

EFFECT OF NEUROTICISM AND OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE PERSONALITY TRAITS ON INTRAPRENEURIAL PERFORMANCE OF HOSPITALITY FIRMS

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Abstract

The research examined neuroticism and openness to experience personality traits on intrapreneurial performance of hospitality firms in Anambra State. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The research instrument was validated using face and content validity. The reliability of the items was tested using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected for this study were tested using multiple regression analysis in order to determine the relationship between the variables. It was revealed from the analysis that neuroticism trait has statistically significant but inverse influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra state. Openness to experience has statistically significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra state. The study concluded that neuroticism and openness to experience personality traits have a significant influence on intrapreneurial performance of hospitality firms in Anambra state. Hence, the study recommended among others that managers of hospitality firms should give attention to the intrapreneurs personality traits as they play a pivotal role in improving and enhancing intrapreneurial performance; and hoteliers and entrepreneurs need to let their employees be part of management decision making because they are more in touch with their customers than their employers themselves. This will afford them the opportunity to adopt innovative strategies to improve.

Keywords: Personality Trait, Neuroticism, Openness to experience, Intrapreneurial performance, Trait Activation Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

Hospitality industry encompassing hotels, guest houses and tourism businesses is a vast industry offering a spectrum of services. This industry over the years has witnessed steady growth and is fast becoming one of the fastest economic sectors and a key driver for socio-economic progression (Omodero, 2019). Its distinctive complexity lies in the high contact nature of the services provided. Every industry regardless of the size or type grapples with the realities of competition and complexity. Olabinjo, et al. (2020) avers that having the right kind of staff doing the right kind of jobs to delight customers must be central to management of successful hospitality trade. Successful entrepreneurs often leverage the unique personality traits of their employees to create value, innovate, and thrive in this competitive industry. Service quality and customer satisfaction is paramount, and the role of engaged employee is particularly critical. Research specific to the hospitality industry emphasizes the importance of employee engagement in delivering exceptional customer experiences (Liu, et al, 2022). By incorporating personality trait assessments into recruitment, training, and performance management practices, hospitality establishments can optimize employee selection, development, and retention strategies to drive success and sustainable growth (Bello & Bello, 2021).

Personality traits reflect people's characteristic pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Diener & Lucas, 2024). Personality as a concept has been described as attitudes, stable motives and direction of actions and experiences of people (Meyer, et al 2014). Fietze & Boyd (2017) avers that in entrepreneurship research "Big-5" or "Five Factor Model" is widely used and it includes Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism as key dimensions influencing individuals' behavior and performance in the workplace. Neuroticism as key dimensions influencing individuals' behavior and performance in the workplace. Neuroticism, when balanced appropriately, contributes to meticulous attention to detail, ensuring high standards of service delivery. Openness to experience fosters innovation and adaptability, enabling hospitality businesses to stay competitive in a dynamic market. Intrapreneurs are entrepreneurs within an organized structure. Intrapreneurial employees play a vital role in fostering innovation thereby empowering the organization to thrive in uncertain environments to achieve growth across multiple dimensions.

The exact problem lies in the lack of knowledge about the employee's personality traits and how misalignment between the personality traits prevalent in the workforce of hospitality firms and the specific requirements for firm's success hinders not only intrapreneurial performance but indeed the firm's general performance. An overemphasis on neuroticism without adequate support mechanisms which can lead to heightened stress levels among employees, thereby negatively impacting their well-being and performance. Also, a lack of openness to experience stifles innovation and inhibits the firm's ability to adapt to changing consumer preferences and trends. The motivation for this study stems from the recognition of the pivotal role that neuroticism and openness to experience play in enhancing performance within hospitality firms. Hence, this study seeks to examine the influence of neuroticism and openness to experience personality traits on intrapreneurial performance of hospitality firms in Anambra State.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning

This study is anchored on Trait Activation Theory (TAT), by Tett & Guter-man, 2000. The principle of trait activation holds that personality traits are expressed as responses to trait-relevant situational cues (Tett & Guterman, 2000). The idea goes back at least as far as Henry Murray (1938), who suggested that situations exert "press" on individuals to behave in trait-related ways. Thus, if one wishes to assess nurturance, one must observe people in situations where nurturance is a viable response (Tett & Guter-man, 2003). According to Trait Activation Theory (TAT), individuals possess a range of personality traits, such as neuroticism, openness to experience, and agreeableness, which remain dormant until triggered by relevant environmental stimuli. These stimuli can be internal or external, and once activated, these traits influence an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions in a particular context.

In the hospitality sector, TAT holds significant relevance in understanding intrapreneurial performance, which encompasses operational efficiency, innovation, creativity, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. For instance, neuroticism, characterized by tendencies towards anxiety and stress, may be activated in high-pressure situations within the hospitality industry, affecting decision-making and interpersonal interactions (Costa & McCrae, 2016). Conversely, individuals high in openness to experience may exhibit greater adaptability and creativity, leading to innovative solutions for operational challenges and enhanced employee engagement (McCrae & John, 1992). Moreover, agreeableness, marked by traits such as cooperativeness and empathy, can foster positive working relationships and thereby contribute to job satisfaction and operational efficiency (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Understanding the implications of TAT in the hospitality sector can inform managerial strategies aimed at optimizing intrapreneurial performance. By recognizing the influence of personality traits on employee behavior and performance, organizations can tailor recruitment, training, and leadership development initiatives to leverage individuals' strengths and mitigate potential challenges (Judge & Bono, 2001). Moreover, fostering a supportive work environment that aligns with employees' personality traits can enhance job satisfaction, foster engagement, and ultimately contribute to operational effectiveness in the dynamic and customer-centric hospitality industry.

2.2 Neuroticism and Intrapreneurial Performance

Neuroticism, a core personality trait characterized by emotional instability, anxiety, and vulnerability to stress, has garnered significant attention in the context of intrapreneurial performance. Neuroticism trait is related to the degree of emotional stability of the intrapreneur. The tendency to experience unpleasant feelings including anxiety, despair,

fear, sorrow, hostility, rage, guilt, disgust, and vulnerability is known as neuroticism. Neuroticism, a cornerstone of personality psychology, has emerged as a critical factor in understanding individual differences in emotional regulation, stress response, and mental health outcomes (Kotov, et al 2017). Neuroticism can impact intrapreneurial performance through its influence on individuals' cognitive and emotional processes. High levels of neuroticism may hinder intrapreneurial success by amplifying fear of failure, reducing risk-taking propensity, and impeding decision making under uncertainty (Rauch & Frese, 2007). Conversely, moderate levels of neuroticism might stimulate intrapreneurial behavior by motivating individuals to address challenges proactively and seek innovative solutions (Zhao, et al., 2010).

The organizational context plays a crucial role in moderating the relationship between neuroticism and intrapreneurial performance. Neuroticism can also influence team dynamics within intrapreneurial settings. Individuals high in neuroticism may exhibit interpersonal difficulties, leading to conflicts and reduced collaboration within teams (Barrick, et al., 2001). However, when managed effectively, neuroticism can contribute positively to team creativity and problem-solving by fostering divergent thinking and attention to detail. Organisations can transform neuroticism into a valuable asset in intrapreneurial teams by designing effective teams and investing in interpersonal skills training to drive growth and innovation. Supportive organizational cultures that encourage risk-taking and experimentation can buffer the negative impact of neuroticism on intrapreneurial behavior (Klotz, et al., 2014). Several researchers have found that neuroticism have a positive influence on intrapreneurial performance (Ranawaka & Samarakoon, 2020; Othman, et al. 2020). The previous studies elaborations have led to the following hypothesis:

H₀₁: Neuroticism trait has no significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra State.

2.3 Openness to Experience and Intrapreneurial Performance

Openness to experience, a fundamental personality trait, plays a significant role in determining an individual's success in an intrapreneurial context. As its name suggests. Openness to experience indicates a high level of intellectual and emotional development in a person, it details the extent to which an individual is creative, curious, and liberal (Mohan & Mulla, 2013). Openness to experience is a trait for intellectually curious intrapreneur (creativity) who tend to seek new experiences and discover new ideas. People who are open also have an easier time with workplace changes and are more adaptable. In essence, they are less susceptible to a decline in performance over a longer time period. Individuals with high openness to experience levels are creative, innovative, reflective, and unconventional. Low level in this trait causes the intrapreneur to fear or dislike change. They usually prefer routine and tradition and generally think more logically and concretely.

Individuals high in openness to experience tend to be more curious, imaginative, and open-minded, traits that are essential for identifying and capitalizing on new opportunities within the organizational environment (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Openness to experience fosters an individual's willingness to take risks which is a crucial aspect of intrapreneurship. By embracing uncertainty and being receptive to novel ideas, individuals high in openness are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities within their organization, such as proposing innovative projects or advocating for change (Zhou & George, 2001). Openness to experience enhances an individual's adaptability to change, a critical factor in the fast-paced and constantly evolving business landscape. Research has shown that individuals high in openness tend to have a broader range of interests and are more inclined to explore unconventional solutions to organizational challenges. Individuals high in openness are more likely to embrace change positively and view it as an opportunity for growth rather than a threat. This adaptability enables them to thrive in dynamic environments and capitalize on emerging trends and market shifts. Several researchers have found that openness to experience have a positive influence on intrapreneurial performance (Sobaih, et al. 2022; Okunbanjo, 2024). Based on the elaborations of the previous studies, the following is hypothesis developed.

H₀₂: Openness to experience has no significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra State.

3. METHODS

The study employed a survey research design, because the study seeks to establish the extent to which two or more variables co-vary. This study laid specific emphasis on the skilled workforce within these registered hospitality firms. A total population of 400 skilled workforce, consisting of operators and personnel in the administrative, marketing, human resources departments, gave a sample size of two hundred as prescribed using Krejcie and Morgan sample size formula. Out of the two hundred (200) copies of the questionnaire distributed, one hundred and ninety-two (192) copies of the questionnaire were used for analysis. The primary data need for this study was collected using structured questionnaire. The research instrument was validated using face and content validity. The instrument reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Linear regression analysis was used to test the null hypothesis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Neuroticism trait has no significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra State.

Independent Variable = Neuroticism

Dependent Variable = Intrapreneurial performance

Regression Analysis was used to test this hypothesis

Table 1: Model Summary

Table 1: Regression Results for the Hypothesis

Coefficients								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-2.895	.817		-3.545	.001		
	Neuroticism	-.104	.037	-.095	-2.782	.006	.738	1.354
a. Dependent Variable: PERF								
b. Predictors: (Constant), neuroticism								

The result for hypotheses one which states that neuroticism trait does not have a significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra State is thus stated B-value = -.104, t-value = -2.782 (which signifies an inverse relationship) and p-value = 0.006 which is less than .05. Going by the decision which states that if the p-value is less than .05, the alternate hypothesis should be accepted, the study accepts the alternate hypothesis and it is, therefore, stated that neuroticism trait has a statistically significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra state.

4.2 Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Openness to experience has no significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra State.

Independent Variable = Openness to experience

Dependent Variable = Intrapreneurial performance

Regression Analysis was used to test this hypothesis

Table 2: Model Summary

Table 2: Regression Results for the Hypotheses

Coefficients								
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Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-2.895	.817		-3.545	.001		
	Openness to Experience	.376	.063	.290	5.974	.000	.368	2.719
a. Dependent Variable: PERF								
b. Predictors: (Constant), openness to experience,								

The result for hypotheses two which states that openness to experience does not have any significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra State is thus stated B-value = .376, t-value = 5.974 and p-value = 0.000 which is less than .05. Going by the decision which states that if the p-value is less than .05, the alternate hypothesis should be accepted, the study accepts the alternate hypothesis and it is, therefore, stated that openness to experience has a statistically significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra State.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The study investigates neuroticism and openness to experience personality traits on intrapreneurial performance of hospitality firms in Anambra State. Data were generated through primary sources and hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. The discussion of the study was done in line with the hypotheses of the study.

The first hypothesis stated that neuroticism trait has no significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra state. After the analysis was carried out, the alternate hypothesis was accepted but it was revealed that Neuroticism trait has a statistically significant but inverse influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra state. Having an inverse relation means that an increase in the dependent variable will cause a reduction in the independent variable and vice versa. The analysis shows that an increase in the independent variable which is Neuroticism trait will invariably lead to a reduction in the dependent variable (intrapreneurial performance). That is, the higher the level of neuroticism traits, the lower their intrapreneurial performance. In the fast-paced and unpredictable hospitality firm, there is need to have employees who are emotionally stable so as to better handle challenges and maintain composure during crises. From previous research, while some argue that Neuroticism trait has an adverse effect on intrapreneurial performance. Ranawaka & Samarakoon (2020) result attests to a significant positive relationship between Neuroticism and Business Performance of the SMEs. To some researchers, it has an inverse relationship. Ayoade et al (2021) agrees that neuroticism has an inverse relationship with entrepreneurs' commitment. To others, it has a positive effect. The findings of Othman et al (2020) concurred that neuroticism has significant relationship with the factors of entrepreneurial personality characteristics on business failure of small and medium enterprises. These findings from previous conforms with the findings of this research. The second hypothesis stated that openness to experience trait has no significant influence on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra state. After the analysis was carried out, it was revealed that there is a statistically significant positive influence of openness to experience on intrapreneurial performance in hospitality firms in Anambra state. This study implies that the more open minded an employee is, the more they are open to more innovative and creative ideas that can further enhance their performance in the hospitality firm. That is, when the employees are allowed to think outside the box on how to better meet the needs of their customers, then they will be more inclined to put in their best into their roles. This finding aligns with the findings of previous studies such as that of Sobaih, et al. (2022) who researched on the influence of an owner manager's big five personality traits on the performance of their small enterprises. Their findings revealed that high levels of openness to experience of owner managers have a significant positive impact on the performance of their small enterprises. That is, open minded intrapreneurs identify customer desires and develop the ability to handle competition and market changes. In a similar vein, Okunbanjo (2024) examined the role of personality traits in determining the entrepreneurial performance of small businesses in Lagos State, the second largest city in Nigeria. Their study showed that small business owners who exhibit openness to experience as their most dormant trait excel in the act of developing innovative model for the

business processes or activities. That is, intrapreneurs that are creative and innovative generally perform better than those who are not. Their findings are in line with the findings of the researcher.

5. CONCLUSION

The study investigates the influence of neuroticism and openness to experience personality traits on intrapreneurial performance of hospitality firms in Anambra State. Data were generated through primary source and hypotheses tested using multiple regression analysis. The result of the analysis reveals that neuroticism trait has statistically significant but inverse influence on intrapreneurial performance of hospitality firms in Anambra state and openness to experience has statistically significant influence on intrapreneurial performance of hospitality firms in Anambra state. Therefore, the study concluded that neuroticism and openness to experience personality traits have a significant influence on intrapreneurial performance of hospitality firms in Anambra state. Sequel to the findings and conclusion, the study recommended that:

1. Hoteliers and entrepreneurs need to let their intrapreneurs or employees be part of management decision making because they are more in touch with their customers than their employers themselves. This will afford them the opportunity to adopt innovative strategies to improve.
2. Managers of hospitality firms in Anambra State should give attention to the neuroticism and openness to experience personality traits as they play a pivotal role in improving and enhancing intrapreneurial performance.

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