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ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION AS MEDIATING FACTOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND JOB PERFORMANCE RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Meta-analytic studies have consistently reported that job performance has a significant relationship with personality trait. However only a limited amount of research has been conducted to find the mechanisms that mediate this relationship. Thus this study attempts to examine the direct role of personality traits as predictors of job performance and the indirect influence of achievement motivation as a mediating variable. Personality measurement tools were adapted from Cattell and achievement motivation from Cassidy and Lynn. Job performance indicator was obtained from annual job performance evaluations. All three personality traits were integrated into a model that predicts job performance and achievement motivation. The model was tested using structural equation modelling (SEM) with a sample of 450 public administrator officers. Results of the model show that it has a goodness of fit and explains, achievement motivation is found fully mediate for the relationship between conscientiousness and agreeableness toward job performance. However, emotional stability directly influence job performance. All the predictors are found to contribute to 24% of the variance in job performance. Implication of the finding shows that emotional stability and achievement motivation can be the essential predictor in predicting job performance of future candidates followed by agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Keywords: personality; achievement motivation; job performance

INTRODUCTION

The individual difference model of job performance states that personality and motivation are the main factors that influence job performance (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler dan Sager, 1993; Motowidlo, Borman dan Schmit, 1997). Findings from meta-analysis studies on the five factor model showed that personality factors like conscientiousness, emotional stability and agreeableness had significant correlations with job performance (Barrick & Mount 1991; Barrick, Mount and Judge 2001)) and motivation (Judge & Ilies 2002). Other studies showed that motivation acted as an important mediator in the relationship between personality and job

performance (Barrick, Stewart & Piotrowski 2002; Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott & Rich 2007; Hart, Stasson, Mahoney & Story 2007). Nevertheless, only a few studies have been done to identify achievement motivation as a mediator in the relationship between personality and job performance (Barrick, Mount & Judge 2001; Barrick & Mount 2005; Rothstein & Goffin 2006). Following this, the current study aimed to explore the mechanism of achievement motivation in the relationship between conscientiousness, emotional stability and agreeableness toward job performance.

In general, conscientiousness is a factor that measures responsibility, discipline and order; emotional stability measures individual skill in controlling stress, anxiety and depression; agreeableness measures the likelihood that one is easy to accept, good-natured and relates to people with respect and honour. In relation to that, the interrelationship between conscientiousness, emotional stability and agreeableness develops workers who function well in an organization (Barrick, Mount & Judge 2000).

Achievement motivation is a desire to do something to the level of excellence (Reeve 2009). Motivation learning psychologists view level of excellence as the desire to succeed. Such a view is consistent with Koestner and McClelland's (1990), where an individual with high achievement motivation is significantly related to an individual with high intrinsic motivation. In relation to that, the concept of achievement motivation in the current study refers to three intrinsic achievement motivation factors which are job ethic, excellence and mastery (Cassidy and Lynn 1989).

A study done in Hong Kong also showed that conscientiousness, emotional stability and agreeableness predicted job performance significantly (Tyle and Newcombe 2006). However, Jiang, Wang dan Zhou's (2009) study in China showed that only conscientiousness has a significant relationship with job performance. In the local context, Edham (2009) and Fatimah wati et.al 2011 showed conscientiousness and emotional stability had a positive relationship with job performance. On the contrary, Edham (2009) found that agreeableness correlated positively with job performance. Generally, previous studies that have shown a reliable prediction among these three personality factors still did not consistently predict job performance. According to Barrick, Mount and Judge (2001), Barrick and Mount (2005) and Rothstein and Goffin (2006) the reliability of an inconsistent prediction among the three personality factors toward job performance is influenced by a mediator variable effect. Despite this, only few studies were done to support the existence of a mediator or mechanism between personality and job performance.

METHODS

Participants

In this study, data were collected from 450 middle level civil servant officers from a training institution in Malaysia. Among these participants, 269 were males, and 154 were females, with an average age of 40.85 and work experiences of 18.25 years. Respondents comprised of 390 Malays, 35 Chinese, 18 Indians and 7 other ethnicities with 86.9% of them having higher education.

Measures

16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) Fifth Edition

The 16PF was translated (Fatimah wati, 2010) into Malay using the back translation method. Participants responded to the 16PF items using a three-point Likert scale. Alpha estimates for the Malay version based on 450 adults were liveliness (F) = 0.71, rule-consciousness (G) = 0.86, abstractness (M) = 0.81, perfectionism (Q3) = 0.86, emotionality stability (C) = 0.74, vigilance (L) = 0.76, apprehension (O) = 0.70, tension (Q4) = 0.70, dominance (E) = 0.71, social boldness (H) = 0.80 and openness to change (Q1) = 0.70.

Cassidy and Lynn Achievement Motivation (CLAM)

The *CLAM* was translated (Fatimah wati, 2012) into Malay using the back translation method. Motivation achievement was assessed with the well-validated developed by *Cassidy and Lynn* (1989). The *CLAM* assesses six components, but for the purpose of this study only three components were used. The three components refer to the three intrinsic achievement motivation factors which are job ethic, excellence and mastery (Cassidy and Lynn 1989).

Job performance

Job performance measure was based on the annual performance evaluation report received from the employer in the form of an overall job performance score (e.g 70, 80, or 90).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach as recommended by Hair et al. (2006)

RESULTS

Table 1 shows five matching indexes: CMINDF = 1.651, GFI=.963, TLI=.983, CFI=.988 and RMSEA= 0.038. These reveal that there was a good match of the model (*good fit*) with the data comprising 450 civil servants, even though the Chi Square value of the *Goodness-of-Fit* showed that the model did not fit with the data [χ^2 (N=450, df=98) =120.489, $k < 0.05$]. All the

goodness-of-fit indices of the model also met the recommended values as suggested by Hair et al. (2006).

Table 1: Results of goodness-of-fit index

| Fit Index | Recommended Value | Observed Value |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Chi-square/ degree of freedom | > 0.05 | 120.489 |
| CMINDF | < 5.0 | 1.651 |
| GFI | ≥ 0.90 | 0.963 |
| TLI | ≥ 0.90 | 0.983 |
| CFI | ≥ 0.90 | 0.988 |
| RMSEA | ≤ 0.06 or ≤ 0.08 | 0.038 |

Table 2 shows only emotional stability (-ve) ($\beta = -.51$, C.R. = -2.67, $k = .008$) and achievement motivation ($\beta = .39$, C.R.=5.73, $k=.001$) influenced job performance directly. The other two personality factors, namely, conscientiousness ($\beta = .44$, C.R.=1.61, $k=.10$) and agreeableness (-ve) did not influence job performance directly ($\beta = .24$, C.R.= -1.31, $k=.19$). Only agreeableness (-ve) influenced achievement motivation ($\beta = .55$, C.R.=2.34, $k=.19$), while emotional stability (-ve) ($\beta = .02$, C.R.=.12, $k=.89$) and conscientiousness ($\beta = -.44$, C.R.= -1.32, $k=.18$) did not influence achievement motivation directly. The summary of the parameter approximations for the SEM model in the standard form are shown in Figure 2.

Table 2 Coefficient for the paths in the SEM model

| Standardized regression coefficient | | β | C.R | k |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------|-------|-------|
| 1. Achievement motivation | → | .39 | 5.73 | .001* |
| 2. Conscientiousness | → | .44 | 1.61 | .10 |
| 3. Emotional stability(-ve) | → | -.51 | -2.67 | .008* |
| 4. Agreeableness(-ve) | → | -.24 | -1.31 | .19 |
| 5. Conscientiousness | → | -.44 | -1.32 | .18 |
| 6. Emotional stability(-ve) | → | .02 | .12 | .89 |
| 7. Agreeableness (-ve) | → | .55 | 2.34 | .019* |

β = standardized Beta (standardized regression coefficient)

* = significant value at 0.05

A detailed observation of the partial influence between the variables reveals that there was a partial influence of conscientiousness on job performance ($-.44 \times .39 = .17$) and of

agreeableness on job performance (-ve) ($-.55 \times .39 = .21$) via achievement motivation, while emotional stability (-ve) did not have a partial influence on job performance ($.02 \times .39 = .03$). The reason is that partial influence is less than 0.08 as suggested by Hair et.al (2006). Table 3 shows the mentioned direct relationship and partial relationship. The result showed that even though conscientiousness and agreeableness (-ve) did not have a direct influence on job performance, these two variables since they did have a partial influence on job performance were still include.

The evaluation of the predictor of job performance conceptual model using the SEM analysis showed that the job performance of civil servant officers in the current study is influenced by emotional stability and achievement motivation directly. The partial influence of conscientiousness and agreeableness is found via achievement motivation. Conscientiousness and agreeableness predicted 7% of the variance in achievement motivation. Furthermore, when these two factors were combined with emotional stability and achievement motivation, the contribution of variance toward job performance increased to 24%. Achievement motivation acted as the full mediator in the influence of conscientiousness and agreeableness on job performance but not on emotional stability.

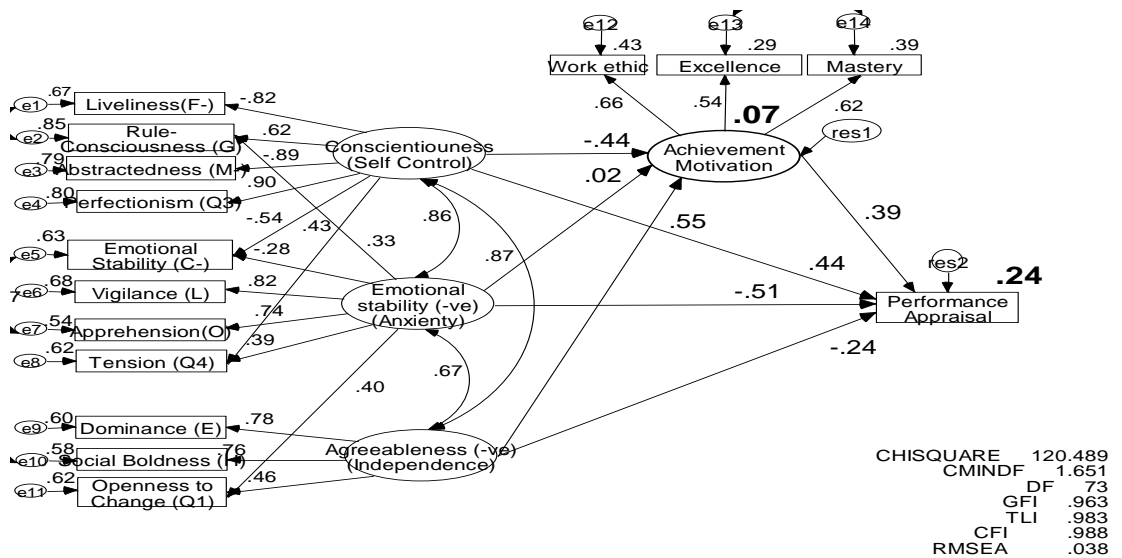


Figure 2 Parameter approximation in the standardized form for SEM model

Table 3 Coefficient for the paths in the SEM model

| Independent Variables | → | Mediating Variables | Dependent Variables | Indirect effect |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Conscientiousness | → | Achievement motivation | Job Performance | $-.44 \times .39 = -.17$ |
| Emotional stability(-ve) | → | Achievement motivation | Job Performance | $.02 \times .39 = .007$ |
| Agreeableness(-ve) | → | Achievement motivation | Job Performance | $.55 \times .39 = .21$ |

DISCUSSION

The results of the current study showed that achievement motivation is an important mediator in the relationship between agreeableness and conscientiousness with job performance. These results confirm Motowidlo et al.'s (1997) individual difference in job performance model is consistent with Barrick et al.'s (2002) and Story et al.'s (2009) findings. Specifically, the results suggest that individual with low agreeableness traits like being dominant, brave and open will influence high achievement motivation and this will subsequently influence high job performance. On the contrary, individuals with high agreeableness traits like giving in, being shy, timid, and traditional will influence low achievement motivation and subsequently influence low job performance. The findings of this study support McClelland's (1997) achievement motivation theory and Cattell's (1993) personality trait theory. According to Koestner and McClelland (1990) individuals with high achievement motivation tend to choose challenging goals, job oriented to achievement, dare to take risks, prefer feedback toward achievement and possess future plans and goals.

Nevertheless, high conscientiousness traits such as serious, and obedient, and having objective thinking and order influence low achievement motivation. This may lead to low job performance. Whereas low conscientiousness traits such as being cheerful, not obedient, having abstract thinking and being not orderly influence high achievement motivation. These findings are inconsistent with results of other researches (Barrick et al. 2003; Kanfer 1991; Judge dan Ilies 2002; Musson, Sandal dan Helmreich 2004) that showed high conscientiousness influenced high achievement motivation.

The current findings suggest that individuals with positive emotional stability and calmness are those with high achievement motivation even though they do not like rules, obedience, abstract thinking and spontaneity. Individuals with emotive reactive and stress, however, did not have high achievement motivation even though they possess order, obedience, objective thinking and seriousness in work. Results also showed that achievement motivation

was more influenced by intrapersonal factors than social factors. The current findings support achievement motivation theory which states that an individual's achievement motivation is more influenced by internal locus of control than external locus of control (Koestner & McClelland 1990).

The influence of reactive emotion and tension toward high conscientiousness in the personality model of civil servant officers also explains why the influence of high conscientiousness influences low achievement motivation. Cattell's (1993) personality trait theory explains the influence of reactive emotion (C-) on high conscientiousness in that it may cause one to have a low tolerance for disappointment, suffer neurotic exhaustion, disturbance, agitation, feelings of dissatisfaction, and regular neurotic symptoms (phobia, sleep disturbance, psychosomatic etc.). The influence of tension (Q4) on high conscientiousness also causes tensed and disturbed feelings, restlessness and impatience. The study showed that individuals who were unskillful in controlling emotion had low concentration ability and were easily exposed to stress at work. When they are in a stressful situation, their achievement motivation will decrease (Barling & Boswell 1995). This will cause them to be less motivated. Civil servant officers with high conscientiousness will influence low achievement motivation.

The influence of high order trait (Q3) and objective thinking (M-) on conscientiousness also influences low achievement motivation. High order trait, objective thinking and orientation to problem solving are less suitable for leaders (Cattell 1993; Digman 1990). Individuals with high order trait have strong control over emotion and general behavior, (socially perceptive, careful and very concerned about social reputation). Based on the discussion, the direct influence of conscientiousness on low achievement motivation is one interesting finding. This finding explains why there is an influence of culture in the job performance predictor model of civil servants.

In contrast, achievement motivation is an important mechanism between personality and job performance. Therefore, the results showed that emotional stability influenced job performance directly; that is, it can stand independently to influence job performance without going through achievement motivation as its mediator. The current results are consistent with a lot of western meta-analytic studies (Barrick, Mount & Judge 1991; 2001; Tett et al. 1991; Salgado 1997, 2003). Studies done in the Asian region also showed the same results. Many of these Asian studies showed that emotional stability is the most significant predictor of job performance when compared with conscientiousness. Workers in Hong Kong also have the same perception on the subject of the relationship between job performance and personality traits in the organization context in Hong Kong (Tyler dan Newcombe 2006).

Therefore, the implication of the findings is that achievement motivation can be the essential determinant to assess candidates in personel decision making. Emotional stability can be the best predictor and the most dominant in predicting the job performance of future candidates, follwed by aggreableness and conscientiousness. The future research should test this model by job types.

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