change. Therefore, idiographic approach believes that personality assessment is not valid when predicting employee performance. Whereas, nomothetic theorist identified traits and believes that personality is resistant to change and further agreed that personality assessment should use when predicting employee performance.

Overall, there factors that affect personality differences between individuals. These factors are the biological environment, the social environment, the physical environment, the cultural environment, and role playing. All these factors related to the research about the nature and the nurture discussed in this essay.

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