

The Relationship Between Workaholism and Personality

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Abstract: This study focuses on the links of personality traits (Agreeableness, Openness to experience, Neuroticism, Extraversion and Conscientiousness) with workaholism components (work involvement, work enjoyment and work drive), indicating which traits lead to workaholism and which not. Self report questionnaires were used to collect data from three occupational sectors of Abbottabad region; education, banking and health. Correlation and Hierarchical regression analysis was used to understand the relationship between personality and Workaholism. The analysis showed that personality traits are linked with workaholism with extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism positively related to all three workaholism components, openness to experience negatively related to work drive, while being positively related to the other two components and agreeableness only showing a relationship with work enjoyment. The workaholic tendency of existing employees can be judged and the organization can provide counselling to such employees, conduct seminars on the ill effects of workaholism and generally discourage employees from engaging in workaholism. It can also help organizations make more informed recruitment and selection decisions. The study brings forward a concept – workaholism- that is not duly recognized or acknowledged in Pakistan and reinforces the concept that workaholism is associated with the personality of people.

Key words: Personality • Workaholism • Big five • WorkBAT

INTRODUCTION

The term Workaholism was first used by Oats [1] to describe his own way of working- compulsive and incessant. And as the boundaries between work and home have been blurring ever since, workaholism has become a widely known concept. The last three decades have seen a lot of work done on workaholism [2-4], but still definitions and measurements are in the formative stage. Due to this lack of a commonly accepted definition of workaholism different researchers have different views about what it is. Some consider it as an attitude towards work while others attribute it to the number of hours spent working [5-8]. Some researchers [1, 9, 10] consider it as mainly being detrimental to both health and career while other take it to be positive [11]. Moreover are few scholars [4, 6] that consider it to be having both pros and cons.

Workaholism: A commonly used measure of workaholism is Workaholism Battery (WorkBAT), developed by Spence and Robbins [6]. According to this measure workaholism is composed of three principle components ‘the workaholism triad’- work involvement, work drive and work enjoyment-, where **work involvement** refers to the degree to which a person uses the time productively both on and off the job and the commitment to work, **work drive** refers to the intrinsic motivation of the person and **work enjoyment** means the gratification obtained from work.

Personality: Personality is defined as “the overall profile or combination of traits that characterize the unique nature of a person” [12] and "The Big Five" Goldberg [13] model is a personality theory that describes personality on the basis of five traits (Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and

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Neuroticism) Where; **extraversion** as per Ewen [14] is a trait that depicts a person's ardent interest in other people as well as external events and confidence with the unknown, **neuroticism** refers to the tendency to experience negative emotions such as distress, anxiety, fear, anger and guilt [15] **conscientiousness** is the ability to control one's behavior and to complete tasks [16], **openness** refers to how ready people are to make changes in their beliefs and actions when encountered with new ideas or situations and, **agreeableness** measures how compatible people are with other people, how well they are able to get along with others.

Research over the years since Fiske [17] has evidenced the usability, reliability of the Big Five as well as the premise, that every measure of personality can be included in it [18, 19, 21]. Generally, 'workaholism' is considered to be a fairly stable characteristic of an individual [2]. Overall Burke *et al* [2] and Aziz & Tronzo [21] imply that workaholism can be explained as a personality trait. Such studies serve as the foundation to further investigate the association between personality and workaholism. Moreover, Burke *et al.* [2] encouraged other researchers to replicate their study in other settings to test out their reported findings.

In this study the relationship of the personality factors (the Big Five) with each of the three workaholism components derived by Spence and Robbins [6] will be studied. Different scholars and physiologists defined many types of personality which shows the impact on their life, how they take up work and how they behave in an organizational setting [22].

Literature Review: Workaholism is a term first used by Oates [1] in his book titled 'Confessions of a workaholic', in which he referred to workaholics as people for whom work becomes the top most priority of their life so much so that their mental, physical and social well being is threatened. Since its inception the term has seen fair amount of attention with the popular press and the masses using it regularly to describe excessive working, but in terms of scientific, empirical attention the concept still lags behind [23, 24], with agreed upon definitions, conceptualizations and measures are still lacking.

Most of the research done on workaholism, touts it as a predominantly negative phenomenon [1, 25-30] etc.. The founder of the term Oates [1] viewed it negatively so much so that he likened it to an addiction, many other scholars agree with this conception, like Porter [9] held that a workaholic disregards other areas of life for his

pleasure of work just like an alcoholic does for his pleasures of drink. Porter [31] depicted workaholism as sorry beings that not only underperform but also impede their fellow workers.

Personality has been defined in many ways and though most of the definitions have the same basic meaning but none are exactly alike [32,33]. According to Mayer [34] the majority of personality definitions have a few things in common. All of them talk about personality as being an organized system having sub parts that develops with time and is expressed in a person's behaviour. This study has chosen the definition given by Lefton [35] in the book titled 'Psychology', which describes personality as a fairly stable set of behavioral characteristics that determine a person's reaction to the environment.

The big five is a five factor trait based theory of personality. These five factors were identified after extensive research, in the start approximately 18000 traits were considered to be personality defining, through factor analysis and over time these got condensed to 171 [36], later, Cattell [37] reduced this list to 35 traits and in [17] Fiske was most probably the first one to identify these five factors of personality. In recent studies by [38] big five personality traits affects attitudes and occupational behaviors of the employee. These five factors of personality-Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience- are called the five factor model (FFM), but in HRM and organizational behaviour it's called the 'Big Five'. There are two recognized FFMs, that of [16] and [19]. These models are similar and they differ only in the naming of the traits. The Neuroticism and openness to experience in Goldberg's model are called emotional stability and intellect in McCrae & Costa's [39].

- Extraversion: this includes a person's comfort level with relationships. Those scoring high on this trait are called extraverts and they are expected to be friendly, talkative, social and outgoing. Those who score low on this trait are called introverts and they are likely to be reserved, comfortable being alone and not that social.
- Agreeableness: this refers to an individual's tolerance of others and easy going attitude. Agreeable people tend to be straight forward, they trust others, are humble and kind [40]. They keep other's interest in mind and are genial [41]. Disagreeable people don't care for others and focus on their needs only [42].

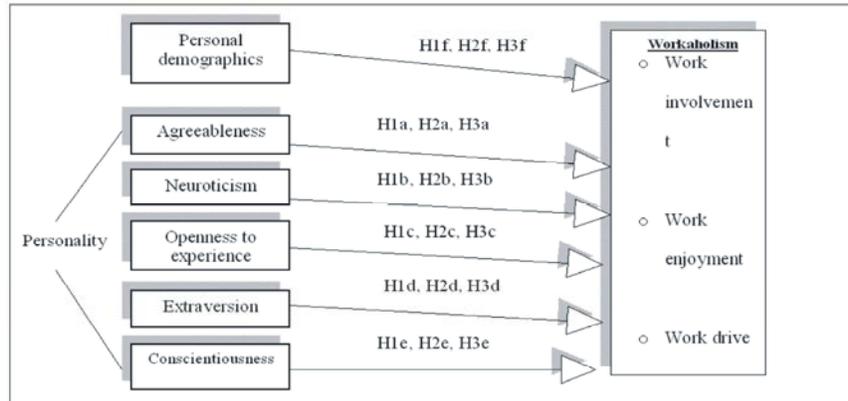


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework (Based on: Aziz & Tronzo (2011))

Hypotheses of the study

- H1a** = Agreeableness is positively related to work involvement.
- H1b** = Neuroticism is negatively related to work involvement.
- H1c** = Openness to experience is positively related to work involvement.
- H1d** = Extraversion is positively related to work involvement
- H1e** = Conscientiousness is positively related to work involvement.
- H1f** = Personal demographics effect work involvement.
- H2a** = Agreeableness is positively related to work drive.
- H2b** = Neuroticism is negatively related to work drive.
- H2c** = Openness to experience is positively related to work drive.

- H2d** = Extraversion is positively related to work drive.
- H2e** = Conscientiousness is positively related to work drive.
- H2f** = Personal demographics effect work drive.
- H3a** = Agreeableness is positively related to work enjoyment.
- H3b** = Neuroticism is negatively related to work enjoyment.
- H3c** = Openness to experience is positively related to work enjoyment.
- H3d** = Extraversion is positively related to work enjoyment.
- H3e** = Conscientiousness is positively related to work enjoyment.
- H3f** = Personal demographics effect work enjoyment.

There are six main hypotheses; hypotheses one to five have three parts each.

- Neuroticism: it is the extent to which someone is prone to stress, is insecure and easily worried and distressed. People with high score on this trait often have negative mood that stay long and are nervous and depressed [43].those who score low are relaxed, not easily angered and depressed and can manage crisis fittingly [40].
- Conscientiousness: it reflects the degree to which a person is dependable, persevering, orderly and vigilant. High scoring individuals are more responsible and persistent and take on few tasks, whereas low scoring individuals tend to start a lot of jobs at once, are not organized and are self-gratifying [42].
- Openness to experience: it depicts the extent of which a person is imaginative, creative and ready to take on new ideas and experiences and has strong

aesthetics. High scorers show more of these characters and low scorers tend to be timid and unimaginative [40].this trait is found to be strongly related with the intelligence of the person [44].

Conceptual Framework: The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1, illustrates the dependent, independent and moderating variables which make up the study. The personality factors that include extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness and neuroticism along with personal demographics are the independent variables and they are shown on the left as per convention. The workaholism components are the dependent variables. The relationship of each of independent variables is analyzed with each of the dependent variables.

Research Methodology: This study is a survey based study and as it is near impossible to collect data from an entire population; surveys are usually conducted by taking a representative sample out of the population and studying it, this way the results can be extended for the entire population. As mentioned before three sectors were used for the study, in Education sector the higher education institutes working in Abbottabad, in Health the teaching hospitals in Abbottabad and in the third sector all the banks in Abbottabad were the population of the study. Using the survey system (<http://www.surveysystem.com>) which is a site that offers a wide range of survey related help to researches, sample size was calculated for each sector on a confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of 0.10. Estimated population of 300, 1520 and 1200 for banking, education and health was used for the calculation, the sample size came out as 73, 90 and 89 respectively. The total sample was 252. The data was then collected by using non probability convenience sampling.

This research used the survey technique for data collection and the survey was administered via questionnaire. The independent variable; personality and the dependent variable; workaholism have separate structured and standardized questionnaires that were combined to make one consisting of 75 questions. The scaling of the questionnaire is 5 point likert scale, with 1 being very inaccurate and 5 being very accurate.

Data analysis is done for making inferences from the data collected. SPSS 20 was the software used for this purpose. The data was duly coded and analyzed by using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation and hierarchical regression.

Demographics: The demographic information of the respondents is summarized in Table 1.1. Majority of the participants were male 66.3 percent and 33.7 percent were female, 52.8 percent were between the ages of 25-30 thus the bulk of the data came from young professionals. 44.8 percent were married whereas 55.2 percent were single. Only eight respondents had 4 or more children majority 58.3 percent had no children while 20.2 percent had a couple. Further, majority were in 17 and 18 grade, 40.5 percent and 50.4 percent respectively. As the statistics show the data was collected from mostly young people, hence it makes sense that the most common experience stat is from 1 to 5 years with 43.2 percent of respondents, only a ten fall above 15 or more years and 50.7 percent are in their first year of work on their current assignment. 48.4 percent follow the typical 40hour work week and work for 8 hours each day, while 25 percent work fewer than 8

Table 1.1: Demographics of the sample

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	167	66.3
Female	85	33.7
Age		
25-30	133	52.8
31-40	102	40.4
41-50	12	4.7
51-60	5	1.98
Children		
0	147	58.3
1	31	12.3
2	51	20.2
3	15	6
4 and more	8	0.4
Grade		
17	102	40.5
18	127	50.4
19	18	7.1
20	5	2
Experience		
1 year and less	69	27.3
1.1-5	109	43.2
5.1-10	57	22.6
10.1-15	7	2.7
15 and more	10	3.9
Time on current position		
1 year and less	128	50.7
1.1-3	57	22.6
3.1-6	60	23.8
6.1-9	7	2.7
Hours worked		
Less than 8	63	25
8	122	48.4
More than 8	67	26.5

Table 1.2: Descriptive statistics

Factor	Education	Health	Banks	Overall
Extraversion	3.523	3.323	3.454	3.43 (.46)
Agreeableness	3.526	3.748	3.663	3.64 (.38)
Conscientiousness	3.321	3.443	3.392	3.38 (.43)
Neuroticism	3.101	3.035	3.056	3.06 (.44)
Openness	3.344	3.295	3.229	3.29 (.47)
Work involvement	3.412	3.426	3.431	3.42 (.39)
Feeling driven	3.416	3.385	3.404	3.40 (.51)
Work enjoyment	3.528	3.505	3.541	3.52 (.41)

Note: The figure in parenthesis is standard deviation

hours where minimum number of hours was reported as 6 and 26.5 work more than 8 hours with the maximum number of hours worked reported as 12.

Descriptive statistics help make sense of the data and highlight its features Table 1.2 depicts the mean and standard deviation of the five personality factors and the three workaholism components across the three sectors

Table 1.3: Reliability Statistics

Factors	Alpha	No. of items
Extraversion	.781	10
Agreeableness	.820	10
Conscientiousness	.803	10
Neuroticism	.826	10
Openness	.758	10
Work involvement	.763	8
Work drive	.812	7
Work enjoyment	.806	10
Overall	.797	75

and also shows the overall mean and standard deviations. A five point likert scale was used in the questionnaire with 1 (very inaccurate) and 5 (very accurate) and so the overall mean shows that the participant commonly answered the questions in positive. The S.D of all the factors is small showing that the mean are a good fit of the data and most of the data is between ± 3 S.D, clustering around the mean. Hence the data is not too scattered and generalizations can be made on the basis of this data.

Looking at the mean of the factors in each sector it can be seen that no drastic changes are present however, slight changes are visible. In case of extraversion the education sector shows the highest mean showing that educators are slightly more outgoing than doctors and bankers. For agreeableness the health sector shows the highest mean showing that doctors tend to be a bit more agreeable and caring than teachers and bankers it might be because a doctors' work entails care and kindness. In case of conscientiousness health sector shows a somewhat higher mean than others, again it can be said that a doctor's job requires her to be more vigilant, organized and determined than others. For neuroticism small difference is present between the factors but it can be seen that lecturers show a little more inclination towards neuroticism, than the other two, hence they are more easily stressed and dissatisfied than the other two. In case of openness educators are shown to be the most open, that is they tend to take on new ways and concepts and are more creative, they are followed by doctors and

finally the bankers are presented as the least open of all which means they like conventions and norms the most. In case of work involvement, work drive and work enjoyment a very modest variation in the mean exists, but still it can be seen that bankers tend to the most involved in work, educators tend to the most motivated to work and finally bankers again tend to enjoying their work the most. Looking at the data it can be said that workaholicism is not affected by the occupation of the people to any considerable level, a workaholic will be a workaholic in every job he is in.

Reliability Analysis: To verify internal consistency Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated. Personality was measured by 50-item IPIP scale [45], which is a very commonly used measure of Big Five personality traits. Each of the five factors is measured by 10 questions each. Workaholicism was measured by WorkBat, Spence and Robbins's [6] 25-item scale. Table 1.3 shows the Cronbach's alpha value for each factor as well as the entire questionnaire which includes 75 items. The alpha value is .797. The closer the alpha value is to 1 the greater the internal consistency is between the items. Typically an alpha value of .7 and above is considered fitting [46]. It can be seen that the alpha of all the factors is well above .7, thus all the factors have good reliability.

Correlation: Correlation between the independent variables (personality factors) and the dependent variables (workaholicism components) was studied by performing Pearson correlation. The correlation matrix is shown in Table 1.4. It can be seen that six of the ten (60%) correlations between personality factors are significant. extraversion is significantly positively related to agreeableness and conscientiousness, it is also weakly negatively related to neuroticism and openness to experience, but these relationships are not statistically significance. Agreeableness is significantly positively related to both conscientiousness and openness to

Table 1.4: Correlation

Variable	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Extraversion	252	1							
2.Agreeableness	252	.344**	1						
3.Conscientiousness	252	.287**	.217**	1					
4.Nuerotscism	252	-0.067	-0.025	-0.064	1				
5.Openness	252	-0.072	.169**	.138*	-.240**	1			
6.Work involvement	252	.222**	.185**	.495**	-0.05	.229**	1		
7.Felling driven	252	.174**	0.047	0.062	.511**	-.249**	-0.101	1	
8.Work enjoyment	252	.416**	.537**	.394**	-0.002	.235**	.342**	0.088	1

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (1 tail) ** Correlation significant at 0.01 level (1 Tail)

Table 1.5: Hierarchical Regression Analyses with Work Involvement as the Criterion (N = 252)

Steps	Factors	β	R	R ²	ΔR^2	P
1	Gender					
	Age					
	Marital status	-.180*				0.05
	Number of children	.374**				0.001
	Grade					
	Personal demographics		0.393	.154*	.154*	0.05
2	Gender	-.184*				0.05
	Age	.175*				0.05
	Marital status					
	Number of children	.270**				0.001
	Grade					
	Extraversion	.240**				0.001
	Agreeableness					
	Conscientiousness	.384**				0.001
	Neuroticism	.127*				0.05
	Openness	.296**				0.001
	Personality factors		0.661	.437**	.283**	0.001

ΔR^2 for the personal demographics is equal to the primary R^2 , whereas ΔR^2 for the personality factors is the increase in R^2 after adding it to the personal demographics. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

experience. Conscientiousness is significantly positively related to openness to experience and Neuroticism is negatively related to all other personality factors but reaches statistical significance only with openness to experience, which means high on neuroticism tend to score lower on other factors and vice versa. All correlations between the personality factors were weak to moderate, with the highest $r = .344$, hence indicating that multicollinearity won't be a problem [47].

In case of workaholism components, work involvement is positively and significantly correlated with work enjoyment but negatively with work drive, while work enjoyment is positively related to both the other workaholism components, but the relationship is significant only in the case of work involvement.

Correlation Between personality and workaholism shows work involvement is significantly positively correlated with all of the personality factors except neuroticism with which it is negatively related. This means extravert, agreeable, conscientious and open people are more involved in work. Work drive is significantly positively correlated with both extraversion and neuroticism and significantly negatively related to openness to experience and finally work enjoyment is significantly and positively correlated with extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness and openness to experience.

For the purpose of testing the hypothesis hierarchical regression was conducted, taking the three workaholism components as the criteria one at a time. The independent variables were added in blocks, first the personal demographics were added followed by the personality factors.

Hierarchical Regression Analysis: For the purpose of testing the hypothesis hierarchical regression was conducted, taking the three workaholism components as the criteria one at a time. The independent variables were added in blocks, first the personal demographics were added followed by the personality factors.

Table 1.5 shows the regression analysis done with work involvement as the criterion. Personal demographics were entered first in the model as they are not of primary interest, personality factors were entered second after controlling for demographics. The personal demographics accounted for 15.4 percent of variance in work involvement as shown by the R^2 and the result is statistically significant at $p < .001$ level. The beta β values show the individual contribution of each variable. It can be seen that the significant contributors were marital status ($\beta = -.180$ $p < .05$) and number of children ($\beta = .374$ $p < .001$).

Looking at ΔR^2 it can be seen that personality factor are responsible for 28.3% of variance in work involvement and it was also significant ($p < .001$) the β values show extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness as being the significant positive contributors, with conscientiousness being the strongest contributor at ($\beta = .384$ $p < .001$). Hence hypotheses H1c, H1e and H1d are supported, maintaining that openness, conscientiousness and extraversion are positively related to work involvement. However, H1a and H1b were not supported. Moreover, H1f is also supported as personal demographics are shown to be effecting work involvement.

Table 1.6: Hierarchical Regression Analyses with Work Drive as the Criterion (N = 252)

Steps	Factors	β	R	R2	ΔR^2	P
1	Gender					
	Age	.230*				0.05
	Marital status					
	Number of children	.309**				0.001
	Grade					
	Personal demographics		0.332	.110**	.110**	0.001
2	Gender					0.05
	Age					0.05
	Marital status					
	Number of children	-.252*				0.05
	Grade					
	Extraversion	.145*				0.05
	Agreeableness					
	Conscientiousness	.384**				0.001
	Neuroticism	.438**				0.001
	Openness	-.143*				0.05
Personality factors		0.603	.364**	.254**	0.001	

ΔR^2 for the personal demographics is equal to the primary R^2 , whereas ΔR^2 for the personality factors is the increase in R^2 after adding it to the personal demographics. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 1.7: Hierarchical Regression Analyses With Work Enjoyment as the Criterion (N = 252)

Steps	Factors	β	R	R2	ΔR^2	P
1	Gender	.216**				0.001
	Age					
	Marital status					
	Number of children	.555**				0.001
	Grade	-.438**				0.001
	Personal demographics		0.522	.272**	.272**	0.001
2	Gender					
	Age					
	Marital status					
	Number of children	.394**				0.001
	Grade	-.408**				0.001
	Extraversion	.252**				0.001
	Agreeableness	.212**				0.001
	Conscientiousness	.306**				0.001
	Neuroticism	.163**				0.001
	Openness	.175**				0.001
Personality factors		0.771	.594**	.322**	0.001	

ΔR^2 for the personal demographics is equal to the primary R^2 , whereas ΔR^2 for the personality factors is the increase in R^2 after adding it to the personal demographics. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 1.6 shows the regression analysis with work drive as the criterion. In this case the personal demographics accounted for 11 percent of variance in work drive significant at ($p < .001$), with age and number of children being the significant contributors. Number of children is negatively related to work drive showing that fewer the children more motivated a person is to work. Personality factors when entered in the model caused a 25.4 percent variance, statistically significant at ($p < .001$).

Moreover, β values indicate extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism the statistically significant positive contributor, showing that extravert, conscientious and neurotic individuals are more driven to work. Hence the hypotheses H2d, H2e and H2b are supported. Openness to experience is a significant

negative contributor, which means open people tend to be less drive to work, the same relationship is shown in the correlation analysis as well, hence H2c is also supported. But agreeableness was not a significant contributor so the null hypothesis could not be rejected, hence H2a was refuted. As the personal demographics are shown to be significantly affecting work drive although the effect is small so H2f is also supported.

Table 1.7 illustrates the regression analysis done with work enjoyment as the criterion. In this case the personal demographics bring significant variation of 27.2 percent and gender, number of children and grade are the significant contributors, with being negatively related to work enjoyment, so it can be said that the higher the grade of the person the lesser he enjoys the work and vice

versa. When personality factors are introduced, the contribution of grade and children decreases and gender becomes insignificant. Personality factors account for 32.2 percent of variance, significant at ($p < .01$). All of the personality factors are shown to be significant positive contributors. Correlation analysis supports this result except in the case of neuroticism. Hence H3c, H3e, H3d, H3a all are supported, but the results don't allow the rejection of null hypothesis in case of neuroticism so H3b is refuted. H3f is also supported, as demographics are shown to have an effect on work enjoyment.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to find out whether personality can predict workaholism or not. Similar studies have been conducted before [2, 48, 21]. And the results in consistency of these studies prove that personality is related to workaholism and that workaholism can be considered as a stable factor of personality.

Although Burke et al [2] came to the conclusion that personal demographics are independent of workaholism, this study proves otherwise that the personal demographics do affect workaholism. This is in line with the work of [49].

In case of work involvement the hypotheses purported positive relationships with all personality factors except neuroticism. Hence in line with the hypotheses extraversion was positively related to work involvement, consistent with Burke [2] and in contrast to Aziz & Tronzo [21]. The correlation also showed a positive relationship between extraversion and involvement. Conscientiousness was also found to be positively related to work involvement in line with the hypothesis however, agreeableness showed no significant relationship with work involvement in the regression analysis although it did show a weak positive relationship in correlation. Opposing the hypothesis neuroticism was found to be positively related with involvement, this finding is consistent with Aziz & Tronzo [21], this may be because neurotic people worry a lot and this anxiety may not allow them to disengage from work. Also in line with the hypothesis openness to experience was positively related with involvement.

In case of work drive the hypothesis purported positive relationships with all personality factors except openness to experience. Consistent with the hypotheses and Burke [2] openness to experience was negatively related with work drive. This may be due to the reason

that open people constantly seek new things to do and crave creativity so their motivation will falter on routine tasks. Conscientiousness was also found to be positively related with drive which is consistent with both Aziz & Tronzo [21] & Burke [2] studies. The hypothesis that agreeableness is positively related with drive was not supported. Extraversion was as per the hypothesis found to be positively related to drive, as these individuals are full of energy and hence may be more motivated to work. Moreover, neuroticism consistent with the previous study of Burke [2] was found to be positively related with work drive.

In case of work enjoyment the hypothesis purported positive relationship with all personality factors except neuroticism and consistent with the hypotheses extraversion, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness are positively related with work enjoyment. But contrary to expectation and previous research neuroticism was also positively related with enjoyment, it might be because they try to find solace in their work from their anxieties and relatively happier at work than other life settings [50-52].

Furthermore, it was found that working in the different sectors of health (teaching hospitals), education (HE institutes) and banking had no apparent effect on workaholism. Reinforcing the concept that workaholism is a stable characteristic of individuals [2, 21].

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