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## MOTIVATIONAL DRIVERS AND PERSONALITY VARIABLES AT WORK IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Similarities and differences in employee and student perceptions of the personality, motivational drivers, and work ethic attitudes in India are examined in this paper. Survey responses covering these three areas are compared between employees and students and the findings compared with selected international studies. In particular relationships are considered for the Indian employees and students. of the Big Five characteristics (conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to new experiences, neuroticism or psychological well-being, and extraversion) with views of motivational drivers (intrinsic and extrinsic motivators: enjoyment, challenge, compensation, and outward orientation) and work ethic principles (such as the centrality of work, hard work as a value, and constructive use of time). Implications of the similarities and differences are drawn*

**Keywords:** *Motivational Drivers; Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation; Personality; the Big Five; Work Ethic; Employees; Students*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Motivational drivers and personality variables at work in India

Employers, human resource managers, business managers and economists around the world are interested in what affects the bottom line in organisations. HR managers emphasise the human contributions to be made, with attention to the effects that attitudes and perceptions have on the performance of the individuals in the workplace. It is no different in India. But there are different cultural traditions from country to country and changes and transitions over time may affect responses. Different values and priorities underpin western and other cultures. Hence the importance of comparative cultural studies but also of internal cultural studies within a country, such as the current study. Yet often large and important countries, growing countries like China and India, will have 'external' businesses and multi-national organisations (or at least the representatives of these organisations) assuming that what works in one culture will work in other cultures and/or the external organisations may appear to seek to impose their way of seeing and doing things. What is needed to break the perceptions that others hold about a country, is evidence directly from the country's own nationals about their own culture and their values, including what is valued in the workplace. This current paper gives attention to the views of two samples in India—of students and of employees- as to their views of what are appropriate effective personality and personal characteristics of employees and what might be a variety of motivational drivers and workplace ethic values - the incentives that direct Indian people at work. The results of our study are presented below, first with contextual information, comments on the method we used in our study and the questionnaires we used, and then the relationships found, and then briefly on the relationships of the findings to other cultures.

The primary researcher in this paper is an Indian national now living and working in Australia in academia - with many years experience in the workplace in India in the government and private sectors, and who completed her doctorate in Australia recently on Indian-Australian relationships (see Mathew, 2013 for the thesis); the lead researcher was able to return to India for the research studies conducted there and this paper reports this aspect of that research work – emphasising the findings from the Indian samples. The method followed in the India studies are outlined in Method below, including the nature of the scales used that helped form strong bases for understanding the 'motivational drivers and personality variables at work in India'. First we indicate the contextual background to our studies.

## **1.2 Context**

There have been many studies of the work ethic, personality and work motivation of employees and students in other countries (as we discuss in subsequent paragraphs) but little is known about the views of Indian students and employees; we aimed to address this gap in the literature. Such studies are important as they make contribution to the growing global trade opportunities and connections developing around the world, including with India itself. Just one example of the anticipated growth is the India-Australia emphases on trade relations, investment opportunities and strategic alliances in education, infra-structure, and energy fields (cf., Hebbani, 2008).

As more and more organizations are beginning to invest in India and Indian students are making their way around the world to further their education, more needs to be known about the Indian psyche. Therefore, in the present study we aimed to provide an overview of the personality, work motivation and work ethic principles and culture of Indian students and employees. This paper reports these foundation results.

## **1.3 Personality and Work Motivation**

Several meta-analyses indicate a relationship between personality traits and workplace criteria such as job performance (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1993; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991) and job satisfaction (e.g., Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000; Judge & Bono, 2001). Individuals have different needs and therefore respond to different motivators- which may include money, advancement opportunities, or job challenge. Personality factors have been found to be associated with preferred motivators. The Big Five personality factor conceptualisation (McCrae & Costa, 1997; Parks & Guay, 2009) is popular and indicates five factors or traits on which individuals differ: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. For example, conscientiousness (positively) and neuroticism (negatively) had consistently strong relationships with performance, as indicated in the meta-analytic review conducted by Judge and Ilies (2002). The relationship between personality traits and work motivation was explored further in the present study, examining similarities and differences in Indian students and employees.

## **1.4 Work Ethic**

Work ethic has been defined as a multidimensional, attitudinal construct relevant to work in general, but may be generalized to school and university (Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002). An ethical work environment was found to be related to lower role ambiguity and conflict, in turn leading to higher satisfaction and organization commitment (Jaramillo, Mulki, & Solomon, 2006). Lower levels of work ethic were found to be related to absenteeism, higher levels of counterproductive behaviour and lower team work (Prottas, 2007; Sanders, 2004). Work ethic has been found to be related to the personality trait of conscientiousness (Miller et al., 2002). Integrity tests have also been found to have large correlations with conscientiousness (Ones, 1993) and meta analyses indicate that conscientiousness predicts deviant behaviours and turnover (Salgado, 1997).

Generational differences in work ethic is an oft investigated topic with results ranging from younger participants scoring higher on delay of gratification and hard work while older participants scored higher on productive use of time and morality (Pogson, Cober, Doverspike, & Rogers, 2003), to perceptions of work ethic being higher among students than working adults (Pierson & Holmes, 2002). Smola and Sutton (2002) in a comparative analysis of work values of Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers found that the Gen-Xers were less loyal to the organization, wanted to be promoted quickly, more likely to quit the workforce if they got a large sum of money and yet were found to be more idealistic as they endorsed the view that working hard is an indication of one's self-worth.

Therefore, one of the aims of the present study was to investigate differences in work ethic and work motivation of students and working adults. Furthermore, as work ethic is a multidimensional construct, the personality correlates of each dimension needed to be explored further, which was also one of the aims of the present study.

## 1.5 Culture

India is seen as a pluralistic not a homogenous society (Panda & Gupta, 2004; Sinha et al., 2004; Sinha et al., 2009), though pan-cultural values, values in common, have been identified. These are: duality in thinking (e.g., belief in detachment and materialism, humanism and power mongering) [Fusilier & Durlabhji, 2001; Sinha et al., 2004; Sinha et al., 2009; Suri & Abbott, 2009; Tripathi, 1990], coexistence of collectivist and individualist tendencies (Ghosh, 2004; Sinha & Tripathi, 1994; Sinha & Verma, 1994), respect for status and power, hierarchical relationships, fatalism (Kakar, 1971; Suri & Abbott, 2009), prevalence of personalized relationships, and familism (Sinha, 1990; Sinha, Gupta, Singh, Srinivas, & Vijaykumar, 2001; Ramaswamy, 1996). The main reason for pluralism or locationally variant behaviour was posited to be differences in infrastructural development where areas with adequate infrastructural facilities had a more positive view of people and organizations as compared to the areas with inadequate infrastructural facilities (Sinha et al., 2004). Kordyban, Hicks, and Bahr (in press) have surveyed these aspects further, in a paper examining India's post-colonial culture.

Based on previous empirical studies and literature it was hypothesized that there would be significant correlations between the big five personality traits and dimensions of work ethic, significant correlations between the big five personality traits and work motivation, and significant differences in dimensions of work ethic and the dimensions of work motivation between the employee and student samples.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Participants

There were originally 146 participants in the study; the data of 24 participants were excluded due to being univariate outliers, reducing the total to 122 participants. Out of 122 participants, 65 were students (males = 28, females = 37), 57 were employees (males = 42, females = 15). The students' ages ranged from 18 to 28 years ( $M = 19.28$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) while the employees' ages ranged from 20 to 54 years ( $M = 30.02$ ,  $SD = 8.05$ ). The majority (96.6%) of the students were undergraduates studying Bachelor of Arts (26.2%), Bachelor of Mass Media (6.2%), Bachelor of Science (26.2%) and Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (41.5%). Approximately half the employees (52.6%) were at the middle level of management, while 36.8% were at the lower level of management and 10.5% were at the upper level of management. The employees had worked at their current organization for an average of 2.72 years ( $SD = 4.33$ ) and had worked in their current occupation for an average of 6.04 years ( $SD = 6.98$ ), perhaps indicating that the employee sample was fairly mobile in terms of job positions.

The employee sample was recruited by two methods; first via an online survey sent to the primary researcher's social networking contacts and second by approaching an aircraft parts manufacturing organization based in South India. The students were recruited from two colleges; one based in West India and one in South India. All participants were informed that participation was voluntary and no incentives were offered.

### 2.2 Materials

**International Personality Item Pool Scale (IPIP; Goldberg, 1999).** The IPIP we used is a 41-item, self-report instrument designed to assess the big five dimensions of personality: extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Item responses are measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'. Facet scores were calculated by summing item totals and dividing by the number of items to generate an average score. All negatively worded items were reverse scored. Higher scores represent greater agreement with the construct.

High scores on extraversion refer to a preference for being in the company of others; high scores on agreeableness refer to a tendency to be cooperative and friendly; high scores on openness refer to being creative, imaginative and open to new experiences; high scores on conscientiousness refer to being well-organized, more focused, and dutiful; and high scores on neuroticism refer to being insecure and emotionally instable. The IPIP is reported to have adequate reliability (ranging from a

= .71 to .89) and good psychometric validity (e.g., Buchanan, Johnson, & Goldberg, 2005; Goldberg et al., 2006).

**The Work Preference Inventory (WPI; Amabile, Hill, Hennessey & Tighe, 1994).** The WPI is self-report measure designed to assess individual differences on two primary scales of 'Intrinsic Motivation' (IM) and 'Extrinsic Motivation' (EM) with each primary scale having two secondary scales ('Enjoyment' and 'Challenge' are subscales of IM, and 'Outward' and 'Compensation' are subscales of EM). Each of the 30 items is scored for both the primary and secondary scales. Responses to items in the original form are indicated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 'Never or almost never true of you' to 'Always or almost always true of you'. For the present study for consistency with other scales in our study, responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'. Individual items were summed and divided by the number of items to obtain the average scores for each scale, with scores ranging from 1 to 5. Higher scores represented greater motivation. All negatively worded items are reverse scored. The WPI has adequate reliability and validity (Amabile et al., 1994; Loo, 2001).

High scorers on the 'Enjoyment' subscale of Intrinsic Motivation are motivated by curiosity, preference to figure out things for themselves, personal goal setting, learning from their work and work enjoyment. High scores on the 'Challenge' subscale of IM are indicative of individuals' preferences for solving new, difficult, complex problems (Amabile et al. 1994).

The 'Outward' subscale of Extrinsic Motivation indicates motivational drivers for individuals to be recognition and sensitivity to other's opinions of their work and ideas. Individuals with an outward orientation judge their success relative to other people and high scorers prefer to work with clear goals and procedures. The 'Outward' subscale has been found to correlate significantly with social desirability indicating that endorsing the 'Outward' items may have a social desirability bias. High scorers in the 'Compensation' subscale of EM are motivated by compensation and rewards and are keenly aware of their grades / work goals.

**Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP; Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002).** The MWEP is a 65-item, self-report multidimensional inventory that measures seven dimensions of work ethic: centrality of work, self-reliance, hard work, leisure, morality/ethic, delay of gratification and wasted time. Item responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'. All facet scores were calculated by summing the individual items and dividing by the total number of items to get an average score. Higher scores represent greater agreement with each construct. All negatively worded items were reverse scored.

Centrality of work refers to importance of work in one's life, self-reliance refers to an endeavour to be independent in one's daily work, the dimension of hard work measures belief in the merits of working hard, leisure refers to the importance of non-work activities, morality/ethic refers to beliefs in being just and moral, delay of gratification measures the belief in deferral of rewards; a future orientation, and wasted time refers to beliefs on the constructive use of time; avoidance of time wastage. The MWEP was found to have adequate reliability and validity as reported by the authors (Miller et al., 2002).

**Demographic Questionnaire.** In addition to administering the MWEP, IPIP and WPI, the participants were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. Participants were asked to provide details of their age, gender, highest educational qualification, degree being studied, level of management at work, number of years worked in their current organization and the number of years worked in their current occupation.

### 2.3 Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from the researchers' institutional ethical committee. Data was collected in two phases. In the first phase an online survey along with an explanation of the study was emailed to the primary researcher's social network contacts in India. The email recipients were asked to forward the survey to their friends and colleagues in India. The explanatory email specified that survey respondents were required to be Indian citizens and employed, but not self-employed. Once completed, the survey responses were automatically sent to the primary researcher.

In the second phase, the primary researcher travelled to India to collect data. Data was primarily collected from Mumbai, a large metropolitan city in West India and Hyderabad, a mid-sized metropolitan city in South India. Prior to travel, arrangements had been made to collect data from a large college in Mumbai, a college in Hyderabad and a manufacturing organization in Hyderabad. At both colleges, a room was arranged where students came in to complete the questionnaire once briefed about the study. The primary researcher was present during the administration of the questionnaires at both colleges in both cities. At the manufacturing organization, the questionnaires were handed over to the Human Resource Manager who administered the survey to the employees. The completed questionnaires were handed back to the primary researcher one week later. The questionnaires took approximately 25-30 minutes to complete, but no time limit was imposed on the participants.

## 2.4 Design

To investigate the relationships among the big five personality traits, the four domains of work motivation and the seven domains of work ethic, correlation analyses were conducted. To investigate differences in work ethic and work motivation between employees and students, two sets of *t*-tests were conducted. The independent variable for both sets of *t*-tests was sample type: employee or student. The dependent variables for the first set of *t*-tests were the dimensions of work ethic: self-reliance, morality/ethic, leisure, hard work, centrality of work, wasted time, and delay of gratification. For the second set of *t*-tests, the dependent variables were the dimensions of work motivation: extrinsic outward, extrinsic compensation, intrinsic enjoyment and intrinsic challenge.

## 3. RESULTS

Prior to analyses the data was checked for data entry errors, missing values and outliers. There were 24 univariate outliers that were detected and subsequently excluded from further analyses. Assumptions of correlational analyses and *t*-tests were checked and deemed satisfactory. As several *t*-tests were conducted, to control for alpha inflation, all tests were evaluated against a more stringent alpha level of .025. All analyses were conducted using PASW version 18.

There were several significant correlations between the dimensions of work ethic, the big five personality traits and the dimensions of work motivation. All significant correlations are presented in Table 1. Some non-significant correlations and correlations between dimensions of the same construct are not presented, but are available on request.

**Table 1**  
**SELECTED CORRELATIONS OF DIMENSIONS OF THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS (OCEAN) AND OF WORK MOTIVATION (EC, EO, IE, IC) WITH WORK ETHIC (M/E, WC, WT, HW, LEISURE)**

Variable	O	C	E	A	N	EC	EO	IE	IC
M/E	.25**	.22*	.18*	.39**	-.33**	.37**	.13	.29**	.00
WC	.18	.33*	.02	.25**	-.14	.31**	.33**	.42**	ns
WT	-.05	.40**	.01	.30**	-.11	.29**	.24**	.25**	.02
HW	.08	.02	-.00	.33**	.05	.12	.43**	.49**	-.01
Leisure	.16	.41**	-.14	.20*	-.05	-.03	.01	.12	-.05

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , O = Openness, C = Conscientiousness, E = Extraversion, A = Agreeableness, N = Neuroticism, EC = Extrinsic Compensation, EO = Extrinsic Outward, IE = Intrinsic Enjoyment, IC = Intrinsic Challenge, M/E = Morality/Ethic, WC = Work Centrality, WT = Wasted Time, HW = Hard Work

There were also significant correlations between the personality traits and dimensions of work motivation, which are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2****CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND DIMENSIONS OF WORK MOTIVATION**

	EC	EO	IE	IC
O	-.07	.18	.12	.04
C	.25**	.09	.00	-.06
E	.27**	-.02	.18	.11
A	.14	.18	.10	.22*
N	-.35**	.00	.13	-.22*

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , O = Openness, C = Conscientiousness, E = Extraversion, A = Agreeableness, N = Neuroticism, EC = Extrinsic Compensation, EO = Extrinsic Outward, IE = Intrinsic Enjoyment, IC = Intrinsic Challenge.

Two sets of independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted. For each *t*-test, the independent variable was sample type, with two levels: employees and students. In the first *t*-test, the dependent variables were dimensions of work ethic. There was a significant difference in the dimension of hard work with students scoring significantly higher ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = .60$ ) than the employees ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = .58$ ),  $t(111) = 3.52$ ,  $p = .001$ . There was also a significant difference in the dimension of time wasted with students scoring significantly lower ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = .53$ ) than the employees ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = .44$ ),  $t(116) = -2.47$ ,  $p = .015$ . Finally, there was a significant difference in the dimension of delay in gratification with students scoring significantly higher ( $M = 3.88$ ,  $SD = .73$ ) than the employees ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = .57$ ),  $t(112) = 2.57$ ,  $p = .011$ . There were no significant differences between students and employees on the dimensions of self-reliance, morality/ethic, leisure and work centrality.

The second set of *t*-tests with dimensions of work motivation as the dependent variables revealed that students and employees significantly differed only on extrinsic outward with students scoring significantly higher ( $M = 3.64$ ,  $SD = .46$ ) than employees ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = .36$ ),  $t(114) = 2.27$ ,  $p = .025$ . There were no significant differences between students and employees on the dimensions of intrinsic enjoyment, intrinsic challenge and extrinsic compensation.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Based on previous literature it was hypothesized that there would be significant correlations between the dimensions of work ethic, personality and work motivation. It was also hypothesized that there would be significant differences in dimensions of work ethic and work motivation between the employee and student samples. Both hypotheses were partially supported.

We found morality-ethic dimension of work ethic to be positively correlated with openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, extrinsic compensation and intrinsic enjoyment and negatively related to neuroticism. Although these correlations are in the expected direction, it was expected that the strongest relationship would be between morality/ethic and conscientiousness (Miller et al., 2002), which was not the case. The strongest relationship was between morality/ethic and agreeableness, implying that those who scored high on morality / ethic also scored high on agreeableness, which perhaps could reflect a social desirability. However, Graziano and Tobin (2002) after conducting a series of studies on exploring the relationship between agreeableness and social desirability concluded that there was very limited contamination of agreeableness by self-serving biases. Therefore, it maybe that those high in morality/ ethic were also strongly motivated to maintain positive relationships with others: this would be consistent with the pan-cultural Indian value of prevalence of personalized relationships (Sinha, 1990; Sinha et al., 2001).

Positive, significant correlations were also found between work centrality or the importance of work in one's life with conscientiousness, agreeableness, extrinsic compensation, and extrinsic outward. Work centrality had the strongest, positive relationship with intrinsic enjoyment of work, implying those who reported work to be important in their lives also reported high importance of enjoying the work that they do.

The dimension of waste of time, or the belief in the constructive use of time was found to be significantly, positively related to agreeableness, extrinsic compensation, extrinsic outward and intrinsic enjoyment. A belief in the constructive use of time was found to have the strongest, positive relationship with conscientiousness, which is in the expected direction.

The dimension of hard work or the importance of working hard was significantly, positively correlated with agreeableness and extrinsic outward, with the strongest relationship with intrinsic enjoyment. The implication of this relationship is that those who emphasized the importance of working hard also reported enjoying the work that they do.

A surprising result was the strong, positive relationship between pro-leisure attitudes and conscientiousness. However, this result is resonant of the pan-cultural Indian value of duality of beliefs, where seemingly opposing beliefs co-exist (Fusilier & Duralabhji, 2001, Sinha et al., 2004; Sinha et al., 2009).

Regarding the relationships between personality traits and work motivation, there was a significant, positive correlation between conscientiousness and extrinsic compensation implying that those who scored high on conscientiousness were also strongly motivated by the compensation they received. There was a significant, positive correlation between extraversion and extrinsic compensation implying that those who endorsed a preference for being in the company of others were also strongly motivated by the compensation they received. Agreeableness related significantly and positively with intrinsic challenge implying that those who were scored high on a preference towards friendliness and cooperation also endorsed a preference for work that stretched their abilities. There were negative, significant correlations between neuroticism and extrinsic compensation and intrinsic challenge implying those who were strongly motivated by compensation for their work and those who preferred challenging work were also low on neuroticism.

Regarding the hypothesis on dimensions of work ethic, the students scored significantly higher on the 'hard work' and 'delay in gratification' and significantly lower 'time use' than did the employees. The results implied that the students believed that it was important to work hard and postpone rewards, which possibly reflects an idealistic view, and yet at the same time they scored lower on the constructive use of time, consistent with previous studies in other cultures (cf., Pogson et al., 2003; Pierson & Holmes, 2002).

Regarding work motivation preferences students and employees differed significantly only on the extrinsic outward dimension, with students scoring significantly higher, implying that the students were strongly motivated by recognition, were sensitive to others' views on their work and tended to judge their success in relation to other people's success whereas employees did this to a much less extent.

The present study was subject to limitations inherent with the utilization of self-report measures. Nevertheless, the findings provide information on the personality, work motivation and work ethic of Indian students and employees and lay a basis for further studies. Our studies include a comparative analysis of work ethic, personality and work motivation across Australia and India (to be reported in due course) and we are interested in further studies that provide clearer snapshots to guide human resource management and investment decisions for organisations aiming to build global alliances.

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