



# The Relationship between Personality Traits and Employee Performance: The Case of Barry Callebaut Ghana Limited

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## ABSTRACT

It is important for one to understand that every employee comes into the organization with a set of unique and distinct personality traits or characteristics. The study tries to investigate the relationship between the personality traits of 60 employee in Barry Callebaut Ghana Limited and their performance on the job. Personality trait was measured using the Eysenck Personality Inventory. Work performance on the other hand was measured using a structured appraisal questionnaire. The personality traits of the employees were then analyzed by mapping the links between the two major traits; Extraversion and Neuroticism. The study showed a weak inverse correlation between the two personality traits and performance. The correlation between Extraversion, Neuroticism and Performance is  $r = 0.1$  and  $r = 0.2$  respectively. This showed that Extraversion and Neuroticism have a weak negative relationship with performance but Extraversion has a good negative relationship with performance compared to Neuroticism or Neuroticism exhibited a stronger inverse relationship with performance compared to Extraversion. It is therefore recommended from this study to management of Barry Callebaut that they should employ more of extroverts than neurotics. Employers must factor personality assessment into their recruitment and selection criterion so as to examine how well potential employees will fit into a particular jobvacancy.

## Introduction

Present-day management understands and appreciate that employees are the most essential tools used in achieving the goals in every organization. It has also come to embrace and accept that the success of any organization is enshrined in the employees who work in the organization (Gatewood and Field, 2001). Thus, employees can be referred to as, the major determinant of what an organization will become tomorrow. Azamasa (2004) also emphasized that the establishment and continuous existence of the organization through the realization of set goals and objectives requires the continuous and effective functioning of its material input with the human element being vital.

Personality is defined as the sum total of the behavioural and mental characteristics that are distinctive of an individual (Colman, 2003). In other words, personality refers to the characteristics which determine general pattern of behaviour, especially those attributes that make the individual distinctive in relationship with others. Personality also refers to the characteristics of the person that account for consistent patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving (Pervin, Cervone and John, 2005).

Carver and Scheier (2000) speculate that the behavioural patterns or characteristics of employees are associated with traits theory of personality. Personality traits as applied in this context refer to the unique set of distinguishing characteristics and qualities that the individual employees possess. This also means that personality traits are the habitual patterns and qualities of behaviour of the individual employees which are exhibited through physical and mental approach towards work performance (Behling, 1998). He added that personality traits are useful factors in determining the level of performance on a

the pattern of behaviour of an employee towards the performance of work has significant effect on output or productivity at the work place (Carver and Scheier, 2000).

German-British psychologist Hans Eysenck (1992) was the originator of the model of personality based upon just three universal traits. They are Extroversion/Introversion, Neuroticism/Emotional Stability and Psychoticism.

Extraversion, the first of the personality traits is concerned with interpersonal interactions, activity, need for stimulation and capacity for joy, an individual identified with this trait is usually sociable, active, talkative, person-oriented, optimistic, gregarious, and assertive, fun-loving and affectionate (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In addition, a person identified with this trait often reappraises work problems positively, use rational problem-solving coping strategies and seek social support at the work place (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig & Dollard, 2006).

Agreeableness is concerned with an individual's interpersonal orientation and their quality in thoughts, feelings and actions. An employee characterized by agreeableness would be soft hearted, good natured, trusting, helpful, forgiving, accepting and straightforward at the work place (Costa & McCrae, 1992). More so, there is some evidence that agreeableness is linked to high levels of social support (Bakker, Van der Zee, Lewig & Dollard, 2006). Additionally, agreeableness is a trait that describes the degree to which a person is cooperative and trusting in an organization. The worker's ability to be agreeable while performing a job can also indicate employee performance. For example, a worker with an extroverted personality would be well suited in a sales position, while an introverted worker may succeed in a research position or one with little interaction with others. Nevertheless,

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no study has addressed the role of agreeableness in predicting psychological distress in workers. As was the case with extraversion, most researchers agree that there is a negative relationship between agreeableness and burnout, but the relationship between agreeableness and the three sub-dimensions of burnout does not yield a consensus.

Conscientiousness is concerned with the degree to which someone is responsible, dependable, persistent, organized and motivated in goal-directed behaviour. Ultimately an employee described by conscientiousness would be organized, reliable and hardworking, self-disciplined, punctual, scrupulous, neat, ambitious and persevering (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Conscientious employee has also been found to adopt proactive self-initiative and creative thinking in solving problems. More so, such an employee is goal oriented and will stop at nothing to achieve the desired results (Bakker et al. 2006). Thus it can be concluded that, a conscientious employee is largely consistent, adventurous and reliable at the work place.

Neuroticism as one of the Big Five traits is concerned with identifying an individual's tendency to psychological distress, unrealistic ideas, excessive cravings or urges and maladaptive responses. Therefore, an employee noted for this trait usually feels worrisome, nervous, emotional, insecure and inadequate in the execution of task at the work place (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Bakker & et al. (2006) added that employees with the neuroticism trait tend to set unattainable goals for themselves and underestimate their performance, as well as use ineffective coping strategies in dealing with complex job situations. Furthermore, Sutin & Costa (2010) put forward that neurotic workers tend to have negative occupational routes which start early and persist throughout their working life. More specifically these individuals tend to have fewer opportunities to learn new skills, express creativity in their work and make their own decisions throughout their career. With this description in mind, it is not surprising that Tokar, Fischer & Mezyldo (1998) in their review of the literature on personality and vocational behaviour identified the role of neuroticism as being of substantial interest in relation to psychological distress, burnout, and work depressive symptoms.

The final trait is openness to experience. This trait is concerned with assessing proactive seeking, appreciation of experience, toleration and exploration of the unfamiliar. Employees with this trait are often curious, creative, original, imaginative, and untraditional and have broad interest (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In addition, the individual employee identified with open to experience trait is mostly found to use humour as a stress coping mechanism and tend to appraise stressful situations as less threatening (Bakker et al. 2006). Thus, such an employee is very accommodating, adventurous, patient, dynamic and sincere in the performance of job roles and discharge of duties and responsibility.

One of the prominent trends in business organizations today is the attention placed on individual personality traits as a means of predicting job performance (Engler, 2006). Thus, the need to assess the relationship between personality traits and employee performance at the work place with notable emphasizes on work behaviours and attitude has become imperative in organizations. Ryckman (2004) opined that personality traits provide employers with an indication of how the employee may perform on the job. There is no guarantee the employee's personality in personal situations will carry over to the workplace. Engler (2006) added that on the average the personality traits a job applicant demonstrates in personal situations also will display the same personality traits while at work.

Both researchers and industry practitioners believe that in the organization, employee personality traits plays an important influence on output quality, customer service skills, and overall performance of the employee, which in turn influences customer satisfaction, loyalty and ultimately organizational success (Spector, 2006). He concluded that employee personality is closely linked with organizational performance through its effect on employees' behaviour, attitudes and service performance. There have been many researches on the role of personality traits as human behaviour predictors. Therefore, it is appropriate to say personality traits are stable personality characteristics that significantly influence employee's attitudes and behaviours in organizations. Theory of personality trait explains personality types which present a solid opportunity for managers and employers to coach employees to higher levels of performance. By taking personality into account, business leaders can reduce interpersonal stress within the workforce and identify communication strategies that work better for different types of employees (Ryckman, 2004).

Today, many organizations are experiencing poor employee performance, low job satisfaction, withdrawal behaviours, high turnover and strike actions, which subsequently lead to organizational bankruptcy and liquidation. Others have either become uncompetitive or gone out of business. This is highly attributed to the failure on the part of management to manage the fit between the employees' personality traits or characteristics including the behavioural pattern and pursuit of organizational productivity. It is against this background that the researcher is interested in assessing the impact of personality traits on the achievement of organizational productivity.

Employees and employers of organizations would find the study very useful, since it highlights personality trait as a very insightful issue in the pursuit corporate goals which brings to the fore, the impact of employee personality traits on the achievement of organizational productivity, and proposes the most effective way to tap into the advantages and take corrective measures to avoid the negative behavioral patterns that work against employees work output and performance in the organization.

Findings and recommendations of this study would also provide reference material for organizations and professional bodies undertaking similar studies, as it would reveal what has been done on the subject and serve as the platform for other researchers to build upon. The study would benefit human resource professionals, employers and managers as it helps to unearth the relationship between personality traits and employee performance at work. Additionally the requisite human resource practices that will help to institute the right conduct of employees for effective performance would be known thus would help organizations achieve greater productivity.

Finally, the research work would present both theoretical and empirical study that will provide a comprehensive view on how the personality traits impact worker/employee work output or performance and the need for management to align and integrate or match the employee's personality traits with the right job description or specification considering the nature of work.

### **Research objectives**

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between the personality traits of employee in Barry Callebaut Ghana Limited and their performance on the job. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the relationship between employee personality traits and performance on work in the organization.

2. Find out how personality traits correlate with employee performance in the organization.
3. Investigate the predictive value of personality trait on employee performance.

#### Research questions

In achieving the intended objectives of this study, the following questions were posed:

1. What is the relationship between the employee personality traits and performance on work in the organization?
2. How do the personality traits correlate with employee performance in the organization?
3. What is the predictive value of personality traits on employee performance?

#### Research methodology

##### Research design

Personality trait was measured using the Eysenck Personality Inventory. Work performance was measured using a structured appraisal questionnaire. The personality traits of the employees were analyzed by mapping the links between the two major traits; Extraversion and Neuroticism which are being assessed and the influence that they may have on work performance. Some of respondents were found to have a balance of extraversion and neuroticism traits. This finding was also analyzed against work performance. Single group comparison was also used in analyzing the results comprising of all the departments in the organization.

##### Sample and sampling procedure

Barry Callebaut Ghana Limited has its head office located within the Tema Metropolis of the Greater Accra region of Ghana. It is a cocoa processing company that has a population of 100 workers. Non-probability sampling technique (convenience sampling) was used to select a sample size of 60 out of the total population. Convenience sampling method was employed in selecting respondents that are willing, interested and also ready to expend part of their time to participate in the study. Purposive sampling was also used as heads of departments were required to appraise respondents who belong to their departments.

##### Data collection

The study focused on two personality trait namely Extraversion and Neuroticism. The Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI), which could be used for both clinical and non-clinical psychological assessment, was used as the main instrument for data collection. The standard appraisal form of Barry Callebaut Ghana was also used for the appraisal of employees. This section used five Likert scale questions ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

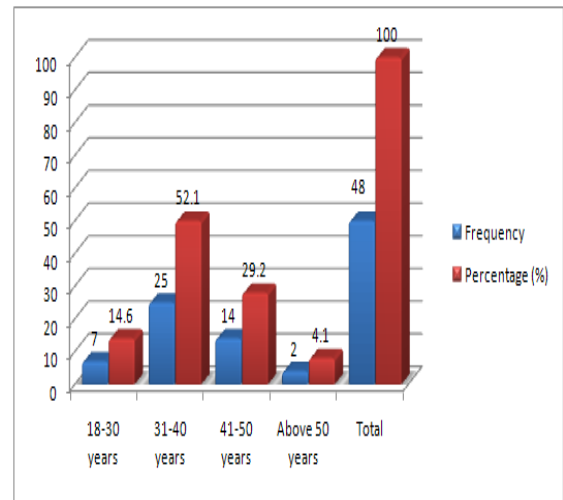
#### Data Presentation and Analysis

##### Qualitative Analysis of respondents

Sixty (60) questionnaires were administered to the employees of Barry Callebaut Ghana Limited. Forty-eight (48) valid questionnaires were ultimately analyzed forming the basis on which the research was conducted. The data collected was analyzed below:

##### Part I

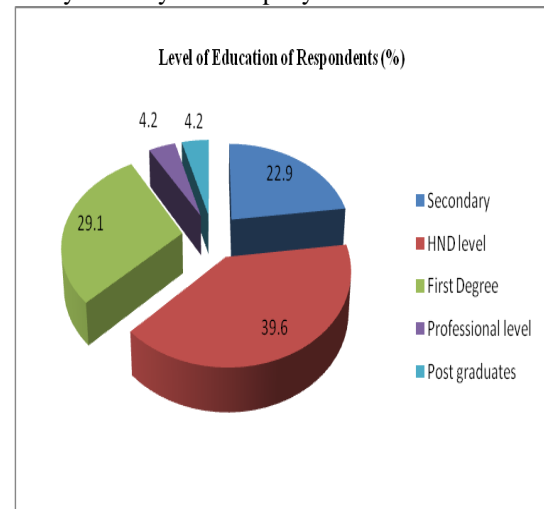
Figure 1, contains the age distributions of the respondents. From the figure above, 14.6% of the respondents were within ages of 18-30 years, 52.1% of the respondents were within ages 31-40 years, 29.2% of the respondents were found to be within ages 41-50 years, 4.1% of the respondents were 51 years and above.



**Figure 1. Age Distribution of respondents**

Source Field data 2012

The pattern of the age distribution shows that, a greater proportion of the respondents who participated in the study were matured adults and this gives us an indication as to the age group that is mostly hired by the company.

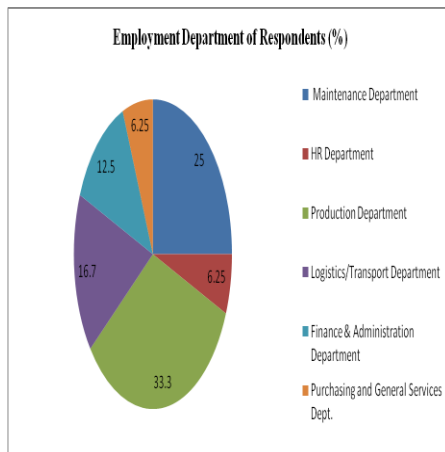


**Figure 2. Educational level of respondents**

Source: Field Data, 2012

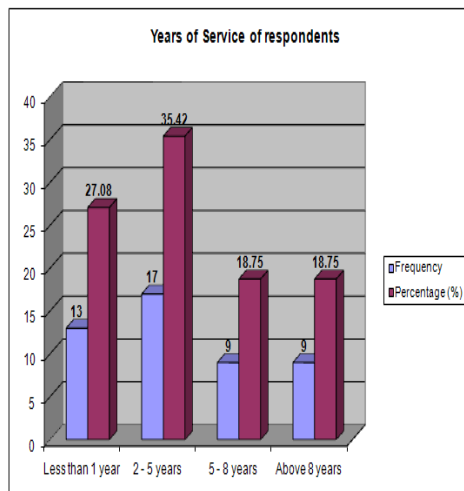
Figure 2 apparently reflects that; 39.6% of the respondents hold a Higher National Diploma (HND) certificate, 29.1% is First Degree Holders, and 4.2% of the respondents hold Professional Level certificates, 4.2% Post Graduates certificates, and 22.9% hold Secondary level qualification. It follows from figure 2 that, the majority of the respondents were employed with HND level and First degree qualifications. Thus it can be asserted that, the majority of the respondents were well educated.

For the employment department category it was noticed in table 4.1.3 that; 25% of the respondents were from Maintenance Department, 33.3% of the respondents were from the Production department, 16.7% of the respondents were from the Logistics department, 12.5% of the respondents were from the Finance department, 6.25% of the respondents were from Purchasing and General Services department and 6.25% of the respondents were from the Human Resource department.



**Figure 3. Employment Department of Respondents**

Source: Field Data, 2012



**Figure 4. Years of service of respondents**

Source: Field data 2012

With regards to the years of experience category, it is evident in figure 4.1.4 that; 27.08% of the total respondents have been in the service with the company between 0-1 year, 35.42% of the respondents have served between 2-5 years, 18.75% of the respondents have been in the service between 5-8 years and 18.75% of the respondents have been in the service for over 8 years. Following the responses in figure 4 above, it can be deduced that majority of respondents have served the organization for 2-5 years and shows that these respondents have working experiences.

#### Quantitative Analysis of data

Data received from the administration of questionnaires was analyzed based on the objectives of the study using Microsoft Excel (2010) program - integrated package on a personal computer and Pearson's  $r$  or Pearson's correlation co-efficient as per below:

$$r = \frac{n(\sum X_1 Y) - (\sum X_1)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{[n(\sum X_1^2) - (\sum X_1)^2][n(\sum Y^2) - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

Pearson's correlation co-efficient was used to measure the strength and direction of Extraversion and Performance as well as Neuroticism and Performance where  $r$  is the Pearson's correlation coefficient,  $n$  is the sample size,  $X$  were the independent variables (Extraversion and Neuroticism) and  $Y$  is the dependent variable (Performance). However, the qualitative data analysis was also very useful in the study. Data analysis process involved tabulation, description and interpretation of the field data. This method was used to principally reveal what the

data imply, since it was very important to make them more meaningful, valid and reliable.

Descriptive statistics was very useful in the analysis of the primary data. The technique adopts the use of frequency distribution and percentages, which were used to determine the proportion of respondents choosing the various responses. The proportions showed the different views of the respondents on the various issues. The interpretations and presentation of analyzed data were also done using pie charts, graphs to ensure easy understanding.

#### The Relationship between Extraversion and Work Performance

There was a weak inverse correlation ( $r = -0.1$ ) between Extraversion and work performance. This means that the more extraverted an individual is, the lower his or her performance will be but the impact is weak and not significant. The decrease in work performance may be due to employees not settling down to work but rather use the official time to chat and socialize. It may also include poor employee management e.g motivation, job analysis, training and development, safety and welfare which often result in conflict situations.

#### The Relationship between Neuroticism and Work Performance

There was a weak inverse correlation ( $r = -0.2$ ) between Neuroticism and work Performance. This also means that the more neurotic an individual is, the lower his or her performance will be. A neurotic employee probably does not have positive attitude towards work and may lack confidence and optimism, which should result in less ambition and less focus on career goals. Therefore, a negative relationship likely exists between neuroticism and goal direction; such that, low goal trends are usually due to low job or work efficiency.

#### The Correlation between Personality Traits and Employee Performance

The weak Inverse correlation exhibited by both Extraversion and Neuroticism confirms that they do not have a significant effect on performance. However in assessing the correlation between extraversion and performance on work and neuroticism and performance on work, it is evident, that neuroticism exhibited a stronger negative correlation compared to extraversion. The co-efficient of correlation of Neuroticism is twice that of Extraversion. Neuroticism and Performance ( $r = -0.2$ ). Extraversion and Performance ( $r = -0.1$ ) implying that employees who are extroverts are more likely to perform better on the job or increase performance compared to than employees who are neurotic.

#### Discussion of Findings

##### Assessing the Relationship between Extraversion and Employee Performance

According to the literature review extroverts usually show high performance on their job roles. However the findings show that there was a weak inverse relationship which means that there was a low performance exhibited by extraversion. In contrast, there was a weak inverse of that relationship but it was not all that significant.

##### Assessing the Relationship between Neuroticism and Employee Performance

Neurotics are usually low performers according to Eysenck's (1967) theory of personality. The findings show that there was a weaker inverse relationship. This means that the more neurotic an employee the lower the performance. Even though some of the employees who are neurotics performed

high, they could not match the extroverts or their probability of increasing job performance cannot be compared to extroverts.

### Summary of Major Findings

The study investigated the relationship between personality traits and employees performance, having used Barry Callebaut Ghana Limited as a case STUDY. The study disclosed a weak inverse relationship between the two personality traits and employee performance.

### Extraversion and Performance

The study showed a weak inverse correlation between extraversion and performance. The weakness in the inverse relationship between extraversion and performance is  $r = -0.1$ . This means that an individual being an extrovert will not have a significant impact on their performance. This appears to conflict with other studies that show that extroverts are more likely to be high performers and likely to get promoted ahead of an introvert.

### Neuroticism and Performance

The study showed an even weaker but still not significant inverse correlation between neuroticism and performance. The weakness in the inverse relationship between neuroticism and performance is  $r = -0.2$ . This means first of all that an individual's neuroticism does not impact upon their performance. However, the more neurotic an individual is, the more their performance will decrease and even stronger than extraversion. This is not difficult to understand; neurotics are prone to irritability, anger, depression, anxiety and over-reaction at situations. This will have a stronger impact on superiors' impression of the individual and so their performance may be rated lower. Of course, this may require further studies.

Moreover, in finding out how personality traits correlate with employee performance at the organization, the results revealed that the co-efficient correlation of neuroticism and performance ( $r = -0.2$ ) is twice as that of extraversion and performance ( $r = -0.1$ ). These findings pointed out that those employees who are extroverts are more likely to perform better on the job than employees who are neurotic.

### Conclusion

There was weak inverse relationship between the two personality traits and work performance. The researcher concludes that even though extraversion showed a weak inverse correlation, the impact was not significant as compared to neuroticism which also showed a weaker inverse correlation.

### Recommendations

Management of Barry Callebaut should employ more of extroverts than it would for neurotics in view of the fact that they were found to have a weak correlation between their trait and job performance. Employers must factor personality assessment into their recruitment and selection criterion so as to examine how well potential employees will fit into a particular job vacancy. In order to successfully enrich existing literature and to practically enlighten researchers, human resource development experts and government officers in designing appropriate learning and performance appraisal equipment for higher productivity and organizational goal accomplishment, an empirical research should be done in order to ascertain the dependability of the relationships between personality traits and work performance.

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