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The Relationships between Preschool Teachers' Personality Traits and Their Relationships at Workplace

Byoung Sook Jin, Sang Lim Kim

Graduated School of Education, Incheon National University
Department of Early Childhood Education, Incheon National University
nybaek2003@inu.ac.kr, slkim@inu.ac.kr

Abstract

Preschool teachers' relationships at workplace is an important component that affects the work performance of caring and educating young children. This study investigated the connection between preschool teachers' personality traits and their relationships at workplace. The participants were two hundred and eighty two teachers in 55 preschools and asked to answer the survey questionnaires. . Two research questions were investigated; (1) are there correlations between preschool teachers' personality traits and their relationships at workplace? (2) do preschool teachers' personality traits affect their relationships at workplace? The results showed that preschool teachers' personality traits were correlated with their relationships at workplace; neuroticism showed a negative correlation while the other four (extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) showed positive correlations with relationships at workplace. In addition, preschool teachers' personality traits had effects on their relationships at workplace in overall. Especially, neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were revealed as significantly influencing personality traits on preschool teachers' relationships at workplace.

Keywords: Preschool teachers, personality traits, relationships at workplace.

1. Introduction

Preschool teachers play a powerful role to ensuring quality of early childhood education and care, and their relationships at workplace are keys that impact on their job satisfaction and daily works [1]. The important role of teachers' relationships with colleagues and families has long been understood and established as a priority by teachers and researchers in early childhood education [2]. Preschool teachers' relationships at workplace include ones with their colleagues and directors as well as parents [3]. Research shows that preschool teachers struggle with relationships with parents [4], and their relationships with director impact on their work performance [5]. Some studies also reveal that preschool teachers' work-relationship affects their decisions on turnover in a negative way [6] and their job satisfaction level in a positive way [7].

Based on evidence regarding the importance of preschool teachers' relationships at workplace, this study hypothesized and investigated the potential correlates of dispositional factor such as personality traits. Accumulated evidence suggests that virtually all personality measures can be categorized under the umbrella of a 5-factor model of personality, which has been labeled the 'Big Five' [8-9]. The personality traits are considered as quite substantial and fairly stable over time [10]. Yoo and Min [11] report that big five

personality factors are related with a variety of performance criteria in a variety of settings, indicating neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness as valid predictors. Some studies also found that personality traits have statistically significant effects on employees' job stress, burn-out, and adjustment at workplace [12-14].

The dimensions composing the 5-factor model are neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Each dimension refers to the different aspects of individual's personality [15]. Neuroticism is the most pervasive and prominent trait, characterized by sadness, moodiness, and emotional instability. Individuals who are high in this trait tend to experience mood swings, anxiety, irritability, and sadness. Neuroticism refers generally to a lack of positive psychological adjustment and emotional stability. Extraversion is characterized by excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and high amounts of emotional expressiveness. People who are high in extraversion are outgoing and tend to gain energy in social situations. Openness to experience trait features characteristics such as imagination and insight. People who are high in this trait also tend to have a broad range of interests. They are curious about the world and other people and eager to learn new things and enjoy new experiences. Agreeableness is characterized cooperative as well as likeable. Conscientiousness is related to an individual's degree of self-control, as well as need for achievement, order, and persistence. Highly conscientious people tend to be organized and mindful of details. They plan ahead, think about how their behavior affects others, and are mindful of deadlines.

Within this context, this study examined the relations between preschool teachers' personality traits, the dispositional factor, and their relationships at workplace. In addition, the effects of personality traits on preschool teachers' relationships at workplace were also investigated. Because teachers' relationships is a vital factor that impacts on their successful job performance and child development, this approach gives practical implementations in training and recruiting teachers. The research questions for the study are:

[Research question 1] Are there correlations between preschool teachers' personality traits and their relationships at workplace?

[Research question 2] Do preschool teachers' personality traits affect their relationships at workplace?

2. Method

2.1 Participants and Procedure

Two hundred eighty two preschool teachers participated in this study. Participants were recruited from 55 child care centers in Seoul, Kyonggi-do, and Incheon areas. The types of day care centers where the participants worked at were 91(32.3%) home-based day care centers, 147(52.1%) private day care centers, and 44(15.6%) public day care centers. The ages of preschool teachers ranged 23 to 57 with the mean of 35.6 years. Participants were informed of their rights and assured that their participation in the survey was completely voluntary. The ethical aspects of the study were properly addressed to protect participants' rights. After volunteers had confirmed their willingness to participate, they were asked to complete questionnaires. Completed questionnaires were then collected.

2.2 Measures of Constructs

2.2.1 Relationships at workplace

Preschool teaches' relationships at workplace was assessed using the Relationships at Workplace Scale developed by Kim [3]. The scale consists of 30 statements, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* in three subcategories: relationships with colleagues, relationships with directors, and relationships with parents. Higher scores indicated higher levels of relationships at workplace. The reliabilities for three sub-factors and total scores of relationships at workplace in the present study as determined by Cronbach's α were .86, .94, and .84 respectively and .76 in total.

2.3.2 Personality Traits

Preschool teaches' personality traits was assessed using the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) that was developed by Goldberg [8] and translated into Korean by Yoo *et al.* [16]. The scale consists of 50 statements, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* in five subcategories: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Higher scores indicated higher levels of each dimension in personality trait. The reliabilities for the five subcategories of the IPIP in the present study as determined by Cronbach's α were .83, .85, .66, .71, and .80 respectively.

2.3 Data Analyses

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 23.0 software (IBM Co., Armonk, NY, USA). Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtoses, and reliability coefficients, were used to examine data tendencies. For the first research question, we conducted Pearson's correlation analyses to examine the relations between preschool teachers' personality traits and their work relationships. For the second research question, we conducted a multiple regression analysis to determine whether personality traits significantly affected relationships at workplace.

3. Results

Mean scores and standard deviations along with minimum and maximum scores for personality traits and work relationships are shown in Table 1. No violation of assumptions on normal distribution of data was found based on skewness and kurtoses.

Table 1. Statistical description of personality traits and relationships at workplace (*N* = 282)

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtoses
Personality traits						
Neuroticism	1.0	4.0	2.58	5.03	-.06	.68
Extraversion	1.2	4.7	3.21	5.09	.16	.81
Openness	2.5	4.4	3.24	3.74	.48	.29
Agreeableness	2.3	4.4	3.49	3.58	-.25	-.03
Conscientiousness	2.5	4.8	3.62	4.39	.22	-.23
Relationships at workplace						
With colleagues	2.7	5.0	3.94	4.91	-.15	-.22
With directors	2.3	5.0	3.88	6.14	-.30	-.18
With parents	2.1	4.9	3.75	4.88	-.15	.04
Total	2.7	4.9	3.86	13.80	-.15	-.12

The Pearson correlation analyses were run to examine the correlation between preschool teachers' personality traits and their relationships at workplace. As listed in Table 2, all of 5 sub-factors in preschool teachers' personality traits showed statistically significant correlations with three sub-factors of work relationships as well as work relationship in total. Specifically, participants' neuroticism was negatively correlated with relationship with colleagues (r = - .44, p < .01), relationship with directors (r = - .48, p < .01), relationship with parents (r = - .50, p < .01), and relationships in total (r = - .55, p < .01). The rest of sub-factors were all positively correlated with sub-factors of relationships at workplace as well as relationships in total (extraversion, r = .31 ~ .39, p < .01; openness, r = .34 ~ .43, p < .01; agreeableness, r = .40 ~ .54, p < .01; conscientiousness, r = .37 ~ .49, p < .01).

Table 2. The correlations between preschool teachers' personality traits and work relationships

Variables	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
Personality traits									
① Neuroticism									
② Extraversion	-.44**								
③ Openness	-.37**	.65**							
④ Agreeableness	-.35**	.43**	.53**						
⑤ Conscientiousness	-.37**	.40**	.54**	.49**					
Relationships at workplace									
⑥ With colleagues	-.44**	.31**	.34**	.54**	.37**				
⑦ With directors	-.48**	.34**	.35**	.40**	.44**	.62**			
⑧ With parents	-.50**	.36**	.42**	.42**	.45**	.51**	.72**		
⑨ Total	-.55**	.39**	.43**	.52**	.49**	.81**	.92**	.85**	

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyze the effects of sub-factors of personality traits on their relationships at workplace (Table 3). Prior to conducting multiple regression analyses, the assumptions were tested. The Durbin-Watson value, a measure of the independence of residuals, was 2.01 that proved no correlation to residuals. The collinearity statistics of variance inflation factors (*VIF*) were all within acceptable limits, ranging from 1.59 to 2.79. Therefore, the regression models with five personality traits as the independent variables and three relationships as the dependent variables were tested.

Table 3. The effects of personality traits on relationships at workplace

Personality traits	Relationships at workplace							
	Total		With colleagues		With directors		With parents	
	ß	*t*	ß	*t*	ß	*t*	ß	*t*
Neuroticism	-.17	-3.03**	-.15	-2.34*	-.15	-2.32*	-.15	-2.44*
Extraversion	-.09	-1.52	-.08	-1.22	-.06	-.84	-.10	-1.59
Openness	-.01	-.12	-.04	-.57	-.04	-.63	.07	1.09
Agreeableness	.21	4.05***	.39	6.48***	.10	1.76	.09	1.50
Conscientiousness	.14	2.52*	.04	.63	.17	2.84**	.13	2.21*
F	43.73***		29.47***		29.96***		34.82***	
adj. R^2	.52		.39		.40		.43	

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

As listed in Table 3, preschool teachers' personality traits statistically significantly affect their relationships at workplace in total ($F = 43.73$, $p < .001$) explaining 52% of the variance (*adj.* $R^2 = .52$). With regards to sub-factors of relationships at workplace, preschool teachers' personality traits statistically significantly affect their relationships with colleagues ($F = 29.47$, $p < .001$) explaining 39% of the variance (*adj.* $R^2 = .39$), relationships with directors ($F = 29.96$, $p < .001$) explaining 40% of the variance (*adj.* $R^2 = .52$), and relationships with parents ($F = 34.82$, $p < .001$) explaining 43% of the variance (*adj.* $R^2 = .52$). These results show the overall effects of preschool teachers' personality traits on their relationships at workplace.

On the other hand, the significant predictors among five sub-factors of personality traits vary by the dependent variables. Neuroticism has a significant negative association with all of three sub-factors of

relationships (relationships with colleagues, t = -2.34, p < .05; relationships with directors, t = -2.32, p < .05; relationships with parents, t = -2.44, p < .05) as well as relationships in total (t = -3.03, p < .01). Agreeableness has a positive association with relationships with colleagues (t = 6.48, p < .001) and relationships in total (t = 4.05, p < .001), while conscientiousness has a positive association with relationships with directors (t = 2.84, p < .01), relationships with parents (t = 2.21, p < .05), and relationships in total (t = 2.52, p < .05). Extraversion and openness had no significant association with relationships at workplace.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to gain insights in the relations between preschool teachers' personality traits and their relationships at workplace and how personality traits affect relationships. Two research questions were investigated: (1) are there correlations between preschool teachers' personality traits and their relationships at workplace? (2) do preschool teachers' personality traits affect their relationships at workplace? With respect to the first research question, we found that preschool teachers' personality traits were correlated with their relationships at workplace. Among five sub-factors of personality traits, neuroticism showed a negative correlation while the other four (extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) showed positive correlations with relationships at workplace. With respect to the second research question, we found that preschool teachers' personality traits had effects on their relationships at workplace in overall. Especially, neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were revealed as significantly influencing personality traits on preschool teachers' relationships at workplace. The present study showed the statistically significant linkage between preschool teachers' personal traits and their relationships at workplace. Understanding personality traits would give preschool teachers insight that helps them establish positive relationships and adjust in working at preschool settings. The results of the present study also suggest that personality traits may be considered as important in recruiting and training processes of preschool teachers.

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