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Personality Traits and Cognitive Flexibility as Predictors of Workplace Motivation among Indian Workforce

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of Personality Traits and Cognitive Flexibility on the Workplace Motivation among the Indian workforce. The focus of this study is not restricted to any one industry but Indian employees of different working sectors. With the major focus of personality theory of the Big Five Factor Theory and cognitive psychology aspects of Cognitive flexibility, this research examines how individual differences influence motivation in professional environments. Data were collected through individuals working in any sector of age range 21 to 60 years, through administering standardized questionnaires such as NEO 5PI by Costa & McCrae (1992), the Cognitive Flexibility Scale by Martin & Rubin (1995) and the Work Motivation scale (R-MAWS) by Gagne et al. (2010). The findings reveal that specific personality dimensions have no influence on work-motivation whereas, higher Cognitive Flexibility significantly shows higher Workplace Motivation. These results imply the importance of psychological factors in shaping employee engagement and productivity, offering practical implications for human resource strategies and organizational development in the Indian context.

Keywords: cognitive flexibility, Indian workforce, organizational psychology, personality traits, workplace motivation,

Introduction

In today's modern world, the workplace motivation plays a greater role in maintaining balance between the technologically advanced tools and man made efforts, especially in a country like India which is in its emerging economy. People are finding ways to stay motivated to retain their job and thus workplace motivation plays a crucial role in driving an organization’s success.

Workplace motivation helps in enhancing productivity and improving the overall performance of all employees across various organizations. Individuals with low motivation perform poorly despite being talented and skillful. Thus, motivation is an important factor studied extensively across social and organizational psychology, which in turn plays a major role in shaping employee behavior, organizational commitment, and performance within the scope of organizational settings. Motivation concerns “psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction and persistence of behavior” (Ilgen and Klein, 1988). Specifically, workplace

motivation, which can be seen in the lens of Herzberg's two factor model which accounts to intrinsic factors such as achievement, responsibility and extrinsic factors that include job securities and working policies (Kanfer, R., & Chen, G. 2016).

Understanding the factors that influence and determine workplace motivation is essential for improving employee satisfaction and organizational efficiency (Konieczny, 2023). Several other factors like supervision by managers, financial satisfaction, job security, job-benefits and schemes play an important role. This research focuses on the context of the Indian workforce, where personality traits and cognitive flexibility are increasingly being recognized as critical predictors of motivation. However, the interplay between these variables remains under-explored, thus highlighting the need for further investigation by the researchers..

Personality, according to Allport (1961), "It is the dynamic organization within an individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment." It's a unique set of characteristics belonging to an individual, but can eventually change over time and experience. Many modern psychologists agree that personality can be understood through five main dimensions which are commonly known as the "Big Five Personality traits" that include Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism.

Extraversion is characterised by sociability, assertiveness, and high levels of emotional expressiveness and engagement. Agreeableness involves being altruistic and kind, compassionate, cooperative, and less likely to avoid conflicts. Openness reflects imagination, creativity, curiosity, and willingness to explore a wide variety of things. Conscientiousness denotes thoughtfulness, organization, and goal-directed behavior. Neuroticism is associated with anxiousness, emotional instability. Some longitudinal studies show that these Big Five personality traits tend to be relatively stable throughout adulthood. But, one four-year study of working-age adults found that personality changed little as a result of adverse life events. (Atherton, 2022). Thus, changes in personality traits greatly affect other areas of attending and functioning. Sankruthyayana (2022), as cited in Bogacheva et al. (2019), suggested a relationship between certain personality traits and cognitive appraisal of risks among doctors. Thus, this research similarly taps into the interplay between the two variables, which aims to explore how individuals' personality traits influence their workplace motivation.

Cognitive Flexibility refers to the ability to shift one's attention (i.e., attention switching/shifting) between multiple tasks or mental sets. (Murdock, K, 2013). It enables an individual to work efficiently, to disengage from the previous task, reconfigure a new response set, and implement this new response set to the task at hand. Odaci and Cikrikci (2019) found that cognitive flexibility mediates the relationship between personality traits and life satisfaction. Their findings indicated that individuals exhibiting higher levels of extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness also demonstrated greater cognitive flexibility.

While numerous studies have examined the relationship between personality traits and motivation, and separately between cognitive flexibility and workplace performance, limited research has addressed how these variables jointly influence motivation within the Indian

workforce. Additionally, most existing literature focuses on Western contexts, leaving a significant gap in understanding the Indian organizational environment.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how personality traits and cognitive flexibility predict workplace motivation among the Indian workforce. The secondary and tertiary objectives are to explore how the big five personality traits affect workplace motivation and to explore how cognitive flexibility influences workplace motivation. The research questions guiding this study are: How do personality traits (such as openness, conscientiousness) influence workplace motivation among Indian employees? What is the role of cognitive flexibility in predicting workplace motivation? Do personality traits and cognitive flexibility interact to affect workplace motivation?

This research is significant as it addresses a crucial research gap in organizational psychology by focusing on the Indian workforce, which is often overlooked and where cultural and contextual factors may influence motivation differently as compared to Western settings. By identifying key predictors, this study aims to inform human resource practices and intervention strategies to enhance motivation in Indian organizations.

The study focuses on all employees working in all Indian sectors. While it provides insights into the relationship between personality traits, cognitive flexibility, and motivation, it does not account for other possible influencing factors, such as organizational culture, work values and innovative work behavior. Additionally, the cross-sectional design may limit the ability to establish causality.

Review of Literature

A study by Murdock et al. (2013) explores how the four core components that include Executive Functioning, Cognitive Flexibility, Inhibition and Updating/Monitoring relates to the Big Five personality traits. The study involved 182 adults, aged between 18 to 29 and utilized quantitative tools such as the NEO-FFI for personality assessment, the Wisconsin Card Sorting Test (WCST) for cognitive flexibility, the Color-Word Interference Test for inhibition, and Verbal Fluency Tests for updating/monitoring. Key findings showed that cognitive flexibility significantly predicted Openness to Experience. This suggests that individuals who can adapt their thinking in response to changing demands tend to be more open to new experiences and ideas, which are traits central to Openness. The association highlights the conceptual overlap between flexible thinking and intellectual curiosity. In contrast, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness were not significantly predicted by any of the EF components, indicating that not all personality traits are equally influenced by executive functions. These results underscore that **e**xecutive functioning and personality traits are selectively related, with cognitive flexibility particularly relevant to Openness. While not directly addressing workplace motivation, this study supports investigating cognitive flexibility as a cognitive factor that may influence adaptive behavior, including motivation in dynamic environments like the workplace.

Another study by. Nair et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between cognitive flexibility and the Big Five personality traits among college students in Kerala, India. The study employed a convenience sampling method which included a sample of 221 emerging adults in between ages of 18 to 25. The Cognitive Flexibility Scale and the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) were administered to measure the variables. The results showed that cognitive flexibility positively correlated with Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability (opposite to Neuroticism), and most notably, Openness to Experience. The findings suggest that individuals who exhibit higher levels of adaptability and flexible thinking also tend to display higher levels of sociability, self-discipline, emotional regulation, and curiosity that are significant in both academic and real-world contexts. However, no significant relationship was found between cognitive flexibility and Agreeableness, indicating that interpersonal warmth and cooperativeness may not be directly linked to one's ability to adapt cognitively. This study reinforces prior findings that link Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness with cognitive flexibility and further emphasizes the role of personality in shaping cognitive adaptability. These traits may have practical implications in domains such as learning, decision-making, and workplace adjustments, particularly in job roles requiring creative problem-solving and adaptability.

A study by Furnham et al. (1998) explored the relationship between personality traits, specifically the Eysenck personality factors, and work motivation using Herzberg's two-factor theory. This study involved a research sample of 81 job applicants for middle-management positions, which included 34 males and 49 females. A quantitative correlational and regression analysis was conducted using standardized questionnaires such as the Eysenck Personality Profiler (EPP) for personality assessment and the Work Values Questionnaire (WVQ) for work motivation. Key research findings indicated that individuals having high extraversion traits valued motivation factors such as recognition and reward, whereas individuals with high neuroticism gave more importance to factors like job security. The results showed that personality traits explained 19 to 29% of the variance in work preferences. These findings suggest a meaningful link between personality dimensions and work-related motivational factors, highlighting how different personality types prioritize different aspects of job satisfaction and motivation.

Judge & Ilies (2002) conducted a meta-analysis to examine the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and three core theories of performance motivation which includes Goal-Setting theory by Edwin A Locke and Gary P Latham, Expectancy theory by Victor H. Vroom, and Self-Efficacy theory by Albert Bandura. This study aimed to determine how individual personality traits influence motivational processes that are related to the performance of individuals. The analysis included 150 correlations extracted from 65 studies, utilizing the Five-Factor Model of personality or the Big Five model and established motivation theories. Key findings revealed that Neuroticism and Conscientiousness strongly predicted individual factors of performance motivation. Overall, the Big Five traits yielded a multiple correlation of .49 with motivational outcomes, indicating a substantial predictive relationship. The findings also demonstrated strong generalizability across diverse study contexts. These

results highlight the significant role of personality in shaping motivational behavior, with implications for personnel selection, training, and performance management.

Sowunmi (2022) investigated the relationship between personality traits, motivation, and job satisfaction among mental health workers. The study included a research sample of 146 staff members from the Neuropsychiatric Hospital in Aro, Nigeria, using systematic proportional sampling. This cross-sectional study employed a range of tools including a Socio-demographic Questionnaire, the Big Five Inventory, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Short Version), and the Multidimensional Work-Motivation Scale. Key research findings revealed that Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness was significantly positively correlated with motivation. Neuroticism emerged as the least dominant trait among the participants. This study recommended targeting individuals high in Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness for recruitment purposes and emphasized the importance of psychological support for staff with high neuroticism to enhance motivation and job satisfaction.

The literature reviewed in this study highlights the significant psychological and functional challenges was faced by individuals with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), which is depicted as a non-congenital, non-degenerative injury caused by trauma, stroke, anoxia, or infections. Individuals with ABI was able to experience a in quality of life (QOL) because to for visible impairments (e.g., mobility, communication) and invisible cognitive consequences such as defects in attention, memory, planning, and impulse control (Lannoo et al., 2004; Lassaletta, 2019). Studies have told that even years after injury, life satisfaction would remain low in population with ABI compared to the general population (Jacobsson & Lexell, 2013). These consequences usually disruppt the pursuit of personal meaningful goals, which is a crucial aspect of subjective well-being (Carver & Scheier, 2008). The Dual Process Model by Brandtstädter and Rothermund (2002) differenciate between assimilative coping (persistent goal pursuit) and accommodative coping (flexible goal adjustment), the latter being immportant when goals become unattainable due to chronic illness or disability. Wrosch et al. (2003) further explains on accommodative coping by looking two key component of goal disengagement and goal reengagements. Studies have shown that these goal adjustment strategies are associated with improved well-being across various chronic health conditions, including cancer, multiple sclerosis, and hearing loss (Mens & Scheier, 2016; Van Damme et al., 2019; Garnefski & Kraaij, 2012). However, evidence on the role of goal disengagement is mixed. Particularly in ABI individual, impairments in executive functioning especially cognitive flexibility may with hold the ability to adjust goals. Cognitive flexibility, as a core executive function, refers to the ability to shift perspectives and adapt to new circumstances, and is commonly assessed using the Wisconsin Card Sorting Test (WCST). Individuals with ABI typically perform poorly on this test, indicating deficits in this area (Norup & Barceló, 2009). Despite the importance of goal adjustment, the literature lacks research directly examining the influence of cognitive flexibility on goal disengagement and reengagement in ABI populations. Additionally, personality traits may influence goal adjustment abilities. Traits like extraversion and conscientiousness may facilitate goal reengagement, while neuroticism might contribute to disengagement or avoidance. The Five-Factor Model of personality, widely

used in psychological research, explains a substantial portion of the variance in well-being (Steel et al., 2008), but the unique contribution of goal adjustment for personality traits remains underexplored. This study helps by gaps examining the relationship between cognitive flexibility, goal adjustment (disengagement and reengagement), and well-being outcomes in individuals with ABI, while also accounting for personality factors.

Research on cognitive styles has long been regarded as a promising lens through which individual differences in personality can be understood. Cognitive styles refer to consistent patterns in how individuals perceive, think, and solve problems, and are closely tied to higher-order mental processes like creativity, intelligence, and decision-making (Witkin et al., 1977; Sternberg, 2010; Hayes & Allinson, 1994). The supportive evidence suggesting that cognitive styles are not merely cognitive in nature, but reflect personality traits. Scholars like Riding and Wigley (1997) and Kirton (1994) argue that cognitive styles are expressions of deeper personality dispositions, while others, like Shkuratova (1994), contends that cognitive styles should be as personality traits themselves. Sternberg (2010) emphasized that cognitive styles may serve as a conceptual bridge between cognition and personality, influence how we learn and think with who we are. Despite a strong theoretical foundation, empirical evidence on the relationship between cognitive styles and personality remains limited and often inconsistent (Kholodnaya, 2004; Cools, 2009). One challenge lies measurement, traditional assessments of cognitive styles, such as Witkin's Embedded Figures Test or Kagan's MFFT, is largely perceptual and may not capture the full personality dimension. Consequently, new approaches advocate for self-report measures that reflect cognitive and personality characteristics. The study addresses the gap by examining how self-reported cognitive styles relate to Eysenck's PEN personality dimensions : Psychoticism, Extraversion, and Neuroticism , which are considered universal and genetically influenced (Eysenck, 1990; Eaves et al., 1989). Previous studies have found associations between PEN traits and specific cognitive styles. By developing a comprehensive Cognitive-Personality Styles Questionnaire (CPS-Q), the current research contributes a more integrated framework for understanding how cognitive processing patterns and personality traits co-occur and influence human behavior.

The literature (Volkova & Rusalov, 2016) explores the relationship between cognitive styles and personality traits referring to a self-report-based questionnaire. It identifies four significant cognitive-personality complexes that interweave dimensions of Eysenck's PEN model (Psychoticism, Extraversion, Neuroticism) with cognitive styles such as field dependence or independence, impulsivity or reflectivity, and tolerance or intolerance of unrealistic experiences. The study emphasizes the existence of authentic cognitive styles and hybrid cognitive personality styles that underline individual differences in behavior. The second review (Çelikkaleli & Gündüz, 2019) investigates the direct and indirect relationships between adolescents personality types and their problem-focused coping styles, particularly highlighting cognitive flexibility as a mediating variable. The findings indicate that positive personality traits like extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness significantly correlate with both cognitive flexibility and effective problem focused coping, while neuroticism is a negative relationship. Cognitive flexibility served as a partial mediator, suggesting its crucial role in stress management and adaptation. The third review (Mastriani,

2021) examined the predictive relationship among psychological flexibility, perceived stress, and aggressive behavior in a work context, utilizing the SCARF model (Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness). The study concludes that psychological flexibility significantly enhances employee agility and helps reduce stress, thereby promoting adaptability in dynamic organizational environments. It recommended integrating psychological flexibility training in workplace practices and emphasizes its relevance in changed managements and employed development strategy.

The literature by Çelikkaleli and Gündüz (2019) focused on the relationship between adolescents personality traits, problem focused coping styles, and cognitive flexibility. Using the Five factor Personality Model, the study found that traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness were positively associated with both cognitive flexibility and problem focused coping. In contrast, neuroticism exhibited a negative correlation with these variables. The key contribution of the study is to identification of cognitive flexibility as a partial mediator between personality traits and coping styles, indicating that flexible cognitive processes enhance adolescents' ability to manage stress through adaptive coping mechanisms. The study, explores the predictive relationships between psychological flexibility, perceived stress, and agile behavior in employees across multiple countries and professions. Guided by the SCARF (Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness) neuroscience model, the study reveals that psychological flexibility significantly predicts higher agility and lower stress levels, while stress inversely affects agility. The finding suggested that cultivating psychological flexibility would reduce workplace stress and also promotes adaptive and proactive agile behaviors essential for organizational change and innovation. The study depicts the importance of integrating psychological flexibility into professional development and change management initiatives to enhance workforce agility and resilience.

The literature depicts that predictive relationship between psychological flexibility, perceived stress, and agile behavior in the workplace, drawing from the SCARF model—Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness as its conceptual framework. Conducted as a quantitative predictive correlational study across multiple countries and professions, the research found that psychological flexibility significantly enhances individual agility while simultaneously reducing perceived stress. Furthermore,psychological flexibility were showed to mediate the negative effect of stress on agile behavior, depicting its dual role in promoting adaptive functioning and the cognitive-emotional costs of organisational change. The findings suggested that developing a psychologically flexible mindset motivate employees to embrace change, adapt fasten, and maintain performance under stress. As a result, the study suggests for embedding psychological flexibility training within employee development, recruitment, and alter management strategies to empower a resilient and agile workforce capable of navigating the demands of a organizational environment.

Methodology

Aim

To examine the predictive role of personality traits and cognitive flexibility on workplace motivation among working individuals in the Indian workforce.

Hypothesis

Personality traits and cognitive flexibility will significantly predict workplace motivation among Indian working individuals.

Objectives

To assess the relationship between the Big Five personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) and workplace motivation.

1. To examine the relationship between cognitive flexibility and workplace motivation.
2. To identify which personality traits significantly predict workplace motivation.
3. To determine whether cognitive flexibility contributes significantly to the prediction of workplace motivation.
4. To explore the combined influence of personality traits and cognitive flexibility on workplace motivation using correlational study.

Variables Measured

- Personality traits (NEOAC)
- Cognitive flexibility
- Workplace motivation

Research Design

The study employed a non-experimental quantitative research design to examine the relationship between the Big Five personality traits namely Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism and cognitive flexibility. This indeed acts as predictors of workplace motivation among employees in the Indian workforce.

Population and sample

The study involved 60 currently-working individuals belonging to Indian nationality, both male and females, whose age range varies from 21-60 years old. These individuals belong from various sectors including business, teaching, healthcare and belong to the urban population. Participants were selected from organizations of varying sizes and industries to ensure a diverse representation of the workforce.

Sampling Method

A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the participants ensuring that individuals who possess relevant characteristics, such as full-time employment and experience in the Indian workforce, were included to obtain insightful and context-specific data.

Inclusion criteria

- Participants both male and female, aged between 21 to 60 years.
- Indian nationals currently employed in any sector (e.g., corporate, healthcare, education, business).

Exclusion criteria

- Individuals not currently employed or unemployed at the time of data collection.
- Participants below 21 years or above 60 years of age.

Data Collection Tools

The following standardized instruments were employed to measure the key variables:

1. NEO-5 Personality Inventory (NEO-5PI): The NEO-5PI developed by Costa & McCrae (1992) was used to assess the personality traits of participants. This inventory measures the five major personality dimensions namely, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism, which provided valuable insight into how these traits might relate to workplace motivation. It has 60 statements and the responses are on a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It has a high reliability and validity.
2. Cognitive Flexibility Scale (CFS): The 12-item Cognitive Flexibility Scale was administered to assess participants' cognitive flexibility, which refers to their ability to adapt to changing work-related situations. This measure evaluated their mental flexibility, adaptability, and cognitive processing styles in response to workplace demands. Higher scores on the CFS represent a higher cognitive flexibility.
3. Workplace Motivation Scale (R-MAWS): The R-MAWS was developed by Gagné et al, which measures 5 dimensions of motivation including motivation, external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation. It consists of 19 items with a 7-point Likert scale and has proven to be a valid and reliable tool to measure work motivation in various cultural contexts.

The survey was administered online, through google forms and participants received clear instructions on how to complete each segment of the questionnaire. The data collection process lasted for approximately one week, with participants given three weeks to complete the survey.

Reliability and validity

The NEO-FFI is a widely used psychological personality inventory that measures the Big Five personality traits: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. In terms of reliability, the NEO-FFI demonstrates strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically ranging between 0.68 and 0.86 across the five domains, and test-retest reliability coefficients over a six-month period ranging from 0.75 to 0.83, indicating temporal stability. Regarding validity, the NEO-FFI has strong construct validity, correlating significantly with other personality measures like the Big Five Inventory (BFI) and the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R). Its factorial validity is well-established through confirmatory factor analyses supporting the five-factor structure.

Criterion-related validity has also been demonstrated in research linking NEO-FFI scores to real-world outcomes such as job performance, interpersonal behavior, and health-related variables.

The Work Motivation Scale is used to assess various dimensions of motivation in the workplace, often drawing from frameworks such as Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory. Its reliability varies by version and subscales, but internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) generally ranges from 0.70 to 0.90, indicating acceptable to excellent reliability across intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation (including identified, introjected, and external regulation), and a motivation components. Test-retest reliability also shows satisfactory stability over short periods. In terms of validity, the scale has demonstrated good construct validity through factor analyses aligning with theoretical constructs of motivation. It also shows convergent and discriminant validity by correlating appropriately with related constructs like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and burnout. Criterion validity is evidenced by its predictive utility for job performance, persistence, and employee engagement.

The Cognitive Flexibility Scale (CFS), short version developed by Dennis and Vander Wal (2010), assesses an individual's ability to adapt to changing situational demands and consider multiple perspectives. The scale has shown excellent reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values for the total scale typically exceeding 0.90, and subscales (Alternative Thinking and Control) also demonstrating high internal consistency (above 0.80). Test-retest reliability over a 2-week interval has been reported around 0.81, indicating good stability. Regarding validity, the CFS has strong construct validity, supported by significant negative correlations with measures of depression and anxiety, and positive correlations with problem-solving and psychological resilience. Factor analyses support its two-factor structure. The inventory also demonstrates concurrent and discriminant validity through its relationship with other measures of cognitive flexibility and emotional regulation, supporting its use in both clinical and non-clinical settings.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants, as well as to provide an overview of responses to the personality, cognitive flexibility, and motivation measures.

Correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between personality traits, cognitive flexibility, and workplace motivation. This analysis helped identify the strength and direction of these relationships.

Table 1

Showing results of data analysis using SPSS

			Neuroticism	openness	conscienciousness	extroversion	agreeableness	Cognitive flexibility	work motivation
Spearman's rho	Neuroticism	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.100	-.507**	-.376**	-.422**	-.187	-.201
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.447	.000	.003	.001	.153	.123
		N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
	openness	Correlation Coefficient	-.100	1.000	.339**	.153	-.028	.053	-.194
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.447	.	.008	.244	.829	.686	.137
		N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
	conscientious	Correlation Coefficient	-.507**	.339**	1.000	.504**	.258*	.108	-.053
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.008	.	.000	.047	.414	.690
		N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
	extroversion	Correlation Coefficient	-.376**	.153	.504**	1.000	.250	.272*	-.083

		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.244	.000	.	.054	.035	.529
		N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
	agreeableness	Correlation Coefficient	-.422**	-.028	.258*	.250	1.000	-.224	-.133
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.829	.047	.054	.	.085	.310
		N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
	Cognitive flexibility	Correlation Coefficient	-.187	.053	.108	.272*	-.224	1.000	.262*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.153	.686	.414	.035	.085	.	.043
		N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
	work motivation	Correlation Coefficient	-.201	-.194	-.053	-.083	-.133	.262*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.123	.137	.690	.529	.310	.043	.
		N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60

Discussion

The present study aimed to assess whether personality traits, namely Neuroticism, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Agreeableness, as well as Cognitive Flexibility, significantly predict Workplace Motivation among Indian working individuals. Based on the correlation analysis conducted using Spearman's rho, the hypothesis that both personality traits and cognitive flexibility significantly predict workplace motivation

is rejected due to a lack of significant correlations between most of the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Neuroticism depicted no statistically significant correlation with workplace motivation ($r = -0.201$, $p = 0.123$), indicating that emotional instability levels do not have a significant relationship with how individuals are motivated in their work environments in the present sample. Neuroticism also had negative correlations with all other personality traits: Openness ($r = -0.100$), Conscientiousness ($r = -0.507$, $p < 0.01$), Extraversion ($r = -0.376$, $p < 0.01$), and Agreeableness ($r = -0.422$, $p < 0.01$), indicting a consistent inverse relationship across these domains.

Openness to Experience did not show any significant correlation with workplace motivation ($r = -0.194$, $p = 0.137$) .It had a significant positive correlation only with Conscientiousness ($r = 0.339$, $p < 0.01$). Due to its lack of significant co relation it doenot act as significant predictor.

Conscientiousness, although correlated positively with Extraversion ($r = 0.504$, $p < 0.01$), Agreeableness ($r = 0.258$, $p < 0.05$), and Openness ($r = 0.339$, $p < 0.01$), did not correlate significantly with workplace motivation ($r = -0.053$, $p = 0.690$). Despite being associated with structured and goal-directed behavior, Conscientiousness did not demonstrate a significant relationship with motivation in this sample, thereby failing to support its proposed predictive role.

Extraversion demonstrated a statistically significant correlation only with Conscientiousness ($r = 0.504$, $p < 0.01$) and cognitive flexibility ($r = 0.272$, $p = 0.035$), yet showed no significant relationship with workplace motivation ($r = -0.083$, $p = 0.529$). Although extraverted individuals may engage socially and show higher energy levels, the trait did not show any correlation with workplace motivation in this study, contributing further to the rejection of the hypothesis.

Agreeableness also failed to show a significant correlation with workplace motivation ($r = -0.133$, $p = 0.310$) or cognitive flexibility ($r = -0.224$, $p = 0.085$), though it was significantly related to Conscientiousness ($r = 0.258$, $p < 0.05$). It shows a poor and non-significant relationship with the dependent variable confirms that agreeableness cant act as a predictor of workplace motivation in this sample.

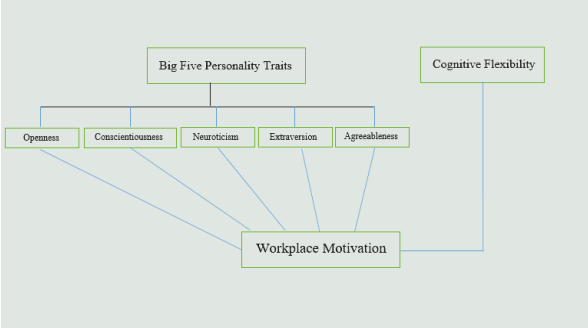
Cognitive Flexibility acts as a factor that shows a statistically significant positive correlation with motivation motivation at workplace ($r = 0.262$, $p = 0.043$). It also showed a significant correlation with trait of Extraversion ($r = 0.272$, $p = 0.035$). While this indicates some level of association between adaptability and motivation, the lack of significant correlations with most other variables—including all five personality traits—limits its broader predictive value in the overall model.

In summary, out of the all the independent variables examined, only cognitive flexibility has proved statistically a positive significant correlation with the dependent variable,

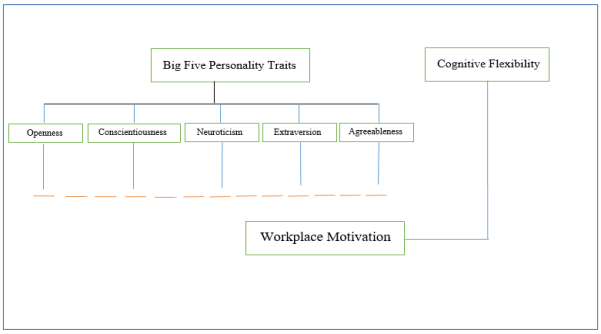
workplace motivation, and even this association was modest. None of the other five personality traits demonstrated significant relationships with workplace motivation depicting that personality traits of an individual will not act as an influencing predictor for the level of work motivation. Therefore, it rejects the hypothesis that personality traits and cognitive flexibility significantly predict workplace motivation based on the observed data.

Conceptual framework:

Before the research study



After the research findings



Limitation

1. The data collection sample is very small which would hinder generalization of the study.
2. Data was collected online through google forms limiting the effectiveness of data.
3. The questionnaire was lengthy , which could influence the effective answering.
4. All the questionnaires were self-report forms, which may have influence of social desirability in answering.
5. The study does not consider the age-related differences in the relationship between the variables.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines as provided by the American Psychological Association (APA). All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to answering the questionnaire tools . Participants were assured that there are no risks involved and that their data would be used solely for academic purposes, and their identities would remain anonymous. This would ensure the well-being, dignity and autonomy of the clients. Additionally, participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence.

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Therapeutic model

PCM Model: Personality, Cognitive flexibility, Motivation model

Based on the study's findings, a therapeutic model titled the PCM Model (Personality–Cognitive Flexibility–Motivation) is proposed. This model integrates psychological constructs that were central to the research: personality traits (as measured by the Big Five), cognitive flexibility, and work motivation. The empirical data showed that none of the five personality traits had a statistically significant relationship with work motivation, while cognitive flexibility emerged as the only factor significantly associated with it. This indicates that while personality traits offer a descriptive understanding of individual behavior tendencies, they are not predictive of motivation in a workplace setting and are not ideal targets for change in a therapeutic context.

In contrast, cognitive flexibility represents a trainable and modifiable cognitive skill that can directly influence motivation. The therapeutic approach, therefore, prioritizes enhancing cognitive flexibility to indirectly boost work motivation, irrespective of underlying personality structure. Interventions under this model begin with personality assessment for self-awareness but do not attempt to change personality. Instead, techniques such as cognitive restructuring, perspective-shifting exercises, problem-solving under uncertainty, and role reversals are used to build mental agility and flexibility.

Core Principles

- Personality traits are stable and not directly predictive of motivation.
- Cognitive flexibility is dynamic and trainable.
- Workplace motivation improves through enhanced cognitive flexibility, not personality changed.

Therapeutic Goals

- Improve cognitive adaptability to boost internal motivation.
- Increase resilience and engagement in work settings.
- Help individuals overcome rigidity in thinking and action.

Key Techniques

- ***Cognitive Reappraisal***
  Helping clients reframe negative or limiting thoughts about workplace roles or challenges.

- ***Perspective-Shifting Exercises***
  "Put yourself in your manager's/colleague's/client's shoes" role plays.

- ***Mental Set Shifting Tasks***

Encouraging problem-solving from multiple strategies or viewpoints.

- ***Role Reversal and Flexible Scenario Planning***
  Practicing reactions to sudden workplace changes and uncertainty.

- ***Flexible Goal Planning***
  Helping clients set dynamic, adjustable work goals instead of rigid performance expectations.

These techniques help clients view challenges differently, reframe unhelpful thoughts, and adapt to dynamic environments. These are crucial for maintaining or increasing motivation in the workplace. Thus, the PCM Model positions cognitive flexibility as the central intervention target, with personality traits serving a background informational role, and motivation as the therapeutic outcome.