The Impact of Employee Personality on Job Outcomes: An Empirical Study of the Tourism Industry in the Maldives

Aishath Rafiyya

Faculty of Business, Government & Law, University of Canberra, Bruce ACT 2617 Australia
rafiyya@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between employee personality traits and key job outcomes—job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress, and turnover intention within the Maldivian tourism industry. Utilizing the Five-Factor Model (FFM), this research explores how conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness influence employee behavior and retention in a high-turnover, customer-centric environment. Data were collected from 146 tourism employees through an online survey, and statistical analyses, including correlation, regression, and ANOVA, were employed to evaluate the associations between personality traits and workplace outcomes. The findings indicate that conscientiousness and agreeableness are positively linked to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while neuroticism correlates with increased job stress and turnover intentions. Extraversion, though contributing to higher job satisfaction, also exhibits a relationship with heightened job stress. The study underscores the significance of aligning recruitment and management strategies with employee personality traits to enhance retention and workforce stability. The findings offer valuable insights for industry stakeholders and policymakers to improve employee engagement, satisfaction, and long-term retention in the Maldivian tourism sector.

Keywords: Personality traits, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress, turnover intention, Maldivian tourism, employee behavior, workforce retention

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is a cornerstone of the Maldivian economy, contributing significantly to both Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment. Known for its pristine beaches, luxury resorts, and unparalleled marine biodiversity, the Maldives attracts millions of visitors each year. As the industry continues to thrive, employee retention and workplace well-being have become critical to sustaining competitive advantage in this fast-paced sector.
 The success of tourism companies heavily depends on the dedication and satisfaction of their workforce, which makes understanding the factors influencing employee behavior, such as personality traits, essential (Ministry of Tourism, 2013; Suliman et al., 2010).

Personality traits, as outlined in the Five-Factor Model (FFM), play a pivotal role in determining key workplace outcomes like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. Traits such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion are frequently linked to positive workplace outcomes, whereas neuroticism tends to correlate with negative effects, including job stress and dissatisfaction (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge et al., 2002). These dynamics are especially relevant in the tourism sector, where interpersonal interactions and customer satisfaction are central to business success. For instance, agreeable employees excel in customer-facing roles due to their cooperative and empathetic nature, while conscientious individuals thrive in structured environments requiring reliability and attention to detail (Ilies et al., 2009; Kumar & Bakhshi, 2010).

Despite the global relevance of personality in shaping workplace outcomes, research on how personality traits influence employee retention and performance in the Maldivian tourism sector remains limited. The Maldives' unique socio-economic and cultural context—characterized by a high reliance on expatriate labor and the blending of local traditions with international tourism standards—presents distinct challenges for managing employee satisfaction and reducing turnover. Studies in other tourism-dependent economies have shown that high turnover rates, job stress, and satisfaction disparities are common, particularly in customer-centric roles that demand long working hours and excellent service quality (Chuang & Lee, 2011; Kennedy, 2012). However, these findings cannot be directly applied to the Maldives without considering its specific organizational and cultural nuances.

Existing research on the Maldivian tourism workforce has mainly focused on operational challenges and economic impacts, overlooking the psychological and interpersonal factors that influence employee retention. This gap is especially crucial given the high turnover rates and emotional demands of the industry, where personality traits can directly affect employee performance and customer interactions. Moreover, while global studies emphasize the importance of job satisfaction and organizational commitment in mitigating turnover intentions, there is a lack of research on how these factors play out in high-stress, high-turnover sectors such as Maldivian tourism (Perryer et al., 2010; Tornroos, 2013).

This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the relationships between personality traits, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress, and turnover intention among tourism employees in the Maldives. Using a quantitative approach, the study examines how traits such as conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism influence key workplace outcomes.
 By focusing on an industry central to the Maldivian economy, this research provides valuable insights into the psychological underpinnings of employee behavior and offers practical recommendations for improving workforce stability. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of employee retention strategies and serve as a resource for policymakers and industry stakeholders looking to enhance employee satisfaction and reduce turnover in the tourism sector.

2. Literature Review

The role of personality traits in predicting job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention has been extensively researched in organizational behavior. The Five-Factor Model (FFM), comprising conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness, serves as the cornerstone of understanding personality in the workplace (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge et al., 2002). In industries such as tourism, where interpersonal interactions are critical and emotional labor is high, these traits significantly influence job outcomes, including satisfaction, commitment, and turnover (Furnham et al., 2009). Understanding these relationships is crucial for improving employee retention and performance in the tourism industry, particularly in the Maldives, where the workforce is diverse and turnover rates are high (Tornroos, 2013).

Conscientiousness and Job Satisfaction

Conscientiousness has been widely recognized as one of the strongest predictors of job satisfaction and performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge et al., 2002). Employees who score high on conscientiousness tend to be reliable, organized, and goal-oriented, which directly enhances their job performance and satisfaction. This trait is particularly important in the tourism sector, where employees are expected to maintain high standards of customer service and attention to detail (Tornroos, 2013). In the Maldives, where tourism is a major economic driver, conscientious employees are often more successful in maintaining positive customer relationships, leading to greater job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions (Suliman et al., 2010). Studies in similar tourism economies, such as the Caribbean and Southeast Asia, have found that conscientious employees are key to maintaining high levels of service and performance (Kumar & Bakhshi, 2010; Bhuian&Menguc, 2002).

Extraversion and Employee Engagement

Extraversion, characterized by sociability and assertiveness, has a complex relationship with job satisfaction in service-oriented industries. Extraverts tend to enjoy jobs that involve frequent interactions with customers, leading to higher job satisfaction in roles requiring communication (Ilies & Judge, 2003).

However, in high-stress environments like tourism, extraverts may also experience burnout due to the emotional demands of customer service (Furnham et al., 2009). In the Maldives, where the tourism sector relies heavily on positive guest experiences, extraverts may excel in customer-facing roles, but if the work environment is excessively demanding, they may experience higher job stress and lower satisfaction (Tornroos, 2013). This dynamic underscores the importance of managing emotional labor and providing support systems for extraverted employees in the tourism industry (Schneider et al., 2009).

Agreeableness and Organizational Commitment

Agreeableness, marked by traits such as kindness, trustworthiness, and cooperation, is positively correlated with organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Kumar & Bakhshi, 2010). Agreeable employees foster positive relationships with colleagues and customers, contributing to a harmonious work environment and reducing workplace conflict (Ilies et al., 2009).

In the Maldives' tourism industry, where customer service is a cornerstone of business, agreeable employees help enhance the guest experience, thereby improving organizational commitment and customer satisfaction (Suliman et al., 2010). Research from similar service industries in Southeast Asia has shown that agreeable employees tend to have stronger organizational ties, leading to greater job satisfaction and lower turnover rates (Schneider et al., 2009). Thus, agreeableness is a valuable trait for tourism organizations aiming to improve employee retention and service quality.

Neuroticism and Job Stress

Neuroticism is a strong predictor of negative workplace outcomes, including lower job satisfaction, higher job stress, and increased turnover intentions (Suliman et al., 2010). Employees with high levels of neuroticism tend to experience higher emotional instability and stress, which can negatively impact their work performance and relationships with others (Judge et al., 2002).

In high-pressure tourism environments, neurotic employees may struggle to cope with job demands, leading to burnout and dissatisfaction (Tornroos, 2013). This is particularly relevant in the Maldivian context, where many employees are expatriates who face additional stressors such as living away from home. Studies from other tourism-dependent regions, such as the Caribbean, suggest that neuroticism is a key factor contributing to burnout and turnover in the hospitality industry (Suliman et al., 2010; Borkenau & Ostendorf, 1993).

Openness to Experience and Workplace Innovation

Openness to experience, characterized by creativity, curiosity, and adaptability, has been linked to greater job satisfaction and performance in roles that require innovation and problem-solving (Ilies et al., 2009). Employees high in openness are typically more flexible and creative, thriving in dynamic work environments such as tourism, where customer expectations are constantly evolving. In the Maldives, where the tourism industry often requires employees to adapt quickly to new trends and guest demands, openness can be a valuable trait (Tornroos, 2013). However, research suggests that employees high in openness may experience dissatisfaction in rigid job structures or roles with limited room for creativity (Judge et al., 2002). This highlights the importance of aligning job roles with individual personality traits to optimize satisfaction and performance, particularly in tourism sectors that emphasize creativity and customer experience (Furnham et al., 2009).

3. Methodology

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional design to investigate the influence of personality traits on workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress, and turnover intention within the Maldivian tourism industry. A structured online questionnaire was employed to gather data from a sample of 146 tourism employees. The questionnaire assessed personality traits based on the Big Five Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992), along with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress, and turnover intention using validated scales from prior literature (Meyer et al., 2002; Spector, 1997).

Before distribution, the survey was pre-tested with 20 respondents to ensure clarity and validity, following the recommendations of Armstrong and Overton (1977). This was done to refine the questionnaire and ensure that it accurately measured the intended constructs. The sample was selected using convenience sampling from various tourism establishments across the Maldives, including hotels and resorts. The sample size was calculated to achieve a 95% confidence level, with a margin of error of ±5%, as recommended by RaoSoft (2004). To mitigate non-response bias, the final sample size was expanded to 146 respondents.

To ensure data quality, the dataset was thoroughly checked for missing values and outliers. Missing data were addressed using mean substitution where appropriate, following the guidelines by Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Outliers were identified through visual inspection and statistical tests (e.g., box plots), and were handled using Winsorization to reduce their impact on the results. This method involves replacing extreme values with the next highest value in the distribution, ensuring that no data points disproportionately affect the findings (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2000).

To test the relationships between personality traits and workplace outcomes, correlation and regression analyses were employed. These techniques were chosen because they allow for the exploration of both direct and mediated relationships between variables (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). In addition, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare differences in outcomes based on demographic factors such as age, gender, and education level, following the recommendations of Meyer et al. (2002). This statistical approach was justified due to its ability to examine group differences and determine the influence of categorical demographic factors on continuous workplace outcomes.

Demographic variables such as age, gender, and education were treated as independent variables in the analysis. These factors were included to control for potential confounding effects, as previous studies (Meyer et al., 2002; Allen & Meyer, 1990) have suggested that demographic characteristics can influence employee attitudes and behaviors. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) enabled the identification of significant differences in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention based on demographic groups.

Gender, for example, has been found to influence workplace outcomes, with women typically reporting higher levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Perryer et al., 2010). Therefore, understanding the influence of demographic variables is essential to interpreting the data in the Maldivian tourism context.

4. Results

This study examined the relationship between personality traits and workplace outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress, and turnover intention, within the Maldivian tourism industry. Data from 146 participants were analyzed to uncover significant patterns and relationships. The findings, presented below, highlight the key impacts of personality traits on employee behavior and organizational outcomes.

Table 1: Conscientiousness and Workplace Outcomes

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Job Satisfaction	4.15	0.72	36.870	<0.001
Organizational Commitment	4.40	0.65	40.321	<0.001
Job Stress	3.12	0.54	20.876	<0.001
Turnover Intention	2.85	0.49	19.321	<0.001

Table 1 shows that conscientiousness significantly influences workplace outcomes. Employees scoring high on conscientiousness reported the highest levels of job satisfaction (mean = 4.15) and organizational commitment (mean = 4.40). Conversely, they experienced lower levels of job stress (mean = 3.12) and turnover intention (mean = 2.85). These results underscore the importance of conscientiousness in fostering positive workplace behavior and enhancing retention.

Table 2: Extraversion and Job Outcomes

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Job Satisfaction	3.80	0.84	29.421	<0.001
Organizational Commitment	3.90	0.70	28.540	<0.001
Job Stress	3.90	0.76	30.231	<0.001
Turnover Intention	3.50	0.67	26.432	<0.001

Table 2 highlights the mixed effects of extraversion on workplace outcomes. While extraverts displayed moderate job satisfaction (mean = 3.80) and commitment (mean = 3.90), they also experienced elevated job stress (mean = 3.90). Their turnover intention was higher compared to conscientious employees (mean = 3.50), indicating that the high emotional demands of tourism roles may strain extraverts despite their social strengths.

Table 3: Agreeableness and Job Commitment

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Job Satisfaction	4.10	0.75	32.801	<0.001
Organizational Commitment	4.50	0.68	42.567	<0.001
Job Stress	3.00	0.55	21.983	<0.001
Turnover Intention	2.60	0.51	19.324	<0.001

As seen in Table 3, agreeableness positively influences organizational commitment and workplace satisfaction. Employees high in agreeableness reported high satisfaction (mean = 4.10) and commitment (mean = 4.50), along with the lowest turnover intention (mean = 2.60). These results suggest that agreeable employees thrive in cooperative environments and are more likely to remain committed to their roles.

Table 4: Neuroticism and Workplace Challenges

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Job Satisfaction	2.90	0.65	43.211	<0.001
Organizational Commitment	3.20	0.59	29.672	<0.001
Job Stress	4.40	0.62	50.124	<0.001
Turnover Intention	4.10	0.64	47.892	<0.001

Table 4 illustrates the negative outcomes associated with neuroticism. Employees scoring high on neuroticism reported the lowest job satisfaction (mean = 2.90) and the highest job stress (mean = 4.40) and turnover intention (mean = 4.10). These findings highlight the challenges posed by neuroticism, particularly in high-stress environments like the tourism industry.

Table 5: Relationship Between Job Stress and Turnover Intention

Job Stress Level	Turnover Intention Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Low Stress	3.00	0.60	25.521	<0.001
Moderate Stress	3.60	0.72		
High Stress	4.20	0.65		

Table 5 demonstrates the significant role of job stress in predicting turnover intention. Employees experiencing high stress reported the highest turnover intention (mean = 4.20), while those with low stress showed much lower intent to leave (mean = 3.00). These findings emphasize the importance of stress management to reduce turnover in the tourism sector.

5. Discussions

The findings of this study reveal significant relationships between personality traits and key workplace outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention, within the Maldivian tourism industry. These results highlight the complex role that personality plays in determining employee behavior, underscoring the importance of tailoring management practices to individual traits.

One key finding of this study is the significant influence of conscientiousness on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Employees high in conscientiousness reported higher job satisfaction and greater commitment to the organization. This aligns with existing research, such as Judge et al. (2002), which suggests that conscientious employees are more likely to align their personal goals with organizational objectives, resulting in better performance and lower turnover intentions. In the Maldivian tourism context, where the service industry plays a vital role in the economy, conscientious employees are essential for maintaining service quality and improving customer satisfaction (Tornroos, 2013).

Conversely, employees high in neuroticism were found to experience higher levels of job stress and turnover intentions. This supports the findings of Suliman et al. (2010), who found that neuroticism is strongly associated with negative workplace outcomes. In the Maldivian tourism sector, employees high in neuroticism may struggle with the emotional demands of customer-facing roles, which can lead to burnout and increased turnover. This highlights the need for tourism organizations to develop targeted support systems, such as stress management training and emotional resilience programs, for employees with high neuroticism to reduce turnover intentions.

The findings regarding extraversion were more complex. While extraverts generally reported higher job satisfaction, they also experienced higher levels of job stress. This dual effect of extraversion is consistent with research by Furnham et al. (2009), which found that extraverts tend to experience both positive and negative outcomes in customer service roles. In the context of tourism in the Maldives, where employees are constantly interacting with guests, extraverts may thrive in social settings but may also become overwhelmed by the high emotional demands of the job. Therefore, managing emotional labor and ensuring that extraverted employees receive adequate support is crucial to prevent burnout and enhance job satisfaction.

In contrast to extraversion, agreeableness was found to be strongly associated with positive workplace outcomes. Employees high in agreeableness exhibited lower stress levels, higher job satisfaction, and greater organizational commitment. This aligns with Ilies et al. (2009), who noted that agreeable employees are better at managing interpersonal relationships and contributing to a harmonious work environment. In the tourism industry, where teamwork and positive guest interactions are essential, agreeable employees play a key role in ensuring customer satisfaction and fostering a collaborative work environment.

Maldivian - Specific Comparisons

This study provides important insights into the Maldivian context, where tourism is the cornerstone of the economy. The results underscore the importance of personality traits in shaping employee behavior in high-turnover industries, where maintaining a committed and satisfied workforce is critical. The findings are particularly relevant given the challenges faced by the Maldivian tourism sector, including the high proportion of expatriate workers and the seasonal nature of the industry, which can contribute to employee turnover (Suliman et al., 2010). The study suggests that addressing the specific needs of employees based on their personality traits can help mitigate turnover and improve overall job satisfaction in this context.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study contributes valuable insights, it has several limitations. First, the use of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should use a more representative sampling method, such as stratified random sampling, to ensure a broader and more diverse representation of the tourism workforce. Second, the cross-sectional design of the study restricts the ability to make causal inferences. Longitudinal studies could provide more robust insights into how personality traits influence job satisfaction and turnover intentions over time. Finally, this study did not examine the interaction between demographic factors and personality traits, which could provide further insights into how specific characteristics, such as cultural background or socioeconomic status, influence workplace outcomes.

6. Conclusions

This study highlights the significant role that personality traits play in influencing key workplace outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress, and turnover intention, within the Maldivian tourism industry. Employees high in conscientiousness and agreeableness report higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while employees high in neuroticism experience higher job stress and turnover intentions. These findings have important implications for tourism organizations in the Maldives, suggesting that personality assessments could be integrated into recruitment and employee development strategies to enhance workforce retention and satisfaction.

Based on the results, tourism organizations should consider providing tailored support for employees based on their personality traits. Conscientious and agreeable employees should be placed in roles that require high levels of responsibility and interpersonal interaction, where they are likely to thrive. For neurotic employees, offering stress management programs and emotional support could reduce turnover intentions and improve job satisfaction. Furthermore, managing emotional labor for extraverted employees and ensuring that they receive adequate support can help prevent burnout and maintain high levels of job satisfaction.

While the study provides valuable insights into the Maldivian tourism context, future research should address the limitations of this study, including the use of convenience sampling and the cross-sectional design. Longitudinal studies and more diverse sampling methods would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how personality traits affect workplace outcomes over time. Additionally, future research could explore the impact of other factors, such as cultural differences or socioeconomic status, on the relationship between personality and workplace outcomes in tourism settings.

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