

Employees Personality Trait towards Engagement in Four-Star Hotel in Northern Region Malaysia: A Mediating Effect of Agreeableness

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Abstract: Employee engagement is crucial for any organization to maintain the best employees' commitment hence leading to organizational performance. Vast researches are done in measuring employee engagement in services sector, which many organizational factors that been studied are to see its direct influence on employee engagement. However, research on individual element itself is scarce in the employee engagement literature recently. Therefore, this study discovers the agreeableness personality trait as a mediator in the relationship between conscientiousness and employee engagement. 165 employees in four-star hotels in northern region Malaysia participated in this study. Statistical analysis using structural equation modelling was used to analyze the data. The result shows that agreeableness does mediate the relationship between employee conscientiousness and engagement. This research also contributes towards a new finding of an individual factor does matter the most towards employee engagement and employee connection with others, which are essential to entertaining customers. Therefore, future research on engagement literature should focus and enhance the aspect of individuality in the study.

Key words: *conscientiousness, agreeableness, employee engagement, extraversion, four-star hotel.*

INTRODUCTION

Personality trait has the potential to influence employee engagement and employee connection with others (extraversion). Nowadays, the hospitality industry is known as the larger service sector in the economy. The services of the hotel industry are important because it shows a serious action on employee engagement which to create a clear job scope and behaviour towards the organization. According to Aon Hewitt (2017), global employee engagement in 2017 has been dropped to 63% compared to 65% in 2016. The moderate employee engagement were dropped from 2015 to 2016 which is 40% to 39% namely dropped 1%. The study from Gallup Consulting (2017) also mentions that the lower employee engagement, the lower the earning in the organization. Previous research had shown that employee engagement is significant towards performance [3]–[5]. There are more than one reason that can affect employee engagement in an organization such as the management, working environment, co-worker, leadership, rewards, culture and so on. Previous study has shown many of the linkages of organizational

factor that can affect employee engagement. However, in the literature, there was a lack of researches to determine the individual factor towards employee engagement [3]. Vast research has proven that employee engagement was affected by the external forces which are other than the personal factor itself. Furthermore, in Malaysia, study on employee engagement about hotel industry was insufficient [6], [7].

Therefore, this research examines and focus on the employee's trait of agreeableness as a mediator which enhance the individual element of conscientiousness and engagement, and also improve employee conscientiousness and extraversion. Drawing from the Big 5 personality, this research used conscientiousness as exogenous variable, agreeableness as mediator and extraversion and engagement as an endogenous variable. This study proves that the personality trait of agreeableness is crucial towards engagement and extraversion, which those two elements are vital in the hotel industry.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement reflected employee's selfbehaviors to the working roles, and expressed physically, cognitively, and emotionally in their job performance. It is also called psychological state of employee at the workplace [8]. Engagement are defined as positive qualities such which is vigor, dedication and absorption [9]. The vigor showed the employee has a high level to resilience in their work in terms of energy, physical and mental. Dedication showed the employees' enthusiasm, inspiration and pride in their work. Besides, absorption showed the employees are fully concentrated into their work. The high score in vigor, dedication and absorption reflect the high performance on the employee engagement.

Nowadays, business world tends to focus on the area of employee engagement because employee engagement become a cornerstone of a successful business [10]. Furthermore, employee engagement shows a positive relationship between organization efficacy and organization profit [11], [12]. Employee engagement is strongly connected to the organization profit. The good performance of employee engagement will help the organization gain more profit [12]. Moreover, employee engagement is the key to lead organization success by giving effort from employees [13], [14]. This is because the employee engagement was assisted in growing committed workforce for the company. [15] reported the committed workforce is to build the emotional strongly connected with the consumers and create a loyal client base to develop the business for the organization. [15] mentions that employee engagement is the long-term performance for the organization to reduce the employee's turnover rate and create positive environment. This is because employee engagement tends to build up the employees' loyalty to the organization and enhance the productivity and profitability of the organization.

Extraversion

Extraversion is the attitude of the individual easily to connect others around them [16], [17]. They have also been grouping that like about and rub shoulder with someone around them. Extraversion shows the positive emotion in personality. They often accept others and do opportunities for making selfsatisfaction and own pleasure. [18] mentioned that extraversion individual is behaved friendly with people around them. [19] also reported that extraversion people also like sitting in a large group and gathering to enhance the relationship with others.

[20] contend extraversion was known as sociability and assertiveness. [16] also remarked that individual high score in extraversion is easy to adapt the social condition environment, actively, friendly, and optimistic. On the other hand, people who low score in extraversion which performed unfriendly to others even in carrying the group assignment. [21] stated that extraversion is to identify aspect that fit with every behavior that domain. In group discussion, people with extraversion are positive, actively and enjoying the discussion and this indicate the element of agreeableness. They also open-minded in the way of innovative and divergence thinking. The divergence thinking is reflected the individual capability to solve the problem. Extraversion more tend to positive and accurate and far from the negative impression. And so, people who have the sense of agreeableness with other people tend to have extraversion.

Agreeableness

[22] defined agreeableness as helpfulness and cooperativeness and are inclined to believe to others people. [23] also categorized the agreeableness people who are straightforward, with trust, unselfish, self-deprecating and tender. People with the agreeableness are showing the harmony value to other people and maintaining a good relationship with others. [24] remarked agreeableness is more tend to sympathies to others and belief other people need help. This is because agreeableness individual shows a soft-hearted and trusting to others [24]. Agreeableness plays an important role to meet and achieve the organization goals. Agreeableness was built an individual work professionally in their job especially in teamwork and service customers [24].

It also means that agreeableness is individual that is trustworthy when carrying out the assignment. They also easy to forgive people around them. Agreeableness individual which does not to reject others in the group discussion. They are to obey all the instruction given by the group. They also not haughty and cocky which easily to be approached. Thus, agreeableness individual is less involved in the conflict. According to [21] individual with high agreeableness which not easy to recognize by others. Whilst, people with low agreeableness are highly involved in competition and conflict.

However, when employees have attractive characteristic, agree with people, trust others, forgive for mistake then it helps to create a better mood for employee to be engaged and connect with people surrounding with joyous. It postulates that in this study, the agreeableness gives significant positive effect toward extraversion. Moreover, agreeableness also acts as a mediator in the relationship between

conscientiousness and employee engagement. it means that people who are keen to follower characteristic will engage better if they have agreeableness as a mediator. In which employee become follower (conscientious) and being helpful (agreeableness) thus employee will be engaged at workplace.

Conscientiousness

[25] reported that conscientious people are more efficient, follow the regulation, self-discipline and self-control, responsibility and aim for achievement about expectation. Conscientiousness is also known as the organization and achievement orientation [26]. The characteristics of the conscientiousness show the high value of individual that enable to lead in planning and to achieve the organizational goals. [21] remarked conscientiousness possessed 6 aspects there are responsible, fantasies, manage systematically, achieve goals, disciplined and consider. An individual with conscientiousness is more focus on the task and hard to interrupt by others people. This is because they carry out their responsibility in every task in order to achieve the goals of the organization. Besides, individual with conscientiousness enable to accept the challenges and can pass through all the obstacle when carrying out the task given [21]. Conscientiousness people are willing to work harder and persistent in their stand, responsible and careful in every task, and orderliness and self-compassion [27].

Conscientiousness is shown the selfdiscipline and self-confident of the employees. The conscientiousness shows a positive relationship to employee engagement. The higher value of conscientiousness, the higher perform employee engagement. Conscientiousness is also known as the organization and achievement orientation [28]. An individual with conscientiousness personality is to lead in planning and to achieve the organizational goals [29]. They are taking the responsibility to all the task given by the organization and tend to create favorable environment, which is agreeable to others.

Therefore, the hypotheses of this study are:

Hypothesis 1: Conscientiousness has an effect on employee engagement

Hypothesis 2: Conscientiousness has an effect on agreeableness

Hypothesis 3: Agreeableness has an effect on extraversion

Hypothesis 4: Agreeableness has an effect on employee engagement

Hypothesis 5: Agreeableness mediates the relationship between conscientiousness and employee engagement

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative method was applied in this study, sampling technique used is purposive sampling, because the population of employee working in four-star hotel is unidentified. 165 employees in frontlines operation department were involved in the survey. Questionnaire use in this study were adopted by previous research. Employee engagement using UWES [30] and for the personality of conscientiousness, agreeableness and extraversion were collected from the secondary data and was constructed. The result of the reliability and validity of the questionnaire were at satisfactory level (measurement model) refer figure 1.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The number of male and female respondents were 61 and 103 respectively, namely 34.9% and 58.9%. Next, the highest range of age of respondents was 21-30 years old with a higher percentage of 48.6%. Afterwards follow by the age less than 20 years old, 31-40 years old, and 41-50 years old with 21.7%, 17.1% and 6.3% respectively. Besides, there were 105 Malay respondents, 29 Chinese respondents and 30 Indian respondents, namely 60%, 16.6% and 17.1% respectively. There are 108 respondents are single with 61.7% and there are only 56 respondents who are married which is 32%. In term of the positioning level, there were 9.7% of the receptionist, housekeeper 17.1%, food and beverage 36.6%, operator 15.4%, bellman 3.4% and 5.7% of concierge and business centre.

Next, using SmartPLS 3.0 as a tool to analyze the data, results of measurement model and structural model. Figure 1, explaining measurement model to test the internal consistency reliability. Looking at the value of AVE, all latent variables shows value more than 0.5, which is considered satisfactory. Furthermore, loading of the items shows value more than 0.7, which also indicate satisfactorily. Meanwhile, aother criteria to test internal consistency is looking at the composite reliability value should in the range of 0.7 to 0.9.

Result od CR conscientiousness (0.839), agreeableness (0.848), extraversion (0.835) and employee engagement (0.918).

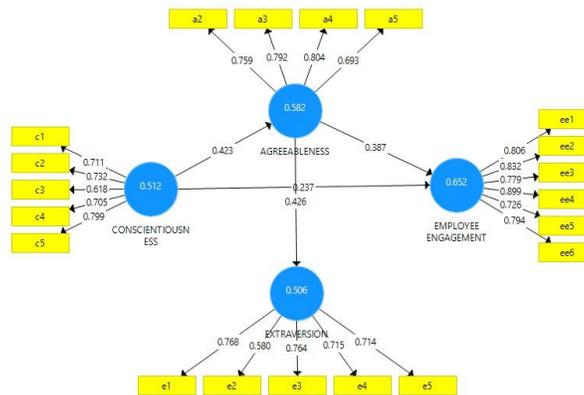


Figure 1
Measurement Model

Table 1
Goodness of Fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.084	0.098

This theoretical framework does fit the model predictive capabilities (Table 1). Using goodness of fit the value of standard root mean square residual (SRMR) value that indicates less than 0.1 is a good fit. This model has good structure which fits the empirical data. It explain the theoretical framework thus explaining the practical situation.

Table 2
Path Coefficient Table

	Std beta	SD	T-values	P- values	R2	F2	Q2
H1: Conscientiousness \square employee engagement	.237	.242	2.799	.005	.283	0.064	0.151
H2: Conscientiousness \square agreeableness	.423	.431	3.574	.001	.179	0.217	0.0076
H3: Agreeableness \square extraversion	.426	.453	4.026	.001	.182	0.222	0.063
H4: Agreeableness \square employee engagement	.387	.390	4.07	.001		0.171	

Significant at $p < 0.05$, $t\text{-value} > 1.649$

Table 2, indicates path coefficient table of direct relationship between the variables. The direct relationships are all significant with significant value less than 0.005 ($t\text{-value} > 1.649$). Hypothesis one which conscientiousness ($\beta=0.237$) does effect on employee engagement, Hypothesis two which conscientiousness ($\beta=0.423$) does effect on agreeableness, Hypothesis three which agreeableness ($\beta=0.426$) does effect on

extraversion, and Hypothesis four which agreeableness ($\beta=0.387$) does effect on employee engagement. The predictor of conscientiousness does explain agreeableness in 21.7 percent. Agreeableness does explain extraversion at 18.2 percent. Meanwhile conscientiousness and agreeableness do explain employee engagement at 28.3 percent.

Meanwhile, the effect size is explained through the value of F^2 . Effect size Conscientiousness shows small effect size (0.064) in producing R^2 for employee engagement, Conscientiousness shows medium effect size (0.217) in producing R^2 for agreeableness, Agreeableness shows medium effect size (0.222) in producing R^2 for extraversion, Agreeableness shows medium effect size (0.171) in producing R^2 for employee engagement. Meanwhile Q^2 has value more than 0, which indicates that this model has a predictive relevance.

Meanwhile for the mediating variable (hypothesis 5), a bootstrapping analysis was performed. The result indicates that the agreeableness does mediate the relationship between conscientiousness and employee engagement. Furthermore, the value of 95 percent of bootstrap confidence does not straddle in 0 [LL=0.040, UL=0.298]. Table 3 illustrates the mediating result.

Table 3
Mediating analysis

Relationship	Std beta	SD	T-values	P-values	Decision
H5: agreeableness mediates the relationship between conscientiousness and employee engagement	.163	.168	2.522	.012	Significant

Significant at $p < 0.05$, $t\text{-value} > 1.649$

Table 3 explains there is a mediation effect of agreeableness in the relationship of conscientiousness and employee engagement. It shows that the agreeableness strengthens the relationship between conscientiousness and employee engagement. Employee with the personality of agreeableness help to strengthen the conscientiousness personality (follow orders and rules) and thus engage in the job. It thus explains that agree with others, makes someone becomes easier into adhering to rules (conscientiousness) and therefore engage in a work. Furthermore, agreeableness does affect the ability of a person to interact with others. Characteristic which ease with other people are tend to be sociable and have connection with people. The overall results of the hypotheses in this study is accepted. Therefore, it concludes that the agreeableness personality is pertinent towards employee engagement and extraversion. It thus explains that agreeableness influences on one's productivity level and sociability in the organization.

CONCLUSION

Results from the hypotheses testing shows that the relationship are all significant. This indicates that agreeableness whereby individual with the sense of cooperative with other people will strengthen the workers commitment in conscientiousness (following orders) and employee engagement. agreeableness has

been looking as a crucial personality trait in complement the followership characteristic and workers' commitment at the workplace. Meanwhile, with agreeableness, it does lead to people becomes close and connected with others (extraversion). This research shows it importance in the focus of individuality study especially in the services sector. Research focusing on employee personality were seldomly discovered in recent years. However, this study reveals that the individual personality is important into determining the work engagement and productivity at workplace. Therefore, this research warrants further study in discovering individual resources and element into determining the work engagement.

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