

## Article

# IMPACT OF PERSONALITY TRAITS ON CAREER SUCCESS: MODERATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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**Abstract:** This study was conducted with an aim to examine the effects of big five personality traits on career success with the moderating role of emotional intelligence. The study adopts positivist paradigm utilizing survey technique. The sample of the study comprised of 250 respondents drawn from banking sector. By using socio-analytical framework, the study shows that big five personality traits contribute positively and significantly towards career success. Two of the big five personality traits i.e. agreeableness and neuroticism are found to have positive influence contradicting many previous studies. Emotional Intelligence positively moderates the relationship between personality traits and career success. The study has implications for service organizations. Managers or supervisors can better utilize the findings of the study in designing training programs for their employees to improve their abilities in controlling their emotions and utilizing their personalities in order to achieve organizational goals and enhance their productivity.



## INTRODUCTION

Banks play a significant role in developing universal economies. Employees in banks have a very important role to play in providing their clients with excellence services and finding them a major asset (Karatepe & Tekinkus, 2006) as human capital that helps to build a good picture before clients (Petcharak, 2002). As a well-known fact, workers are the most important assets that an organization has. Within the service sector this seems to be right, as the only asset produced is often the behavior or actions of workers/staff. Thus, behavior management is crucial for progress of service sector and the behavioral repertoire is provided as a device for creating, directing and managing their suitable performance (Dobni, Zerbe & Brent Ritchie, 1997). Service workers in banks are usually trained on emotional intelligence through a customized curriculum adapted to improve their emotional and behavioral skills and this training guides to high levels of perceived service quality among customers/clients of banks (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2011). The focus of banking industry is to constantly provide high quality facilities for its customers. It is the only field of the banking industry that assures market growth. Due to strong competitions with international banks, the banking sector of Pakistan has also begun to pay attention to enhancing the standard of service. In order to enhance quality of service, workshops and seminars are designed to train/educate employees. All steps taken to enhance the quality of service always include banking staff's emotional intelligence (Naeem, Saif

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& Khalil, 2011). Big Five personality traits may be linked with a personal welfare (for instance sincerity is considered as component of conscientiousness which is connected with achievement and wisdom is considered as a component of openness which is linked to personal development, (Sun et al., 2018) also the most important thing to achieve satisfaction is probably emotional stability (Shrader & Singer, 2014).

Future research is required to explain more close processes through which big five traits may affect career success i.e. work place behavior (Wille, De Fruyt, & Feys, 2013). Research work carried out on big five personality traits in Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands has inspired the researchers to conduct this study on big five personality traits in Pakistani context and examine its impact on career success in the banking sector. This study has combined emotional intelligence as a moderator with personality traits and career success. Previous researches have been carried out in the education sector (de Haro, Castejón, & Gilar, 2013) as well as in other areas (Wille, De Fruyt, & Feys, 2013). However, this work has taken into account the banking industry. This research would fill the existing gap by examining the influence of the moderator i.e., emotional intelligence in the relationship between the personality traits and career success in banking sector. This study would also focus on the relationship of personality traits and career success by utilizing the socio-analytical theory to explain these relationships.

The socio-analytical theory (Hogans, 1996) focuses on the social position of a person and certain observations created by other people about him. The theory describes personality from two perspectives, i.e. a person's identity and credibility. Identity is what you are feeling of yourself and credibility is that's what people think of you. Literature on identity has made fewer valuable results, however research work on reputation has been a great support, e.g. the five-factor personality model represents a taxonomy of reputation, which is a valuable tool for interpreting findings from personality researches. Previous actions foresee potential outcomes; reputation is based on previous actions so; reputation is the only way to predict potential consequences. This theory suggests that the secret to career success is social skill which reflects through a person's reputation. The theory further states that response from appropriate personality evaluation will build strategic self-awareness that will allow enthusiasts to improve their career growth and that their issues at the workplace. Previous research findings have found that individuals with a high degree of emotional intelligence are more successful in their careers and have better personal ties with everyone and are also in good health than those with a low degree of emotional intelligence (Imrani, 2004). Moreover, emotional intelligence has a strong social nature, it is assumed that it will interact with positive personality traits in such a manner as to nourish the connection between personality and working efficiency (Shaffer and Shaffer, 2005). Thus, main objective of the research is to find out the effect of personality on career success and examine the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between personality and career success.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Five traits of personality which are covered in the Big Five model comprises openness to experience (scope, passion, creativity and nature of an individual's intellectual and creative existence); conscientiousness (socially defined impulse regulation that promotes mission and goal-oriented actions); extraversion (active response to the social and material environment); agreeableness (pro-social and cooperative attitude towards those with antagonism) and emotional stability (remaining stable against unpleasant feelings such as feeling stressed, nervous, miserable and worried) (John et al., 2008). Through our research, we were able to describe that improvements in personality signifies maturation (for instance enhance in agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability) may be forecasted by personal living happiness. Those people who have higher life satisfaction tend to be more likely to adjust their circumstances, which brings maturity in their personalities. Moreover, Increased life satisfaction occurs with more positive improvements in all the dimensions of Big Five (Specht, Egloff & Schmukle, 2013). All the dimensions of big five model are linked to a number of significant life outcomes (Ozer & Benet-martinez, 2006). High conscientiousness, for example, predicts big job success and improved health while low agreeableness and high neuroticism are correlated with bad health; high agreeableness is related with supporting everyone; high degree of extraversion predicts leadership; high neuroticism is associated with depression; and high openness is linked with creativity. Low willpower is category of strong neuroticism, weak degree of agreeableness and low level of conscientiousness has been shown to be correlated with diverse forms of Psychopathology (Malouff, Thorsteinsson & Schutte, 2005) as well as consumption of alcohol (Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Rooke & Schutte, 2007) includes smoking habit (Malouff, Thorsteinsson & Schutte, 2006). Abdullah, Rashid and Omar (2013) carried out a research to check in which means personality influences employees' work efficiency so that top performing workers can be selected by their personality analysis. From the findings of their research study it was revealed that personality has been a valuable performance analyst. All personality traits i.e. Conscientiousness, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Extraversion have a good impact on employees' work performance; whereas, neuroticism has a

bad impact on employees' productivity. Emotional intelligence is the cognitive variable which predicts social adaptability and decreases social anxiety (Vera, 2008). It was described as the capacity to perceive feelings accurately and utilize knowledge of emotional intelligence to improve cognition (Mayer, Roberts & Barsade 2008). In an organization, one's capacity to manage one's own anger and another's is closely related to one's own job satisfaction and exit plans, influenced by type of his links with everyone (Jordan & Troth, 2011). Judging emotions, motivation and social skills contribute positively to work performance (Moon & Hur, 2011). Employees who deal with customers with higher rates of EI recorded lower levels of work-related pressures and issues related to health (Ogińska-Bulik, 2005). Such findings suggested that the ability to correctly understand and encourage EI in the workplace could lower the rates of stress experienced by workers. Jorfi, Jorfi, Yaccob and Shah (2011) showed a strong positive relationship between EI and the effective communication between employees. However, high EI workers are best communicators, these workers appear to suffer more emotional exhaustion as they evaluate the usage of emotion between themselves and others more often than low EI workers (Moon & Hur, 2011). Lam and O'Higgins (2012) argue that leaders using EI would demonstrate improvements in their attitude and behavior, resulting in improved work satisfaction of their subordinates. According to a study conducted by Rahim & Malik (2010) female workers are better in emotions management in comparison with male colleagues and women's and men's age have opposite relationship with Emotional Intelligence and the EI level also increases with an increase in the level of education. The more satisfied the workers are the more they will be in a better position to work well in an organization (Rahim & Malik, 2010). In the continuous exploration of complete models of career success, the research scholars have assumed that it is essential to look at the model from both angles i.e. intrinsic and extrinsic (Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2019). In past research studies all dimensions of big-five (neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to experience) have been correlated with famous measures of career success i.e. extrinsic and intrinsic (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2007). A strong link between openness to experience and career success seems to exist (Ng et al., 2005; Tett et al., 1991; Van der Linden, Te Nijenhuis, & Bakker, 2010), and there are also negative correlations (Furnham, Taylor, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2008). On the other hand, majority of research identified a negative association between openness to experience and salary which is a parameter of extrinsic career success Bozionelos, 2004; Gelissen & De Graaf, 2006; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001) and no link found (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Boudreau et al., 2001), in contrast with those that have found positive correlations (Palifka, 2009). Findings of job satisfaction have also been mixed, varying from researches that found no association (Judge et al., 2002) and a relatively strong link (Boudreau et al., 2001), with those which had strong links (Eby et al., 2003; Sutin et al., 2009). This discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

***H1: Openness to experience positively influences career success***

Most of the researchers have identified a strong link among conscientiousness and both parameters of career success which includes salary and job satisfaction (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011; Judge et al., 1999; Sutin, Costa, Miech, & Eaton, 2009). However, extraversion was shown to be strongly linked (Gelissen & de Graaf, 2006), weak relationship (Nyhus & Pons, 2005), or unlinked (Boudreau et al., 2001) with revenue or pay. There have been strong links developed between extraversion and career success which includes both income (Gelissen & DeGraf, 2006; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011; Judge et al., 1999; Rode et al., 2008; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001; Sutin et al., 2009) including pleasure (Boudreau et al., 2001; Judge et al., 2002; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). Following hypotheses are derived from the above discussion:

***H2: Conscientiousness positively influences career success***

***H3: Extraversion positively influences career success***

Agreeableness has shown a weak correlation with extrinsic career success (Boudreau et al., 2001), that is consists of small incomes (Nyhus & Pons, 2005). Although this relationship has not been revealed by every researcher (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). But few studies have revealed that agreeableness has a weak correlation with career success (Boudreau et al., 2001), probably that highly agreeable people may get little help as a result of being obedient and can easily exploited. Findings on neuroticism have revealed that it has a weak correlation with both dimensions of career success i.e. extrinsic and intrinsic (Boudreau et al., 2001; Gelissen & De Graaf, 2006; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011; Judge et al., 1999; Judge et al., 2002; Ng et al., 2005; Nyhus & Pons, 2005; Rode et al., 2008; Salgado, 1998; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001; Smithikrai, 2007; Sutin et al., 2009). Hence, the discussion leads to following hypotheses:

***H4: Agreeableness will negatively affect career success***

***H5: Neuroticism will negatively affect career success***

All dimensions of personality i.e. Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Openness to experience were shown to be at least moderately correlated with Emotional Intelligence (McCrae, 2000). Particularly, emotional intelligence findings have usually been found to have at least moderately significant correlations with neuroticism (adverse direction) and extraversion (upright direction) and less significant positive correlations have been found with conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness (Matthews et al., 2006).

EI can be very significant for the service sector and also for those jobs where workers directly communicate with their clients. For instance, food providers, (Sy, Tram, & O'Hara, 2006) which is directly linked with ability of bosses to regulate job satisfaction of their staff members. There is a strong link between emotional intelligence and openness to experience (Shulman & Hemeenover, 2006). Emotional intelligence is supposed to have an influence on success of workers dealing with colleagues, on the rules they have adopted to cope with conflicts and challenges and overall, on the work performance of employees (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Lopes, Coˆteˆ, & Salovey, 2006). High degree of emotional intelligence leads to gain more openness element in workers that is very helpful for work progress. The strong relationship between emotional intelligence and conscientiousness has been described in a study by Van der Zee et al. (2010). It must be noted that in this analysis operational definition of conscientiousness included helpfulness and integrity, and therefore it is varied from other traditional approaches regarding this element. There seems to be a strong relationship between conscientiousness and career success for those who have high degree of emotional intelligence (Douglas, Frink, & Ferris, 2004). Extroverts are accessible to everyone, and their interactions with others appear to be frank and casual. Such features are possibly associated to what Gardner (1983) described as 'interpersonal intelligence'. There have been numerous researches showing a link between extraversion and emotional intelligence (Bagby, Taylor & Parker, 1994; Davies et al., 1998; Roger & Najarian, 1989; Van der Zee et al., 2010). Emotional intelligence was associated to the level in which managers work in better ways to achieve the goals of the company, according to the evaluations by their seniors (Coˆteˆ & Miners, 2006). This research analysis reveals that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in meeting the corporate objectives of workforces. The findings of extraversion and emotional intelligence are strongly associated, which suggests that if employees have a higher degree of emotional intelligence than they become more extraverted, they would perform better (Nurul & Ma'rof, 2011).

People with high agreeableness tend to be cooperative and sincere, tend to value others, and seem to be approachable to others demands. Although the evidence for correlation between emotional intelligence and agreeableness is inadequate, it supports minimum studies (Davies et al., 1998; Van der Zee et al., 2010). Agreeableness has been shown to be at least moderately correlated with emotional intelligence (McCrae, 2000). Findings have shown that there is a strong link among emotional intelligence and all personality traits; conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience (Andi, 2012). Results of the study described that emotional intelligence has positive correlations with openness to experience, agreeableness, extraversion and conscientiousness and has negative correlation with neuroticism (Atta, Ather, & Bano, 2013). In a research study conducted by McClelland & Boyatzis's (1982), they described that making connections is an element of agreeableness which could be harmful for a supervisor's career, as it hinders managers' ability to make difficult choices regarding co-workers and subordinates. EI thus plays a main function in lessening level of agreeableness of employees/managers so that they can make the best choices at work in order to accomplish corporate goals. Personnel with strong neuroticism can have less productivity. However, if these people with strong neuroticism are prepared with the capacity to control feelings and rapidly heal from psychological distress, the adverse effects of neuroticism will be gradually eliminated. Employees will only do their job well if they have the ability to control emotions strongly (Othman, Daud, & Kassim, 2011). Thus, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in lessening high neuroticism of employees, so that they can do well in their jobs and accomplish corporate objectives. Thus, the above discussion leads to the following hypotheses:

***H6: EI can moderate the positive link between openness to experience and career success, making the relationship stronger when the EI is high.***

***H7: EI can moderate the positive link between conscientiousness and career success, making the relationship stronger when the EI is high.***

***H8: EI can moderate the positive link between extraversion and career success, making the relationship stronger when the EI is high.***

***H9: EI can reduce the negative link between agreeableness and career success, making the weak relationship when EI is strong.***

***H10: EI can reduce the negative link between neuroticism and career success, making the weak relationship when EI is strong.***

## METHODOLOGY

The study is carried out on the employees of banking sector. The service sector is a major contributor in the GDP of Pakistan. Thus, within service sector, banking sector is taken as it shows steady growth. A sample of 250 employees working in different domestic private banks situated in twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan were targeted. The data was collected based on non-probability sampling scheme. As of June 2019, there are 20 domestic private banks with 10,835 branches across the country. In Islamabad territory there are 533 branches and in Rawalpindi district there are more than 500 branches of domestic private banks. Banks were approached through their regional head-offices. Altogether, 7 banks participated in the study as other banks refused to provide data. A pilot test of 50 questionnaires was carried out to check for the reliability of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was found to be above 0.7 indicating that further data could be collected on the instrument. The questionnaire consisted primarily of four parts covering demographics and each variable of the study. Items were calculated using a 5-point likert scale between 1 (strongly disagreed) to 5 (strongly agree). Personality traits were calculated by 44 items scale which was introduced by John & Srivastava, (1999) and later on adopted by Gross & John (2003), where alphas for the five scales were recorded varying from .76 to .88. Emotional intelligence was calculated by the scale of 16 items, introduced by Wong & Law, (2002) in which they recorded  $\alpha = .84$ . and career success was calculated by the scale of 8 items introduced by Lertwant towit, Serirat & Pholpantin, (2011), in which they mentioned  $\alpha = .81$ . The demographics indicate that majority of the respondents had less than 5 years of experience with their current bank (42.8%), while qualification indicated that 56.4% were holding a graduate degree. The gender composition of respondents was found to heavily skewed towards males (66%). This is considered normal in banking sector in Pakistan, as majority of the employees are male due to late sittings in the office. Thus, a little percentage of educated females adopt banking sector as their employment choice.

## RESULTS

Statistical analysis included Pearson correlation and regression. The results of correlation are provided in (Table 1). The results indicate that personality traits have weak to moderate relationship with emotional intelligence and career success. All the relationships are statistically significant.

Variable	Mean	S.D.	O	C	E	A	N	EI	CS
Openness (O)	3.59	.661	1						
Conscientiousness (C)	3.23	.499	.545**	1					
Extraversion (E)	3.36	.490	.554**	.553**	1				
Agreeableness (A)	3.33	.502	.478**	.598**	.693**	1			
Neuroticism (N)	3.04	.680	.343**	.516**	.563**	.661**	1		
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	3.81	.659	.505**	.379**	.448**	.373**	.179**	1	
Career Success (CS)	3.56	.617	.203**	.229**	.238**	.343**	.219**	.258**	1

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation

N=250, \*\*P<0.01

For regression analysis, demographic variables were controlled for their influence on other variables. According to findings of some researches, demographic variables such as age, gender, education, experience, and organizational characteristics (organization size, metropolitan location and business sector) influence the relationships under study (Judge & Bretz, 1994; Judge et al., 1995; Kirchmeyer, 1998; Seibert et al., 1999; Wayne et al., 1999). Thus, in our study we controlled the demographic variables of age, education, gender, experience. The findings of regression are provided in Table 2. The results indicate all five personality traits are having positive and statistically significant influence on career success.

Variable	Career Success		
	B	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
Openness to Experience	0.187***	0.070	0.039***
Conscientiousness	0.261***	0.074	0.043***
Extraversion	0.294***	0.084	0.053***
Agreeableness	0.422***	0.143	0.112***
Neuroticism	0.199***	0.078	0.047***
*** $p < 0.001$ , control variables: education, experience, age, gender			

Table 2: Results for Regression Analysis

Moderation analysis using EI as a moderator was used to check the influence of EI on the relationship between personality traits and career success (Table 3). The results indicate that EI has a significant influence when acting as a moderator in the Pakistani context.

EI as Moderator	Career Success		
	B	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>
<b>EI*Openness</b>	.174*	.120	.019*
<b>EI*Conscientiousness</b>	.385***	.162	.053***
<b>EI*Extraversion</b>	.426***	.172	.060***
<b>EI*Agreeableness</b>	.212**	.175	.013**
<b>EI*Neuroticism</b>	.275***	.148	.024***
<i>Control variables: education, experience, age, gender *p&lt;0.05, **p&lt;0.01, ***p&lt;0.001</i>			

Table 3: Results of Moderator Analysis

The main purpose of this research was to examine whether EI moderates the relationship between big five personality traits and career success among the employees of Pakistan's banking sector. The findings of this study are interesting. Out of five personality traits, two traits of agreeableness and neuroticism have shown positive and significant influence on career success, which contradicts earlier studies on which hypotheses for these traits were formulated. There may be several possible explanations for the rejection of hypothesis 4 and 5. For example, Tett et al. (2003) states that agreeableness is positively linked with job success. Hurley (1998) has clarified that agreeableness is completely connected to work completion grades of employees. Keeping in view previous studies we can safely infer that due to economic conditions and fewer job opportunities, employees tend to comply with anything recommended by their supervisors. Secondly, because banking industry is very competitive and employees to promote themselves in front of their supervisors opt to comply with supervisors orders. Thirdly, the benefits of banking employees make them satisfied with their jobs in terms of monetary and promotional benefits. This makes them not to jeopardize their employment and thus, try to please their supervisors to keep getting the benefits. Furthermore, there may be several possible factors behind H5's rejection. Nettle (2007) states that people with strong neuroticism are probably the competitors. They work incredibly hard without wanting to win any award because they just need to handle all the risks in front of them. The explanation behind H5's rejection may be the competition with peers and persons with strong neuroticism are trying very hard to accomplish their aims by pushing away all the obstacles in their path. The fewer job opportunities available for people with strong neuroticism may be another explanation for rejection of this hypothesis. They are conscious of this reality that they would not be simply adjustable at other place and so they are trying very hard to stay in their current organizations due to fear of losing their current jobs. In future research these variables need attention. All the moderator-related hypotheses were accepted. EI positively moderates the relationship between big five personality traits and career success. EI is known as an analytical feature that predicts social stability and decreases social nervousness (Vera, 2008) by building capacity and skills to perceive emotions correctly and to use this knowledge to increase comprehension (Mayer, Roberts & Barsade 2008; Colfax, Rivera, & Pervez, 2010). The results of our study find support from previous studies done on EI (McCrae, 2000; Matthews et al., 2006; Douglas, Frink, & Ferris, 2004; Nurul & Ma'rof, 2011; Brackett, Rivers & Salovey, 2011; Daud, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

The study conducted on banking sector employees show that EI is an important factor that contributes significantly towards career success. Managing emotions in a competitive working environment is a necessary skill that should be developed by everyone. Adequate results will be obtained if the supervisors concentrate on implementing adequate trainings for workers by which they can successfully develop their emotions management skills. Present study has contributed towards the literature on big five personality traits, career success and EI. Usually personality traits (i.e. conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, extraversion) are used to analyze job performance (Barrick & Mount, 2005; Ng et al., 2005; Guthrie et al., 1998; Cable & Judge, 2003; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2007; Sutin et al., 2009) or in education (de Haro, Castejón, & Gilar, 2013) and other sectors (Wille, De Fruyt, & Feys, 2013), but not in banking sector especially in the context of Pakistan. Two of the personality traits i.e. agreeableness and neuroticism are commonly accepted as having negative impact in the literature but our study show that these two can also be considered as having positive impact. The present work, thus helps to explain the importance of context while determining attitudes of many employees in banks.

The banking industry falls under the service sector category, hence, it has to provide its clients with high performance facilities and the efficiency of all services should be regulated or monitored by management. Thus, this research study consists of practical implications for the banking sector's management, recommending that more appropriate results can be generated if the managers concentrate on implementing suitable trainings for workers with which they will efficiently develop their emotion control skills. Banks have critical and essential roles in the development of universal economies in general. Bank employees have a very significant role to play in delivering professional services to their customers and are considered as the major asset (Karatepe & Tekinkus, 2006). These employees aim to build a good image towards their clients (Petcharak, 2002). In order to satisfy business demands, banking industry needs to maintain its human capital for a productive and stable relationship with their customers. Managers should therefore, provide workers with a healthy environment so that they can effectively perform their duties. Managers should know that they will rely more on workers' emotional intelligence since the banking industry is a service business and managing employee feelings is very critical to producing successful performance (Rahim & Malik, 2010).

Future researches are recommended especially to understand the real influence of agreeableness and neuroticism on EI and variables. Present study focused only on banking sector, it is strongly recommended that other service sectors may also be included to gather more meaningful insights on the big five personality traits and EI.

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