

## Personality Traits and Emotional Labour of Nurses in Osun State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This paper examined the relationship between personality trait and emotional labour among nurses in Osun state. A total of 264 respondents that were randomly selected among nurses from two hospitals in Osun State, Nigeria, participated in the study. Data were collected using two standardized psychological scales viz: the adapted version of Big Five Inventory (BFI) and the Emotional Labour Scale (ELS). Data were subjected to Multiple Regression and Correlation Matrix. Results showed that personality traits significantly predicted nurses' emotional labour [ $f(5,258)=4.81$ ,  $R^2=0.07$ ,  $p<0.05$ ]. The results further showed a significant relationship between openness to experience and emotional labour [ $\beta=1.09$ ,  $t=4.59$ ,  $p<0.05$ ] but a significant negative relationship between extraversion and emotional labour was established [ $\beta= -0.46$ ,  $t= -2.04$ ,  $p<0.05$ ]. The results of the correlation matrix revealed a significant inverse relationship between extraversion and deep acting [ $r(262)=0.22$ ,  $p<.0.05$ ] but a significant positive relationship with surface acting [ $r(262)=0.17$ ,  $p<0.05$ ]. The study concluded that personality traits of determined emotional labour among nurses in Osun State. It recommended that personality assessments are necessary during recruitment and selection of nurses so as to determine individuals with traits that permit appropriate display of emotional labour on the job.

**Keywords:** Personality Trait, Emotional Labour, Deep Acting, Surface Acting

## **Introduction**

Since Hochschild (1975, 1979, 1983 & 1990) coined and carried out extensive research on emotional labour among employees in the service-oriented industries, studies have continued to draw on her original ideas and concepts. The concept was later defined by Grandey (2000) as the process by which employees regulate both their feelings and expressions to meet organisational goals. It involves an attempt by individuals to reduce the discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions (Liu, Perrewe, Hochwarter, and Kachmar, 2004), by engaging in effort, planning, and control needed to express organisationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions (Morris and Feldman, 1996) at work. Hochschild (1983) established that employees show two kinds of emotional labour. These are surface acting and deep acting.

When an individual uses only external manifestation of his/her emotions (such as physiognomy, tone and intonation of voice, and gestures) to meet the organisations' emotional norms without actually altering his/her emotions, is said to be performing surface acting. In this case emotional displays do not coincide with their actual emotion. A surface actor will conceal his/her sincere emotions and act in a way that is in line with the prescribed norms of the organization, as prescribed with respect to its employees' emotional displays. On the other hand, deep acting is defined as alteration of the individual's true emotions in order to comply with the organisation's emotional norms (Grandey, 2000). A deep actor alters his/her emotions in order to comply with organisational norms as he/she sincerely feels in any particular situation.

A number of dispositional factors play significant role in the display of emotion at workplace. Such dispositional factor includes personality traits, locus of control, self-esteem and so on. This present study investigated the relationship between personality traits and emotional labour. Personality is concerned with individual's characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting across time and situations. It is concerned with whether a person is happy or sad, energetic or apathetic, smart or dull, emotionally stable or unstable and is expressed through its influence on the body, conscious mental life and through individual's social behaviour (Mayer, 2005). The dominant personality traits (Big five personality traits), has five components which are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (Costa and McCrae, 1992) were examined in the study.

Openness to experience is a measure of the depth, breadth and variability in a person's imagination and urge to experience. People who are open to experience are imaginative or practical, interested in variety or routine, independent or conforming, intellectually curious and sensitive to beauty. They tend to be, compared to closed people, more creative and more aware of their feelings. Conscientiousness is a measure of goal-directed behaviour and amount of control over impulses. A conscientious individual is hardworking and desire to do their job well, tend to show self-discipline, act dutifully and shows a preference for planned rather than spontaneous behaviour. Extraverts tend to be more physically and verbally active, adventurous, assertive, frank, sociable and talkative whereas introverts are independent, reserved, steady and like being alone. Extraverts are people with positive emotions and tendency to seek out stimulation and company of others and they are often perceived as full of energy (Costa and McCrae, 1992).

Agreeableness reflects stable individual differences in the need to develop and maintain positive relationships through social behaviour. Agreeable person is compliant, cooperative, getting along with others, kind, considerate and empathetic (Tobin, Grazano, Vanman and Tassinary, 2000). Their concern to get along with others and to keep positive interpersonal relationship makes them adapt emotional responses to fit any situation. Its other side is a disagreeable person who is unkind and sometimes antisocial. Neuroticism is a measure of affect and emotional control. Low levels of neuroticism indicate emotional

stability whereas high levels of neuroticism increase the likelihood of experiencing negative emotions such as anger, anxiety or depression. Individuals with high levels of neuroticism are reactive and more easily bothered by stimuli in their environment. They frequently become unstable, worried, temperamental and sad (Costa and McCrae, 1992). They can interpret ordinary situations as threatening, and minor frustrations as hopelessly difficult especially at workplace.

Conscientious individuals have been found to be responsible and careful. Thus, they show greater adherence to display rules meet organisations expectations by trying to be more authentic and sincere (Diefendorff, Croyle, and Gosserand, 2005). These individuals might be more likely to perform deep acting rather than faking their emotions by surface acting. Further studies have also confirmed that conscientiousness was negatively related to surface acting (Austin, Dore and O'Donovan, 2008).

Similarly, Austin, Dore and O'Donovan (2008) found a negative relationship between extraversion and surface acting. Judge, Woolf and Hurst (2009) examined the moderating role of extraversion in the relationship between emotional labour strategies and work outcomes and found a negative (though insignificant) relationship between extraversion and surface acting. Since extravert individuals are predisposed to experiencing positive emotions such as enthusiasm and optimism more often (Costa and McCrae, 1992), individuals who are high in extraversion may not need to fake their emotions during their interactions with patients and display their real feelings.

Deep acting requires expected expressive behaviour and simultaneously regulation of inner feelings by invoking memories and thoughts that induce desired emotions (Lee & Ok, 2014; Zapf, 2002). It is sometimes called "acting in a good faith", strongly motivated attempt to display expected emotions (Van Dijk, Smith, & Cooper, 2011; Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005) and means to manage actual feelings by proactively changing ones feelings to evoke authentic emotional display that is in accordance to organisation rules (Dahling & Perez, 2010; Lee & Ok, 2014). Customer satisfaction can be gained when offered sincere service therefore deep acting can be linked to high scores in service evaluation (Sohn & Lee, 2012) because employees by deep acting do not create only outer but also inner expression by recalling the past joyful circumstances that can create appropriate emotions (Chu & Murrmann, 2006) that follow genuine emotions (Diefendorff *et al*, 2005) which require conscious action controlled at the intellectual level of emotion regulation. Thus, employees have to try to respond to guests through deep acting to achieve high level of service quality (Lee & Ok, 2014). Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) found that one can display intense emotions only through deep acting, while the very genuineness of emotions will be lost through surface acting.

Diefendorff, *et al* (2005) found that agreeableness significantly and positively related with deep acting which implied that individuals, who scored higher on agreeableness dimension, were more likely to engage in deep acting. Monaghan (2006) also examined the relationship among agreeableness, frequency and perceived difficulty of emotional labour activities and discovered that agreeableness was significantly related to both frequency and perceived difficulty of deep acting in the expected directions. Basim, Begenirbas and Can Yalcin (2013) also found that surface acting had significant relations with neuroticism and openness to experience. Deep acting also significantly related to openness to experience and conscientiousness. Austin, Dore, and O'Donovan, (2008) and Diefendorff, *et al* (2005) reported that neuroticism was significantly and positively related to surface acting. On the other hand, a negative (though insignificant) relationship was found between neuroticism and deep acting.

When an employee has to display emotions that are not identical to their own it may lead to psychological ill-health. Similarly, expressing more intensive emotion requires more effort (Zapf, 2002). Yet others have reported positive outcomes emotional labour. For instance, emotional labour does not only make interactions more predictable and help avoid embarrassments that are caused by inter-personal relations (Yang & Chang, 2008), it also yield positive individual's psychological outcomes like job satisfaction, enhanced self-development and self-esteem (Shani, Uriely, Reichel & Ginsburg 2014; Yang & Chang, 2008) and that deep acting does not lead to burnout but rather conveys benefits to employees and to customers (Kim, 2008).

In a closely related study, Ehigie, Oguntuase, Ibode and Ehigie (2012) assessed the influence of big five attributes on the performance of emotional labour of 145 frontline hotel workers randomly selected from ten hotels within Ibadan, Nigeria. Emotional labour and its two facets (deep acting and surface acting) were regressed on the personality factors while demographic variables of age, education and job tenure were the control variables. Their study found out that extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness negatively predicted deep acting, extraversion positively predicted surface acting, while extraversion and neuroticism negatively predicted overall emotional labour.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on two main theories: Affective Events Theory and Trait Theory.

**Affective Events Theory (AET)** developed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), has shown the importance of affective events on employees work related behaviours. Grandey (2000) suggested that affective events could determine which emotional strategy would be adopted by employees, AET states that characteristics of the job make the occurrence of certain types of work events more likely than others. Affective reactions, in turn, are proposed to lead to both immediate, affect-driven behaviours (such as smiling, frowning, yelling, leaving the work floor) and also to contribute to work attitudes over time (such as job satisfaction). Affective Events Theory predicts that work events create emotional responses on the part of employees and affect their work related attitudes and behaviours such as job performance and job satisfaction. However, the intensity of this effect evoked by an event is determined by personal dispositions such as personality traits and mood.

**Trait Theory:** A number of theories have made significant contributions to our understanding of personality. However, this study rests on the trait theories. Unlike the humanistic and psychoanalytic theories of personality, the trait theories attempt to describe individual differences in behavioural disposition. This is because the theory centres on traits which are enduring, stable attributes or characteristics of a person. This theory posits that traits are relatively stable overtime, differ across individuals (for example some people are outgoing whereas others are shy), and influence behaviour. Traits theory idea is that human behaviour is traced to the joint effects of the organism's inherited capabilities and past experience. Trait theories are primarily interested in the measurement of traits, which is defined as habitual patterns of behaviour, thoughts, and emotion (Kassin, 2003).

The best known of trait theories are those of Eysenck's three-dimension theory and the five factor theory of personality. The five factor theory have been embraced mostly by researchers today believe that there are five core personality traits. Many psychologists (McCrae & Costa, 1987; McCrae & Costa, 1992) believed that the five factors are sufficient description of human personality. Trait theory is focused on identifying and measuring these individual personality characteristics. It is against this backdrop that the present study aimed at investigating the relationship between personality traits and emotional labour (deep acting and surface acting) among nurses in two selected hospitals in Osun State, Nigeria

## **Methodology**

A total of two hundred and sixty four respondents participated in the study. The participants were nurses from the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital Complex, Ile-Ife and Osun State General Hospital, Osogbo both in Osun State, Nigeria. The two teaching hospitals were by virtue of their capacity to accept referrals from neighboring hospitals. The hospitals have large number of nurses that permitted sufficient samples compared to other private hospitals.

## **Instrument**

The standardized psychological scales; Emotional Labour Scale (ELS) and Big Five Inventory (BFI). The modified version of Emotional Labour Scale (ELS by Grandey (1999), consists of 18 items to assess nurses' emotional labour. The scale has two components, surface acting and deep acting. A sample item for surface acting dimension is "I pretend to have emotions that I don't really have", whereas a sample item for deep acting dimension is "I make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to patients". The Emotional Labour Scale assesses overall emotional labour, which is a combination of the deep acting and surface acting. Items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16, and 17 measures surface acting, items 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15 and 18 measures deep acting, while all the 18 items measure general emotional labour. The ELS requires the respondent to rate each item on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). All the items will be summed to get a composite score for emotional labour. Ünler – Öz (2007) found a reliability coefficient value of 0.77 for surface acting and 0.68 for deep acting. Cronbach's Alpha value in Yalçın (2010) original study was 0.80 for deep acting and 0.81 for surface acting.

The original Big Five Inventory which consisted of 44 items was designed by John, Donahue and Kentle (1991) to assess and measure personality from a five dimensional perspective. The essence of the perspective is that personality characteristics can be resolved into five broad dimensions which are distinct from one another. These dimensions are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. This study adapted 20 items from the original scale. Items 1 to 4 measure extraversion; items 5 to 8 measure agreeableness; items 9 to 12 measure conscientiousness; items 13 to 15 measure neuroticism; items 16 to 20 measure openness to experience.

The concurrent validity coefficients obtained by Umeh (2004) with University Maladjustment Scale (Kleinmuntz, 1961) are extraversion 0.05, agreeableness 0.13, conscientiousness 0.11, neuroticism 0.39 and openness 0.24. The coefficients of reliability provided by John, Donahue and Kentle (1991) reported a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.80 and by a month test retest coefficient=0.85. The BFI has a mean convergent validity coefficients of 0.75 and 0.85 with the big five instruments authored by Costa and McCrae (1992) and Goldberg (1992) respectively. A Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.75 was obtained for this study.

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected was subjected to the appropriate statistical analysis using SPSS 16. Multiple regression and correlation matrix was utilised to see if there was any relationship between personality traits and emotional labour (surface and deep acting) among nurses.

## Results

**Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis of Emotional Labour and Personality Traits**

<p><i>Multiple R</i> = 0.292  <i>R-Square</i> = 0.085  <i>Adjusted R-Square</i> = 0.068  <i>Standard Error</i> = 9.7493</p>					
<i>Model</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Regression</i>	2287.822	5	457.564	4.814	.000b
<i>Residual</i>	24522.663	258	95.049		
<i>Total</i>	26810.485	263			
<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE.B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>(Constant)</i>	56.452	7.575		7.452	.000
<i>Agreeableness</i>	-.168	.293	-.044	-.575	.566
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	-.140	.268	-.040	-.524	.601
<i>Neuroticism</i>	-.133	.365	-.024	-.363	.717
<i>Openness</i>	1.093	.238	.310	4.592	.000
<i>Extraversion</i>	-.457	.224	-.127	-2.036	.043

{F(5,258)=4.814, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.068, P<0.05}

Results on Table 1 showed that personality traits significantly relate to emotional labour (F(5,258)=4.814, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.068, P<0.05). The result also indicates that the independent variables personality traits explained 6.8% variation in dependent variable emotional labour. Results further showed that openness to experience has significant independent prediction on emotional labour ( $\beta$ =1.093, t=4.592, p<0.05), extraversion negatively predicted emotional labour ( $\beta$ =-0.457, t=-2.036, p<0.05). It means that as the level of extraversion increases, emotional labour decreases. However, personality traits will significantly relate to emotional labour.

**Table 2: Correlation matrix showing relationship between Personality Traits, Surface Acting, Deep Acting and Emotional Labour**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Extraversion (1)</i>	<i>1</i>							
<i>Agreeableness (2)</i>	<i>.162**</i>	<i>1</i>						
<i>Conscientious (3)</i>	<i>.107</i>	<i>.522**</i>	<i>1</i>					
<i>Neuroticism (4)</i>	<i>-.145*</i>	<i>-</i> <i>.164**</i>	<i>-</i> <i>.394**</i>	<i>1</i>				
<i>Openness (5)</i>	<i>.116</i>	<i>.408**</i>	<i>.162**</i>	<i>-.157*</i>	<i>1</i>			
<i>Deep-acting (6)</i>	<i>-</i> <i>.223**</i>	<i>.071</i>	<i>-.005</i>	<i>-.071</i>	<i>.247**</i>	<i>1</i>		
<i>Surface-acting (7)</i>	<i>.173*</i>	<i>.011</i>	<i>.037</i>	<i>.005</i>	<i>.152*</i>	<i>.226**</i>	<i>1</i>	
<i>Emotional Labour (8)</i>	<i>-.252*</i>	<i>.046</i>	<i>-.016</i>	<i>-.031</i>	<i>.256**</i>	<i>.734**</i>	<i>.745**</i>	<i>1</i>

**Note: \*\*= Correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed), \*= Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2 tailed).**

A correlation matrix was employed to further explain the relationship at 0.05% significant level. Personality traits has five dimensions (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience), each of this dimension were subjected to test of relationship with respondent corresponding scores on deep acting, surface acting and overall emotional labour. The analysis result as presented in table 2 showed that extraversion has significant inverse relationship with deep acting { $r(262) = 0.223, p < 0.05$ } indicating that the higher the level of individual extraversion the lower they deep acted. Furthermore, it is also found that personality traits of extraversion has significant positive correlation with surface acting { $r(262) = 0.173, p < .05$ } and negative relationship with overall emotional labour { $r(262) = 0.252, p < .05$ }.

The table further shows that openness to experience has significant positive relationship with both surface acting { $r(262) = 0.152, p < .05$ }, deep acting { $r(262) = 0.247, p < .05$ }. The result indicates that the more opened to experience an employee is, the better they can perform deep and surface acting. In addition, the personality traits of openness to experience has a significant direct relationship with emotional labour { $r(262) = 0.256, p < .05$ }. However all other dimensions of personality traits were not found to be significantly related to deep acting, surface acting or overall emotional labour.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between personality traits and emotional labour (surface acting and deep acting) among nurses in selected hospital in Osun State. The result obtained showed that personality traits significantly relate to emotional labour. However, out of all the five dimensions of personality traits, only extraversion and openness to experience significantly relate to deep acting, surface acting and overall emotional labour. Extraversion has negative relationship with deep acting and overall emotional labour, but a positive relationship with surface acting.

The results of the present study suggested that when individuals are in positive mood, they perform surface acting through automatic regulation. Since extraverts are predisposed to experiencing positive emotions more often, it is plausible to think that they will also perform higher levels of surface acting. The result is in agreement with Ehigie, Oguntase, Ibode and

Ehigie (2012) who found that extraversion was a negative predictor of deep acting and overall emotional labour, and positive predictor of surface acting. This contradicts the study of Diefendorff and Gosserand (2003) that individuals high in extraversion will have little need to perform surface acting. This result also supports that of Tan, Foo, Chong, & Renee (2003), who found employees with high extraversion traits as characterised by the display of more positive emotions than service employees with low extraversion traits. In a related manner Tan et al.'s (2003) found that individuals who are high on extraversion trait display more positive emotions than those low on extraversion trait. On the contrary, Austin, Dore and O'Donovan (2008), and Judge, Woolf and Hurst (2009) found that extraversion was a negative predictor of surface acting. However, the choice of deep acting over surface acting is beneficial to the employee because while both forms of emotional labour require effort, surface acting is more taxing because more effort is required to suppress inappropriate emotions and produce the appropriate ones (Richards & Gross, 2000). According to emotional regulation problem (Zapf, 2002), high emotional dissonance occur when feeling inauthentic is obvious when applying surface acting. Therefore, employees who engage more in surface acting suffer more negative outcomes such as low job satisfaction as well as poorer service quality (Lam, and Chen 2012; Kim, 2008).

Since introverts are reserved, independent, shy and unsociable (Costa and McCrae, 1992), this has a negative influence on the emotions expected of a nurses in hospital. Thus, in order to comply with the hospital's emotional norms, nurses are required to modify/alter their inner feelings to mirror the expected outward emotions. Compared to introverts, extraverts tend to be happier on the jobs and with their lives as a whole. They experience more positive emotions, and they express their feelings freely. They also tend to perform better on jobs that require significant interpersonal interaction perhaps because they have more social skills. This study therefore concludes that personality traits determined emotional labour of nurses in Osun State, Nigeria.

### **Recommendation**

This study demonstrated that personality traits are significant predictors of emotional labour; a number of recommendations were suggested.

- i) Hospitals management Board may consider assessment of personality traits in the processes of recruitment and selection of nurses in the hospital organisations. They need to ensure there is good fit between individual personality and job demands. Nurses with personality disposition of extraversion and openness to experience should be considered during the selection process. Thus, employ nurse of high or low extraversion and high openness to experience.
- ii) There is a need for the hospital management to provide psychological supports and assistance for nurses through adequate training programmes that enable the development of emotional regulation skills so that nurse can easily deal with problematic patients and manage psychological issues of emotional labour.
- iii) Government and hospital management board on their part need to establish suitable work environment by looking at display rules that are worker-friendly where employees are able to regulate emotions by deep acting.

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