

Investigating the Mediating Role of Social Networking Service Usage on the Big Five Personality Traits and on the Job Satisfaction of Korean Workers

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the Big Five personality traits and the use of social networking services (SNSs) promote job satisfaction among Korean workers. The study sample is drawn from the Korean Education & Employment Panel (KEEP) for 2011, which gathers comprehensive data on Koreans' individual demographics, including information regarding their education, families, and work and personal lives. Structural equation modeling is employed to examine the mediation model between Big-Five personality and job satisfaction of workers. From a sample of 1,646 workers employed in Korean workplaces, the authors found that the Big Five personality traits were significantly related to SNS usage and job satisfaction. SNS usage was found to be a factor in determining job satisfaction, and SNS usage partially mediated the relationship between personality (extroversion and neuroticism) and job satisfaction. To improve employees' work-related attitudes, organizations must recognize the growing influence of SNS usage on those workplace attitudes.

KEYWORDS

Big Five Personality, Job Satisfaction, Mediation Model, Social Networking Service (SNS) Usage, Workplace Attitudes

INTRODUCTION

SNSs are web-based platforms through which users share personal profiles and messages while interacting with others. Over the past decade, the number of social SNS users has grown rapidly. For instance, Facebook has approximately 1 billion active users, half of whom visit the site for approximately 20 minutes per day on average. Thus, SNSs offer users the opportunity to form and maintain social networks based on shared interests and identities (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). SNS usage thus can help individuals build and maintain interpersonal relations while forming new social networks, thereby serving as a source of emotional support while enhancing psychological well-being (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). Although these outcomes can benefit employees and organizations, few studies have examined the role of SNSs in the workplace. Therefore, we aim to identify how SNS usage affects individual job satisfaction, thereby highlighting the role of SNSs in the workplace.

DOI: 10.4018/JOEUC.2019010106

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The Big Five factor model assumes that individual personalities consist of five traits that are commonly used in personality research (Judge, Heller & Mount, 2002). Personality is significantly related to the concept of self-construal, the extent to which workers are more likely to perceive themselves as independent versus interdependent with others. Personality traits significantly affect the motivations that drive SNS use, as interacting with others and maintaining social relationships are closely associated with individual motivations to make self-presentations (Blumer & Doering, 2012; Wang, Jackson, Zhang & Su, 2012). Personality also affects the extent to which workers evaluate their jobs positively or negatively. Neurotic workers tend to have negative job perception, as they feel anxious and angry in the workplace. The positive aspects of jobs are salient to extroverted and agreeable workers, who tend to be active in interactions and also promote trusting and cooperative relationships with working colleagues. SNS usage facilitates interpersonal communication and promotes self-presentation mechanisms, which can be useful and helpful to foster positive job perceptions (Kathryn, Stephanie & Katherine, 2010). On the contrary, SNS use may increase the gap between the true and expressed self, elevating the possibility of depression, anxiety, and suicide (Brooks & Longstreet, 2015). Hence, SNS use affects the intent to make self-expressions, which then intervenes in the relationship between Big-five personality and job satisfaction.

The present study was conducted in Korea as it has been recognized as the most digitally connected country in the world (Kwak, Choi & Lee, 2014). In 2011, the Internet use rate in Korea was recorded at 78.0%, accounting for approximately 37.2 million people; moreover, 66.5% of these users were also SNS users (Korea Internet & Security Agency, 2014). Of these SNS users, the use rates for individuals in their 20s and 30s are 89.7% and 70.8%, respectively, indicating that younger individuals prefer to use SNSs as a communication tool. Korean Internet users are highly motivated to participate in SNSs because Koreans have strong psychological motivations to extend their social capital. Thus, it is meaningful to examine whether SNS use promotes job satisfaction among Korean individuals, which then may be extended to cross-cultural research.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

The Big Five Personality Traits and SNS Use

Self-construal is a crucial element in SNS use, as social mediums simultaneously facilitate self-expression and multilateral interactions (Kim, Kim & Nam, 2010). SNSs allow individuals to selectively present positive aspects of the self (Shim, Lee-Won & Park, 2016). When individuals define themselves as interdependent with others, they have higher motivation to engage in or to avoid posting positive profiles online. The Big-Five personalities are closely associated with the sense of self (Shim et al., 2016). SNS users construct and represent the self in multiple ways. Big-Five personalities affects individuals' tendency to make self-expressions about their worth, which determine individual motivation to construct and maintain self-images on SNSs (Shim et al., 2016).

Workers with high extroversion tend to be more optimistic and sociable, gregarious and outgoing (Judge et al., 2002; Wille, Hofmans, Feys & de Fuyt, 2014). Extroverts are more likely to enjoy social activities and have more developed social capital than introverts. Extroverts view SNS as an opportunity to make positive self-presentations and to extend their social networks, which increases individual motivation to engage in SNS activities (Amichai-Hamburger, Wainapel & Fox, 2002). Workers who exhibit openness to new experiences are more likely to satisfy their curiosity and explore new perspectives, and pursue genuine interest in the roles in which they are involved (Wang et al., 2012; Wille et al., 2014). Through SNS use, individuals can organize and establish online communities, which facilitate acquisition and exchange of knowledge and information about shared interests (Ljepava Orr, Locke & Ross, 2013). Workers with high openness to experience can satisfy their intellectual curiosity and experiment with novel ideas through SNSs, which can be opportunities to express and satisfy self-interests.

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