POSTSECONDARY INSTRUCTOR PERSONALITY TRAITS AND INSTRUCTION UNDERTAKING AFFECTS

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ABSTRACT

The research focuses on the hiring practices of instructors Southern California community colleges should follow to reduce the human resources (HR) costs associated with turnover. Personality traits that contribute to the retention of both full-time tenured and part-time adjunct instructors are analyzed. The study used a quantitative nonexperimental survey approach using linear regression statistical procedures to expose correlations. The survey tool included 58 Likert-type measurable questions; each with possible responses. A total of 230 participants from five Southern California community colleges participated in the study. The data showed full-time instructors encompassed personalities with high subordinate levels of neuroticism, moderately high subordinate levels of openness/intellect, and weak extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Part-time instructors had a moderately low correlation with extraversion and conscientiousness, and a weak correlation with agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness/intellect. Results of the current research indicated a higher correlation of neuroticism and openness/intellect with instructor success and retention. Further research into how personality traits are obtained and how these traits are affected when an instructor goes from being a part-time adjunct instructor to full-time tenured status is recommended. It is also suggested that the current study is replicated across a larger scope to better comprehend how personality traits affect hiring and training practices. Further study is also needed from an HR perspective to ascertain whether there is a significant advantage to hiring instructors as adjuncts before offering full-time status.

KEYWORDS: *Adjunct, Extrinsic Values, Hiring Catalog, Instructor, Intrinsic Values, Motivation, Personality Traits, Retention, Tenure, Traditional Instructional Format*

INTRODUCTION

Recruitment and retention of instructors in post-secondary schools is a daunting task. Beyond the direct and indirect costs of recruitment and retention, the time to train new instructors impacts the institution's productivity and efficiency. With a rapid growth in education, staffing has emerged as one of the most significant issues. The focus of the current study was to ascertain the specific balance of subordinate and dominant instructor personality traits that will aid in the discovery and cultivation of a job and hiring classification for instructors in the California Community Colleges system. This examination of what and how specific traits are directly correlated with achieving instructor retention was designed to aid in the cultivation of job and hiring classifications that can be used to mitigate some of the extensive costs these organizations incur from their human resources (HR) activities. By identifying which personality traits the

participants encompassed and correlating them to their self-viewed success and retention as instructors, the researcher intended to identify which personality traits directly correlate to hiring instructors with a high probability of retention. The processes of recruiting, training, and retaining employees require monetary and human capital investment; the development of a job and hiring classification will help reduce the costs associated with the HR process.

The problem is learning and identifying what type of instructors community colleges should hire in order to reduce the HR costs associated with turnover. The focus was to determine which personality traits contribute to the success and retention of both full-time tenured and part-time adjunct instructors. Predmore and Bonnice discussed the importance of exhibiting malleable personality traits [1] and Sypniewska also believed personality traits could be molded, stating that experience and communication affect how people use these traits [2].

The research analyzed diverse personality trait models to answer the research question, principally looking at these traits and how they directly correlate to the obtainment of self-viewed success and fulfillment, which is associated with instructor retention and the mitigation of HR costs associated with hiring and training new individuals. It can be difficult to determine in what way companies, specifically postsecondary educational corporations, can decrease the expenses directly correlated with the employment of ineffective instructors and increase retention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Postsecondary education is growing globally and it is the private education sector that has changed the education field the most [3]. With more private postsecondary schools opening, there is more opportunity for students and greater financial benefits for these institutions. Technology has also had a pronounced impact on the growth of postsecondary education; the advent of distance education has allowed the industry to increase its student population. Online students are able to attend school anywhere in the world and it is this global reach that has increased the number of students currently attending school in the United States. 5.8 million students were enrolled in at least one distance learning course in fall 2014 [4] – up 3.9 percent from the previous fall.

This necessitates the research conducted in this study, which was to ascertain the specific balance of subordinate and dominant instructor personality traits that will aid in the discovery and cultivation of a job and hiring classification for the California Community Colleges system. Consequently, the focus of this study was to determine which personality traits contribute to self-viewed success and fulfillment and directly affect instructor retention to cultivate a job and hiring classification. The researchers chose the quantitative non-experimental survey approach for this study because the problem was able to be addressed through numeric data. The choice to use a survey design was based on the benefits of a rapid turnaround time and the ability to use linear regression statistical procedures to expose correlations. A survey research design takes a broad view and helps deduce the characteristics of the sample that mirror the behaviors and attitudes of the population [5].

This study used a quantitative non-experimental survey design to quantify the number of years an instructor had been instructing (i.e. retention) and how it was affected by specific personality traits. A non-experimental survey design allows the researcher to use linear regression statistical procedures to uncover correlations between the dependent and independent variables [6]. A quantitative non-experimental research design uses measurable and numeric data that can be quantified [7]. A non-experimental research design allows the researcher to use many variables that may not be manipulated because they are attributed variables such as personal characteristic or trait [7].

This exploration of whether a specific balance of subordinate and dominant instructor traits leads to higher years of retention was intended to aid in the discovery and cultivation of a job and hiring classification for companies focused on instructors in postsecondary educational corporations in order to mitigate the HR costs associated with hiring and training new individuals. An introductory analysis using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics [8] reflecting the number of postsecondary instructors in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area south of Long Angeles City, Long Beach Metropolitan Area west and south of downtown Long Beach, and Orange County Metropolitan Area north of Irvine revealed estimated postsecondary employment at 12,930. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [9] reported a total of 7,587 academic instructors (full-time and part-time) were employed in 2016. According to California State University Northridge [10], for a moderately large population, a smaller sampling ratio of about 1% establishes adequate validity. Therefore, this research needed an estimated 76 to 176 instructors. The researchers received an agreement to participate from five institutions. This study was designed to account for diverse generational clusters to assist in increased comprehension of observed dissimilarities, as well as avoided gender biased results by including both men and women. Cluster sampling is ideal when it is impossible or impractical to compile a list of elements composing the population [5].

The researcher used a quantitative non-experimental survey design to quantify how specific traits are directly correlated with retention or the instructors' years of tenure. The use of surveys as a tool in research provides a numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinion of a population by studying a sample of that population [5]. The survey tool comprised 58 Likert-type measurable questions. Each question had nine possible responses: 1 (*extremely inaccurate*) 9 (*extremely accurate*). The responses generated the numeric data needed to quantify instructors' personality traits and efficacy of instruction and student engagement of community college instructors. According to SurveyMonkey [11], Likert-type scales are one of the best ways to measure perceptions reliably. LaMarca [12] stressed the reliability of Likert-type scales lies in the ability of the participants to respond in degrees; it does not force them to take a particular stand, which enables the researcher to code the data and quantify them mathematically through statistical analysis.

Saucier [13] developed mini-markers to condense the established personality traits, which were based on the five main personality traits (i.e., neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness), to 40 distinct objectives (eight per each of the five main personality traits). Saucier made these into a 9-point Likert-type scale, with responses of 1 (*extremely inaccurate*) to 9 (*extremely accurate*); a higher total indicates a higher level of dominance of that particular personality trait. This tool has been used in studies and documented in the literature [14, 15, 16]. The Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) was developed by. The researchers requested and received permission to use the questions from this tool as a part of the survey. The reply format consists of a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* in order to make sure there is the reliability of the data. A sample pilot study was conducted on the demographic questions with 40 participants who responded from Cerritos College. The fundamental purpose of conducting a pilot study is to examine the feasibility of an approach that is intended to ultimately be used in a larger scale study [17]. There were no issues uncovered and the feasibility of the approach was established.

The SurveyMonkey link to the survey was sent to the faculties of five institutions – Victorville College, Santa Monica College, Rio Hondo College, Cerritos College, and Rancho Santiago College. The surveys were self-administered and included demographic information. The researcher gathered the surveys and evaluated and interpreted the data to identify personality traits that support the cultivation of a job and hiring classification for the Southern California

Community Colleges system. The researcher imported the data from SurveyMonkey into an Excel spreadsheet for manual coding. This further ensured uniformity prior to being uploaded to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for statistical analysis. The researcher used open coding, which allowed for the categorization of the data into main associations [5]. The survey outcome ranges were within suitable and consistent reliability matrixes. In order to identify inconsistencies or extreme values in the data, the researcher validated all data before loading them into SPSS for analysis, carefully reviewing for completeness and comparing the coded data to the raw data in order to identify inconsistencies. Missing responses were tracked to maintain accurate and viable participation data. Out of the 230 participants, only one survey was incomplete and this missing data was omitted. The use of wave analysis aided with the determination of biased responses as a result of any change in the average. The researcher conducted an extensive breakdown of the survey data, to include the standard deviation, range of scores, and mean. Cronbach's alpha measure using SPSS demonstrated dependability of the survey. The researcher also correlated the data using multiple linear regressions in SPSS to analyze the relationships between the dependent variables and the independent variables. Assumptions that needed to be included were: regression residuals were normally distributed, there was a linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables, the residuals were homoscedastic, there was an absence of multicollinearity, and multiple linear regression fit a line through multi-dimensional space of data points. The researcher also correlated the data using Pearson's correlation coefficient to investigate the relationships among the quantitative variables of the personality traits and instructors' years or instruction to test the first hypothesis, that there would be a specific balance of subordinate and dominant personality traits that correlated to instructors' years of instruction. "Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) is a measure of the strength of the association between the two variables" [18]. The greater the concentration of a specific score, the greater the concentration or dominance of those specific personality traits [13]. The survey outcomes were paralleled with the personality traits (i.e., subordination or dominance), and results can be used to recognized and cultivate job and hiring classifications.

The survey instrument comprised three sections: (a) the first section covered demographic questions, (b) the second section covered questions based on Saucier's mini-markers, and (c) the third section covered questions based on the TSES. By using Saucier's mini-markers, the study had greater internal validity. FFM surveys such as the NEO-FFI and Saucier's mini-markers have been used and validated by researchers [14-16]. According to these researchers, Saucier's mini-markers also have the advantages of being shorter and of being in the public domain. There was no pilot study done on Saucier's mini-markers; validity was established in [14]. Cronbach's alphas were within acceptable standards. The researcher conducted a sample study on the demographic questions with 40 participants from Cerritos College. The fundamental purpose of conducting a pilot study is to examine the feasibility of an approach that is intended to ultimately be used in a larger scale study [17].

There was no pilot study done on the TSES, as validity has been established in [19], where Cronbach's alphas were within acceptable standards and Test-retest reliability of .67 (N = 158) and .65 (N = 161) [20].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Trait Comparison

Trait	Full Time Instructors	Part time Instructors
Agreeableness	Weak	Weak
Conscientious	Weak	Weak
Extraversion	Weak	Weak
Neuroticism	High-level	Weak
Openness / intellect	High-level	moderately low

The researcher correlated the data using Pearson's correlation coefficient to investigate the relationships between the quantitative variables of personality traits and the instructors' employment status and years of instruction. Several interesting factors emerged with respect to the differences between full and part-time, and years of service. The data showed (Table 1) full-time instructors encompassed personalities with high subordinate levels of neuroticism, moderately high subordinate levels of openness/intellect, and weak extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Part-time instructors had a moderately low correlation with extraversion and conscientiousness, and a weak correlation with agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness/intellect.

When examining the years of service data (Table 2), there were several differences as compared to previous studies. Furnham and Fudge [16] establishes a definite association, but different than the vast majority of the current body of knowledge, they were unable to discover excessive neuroticism and extraversion as principal traits in the success of participants in their research. Kneip et al. [21] uncovered the importance of agreeableness for the successful instruction of students by online instructors. Agreeableness was not a strong indicator in this study; this may be a direct correlation to the participants (i.e., junior college level instructors) and prove different with traditional for-year university instructors.

Table 2: Level of Correlation by Service Years

Trait	< 1 year	1 – 5	6 – 10	11 – 15	16 – 20
Agreeableness	None	Weak	Weak	High	Moderate
Conscientious	Moderate	Low moderate	Dominate	Moderate	High
Extraversion	Subordinate	Weak Dominate	Dominate	Moderate High	Moderate
Neuroticism	Moderate	Moderate	Dominate	Moderate	High
Openness / intellect	Subordinate	Low moderate	Dominate	Moderate High	Not significant

According to [22], many community colleges focus their recruitment and hiring efforts on individuals who have first-hand knowledge of the subject being taught and their ability to communicate their knowledge and skills to the learner. By hiring instructors (i.e. part-time adjunct and full-time tenured) that encompass specific personality traits businesses, in particular, community colleges are able to mitigate the costs associated with losing and replacing instructor attrition. These costs may then me reinvested into the business to improve technology and infrastructure.

Instructors who were in the position for less than 1 year showed a subordinate correlation of extraversion and openness/intellect, a moderately dominant correlation of conscientiousness and neuroticism, and no correlation with agreeableness. Between 1 and 5 years they showed a moderate subordinate correlation of neuroticism, a low moderately subordinate correlation of conscientiousness and openness/intellect, and a weak subordinate correlation with agreeableness and weak dominant correlation with extraversion. Between 6 and 10 years, they showed a dominant correlation between extraversion and neuroticism, a moderately high dominant correlation between conscientiousness and openness/intellect,

and a weak subordinate correlation with agreeableness. Between 11 and 15 years, they showed a high subordinate correlation of agreeableness, a moderately high dominant correlation between extraversion and openness/intellect, and a moderately subordinate correlation of conscientiousness and neuroticism. Between 16 and 20 years, they showed a high dominant correlation of conscientiousness and neuroticism, a moderately dominant correlation of extraversion and a moderately subordinate correlation of agreeableness, and no significant correlation with openness/intellect. Those with more than 20 years showed a high dominant correlation of neuroticism and openness/intellect, a moderately high subordinate correlation of conscientiousness, and a moderate subordinate correlation of extraversion and a moderate dominant correlation of agreeableness.

Employees who feel they are professionally successful are more likely to stay at their jobs [23]. Hiring the right people is the foundation of employee retention, and a lack of understanding applicants' behaviors and personality traits is directly correlated with hiring the wrong people. Florentine [24] asserted that retention begins with recruitment by understanding which applicants encompass the personality and behavior traits that will meet the needs of the business.

The study results were in conflict with some of the prevailing literature. Furnham and Fudge [16] established a definite association, but different than the vast majority of the current body of knowledge, as they were unable to discover excessive neuroticism and extraversion as principal traits in the success of participants in their research. They also affirmed that additional analysis is necessary. Kneipp et al. [21] uncovered the importance of agreeableness for the successful instruction of students by online instructors. Agreeableness was not a strong indicator in the current study, which may be related to the participants being junior college level instructors and prove different with traditional 4-year university instructors.

Public two-year institutions hired 400,000 faculty members in 2009 [25]. Part-time instructors made up 70 percent of the new hires. The data did not show differences in hiring practices between California community college hiring practices and the hiring practices of 4-year colleges and universities. Many community colleges focus their recruitment and hiring efforts on individuals who have first-hand knowledge of the subject being taught and the ability to communicate their knowledge and skills to learners [22]. By hiring instructors (i.e., part-time adjunct and full-time tenured) who encompass specific personality traits, businesses, in particular, community colleges, can mitigate the costs associated with attrition and replacing instructors. These costs can then be reinvested into the business to improve technology and infrastructure.

CONCLUSIONS

There have been extensive analyses dedicated to understanding and categorizing what constitutes great employees or individuals for specific jobs in the last few decades; however, to a great degree, these studies focused on ability (e.g., aptitude, skill). The personality traits that are vital for organizational success and retention must be additionally studied; this was the primary purpose of the current study. Holmes et al. [26] believed instructors need to be flexible, resilient, and self-regulating. The research was completed with a focus on aptitude, particularly those that centered on leadership, communication, and management [2]. Capabilities usually are perceived as necessary in all extents of organizations in the postsecondary education business. Alshare and Miller [27] believed instructors need to be able to help their learners, encompassing the personality traits of a facilitator. A definite association among the five traits in the FFM has been established [16]. Conversely different than the vast majority of the current body of knowledge, they were unable to

discover excessive neuroticism and extraversion as principal traits in the success of participants in their research. They felt neuroticism and extraversion were curvilinear (i.e., with too much or too little being less than ideal for implementation), with a functional relationship between the personality traits and productivity. Literature affirms that additional analysis is necessary [16]. Kneipp et al. uncovered the importance of online instructors encompassing agreeableness. "Agreeableness as a personality characteristic is described as being positive and accepting of others. It denotes the traits of trustworthiness, helpfulness, and caring" [21].

The researcher correlated the data using multiple linear regression in SPSS to analyze the relationships between the dependent variables (i.e., highest degree earned, years of instruction, self-rated success, part-time adjunct instructors, and full-time tenured instructors) and the independent variables (i.e., neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness). Assumptions that needed to be included were: regression residuals were normally distributed, there was a linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables, the residuals were homoscedastic, there was an absence of multicollinearity, and multiple linear regression fit a line through multi-dimensional space of data points. All the variables were quantitative; the independent variables were the personality traits and the dependent variables were years instructing, as well as part-time and full-time employment. Saucier made the mini-markers into a 9-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being *extremely inaccurate* and 9 being *extremely accurate*. The results showed high correlations of the five personality traits for all of the questions. For instance, the data for the highest degree earned indicated a strong correlation of extraversion (.906) and 110 neuroticism (.844) as it related to instructors' desire to earn higher degrees. The data for the number of years the instructor had been instructing indicated a strong correlation of extraversion (.980), conscientiousness (.844), and openness (.831) as it related to tenure; important information for leaders of any organization who wish to reduce costs associated with turnover. The data for instructors who were also administrators indicated a strong correlation of agreeableness (.904). This is a good indicator for hiring managers; if they wish to hire administrators, it may be important that candidates show agreeable skills (e.g., cooperation, warmth, and kindness). Data were also correlated using Pearson's correlation coefficients to investigate the relationships between the quantitative variables of the personality traits and the different years in the field (i.e., less than a year, 1 to 5 years, 5 to 10 years, 10 to 15 years, 15 to 20 years, and more than 20 years) as well as part-time versus full-time instructors. "Pearson's correlation coefficient (*r*) is a measure of the strength of the association between the two variables" (University of West England, 2017, para. 2).

This research correlated the data using Pearson's correlation coefficient to investigate the relationships between the quantitative variables of personality traits and the instructors' employment status and years of instruction. The data showed full-time instructors encompassed personalities with high subordinate levels of neuroticism, moderately high subordinate levels of openness/intellect, and weak extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Part-time instructors had a moderately low correlation with extraversion and conscientiousness, and a weak correlation with agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness/intellect.

Following the initial review of the current body of knowledge and the analysis of this research data, there are some apparent gaps that need to be studied to add to the literature. Many researchers [1, 2, 15, 29, 30] agree that job success, contentment, and retention as an instructor or course facilitator are reliably associated with greater concentrations of neuroticism, conscientiousness, and extraversion. Mentors and coaches need greater concentrations of agreeableness and openness besides the other three traits, which are not necessary for people who are accountable for their individual success

[16]. Results of the current research indicated a higher correlation of neuroticism and openness/intellect with instructor success and retention. The main missing areas within prior studies, as well as this research, are the lack of clarity on whether personality traits are inherent or gained from experience. The literature and this study help clarify how they correlate with years of instruction, as well as the difference found between part-time and full-time instructors, but not how the traits are formed.

CONTINUING RESEARCH

Following the review of the current body of knowledge and the analysis of this research data, there are some apparent gaps that need to be studied to add to the literature. Many researchers [1, 2, 15, 28, 29] agree that job success, contentment, and retention as an instructor or course facilitator are reliably associated with greater concentrations of neuroticism, conscientiousness, and extraversion. Furnham and Fudge [16] indicated mentors and coaches need greater concentrations of agreeableness and openness besides the other three traits, which are not necessary of people who are accountable for their individual success. Results of the current research indicated a higher correlation of neuroticism and openness/intellect with instructor success and retention. The main holes within prior studies, as well as this research, are the lack of clarity on whether personality traits are inherent or gained from experience. The literature and this study help clarify how they correlate with years of instruction, as well as the difference found between part-time and full-time instructors, but not how the traits are formed.

The first recommendation is to conduct further research on how personality traits are obtained. There is significance and importance to this topic because, if these traits are inherent, companies will have to finance further research and conduct personality tests pre-hire to avoid employing the incorrect person for the position. If traits are gained from experience, companies can invest in the education of possible instructors on these traits post-hire. These tests can then help mitigate the costs associated with employment changes (i.e., hiring and recruiting a new employee). In the case of the state of California, part-time instructor changes cost between $23 million and $46 million and the total cost of full-time instructor changes is between $37 and $75 million [30].

The second recommendation is for further research on how personality traits are affected (e.g., changed, developed, or gained) when an instructor goes from being a part-time adjunct instructor to full-time tenured status. Piercy, Cravens, and Lane [31] believed additional inquiry was indispensable on teachers over time, concentrating on probable personality trait alterations. Personality traits from one arrangement to a different arrangement are dissimilar [15]; unfortunately, the body of work does not clarify whether instructors already possessed these traits but were unexpressed in their part-time instructional positions or that they had to gain them through experience.

It is believed that additional study is required, concentrating the research on educating current instructors on well-defined traits to expose whether they can be gained from the experience [1]. Understanding this may help mitigate possible training costs; by investing in the development of adequate strategies, community colleges can place individuals in positions that best fit their personality traits. HR may help by developing personality tests to identify those candidates who are best suited for part-time adjunct or full-time tenured work. HR can also develop training programs that will enable candidates to increase or decrease the dominance or subordination of certain personality traits in order to increase their ability and desire to remain in the position longer.

Further researchers can replicate the current study across a larger scope (e.g. different postsecondary school systems, different states, and different countries) to better comprehend how personality traits affect hiring and training practices. Further research is also needed from an HR perspective to ascertain whether there is a significant advantage to hiring instructors as adjuncts before offering full-time status. Would this process change result in the reduced turnover of academic faculty, thus leading to a reduction in the cost of recruitment and retention of staff [32]?

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