

Can personality influence the relationship between challenge and hindrance demands and work engagement levels?



D. D'mello and E. Russell

Context

- 24/7 nature of global organisations, constant job demands, increasing need for competitive edge – key asset – people.
- Traditionally, well-being = job satisfaction (Bakker, 2011). Recently **work engagement (WE)** is identified as more active and energised form of well-being (Bakker, 2011)
- WE is synonymous with longer and sustained performance at work (Bakker, 2011), leads to higher levels of performance and productivity (CIPD, 2010, Macleod & Clark, 2009)
- According to the Job Demands-Resource Model majority of the job characteristics can be grouped under Demands and Resources (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).
- Nature of the job would ascertain the relationship between job demands and well-being. Hence job demands are classified into **challenges and hindrances** (Cavanaugh et al., 2000) and the distinction can impact WE (Tadic et al., 2016)
- Examining individual differences such as **personality** traits of high or low engaged employees will help gain an overall understanding of WE. Engaged employees perceive work as challenging instead of stressful (Baker, Schaufeli Leiter and Taris, 2008).
- Strong evidence to support positive association between personality and job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

Aim

- To elucidate the relationship between 'challenge' and 'hindrance' demands, and 'work engagement' of employees.
- To evaluate the role of 'personality' as a moderator in the relationship between challenge and hindrance demands and work engagement.

Methods

Procedure & Participants

- Self-administered online survey distributed via email and social media using Qualtrics. A convenient sampling followed by a snowball effect leading to a total sample of $N=122$ participants

Design

- Cross-sectional study using quantitative methods to infer statistical results and test the hypotheses

Measures

- The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17) developed by Schaufeli & Bakker (2003). $\alpha = .90$
- Challenge & Hindrance Demand scale by Rodell & Judge (2009) Subscale challenge demands $\alpha = .87$, subscale hindrance demands $\alpha = .78$
- 50-item International Personality Item Tool (IPIP) by Goldberg (1992) $\alpha = .68$. Measured Big Five personality

Analysis

- Normality tests conducted, frequency analysis performed to measure demographic details and inspect nature of sample.
- Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis conducted to test the hypotheses
- In total, the model accounted for 25% of explained variance of work engagement. The full model is not statistically significant ($F=1.502$, $p=.218$)
- Challenge Demands ($\beta = .37$, $t = 4.09$, $p < .001$) and hindrance demands ($\beta = -.03$, $t = -0.52$, $p = .606$) (accounted for 13% variance $F = 8.609$, $p < .001$)
- Extraversion ($\beta = .14$, $t = 1.65$, $p = .102$), Conscientiousness ($\beta = .22$, $t = 2.66$, $p = .009$) and Neuroticism ($\beta = -.13$, $t = -1.57$, $p = .120$). (accounted for 9% additional variance $F = 4.782$, $p = .004$)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Work Engagement	5.05	.75	(.78)					
2. Challenge Demands	5.10	1.11	.35*	(.87)				
3. Hindrance Demands	3.85	1.06	.06	.29*	(.78)			
4. Extraversion	3.29	.79	.22*	.19*	-.13	(.87)		
5. Conscientiousness	3.84	.55	.25*	.05	-.10	-.04	(.71)	
6. Neuroticism	2.75	.72	-.16	-.10	.06	-.16	-.15	(.83)

Note: Values in parentheses on the diagonal are Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Analysis	Predictor Variable	B	β	t	p	R	R ²	F Change
Step 1	Challenge Demands	0.25	0.37	4.09	.000	.36	.13	8.609
	Hindrance Demands	-0.03	-0.05	-0.52	.606			
Step 2	Challenge Demands	0.22	0.32	3.60	.000	.47	.22	4.782
	Hindrance Demands	0.01	0.01	0.15	.878			
	Extraversion	0.14	0.14	1.65	.102			
Step 3	Conscientiousness	0.22	0.22	2.66	.009			
	Neuroticism	-0.14	-0.13	-1.57	.120			
	CD X Extraversion	-0.04	-0.04	-0.51	.614	.50	.25	1.502
	CD X Conscientiousness	-0.20	-0.15	-1.75	.083			
	HD X Neuroticism	-0.13	-0.14	-1.61	.109			

Note: Dependent Variable = Work Engagement
CD = challenge demands; HD = hindrance demands; B = unstandardised regression coefficients
 β = standardised regression coefficients
N=122; R² = overall variance explained in dependent variable by the variables in the model.

Discussion

- Results from this study indicate that employees' WE levels are higher when facing challenge demands (e.g. workload)
- Results consistent with COR theory suggesting although demands are challenging and strenuous, one will gain from them it positive outcomes
- This study is the first to consider moderating effects of personality on work demands especially conscientiousness as a trait.
- Narrower components of personality than Big Five may reveal different relations with WE (Jackson et al., 2009)
- Individuals are likely to view challenges and hindrances differently depending on their career stages. For e.g. current study included 43% participants between 35-44 years who are likely to be establishing themselves a work and will view challenges are stepping stones to success.

Implications and Impact

- Theoretical impact – past research is limited in classifying demands as challenge and hindrance. Consider appraisal of job role which is dependent on factors such as job role, industry or profession (Webster et al., 2010, Van Den Broeck et al., 2010).
- 50% of participants were in managerial or above positions. Presuming higher job role = more autonomy and responsibility = achievement focused = less likely to see demands as hindrances. (See Barrick & Mount, 1993). By identifying challenging demands organisations can facilitate interventions to enhance working conditions.
- However challenge demands are inherently strenuous (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004), job complexity can show physical strain such as head aches. Employers should offer tools to manage strain to increase ownership and thereby sense of achievement.
- Organisations should decipher what is hindering an employee's growth, intervene by offering training, coaching or limiting the hindrances thereby negating effects on organisational well-being.

