



Ethio telecom sale person's Personality Trait, Performance & Customer satisfaction; based on Five-Factor Traits model: The Case of Ehtio-Telecom Call Center, Churchill Branch

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Abstract: *This research was designed to assess the mediating roles of adaptive behavior, personality trait and employee performance with customer in call centre. The purpose of this research was to analyze the relationships between certain personality traits of employee and their job performance with customer in call center. Descriptive research designs were used with a mixed research approach. Systematic random sampling was used to involve all members of the total population as (N=790) and (n=259). To gather data for the study the researcher uses structured questionnaires. The respondents were call center advisor and supervisors of call center, Ethio-telecom from Churchill branch. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 20 software. On the basis of the data obtained from the respondents, the study identified:*

The finding of the study shows that performance of employee and personality has positive relationship. Emotional stability is very much important and required to make the performance better. Agreeableness is a crucial factor to the intelligent of the task activity. Openness to experience is curious to associate each of the individual person should be adopt in call center. Consciousness, openness to experience and agreeableness has a positive relationship with performance.

Key terms: Personality, Adaptive Behavior; customer service, customer service center, call center; Five-Factor Traits; Customers; Employee

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Call and contact centers play an important role in the global economy, employing millions of people in the USA and UK and hundreds of thousands in other parts of Europe, Africa and Asia (Russell, 2008).

Telecommunication services play significant role in the all-round political, economic and social development of a given country. Oodan et al., (1996) further explained that the availability and reliability of telecommunications customer services affect the successes of business and social interaction which started to rely on the service provider.

Customer service is not limited to how companies offer products and services, but more specifically focuses on how products are supported after being sold to customers (Conversi, 2010). Call centers (CC) and customer service delivery and assist in consolidating customer service business operations (Bechtoldt & Blau, 2003). Call center employees represent the main point of customer contact; therefore, their performance with customers is critical for a call center's success. Bodin and Dawson (1999) describe call centers as places where calls are placed or received in high volume for the purpose of sales, marketing, customer service, telemarketing, technical support, and other specialized business activities. Call centers are of two basic types: inbound call centers, where customers call in for service, and outbound call centers. Call centers not only offer phone-based

support, but also support through online chat, SMS and e-mail (Subramanian, 2008).

Despite the fact that many studies have been conducted in both marketing literature and psychology to assess the relationship between adaptive behavior with personality traits and performance, data about this relationship in the call center environment is limited. However, primary studies have shown that under certain conditions, there are relationships between personality traits and call center performance dimensions.

According to Merchants, 2006, a call center generally functions as an independent unit, separated from the business. The traditional call center role has however lately been shifting from being an independent unit to becoming a strategic business unit called a contact center.

Contact centers generate value by building relationships with customers, driving business processes, promoting the image of a company, and brand building (Adria & Chowdhury, 2004; Ashworth, 2003; Holland, 2003).

1.2 Historical background of Ethio-telecom

ETC is the oldest public communication operator in Africa. In those years, the technological scheme was contributed to the integration of the Ethiopian Society, when the extensive open wire line system was laid out linking the capital with all important administrative cities of the country.

1952, telecommunications services were separated from the postal administration, and structured under the ministry of Transport and communications. After the end of the war against Italy, during which telecommunication network was destroyed, Ethiopia recognized the telephone, telegraph and postal service in 1941. It also

established the Imperial Board of Telecommunication of Ethiopia (IBTE) by proclamation No. 131/52, whose activity was funded from domestic sources and the World Bank. ETC then has taken a responsibility to operate as public enterprise with the principal duty of maintaining and expanding telecommunication service in country and providing domestic and international telephone, telex, and other communication services under the supervision of ETA, which is a separate regular body founded by proclamation No. 49/1996, establishing the Ethiopia Telecommunication Agency (ETA), which has the objective of promoting the development of "High quality, efficient, reliable and affordable telecommunication service" in this respect, it is currently deemed by the regulation that Ethio-Telecom is the sole operator of any telecommunication related service, including the provision and public phone. Ethio-Telecom (ET) currently exerting extensive and comprehensive efforts to satisfy the ever increasing demands of telecom service in all over the country. Today the backbone net-work is constituted from a variety of micro wave, satellites and fiber optic links. International access is provided by the terrestrial microwave network, connecting Ethiopia to all over the world.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Frankel, Tam, Kaczynski & Shire, (1998), analyzed that a call Centre agent responds to incoming calls by providing customers with detailed product and procedural information, processing customer transactions, and attending to customer queries and complaints in a responsive, accurate and timely manner, in accordance with specified service standards.

As stated by Mount and Barrick (1995) it appears that many personality psychologists have reached a consensus that five personalities constructs, referred to as the Big Five, are necessary and sufficient to describe the basic dimensions of normal personality. As stated by Schmidt et.al (1991), that there are numerous studies showing that personality is a significant predictor of effective employee performance.

Numerous studies have shown that call centers are high-pressure and stressful work environments, characterized by highly routine work, lack of control, intensity of electronic performance monitoring, meeting of performance targets, high turnover, and absenteeism (Holman, 2002, 2003; Holds worth & Cartwright, 2002; Callaghan & Thompson, 2002). Under these working conditions, training call agents are a challenging endeavor. In the past years, a handful of studies has appeared on a range of "people issues" related to call agents such as emotional dissonance (Lewig & Dollard, 2003); empowerment, stress and job satisfaction (Holds worth & Cartwright, 2003); recruitment, selection, and training (Callaghan & Thomson, 2002) and training and job mobility

So far, however, little attention has been paid to developing profiles of call agents based on personal characteristics and demographic factors. This is surprising, given that more than 65% of the costs in the modern call center are attributed to staffing, and that the call center industry is currently suffering from retention problems (Higgs, 2003). Empirical evidence from a Canadian call center, Published Online January 2013 reported that Agreeableness is the biggest predictor of performance with customers, followed by Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Emotional stability and Extraversion, respectively. As far as could be determined, little research has been done on the

relationship between agents' personality traits and their job performance in the context of a customer relations of employee in call center environment from Canada, or other European country.

Thus this study aims to fill gaps in employee's performance within the call center setting and how significantly personality traits relates and impact performance in call center, the different factors of inefficiency of employees.

1.4. Objective of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

The general objective of this research was to analyze the relationship between call center employee performances with customer satisfaction.

1.4.2. Specific objectives

- ✓ To identify the relationship between openness to experience & employee performance in call centers with customers satisfaction.
- ✓ To identify the relationship between Conscientiousness & employee performance in call centers with customers satisfaction.
- ✓ To identify the relationship between Extroversion & employee performance in call centers with customers satisfaction.
- ✓ To analyze the relationship between Agreeableness & employee performance in call centers with customers satisfaction.
- ✓ To analyze the relationship between Emotional stability & employee performance in call centers with customers satisfaction

1.5 Scope of the study

This study delimited to one of the telecom branch; Churchill branch. Of the personality traits theories, the five big models have been used for this paper.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Performance

Performance (DV) is the output of an employee in terms of punctuality in completing tasks, speed with which the individuals works and the quality of the work(Erdem, 2003).

Personality traits are the basic predictors that effect performance; extroversion, openness to experience, emotional stability, agreeableness and conscientiousness are the basic one.

Bozionelos (2004) stated extroversion is characterized by sociability, assertiveness, and social dominance, ambition, tendencies towards action, sensation-seeking and the experience of positive affect. Openness to Experience- This trait is exemplified as the people, who are imaginative, sensitive, and intellectual, polished versus the people down to earth narrow, simple and insensitive (Reilly, Lynn and Aronson, 2002).Agreeableness describes the courteous, sympathetic, tender-hearted and kind characteristics (Harris and Fleming, 2005).Emotional Stability is the extent to which a person experience negative emotions like anger, anxiety, hostility and depression. It represents the individual differences in personalities. Emotional Stability represents individual differences in adjustment and emotional stability. It tends to experience negative emotions, impulsiveness, depression and anxiety (Zhao and Seibert, 2006).Conscientiousness is the most dependable predictor of an individuals' act and mentioned that conscientious individuals have been

characterized as dependable, responsible, hard-working, self-disciplined, persistent, plan full and organized (Barrick and Mount,1991).

Agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience and extroversion are positively related with performance while Emotional stability has negative relationship.

2.2 Customer service

Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) defined customer service as the service provided in support of a Company's core products and Promoting the image of the organization through well-organized employee in line with best customer contact . Customer service is provided by various types of companies-including manufacturers, IT companies and service companies. Customer service provided by companies most often includes answering questions, taking orders, dealing with billing issues, handling complaints, and perhaps scheduling maintenance or repairs.

2.3 Personality Traits and Performance

A. Openness and Performance

Openness to experience is measured by being original, creative, imaginative, Curious and broad minded, whilst the low scorers are defined as being conventional and uncreative (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Barrick and Mount (1991), found positive correlation between openness to experience and the training criterion used, which subsequently contribute to positive work performance?

B. Conscientiousness and Performance

Individuals who are conscientious maintain socially prescribed impulse control such as thinking before acting, delaying gratification, planning, prioritizing, and following rules and norms that enhance task

performance (John & Srivastava, 1999; Witt, 2002). Conscientious individuals are also observed to have long-term plans, technical expertise, and an organized support network (McCrae & Costa, 1999).

C. Extraversion and Performance

Extraversion is measured by assertiveness, activeness, social dominance, ambition, tendencies toward action, and the experience of positive affect (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Empirical studies have also found that extraversion correlates with performance in jobs involving social interactions such as in sales and managerial role (Barrick & Mount, 1991) but not in customer services, academic performance and research productivity (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2006)

D. Agreeableness and Performance

Agreeableness is an interpersonal orientation ranging from courteous, good-natured, flexible, cooperative, forgiving (Waldman et al., 2004), sympathetic, eager to please others and gullible at one extreme (Gelissen & Graaf, 2005) while low agreeableness on the other extreme is associated with antagonism, rudeness, suspiciousness, selfishness and manipulative (Rabinowits & Hall, 1977). Agreeableness seems to be the most relevant to job performance that requires joint action and collaboration such as working in a team (Mount et al., 1998). Agreeable persons tend to deal with conflict cooperatively or collaboratively, strive for common understanding, and maintain social affiliations (Digman, 1990).

2.4 Job performance

Campbell (1990, p. 704) defined job performance as “those actions or behaviors relevant to the organization’s goals”. As effectiveness and

productivity measures are the results of both performance and other factors such as opportunity and working conditions, and the degree that effectiveness and productivity measures are contaminated, they are not acceptable measures of performance. (Motowildo et al., 1997) also viewed job performance as the total expected value to the organization of the individual behavioral episodes over a standard period of time. Performance is behavior with an evaluative component that can be evaluated as positive or negative for individual or organizational effectiveness.

2.5. Relationship between Personality and employee Effectiveness

Barrick and Mount (1991), found that conscientiousness had consistent and positive relationship with job performance across a variety of occupational groups. It supported by Ree and Earles

(1992) which they stated that general intelligence and conscientiousness have been found to be valid predictors of training and job performance. Barrick et al (2001), importantly, of the Big Five, conscientiousness has been consistently found as the most reliable predictor of job performance.

✓ Performance with Customers

In the literature, many criteria or types of sales performance have been used (e.g., supervisory rating performance, profit, sales and performance with customers). First, Hunter and Perrault [25, 26] highlight that performance with customers is a good criterion of performance for a technological organization. They define performance with customers “as developing an understanding of a customer’s unique problems and concerns—marketing, technology, operations, or otherwise—and recommending solutions that address those

concerns” Hunter and Perrault (P. 99). Sawyer et al. have used service performance ratings composed of three items, accuracy of information provided to customers, speed of response to customer requests and the ability to solve problems. Finally, Hunter and Perrault have shown that some Five-Factor traits have been significantly associated with employee performance with customers.

2.6 Measurement of job performance

The measurement of job performance is recognized as one of the significant challenges that managers and researchers face (Murphy, 2008). The performance indicators used in performance measurement typically include the following (Hakala, 2008):

- Quantity: The number of units produced, processed or sold is an objective indicator of performance.
- Quality: The quality of work performed can be measured by several means. The percentage of work output that must be redone or is rejected is one such indicator.
- Timeliness: How fast work is performed.
- Cost-effectiveness: The cost of work performed. This should be used as a measure of performance only if the employee has some degree of control over the costs involved.
- Absenteeism: The rate that an employee is not at work.
- Creativity: It may be difficult to quantify creativity as a performance indicator, but in many white-collar jobs, it is vital. Supervisors and employees should keep track of creative work examples and attempt to quantify them.

- Adherence to policy: Deviations from policy indicate an employee whose performance goals are not well aligned with those of the company.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

The study used a descriptive research designs. Both qualitative and quantitative research approach has been used.

3.2. Sources of Data

In this study both primary and secondary sources of data were used. The primary sources of data comprise of the information collected from employees through close ended questionnaire. Also, reports and relevant documents were reviewed and gathered from Front Office Department, Customer Service Division and Human resource department of Ethio-telecom at Churchill branch as secondary source of data.

3.3. Data Gathering Tools/instruments

For the data collection purposes, two basic instruments namely; questionnaire and document analysis were used.

3.4. Target Population

The target populations for this study were the employees and the manager of call center in Ethio-telecom call center Churchill branch.

3.5. Sample Design

3.5.1. Sampling Technique

The total number of employees of the organization in Ethio-telecom call center, Churchill branch is 790 out of this the researcher has taken 259 sample size. The study was used systematic random

sampling techniques for the procedures of obtaining units or members whom were represent the total population of the organization. In selecting the incidental sample, the researcher was selected the required sample size and then simply collects data on that number of individuals who was randomly selected.

3.5.2 .Sample Size

Sampling is a strategy used to select elements from a population. The unit analysis of the study includes employee and manager of the section.

3.5.2.1 Sample size determination

The formula below was used to calculate the sample Size as:

$n_1 = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$ (Kothari, 2004) Where: n_1 : is the sample size for an infinite population

$n_2 = n_1 / 1 + [(n_1 - 1) / N]$, where n_2 : is sample size for finite population

Where, Z represents z value of confidence level, P represents expected standard deviation, C is margin of error (confidence interval), and N is the population

P: population reliability (or frequency estimated for a sample of size n), where p is 0.5 which is taken for all developing countries population and $p + q = 1$

E: margin of error considered is 10% for this study.

Z $\alpha / 2$: normal reduced variable at 0.05 level of significance z is 1.96

According to the above formula, the sample size was: $n_1 = \frac{z^2(p*(1-p))}{e^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2(05)(05)}{(.05)^2} = 386.16$

$n_2 = n_1 / 1 + (n_1 - 1) / N = 386.16 / 1 + (386.16 - 1) / 790 = 259.$

3.6. Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected through questionnaire was presented in table form and descriptive statistics was employed. After making the necessary coding, the data was analyzed using 20.0 versions of SPSS qualitatively and quantitatively. Inferential statistics particularly multi-co linearity test, univariate regression is used to test the existence of statistical differences between the responses of the respondents in the two independent groups for the close-ended items in the questionnaire and descriptive statistical techniques was used. But the qualitative data was analyzed qualitatively.

3.7. Reliability

The researcher has tested the reliability of the study through Cronbach a test & all the variables found reliable, with the score of 0.81.

3.8. Validity

Validity of finding or data is traditionally understood to refer the 'correctness' or 'precision' of a research (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003:273). In this study, validity is ensured through multiple sources of evidence, including documentation, interview, questionnaires and direct observation.

4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Data analysis and interpretation

The primary focus of this study was to analyze the relationship between Personality Traits, adaptive Behavior, and performance with customer in call center.

Two hundred Fifty Nine (259) questionnaires were distributed for employees and supervisors (line managers) & were successfully collected, and the researcher found it suitable for further analysis.

Engineering with a rate of 34.7 % , 23.2 % and 12 % respectively . This implies that the field of study for majority of the employees in ET is relevant to their job and able to meet the aims of the organization performance in respect to customer service in call center. All of the respondents are working on the department of customer service in call center section this implies that the target employee for this analysis is working from there.

1. Specialization of Employee

The analysis indicates that majority of the respondents are specialized in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Computer

Table 1: multi-co linearity test against measures of correlation between adaptive behavior, personality and Performance.

Correlations

	Personality	Conscientiousness	Agreeableness	Extroversion	Openness	Emotional stability	Adaptive Behavior	Performance
Personality	1	.182**	.333**	.428**	.389**	-.043	-.032	.012
Conscientiousness	.182**	1	.470**	-.020	.023	.027	-.259**	.235**
Agreeableness	.333**	.470**	1	.408**	.089	-.103	.279**	.346**
Extroversion	.428**	-.020	.408**	1	.559**	-.053	.124*	.232**
Openness	.389**	.023	.089	.559**	1	-.017	.148*	.134*
Emotional stability	-.043	.027	-.103	-.053	-.017	1	.035	-.103*
Adaptive Behavior	-.032	-.259**	.279**	.124*	.148*	.035	1	.143*
Performance	.012	.235**	.346**	.232**	.134*	-.103*	.143*	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows the correlation between variables and according to Sawyerret *al.*'s (2009) call center research has shown, in contrast to the author's prediction, that only openness to experience was significantly correlated with employee performance. Sawyerret *al.* determined service employee performance to be measurable by three factors: 1) the accuracy of information provided to customers; 2) the speed of response to customer requests; and 3) the ability to solve problems. However, these items do not capture all aspects of employee performance with customers in call centers.

Therefore, In Table 1 it can be seen that, almost all of the variables have higher (significant to 1%) correlation with the dependent variable; performance. But the relationships among the dependent variables only few of them (especially those causing higher inconsistency) found to be significantly related to each other. Thus the variables which correlate significantly with each of the variable were Performance correlated with Conscientiousness ($r = .235$) Agreeableness ($r = .346$), Extroversion ($r = .232$), Openness ($r = .134$), and Emotional stability ($r = -.103$). Therefore, among the Five-Factor traits, four are (conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Openness to Experience) directly affect the employee's performance with customers. which is those traits are positively correlated with performance of employee with customer in call center and the rest one (Emotional stability) are negatively correlated with performance, even Sawyerret *al.* determined the five factor personality traits are positively correlated with performance of employee because on the organization that the study was conducted there is no statistically evidence to predict those personality characteristics can affect the performance of employee with customer positively in this study.

Based on the result above correlation table indicates that adaptive behavior were correlated with Conscientiousness ($r = -.259$), Agreeableness ($r = .279$) which is negatively correlated with adaptive behavior, Extroversion ($r = .124$),

Openness ($r = .148$) is positively correlated with adaptive behavior.

As Brown and O'Donnell determined among their studies showed that conscientiousness is a significant predictor of learning goal orientation, which in turn is recognized as a determinant of adaptiveness. There for the result analysis in this study shown as conscientiousness is conversely correlated with adaptive behavior.

Mount *et al.*'s (1998) meta-analysis showed that Agreeableness is a determinant for positive interpersonal interactions in the workplace. In addition, Bonzionelos, indicates that agreeableness is related to the tendency to care for others. These qualities may be particularly relevant for employees who need to interact with each customer on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, in this study the result implies that Agreeableness is positively associated with adaptive behavior.

As stated according to Judge *et al.* that extraversion helps individuals to effectively communicate interpersonally. This disposition has the potential for increased success in adaptiveness and with this study result also shown as Extroversion is positively associated with adaptive behavior.

As per table 1, result implies that Openness to experience will be positively associated with employee adaptiveness in call centers. *Thus indicates that Openness to Experience has a*

positive impact on adaptive performance *and* on team adaptiveness in call center environment.

Mount *etal*, reported that people who score high in Emotional stability seem to have good interpersonal interactions in service settings and are able to fit their personalities to any particular context. Prior studies have also reported that Emotional stability is associated with service orientation. Which is Emotional stability is positively associated with adaptive behavior. In this study there is no prediction as the effect of emotional stability with adaptive behavior .because there is no substantial data to show the prediction of emotional stability.

Hunter and Perrault showed that practicing adaptive behavior improves performance with customers. Which is adaptive behavior is positively correlated with performance of employee with customer in call center .and in this study the result Performance ($r = .143$) that is ensured that was expected as adaptive behavior is positively correlated with employee performance.

The relationship between Five-Factor traits and adaptive behavior was significantly correlated, leading to acceptance of second hypothesis which was Five-Factor traits will positively relate to the adaptive behavior of employee with customer.

Therefore, among the seven factors; personality, consciousness, agreeableness, openness, adoptive behavior) were significant to less than 1% (most) level of error. Adaptive behavior determines performance of a person. Extroversion and emotional stability were not significant to affect performance of persons in the organization under consideration.

4.2. Summary

Among those personality traits (consciousness, agreeableness, and openness) tends to be the only personality trait that positively correlates with performance across all categories of jobs, including customer service centers. However, other personality dimensions identified by the FFM, such as Emotional Stability and extroversion may also be of importance, particularly in jobs that involve a significant degree of social interaction (Mount, Barrick & Stewart, 1998). Emotional Stability and extroversion is negatively correlated with performance on negative significance value. Skyrme, Wilkinson, Abraham and Morrison (2005) also found that the FFM personality dimensions of consciousness, agreeableness, and openness were positively related to employee performance as discussed above from the analysis. This is similar to the findings of this study but there is no statistically evidence relationship between the Big Five personality trait of emotional stability and extroversion with performance criteria is positively correlated that was reported in this study. Given the nature of CSC work, with its emphasis on providing quality customer service, it is likely that those characteristics associated with individuals will make them suitable for this type of work.

Consciousness, openness to experience and agreeableness has a positive relationship with performance.

Emotional Stability and extroversion are negatively related to performance.

The relationship between Emotional Stability and extroversion and performance is insignificant. When employees are adopt their own behavior except for emotional and extrovert employees, their individual personalities have a significant impact on performance.

So employee adaptive behavior moderates the relationship between all personality traits and performance except for Emotional Stability and extroversion personality.

Employees who are Conscious, agreeable and open to experience enable synergies to be created which allow for high levels of performance at work.

Emotional and extrovert employees not perform well and also affect the overall performance and not lead to increase their performance.

4.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings, conclusions and limitations of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations for future research:

- ETC should make ethical work standard to relate the employee performance with their personality character and their adaptive behavior to ensure their performance could be evaluated with customer handling.
- ETC should put in place adequate training program to make the relationships of employee performance with customers.
- In order to take proactive measures employee performance with customers, it should be set the dimensions of measuring personality characteristics in respect of their adaptive behavior in work place environment.
- Emotional and extrovert employees should take course of action to working in this environment because they would not perform well and also affect the overall performance.
- Emotional and extrovert employees should take course of action to working in this environment because they would not perform

well and also affect the overall performance, they would not lead to increase their performance.

- ETC should encourage personality of employees with Consciousness, openness to experience and agreeableness traits to work effectively so as to improve the overall performance employee rather than performance of call center.

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