

THE INFLUENCE OF BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS ON IRRATIONAL
BELIEFS AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN MUAR, JOHOR.

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Award of the
Degree of Master of Human Resource Development

The Faculty of Management
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

2017

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my beloved family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to thanks to Dr. Mastura Binti Mahfar for her incredible support, patience and guidance during the completion of this dissertation. Yours input had incredibly valuable and I truly appreciated your time and attention.

Appreciation also towards respondents (teachers of the selected primary schools) and staffs of Faculty of Management, University Technology Malaysia that involved directly or indirectly in this dissertation. Thank you all for cooperation and willingness to provide me with possible range of assistance.

Lastly, I would like to thank my loving and wonderful family for their support throughout my study. Most importantly, I want to express my gratitude to my parents for giving me confidence and support to be succeed in study, you all are special for me. I would like to share my entire honor with all of you.

Thank you all so much.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the influence of the Big Five personality traits on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor. The research objectives of this study are to identify the personality traits of primary school teachers based on Big Five Model and the level of irrational beliefs among primary school teachers and to identify the Big Five personality traits that contribute most to the irrational beliefs among primary school teachers. 140 primary school teachers from sixteen primary schools in Muar, Johor were selected as the respondents for this study. The instruments employed for the data collection were Big Five Inventory (BFI) and Questionnaire of Teachers Irrational Beliefs - Revised (QTIB-R). The analysis of the data was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19. The analyses comprised of normality test and multiple regression. The findings revealed that the primary school teachers possess a moderate level of Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism, while the level of irrational beliefs among primary school teachers also moderate. Meanwhile, there are significant influences of the Neuroticism ($\beta = .353, p < .05$), Openness to Experience ($\beta = .217, p < .05$), and Extraversion ($\beta = .276, p < .05$) traits on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers. Among the three personality traits, Neuroticism makes the best contribution, which is 10.5 % of the variance in explaining the irrational beliefs. Meanwhile, there are no significant influences of the Conscientiousness ($\beta = .012, p > .05$) and Agreeableness ($\beta = .032, p > .05$) traits on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor. In conclusion, this study was able to identify the personality traits and irrational beliefs among primary school teachers and identify the influence of the Big Five personality traits on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti pengaruh tret personaliti Big Five ke atas kepercayaan tidak rasional dalam kalangan guru sekolah rendah di Muar, Johor, Malaysia. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti jenis personaliti Big Five dalam kalangan guru sekolah rendah, tahap kepercayaan tidak rasional dalam kalangan guru sekolah rendah dan mengenal pasti tret personaliti Big Five yang paling banyak menyumbang kepada kepercayaan tidak rasional dalam kalangan guru sekolah rendah di Muar, Johor. Seramai 140 orang guru sekolah rendah dari enam belas buah sekolah rendah dipilih sebagai responden kajian. Instrumen yang diguna dalam pengumpulan data ialah *Big Five Inventory* (BFI) dan *Questionnaire of Teachers Irrational Beliefs - Revised* (QTIB-R). Analisis data dijalankan dengan menggunakan program *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS) versi 19. Analisis yang dijalankan dalam kajian ini termasuk ujian normaliti dan regresi berganda. Dapatan kajian telah menunjukkan bahawa guru sekolah rendah mempunyai tret personaliti *Openness to Experience*, *Conscientiousness*, *Extraversion*, *Agreeableness* and *Neuroticism* yang sederhana, manakala tahap kepercayaan tidak rasional dalam kalangan guru sekolah rendah juga pada tahap sederhana. Manakala, terdapat pengaruh signifikan tret *Neuroticism* ($\beta = .353$, $p < .05$), *Openness to Experience* ($\beta = .217$, $p < .05$) dan *Extraversion* ($\beta = .276$, $p < .05$) terhadap kepercayaan tidak rasional guru sekolah rendah. *Neuroticism* merupakan penyumbang terbaik, iaitu 10.5 % varians dalam menjelaskan kepercayaan tidak rasional. Manakala, tidak terdapat pengaruh signifikan tret *Conscientiousness* ($\beta = .012$, $p > .05$) dan *Agreeableness* ($\beta = .032$, $p > .05$) terhadap kepercayaan tidak rasional dalam kalangan guru sekolah rendah di Muar, Johor. Sebagai kesimpulannya, kajian ini telah mengenalpasti jenis personaliti dan tahap kepercayaan tidak rasional dalam kalangan guru sekolah rendah dan mengenalpasti pengaruh tret personaliti Big Five ke atas kepercayaan tidak rasional dalam kalangan guru sekolah rendah.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AWF	=	Awfulizing
BFI	=	Big Five Inventory
CBT	=	Cognitive behavioral therapy
DEM	=	Demandingness
DV	=	Dependent Variable
GE	=	Global Evaluation
GRED	=	Geothermal Resource Exploration and Development
H ₀	=	Null Hypothesis
H ₁	=	Alternative hypothesis
IV	=	Independent Variable
LFI	=	Low Frustration Intolerance
QTIB	=	Questionnaire of Teachers Irrational Beliefs
QTIB-R	=	Questionnaire of Teachers' Irrational Beliefs-Revised
REBT	=	Rational Emotional Behavior Therapy
RET	=	Rational Emotional Therapy
SD	=	Self-downing
SJK (C))	=	School (Chinese) (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina))
SPM	=	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
SPSS	=	Statistical Package for Social Science
STPM	=	Sijil Tinggi Pelajara Malaysia

LIST OF SYMBOLS

$\&$	=	And
$\%$	=	Percent
$=$	=	Equal
$-$	=	Minus
$+$	=	Plus
$<$	=	Less Than
$>$	=	More Than
$/$	=	Divide
f	=	Frequency
r	=	Pearson's Correlation Coefficient
p	=	Significant Level

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify the influence of the Big Five personality traits on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor. This chapter would start with background of research, problem statement, research questions, research objectives and research hypotheses. In addition, the scope of the study, significance of the study and limitations of the study will be discussed before the conceptual and operational definitions of personality and irrational beliefs.

1.2 Background of Research

Irrational beliefs are thinking modes of human beings, which are continuous, unreasonable and impossible to be fulfilled in reality (Hyland et al., 2014). In other words, irrational beliefs are beliefs, which are not helpful, not logical and incompatible with reality, meanwhile rational beliefs are beliefs, which are helpful, logical and

compatible with reality (Dryden & Neenan, 2004). Although irrational belief is opposite of rational beliefs, these two terms are not bipolar opposite. Bipolar opposite indicates, when one exists, another is absent. According Ellis (1991), three possible situations might emerge, which are; (i) there is the possibility of the presence of irrational beliefs and totally no rational beliefs; (ii) there is the possibility of the presence of rational beliefs and totally no irrational beliefs; (iii) there is the possibility of the presence of both irrational beliefs and rational beliefs.

Ellis also clarified four types of rational beliefs and four types of irrational beliefs for better understanding (Ellis, 1991). Four types of irrational beliefs included demands, awfulizing, low frustration tolerance and conditional self-acceptance or global evaluation. Ellis purposed that demands are the measure of irrational beliefs and other three are differentiated from the demands. On the other side, four types of rational beliefs included preferences, anti-awfulizing, high frustration tolerance and unconditional self-acceptance. These help individuals to have a better understanding about rational and irrational beliefs in addition identify possible solutions to reduce irrational beliefs and maintain rational beliefs based on circumstances.

Furthermore, the focus of this study is to find personality factors that influence irrational beliefs. This is because of irrational beliefs will generate unhealthy emotions which influence individuals' behaviors and actions (Ellis, 1987). These consequences will lead to psychological disorders. Moreover, Turner (2015) believed that, if an individual has rational beliefs, the individual has healthy and positive emotions, behaviors and actions. However, if an individual has irrational beliefs, the individual has unhealthy and negative emotions, behaviors and actions, which lead to continuous crisis in daily living.

In this fast-paced globalizing century, it is important for public to alert about irrational beliefs (Warren, 2012). This is important because most of the people do not know how to identify and distinguish irrational beliefs from rational beliefs.

Moreover, there are many reasons that lead to irrational beliefs among human being in which personality might be one of the reasons (Ghumman & Shoaib, 2013). Erdogan and Bauer (2005) stated that there were significant positive relationships between personality traits and irrational beliefs. An individual with a high level of positive personality would experience low levels of irrational beliefs, and vice versa.

Additionally, the purpose of personality psychology is to study individuals from inner to outer value through detail description (Larsen & Buss, 2014). Thus, personality is a way to group individual through common patterns, traits and symptoms. Therefore, personality is consistent performance of an individual in thinking, feeling and acting, which parallel with relevant psychological mechanisms. After numerous researches on personality traits, Big Five personality model had proposed. The researchers attempt to group various personality traits under five major personalities.

Although this model received various criticisms and open debates among researchers and practitioners, it had slowly been accepted and had been considered as a suitable and stable model in personality psychology (Costa & McCrae, 1996). Those five mentioned personality traits are Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. Openness to Experience included domain traits such as uncreative versus creative; conservative versus liberal; curious versus incurious.

Conscientiousness included domain traits such as punctual versus late; ambitious versus aimless; hardworking versus lazy. Extraversion included domain traits such as joiner versus loner; talkative versus quite; fun loving versus sober. Agreeableness included domain traits such as generous versus irritable; trusting versus suspicious; lenient versus critical. Neuroticism included domain traits such as vulnerable versus hardy; calm versus worrying; emotional versus unemotional.

In fact, personality is also important and associated with the nature of job among teachers (Warren, 2011). This is because of the responsibility of teachers are not only teaching and monitoring the students in schools (Barahate, 2014). In addition, teachers are also important contributors to the development of a nation. Therefore, teachers are responsible for the growth of their students from the perspectives of mental and psychological. This means that teachers do not only aggregate their experience, information and knowledge to young generations, but also, teachers must ensure these experiences, information and knowledge can help to enhance the strength and ability of young generations to survive in this fast growing world.

Previous research on irrational beliefs had found these Big Five personality factors were potential and possible to influence irrational beliefs of individuals (Sava, 2009; Ghumman & Shoaib, 2013; Najafi, 2016; Samar, Walton & McDermut, 2013). For instance, findings from Ghumman and Shoaib (2013) showed that Self-downing has a negative relationship with Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness traits of individuals. Meanwhile, the study also indicated positive relationships between Need for Achievement, Need for Approval, Need for Comfort, Demand for Fairness with Neuroticism traits. In simple words, empirical research evidence was available to support and further current research. Therefore, it is important to study the personality traits of primary school teachers and their irrational beliefs in different circumstances.

1.3 Problem Statement

In this study, the researcher was interested to study the influence of Big Five personality traits on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers at Muar, Johor. According to Warren (2013), it is important to study the irrational beliefs of teachers because teachers are the factor of classroom success. Teachers with irrational beliefs

would respond negatively to their students, thus hindering their relationships and potential for classroom success. Additionally, irrational beliefs lead to negative emotions, such as anger and depression (Ellis, 1962). These emotional disturbances would reduce the job performance and enjoyment of life of teachers (Warren, 2013).

Kazem and Zahra (2016) conducted a study on irrational beliefs of primary school teachers in Yard, Iran. The study proposed that, by changing irrational beliefs of primary school teachers will help to improve their behaviors, social adjustment, and achieve better mental health. Moreover, a study by Bernard (2016) on the relationship of irrational beliefs and stress among primary and secondary teachers in Australia revealed that, irrational beliefs were associated with teachers stress. In addition, findings from previous studies also discovered irrational beliefs held by local teachers in Johor state (Nurul Iza, 2013; Khoo, 2015).

In this study, the 16 National-type School (Chinese) (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina), SJK (C)) in Muar, Johor consists of various cultures and generations of primary school teachers from all over the Malaysia. Therefore, the personality traits of primary school teachers in these 16 National-type School (Chinese) (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina), SJK (C)) will be different. Additionally, an interview with a counselor of SJK (C) Sing Hwa showed that there are various types of personality among teachers, which might influence their beliefs system.

A study conducted by Elmore and Ellett (2015) on the relationship between personality characteristics and belief systems found out that personality plays an important role in determining belief systems of teacher education students. The study reported that personality was consistently positively to belief system (Elmore & Ellett, 2015). In short, it is necessary for a researcher to identify the personality traits and the level of irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor.

Besides that, various studies discovered that personality traits had an influence on the level of irrational beliefs among adults. However, the studies conducted are limited (Sava, 2009; Ghumman & Shoaib, 2013; Najafi, 2016; Samar, Walton & McDermut, 2013). A study done by Samar, Walton and McDermut (2013) aimed to identify whether personality traits helps in predicting irrational beliefs among adults. The result showed that there were significant relationships between personality traits and irrational beliefs. The results of the study also suggested that Big Five personality model is appropriate in studying of irrational beliefs and rational beliefs among adults.

On top of that, research focuses on the role of personality on irrational beliefs is limited (Ghumman & Shoaib, 2013). More studies should conduct in exploring the function of personality that leads to irrational beliefs, as the connection is important to understand the psychological issues faced by the people. Additionally, Najafi (2016) examined the connection between personality traits and irrational beliefs. The findings showed that personality traits of Neuroticism could predict irrational beliefs. Meanwhile, other personality traits had a significant negative relationship with irrational beliefs.

Although several researches have been carried out in various schools in Johor, until now, there is no similar research has been conducted in National-type School (Chinese) (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina), SJK (C)) in Muar, Johor, in relation to the influence of Big Five personality traits on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify the influence of Big Five personality traits on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers at SJK (C) Muar, Johor.

1.4 Research Questions

Research questions can help the researcher to focus on the core purpose of this research. In other words, research questions are questions needed to answer by research or study (Monnete *et al.*, 2010). The research questions of this research are addressed as follows:

1. What is the level of the traits of Big Five personality among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor ?
2. What is the level of irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor ?
3. What are the Big Five personality traits (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism) that contribute most to the irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor ?

1.5 Research Objective

Research objective help in determining the core purpose of each research question as proposed above (Monnete *et al.*, 2010). In this research, the primary objective is to determine the influence of Big Five personality traits on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor.

The research objectives based on research questions are addressed as follows:

1. To identify the level of personality traits (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism) of primary school teachers in Muar, Johor according to Big Five Model.

2. To identify the level of irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor.
3. To identify the Big Five personality traits (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism) that contribute most to the irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor.

1.6 Research Hypothesis

Research hypothesis is unproven assumption made by the researcher to estimate the possible outcomes of a research before availing of any evidences (Monnete *et al.*, 2010). Alternative hypothesis assumes availability of connections between variables being studied (Monnete *et al.*, 2010). In this research, the alternative hypothesis had been applied and addressed as follows:

Ha1 : There are significant influences of the Big Five personality traits (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism) on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor.

1.7 Scope of Study

The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of Big Five personality traits on irrational beliefs among primary school teachers in Muar, Johor. In this study, a total sample of respondents was 132. The overall study was based on a theoretical review of Big Five personality traits and irrational beliefs of teachers.

By referring to the Big Five Model, those Big Five personality traits included Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism.

Meanwhile, for irrational beliefs, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) was used as a theoretical framework to explain the irrational beliefs. The measurement was focused on demandingness (DEM), awfulizing / catastrophizing (AWF), low frustration intolerance (LFI) and global evaluation / self-downing (GE/SD) to identify the level of irrational beliefs. Research design included descriptive study and cross sectional study, which would generate through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

1.8 Conceptual and Operational Definitions

The conceptual definition and operational definition of the terms used in this study will be explained for better understanding. Conceptual definition is a scientific description of the constructs (Monnete *et al.*, 2010). This ensures that those constructs can be measured systematically. Meanwhile, operational definition is scientific measurements of the constructs. This included ways to measure and types of instruments used (Monnete *et al.*, 2010). The constructs in this research would be Big Five personality traits and irrational beliefs.

1.8.1 Big Five Personality

According to Feist and Feist (2009), personality is permanent traits and unique characteristics that could be found in the feelings, thought, and behaviors of human being. These traits can distinguish one person to another person (Feist & Feist, 2009). Therefore, human beings can be separated into different groups based on their personality (Larsen & Buss, 2014). Additionally, personality is a development process of an individual in term of physical and mental traits. The changing process of physical and mental traits might shape our behaviour and reaction to the environment (Schiffman, 2008).

In this study, personality traits refers to the *Big Five Inventory* (BFI), developed by John and Srivastava (1999). The *Big Five Inventory* (BFI) is based on the Big Five Personality as proposed by Costa and McCare (1987), which consists of five traits, such as, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism.

i. Openness to Experience

In this study, Openness to Experience represents primary school teachers' characteristics, included original, comes up with new ideas, curious with many different things, ingenious, has an active imagination, incentive, values art and aesthetic experiences. It was assessed by using the ten items in the BFI (John & Srivastava, 1999).

ii. Conscientiousness

In this study, Conscientiousness represents primary school teachers' characteristics, included does a thorough job, reliable, perseveres until the task is

finished, and does things efficiently. It was assessed by using the nine items in the BFI (John & Srivastava, 1999).

iii. Extraversion

In this study, Extraversion represents primary school teachers' characteristics, included talkative, energetic, generates a lot of enthusiasm, has an assertive personality and outgoing sociable. It was assessed by using the eight items in the BFI (John & Srivastava, 1999).

iv. Agreeableness

In this study, Agreeableness represents primary school teachers' characteristics, included helpful and unselfish with others, has a forgiving nature, considerate and kind to people. It was assessed by using the nine items in the BFI (John & Srivastava, 1999).

v. Neuroticism

In this study, Neuroticism represents primary school teachers' characteristics, included depressed, tense easily, worries a lot and always moody. It was assessed by using the eight items in the BFI (John & Srivastava, 1999).

1.8.2 Irrational Beliefs

Irrational beliefs are beliefs which are not flexible, not logic and extreme in achieving goals that are not realistic (Dryden & Neenan, 2004). Additionally,

irrational beliefs can understand as those beliefs which are rigid, inaccurate, or illogical that used by human beings in interpret external events (Bridges & Harnish, 2010b). In conjunction with reality, irrational beliefs indicates the trend of self-defeating, inconsistent with reality, and difficult to support with empirical evidence. Meanwhile, reality with rational beliefs indicates the trend of logical, flexible, and consistent with empirical evidence obtained. In short, irrational beliefs were the cause of negative emotions and dysfunctional behaviors found within human beings.

In this study, irrational beliefs refers to the *Questionnaire of Teacher's Irrational Beliefs-Revised* (QTIB-R), developed by Mastura (2015). The QTIB-R is based on the REBT approach, which represented by four dimensions of irrational beliefs. These four dimensions are demandingness, awfulizing, low frustration tolerance and global evaluation.

i. Demandingness

In this study, Demandingness represents a rigid idea of primary school teachers in which a certain decision, situation or circumstances “must be” or “must not” occurs in their working setting. It was assessed by using the thirteen items in QTIB-R (Mastura, 2015).

ii. Awfulizing

In this study, Awfulizing represents a circumstance or situation experienced by primary school teachers in which the demanding outcome in the working environment is not achieved and primary school teachers sense more than 100% awful. It was assessed by using the fifteen items in QTIB-R (Mastura, 2015).

iii. Low Frustration Tolerance

In this study, Low Frustration Tolerance represents an idea or extreme belief of primary school teachers that occurred when the situation did not fulfill the demandingness of primary school teachers. It was assessed by using the twelve items in QTIB-R (Mastura, 2015).

iv. Global Evaluation

In this study, Global Evaluation represents negative evaluations by primary school teachers towards themselves, others or the overall living or working conditions. It was assessed by using the nine items in QTIB-R (Mastura, 2015).

1.8.3 Teachers

Teacher has been defined as an individual who has knowledge, skills and received special training in teaching, explaining and educating (Wray *et al.*, 2010). Teacher is able to create behavioural change in terms of cognitive and emotional. Teaching is an unique career as all other professions originate from the teaching. Additionally, the teacher is responsible in nurturing human beings with different attitudes and manners so that they can live well. Thus, the teacher is important for the development of a nation and cultivations of young generations.

In this study, the target respondents are primary school teachers from National-type School (Chinese) (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina), SJK (C)) located in Muar, Johor. Target respondents could be further divided into two major groups based on education level (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2016). These two groups are respondents with a Diploma level and respondents with a Degree level.

For Diploma holders, the starting Gred is DGA 29 and could be further promoted to DGA 32 and DGA 34. For Degree holders, the starting Gred is DG 41 and could be further promoted to DG 42 and DG 4.

1.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter gives an overview of the background of research, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, research hypotheses, scope of study, significance of study, limitations of study in addition conceptual and operational definitions.

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