

A Predicting Model for Competency Level of Construction Managers based on “Big Five” Traits in Iran as a Developing Country

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ABSTRACT

One of the most significant obstacles in a developing country is related to non-productive investments or delay on productivity of construction projects. Following the development in the business world, the challenges for handling the businesses toward productivity raised rapidly. Construction industry plays an important role in the foundation of economy everywhere. Therefore, to lead the projects through the challenges, a proper leadership and a competent construction manager are essential. The evaluation of competency might be more accurate by different variables. The psychological factors are one of the most effective variables within evaluation suggested by many scholars. The purpose of this study is to develop a predictor variable to recognize the competent construction manager based on their “Big Five” traits as one of the variables predicting a successful Construction Manager (CM). In other words, the objective of this article is to determine the relation between the “Big Five” traits of CMs and the competency level. Two different Questionnaires were employed to collect data and support the objective of this paper. The first group was to evaluate and measure the competency level and the second one to evaluate “Big Five” traits of the respondents. According to correlation and regression analysis in SPSS software on the data collected, a meaningful relationship was acquired between CMs’ competency level and their “Big Five” traits test. By the result of the survey, the projects’ authorities can consider CMs’ “Big Five” traits as a predictor variable of CMs competency level to recognize the competent construction managers before employment.

KEYWORDS: Competent Construction Manager, “Big Five” traits of CMs, Predictor Variable

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The authorities in projects always face the challenges in order to promote productivity in their human resources. Construction managers can play a significant role regarding the purpose in construction industry. Thus, the authorities must know the essential competencies which are important to achieve the best performance within projects by a manager firstly[1]. In other words, they must know the competencies and skills needed for a construction manager to perform a job efficiently and effectively. The second challenge in organization is how to predict a competent person characterized by the necessary competencies involving in the future [2, 3]. Recently authorities have been seeking the significant factors helping them to predict competent individuals to be involved in the projects. Therefore, they may evaluate the applicants by some variables in which the necessary competencies could be observed. Many researchers suggested psychological factors as a predictors in order to evaluate the candidates to be involved in addition to the academic qualifications[4].

In psychology literature, it has been presented that some attributes and characteristics such as Intelligence Quotient(IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ), personality, and body types can influence aspects of life such as behavior, learning and job success [5]. In fact, according to previous studies it can be considered that the psychological factors may affect some of competencies and capabilities of people to perform tasks.

At a micro perspective, construction managers are the critical persons who are able to facilitate the organizational mission effectively. Therefore, to employ efficient construction manager is one of the most significant and sensitive tasks in construction projects[3]. The construction projects are also characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity of experts and specialists to run the competitive goals. Managing construction affairs are therefore very challenging tasks. Accordingly, considering the important role of construction managers at the projects, recognition of the level of CM competencies at the projects can contribute to achieve the organizational business goals and improve the level of CM competencies.

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The main task of construction managers is to keep the project tasks under process timely. In addition, construction managers are responsible to evaluate the progress and to do analysis that give information for decision making about the necessities keeping the work progress as scheduled[6]. Global competition, advanced technologies and new knowledge have caused highly competitive and sharply changing business environments. In this situation, professionals have to be predicted, determined in term of capabilities, skills and competencies in order to be employed and face current challenges[7].

According to the previous studies, the model of principal influencer factors based on personality traits, cognitive styles, and the other predictor factors would be developed in order to identify and hire the most competent and the best people as the workforces[8]. Thus, construction manager position could not be an exception to be studied under such factors. Since, going to and meeting competencies are two of the necessary competencies for a construction manager; psychological factors such as “Big Five” traits could play a highlighted assistant factor for identifying a successful manager. In other words, since a construction manager has to go to everywhere in construction site and meet every part, operators, contractors, and sub-contractors, the person at the position as a going to and meeting person has to be characterised by a suitable sense of negotiation, cooperation, sociable, and so on. In other words, “Big Five” traits could be as a variable contributing prediction of competent applicants for construction manager position beside the other variables to find out more accurate candidate.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

From the historical perspective, about 4,000 years ago in China the officers of imperial developed a checklist to find out and employ the competent individuals to be involved as imperial guards [9]. In the same way, in 1920, the USA and European companies, particularly in United Kingdom considered personality factors such as shape of maxillary, shape of skull, face, the distance between the teeth or eyes, the ears shape, and some other personal information. These companies tried to apply these factors for employing job applicants[10].The competencies are highlighted as the key aspects to choose the best individuals for the vacancy and promotion[10]. Therefore, the variable which could recognized competent people and predict the level of the competencies attracted the authorities’ attention.

This paper focused on establishing a model to predict competency level of construction manager based on ‘Big Five’ traits. In other words, the competency level as a dependent variable was assessed versus ‘Big Five’ traits as the independent variable so that the relations between the two variables were shown finally. Therefore, it can be stated that the independent variable could contribute as a variables to find out the most competent CM in Iran as a developing country.

2.1 Competency

Many researchers have employed the expression of competencies and Competency phrase in the field of management theorists, educational practitioners, human resource managers and industrial psychologists[11].Many scholars defined the term “competency” differently. A competent individual is someone performing an occupational role in very various situation or conditions in a long cycle of time[12].“The competencies consist of expertise, information, capabilities, motivation and other necessary elements required for doing a job efficiently and effectively”[13]. As pointed, in the past, experts have suggested various components of competencies. Maykl Lucy defined the competency by the formula below [14].

$$\text{Intelligence} + \text{training} + \text{experience} + \text{Ethics} + \text{Favorites} = \text{Competency}$$

Competencies could be categorized in two aspects: one aspect identifies the skills that are necessary for doing an occupation and the second aspect determines the duties that are necessary to perform the task more efficiently. Since the early of 1970, three various approaches related to competencies have been proposed in studies and literature to explain the concept of competency. These approaches can be named as functional-standard approach, behavioral or personal competence approach and situational approaches[15].

In general, the competencies could be divided into five groups based on the approaches including: “Leadership and Management competencies, personal competencies, communication- Social competencies, Strategic competencies and lastly supplementary competencies” (see figure 2.1). These categories could be extended for construction managers’ competencies as well.



Figure 2.1 Competencies Categories

The determined competencies help the organization’s success by the role of its construction manager. Table 2.1 offers a summarized CMs’ competencies based on the respondents’ opinion. The numbers refer to the number of interviewees who pointed each competency[31].

Table 2.1 Necessary competencies of a CM in a developing country based on the frequency

Competencies										
Individual Competencies	Physical Fitness & Mental health	Meeting Person	Problem Solver	Self Manager	Willingness to change	Flexible and adaptable	Creative and Innovative	Self-Confident	Stress Controller	Risk Taker
Number	21	18	16	15	13	14	16	15	18	8
Communication and Social Competencies	Team working and cooperating	Conflict manager	Sociable	Trust Builder	Negotiation	Oral expression ability	*****	*****	*****	*****
Number	20	19	18	10	18	17				
Management and Leadership Competencies	Impact and influence	Proficient & Technical	Empowering and delegating	Planning and organizing	Judge and Decision maker	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****
Number	19	19	15	22	12					
Strategic Competencies	Knowledge Manager	Strategic Thinker	Predictor	Time Manager	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****
Number	14	11	16	23						
Complimentary Competencies	Computer and IT Knowledge	English language knowledge	Being up to date	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****
Number	19	10	16							

2.2 Big Five Personality Traits

Big Five Personality Traits test is one of the most common tests applied in different kinds of worksites around the world. In 1993, in order to describe and give details about the dimension of the characteristics of mankind, Goldberg proposed Big Five traits theory in five general and wide categories. The aim of proposing such traits was to reveal and separate the personality traits considered in five areas by scientists. The foundation of the construct behind every personality trait is revealed by these factors[16]. These five traits were used for creating an inclusive conceptual framework to show the results of all research and all hypotheses about the characteristics of mankind. There is a Five Factor Model (FFM) which indicates these five domains [17]. In a lot of studies, Big Five personality traits were defined as the common and wide personality traits that can justify the reason of humans’ general behavior in different contexts, in various times[18].

The Big Five Personality traits include Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism[19]. These traits are defined and described as follows:

Openness: Individuals who possess the trait openness are inclined to experience adventure and art. They express their feelings and like the opinions that are not common or usual. They are very inquisitive and like to experience different things

Agreeableness: Agreeableness is describe as the inclination which makes a person be kindhearted, enjoyable, empathetic, willing to help and supportive toward others, in communal situation, instead of being aggressive and doubtful

Extroversion: Extroverts are the people who are usually outgoing and self-confident. They reflect positive feelings, and they enjoy the atmosphere of fellowship.

Neuroticism: Neuroticism is defined as a continuing inclination that makes a person want to have negative feelings like stress, guiltiness, annoyance and depression. These emotions usually predispose people to consider them as usual and common feelings that cause harm[19]

Conscientiousness: It is described that individuals with high level of conscientiousness are loyal and respectful. They are self-controlled and plan to accomplish what they want to. They usually plan for their performance and activities and have a purpose for their behavior and hardly ever do something unplanned [20].

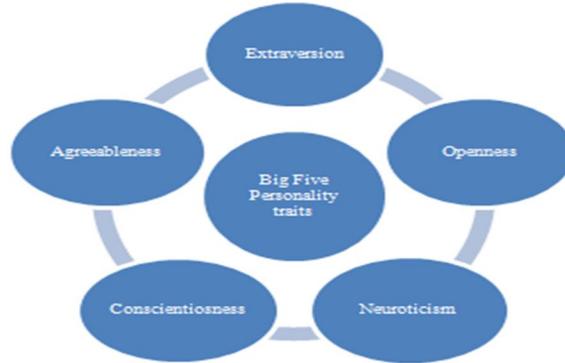


Figure 2.2: Big Five Personality's Factors

Through a study conducted in Japan and the United States, it was explored that the principles of Confucian that may influence rating the Big Five personality traits for efficient and successful managers. The study showed that some efficient and successful managers had the same personality traits in spite of the fact that they were in various locations having dissimilar culture[21]. According to Chou (2007) who conducted a research on the impacts of personality traits on citizenship behavior in organizations, it was suggested that the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and people management becomes less extreme and more acceptable due to the noticeable effect of personality traits on personal behavior[22].

Many researchers examined the association of behavior in work sites with psychological factors. Moreover, in other study it was observed that job involvement was correlated with Big Five personality. On the other hand, in their research about job involvement and reciprocal effect of Big Five personalities, they found out a negative correlation between job involvement and neuroticism[23]. Another research carried out on 626 samples revealed that goal orientation dimensions and a big number of traits of Big Five personality traits are related to each other. According to their study, they also concluded that there is an association between goal orientation and extroversion. Another finding in their study was about the existence of positive association between performance approach orientation and emotional stability[24].

Some researches about personalities agree that every ordinary personality trait is possible to be carefully depicted through five broad traits (Big Five personality traits). It is proposed that these traits consist of sociability, agreeableness, awareness and responsiveness, neuroticism, and sincerity which were evaluated in a lot of researches in opposition to various standards and criteria such as work performance [25, 26].

In sum up, many researchers argued that actions and performance in work sites are associated with a number of personality traits. In addition, the studies conducted in past, confirmed that there is a relation between Big Five personality traits and job participation, group performance, goal designing and directing and work satisfaction.

Neuroticism-Extroversion-Openness Personality Inventory (NEO-PI) is a type of questionnaire. It is suitable for reporting the findings obtained based on the evaluation of Big Five personality traits[27]. This kind of test consists of 240 questions. The NEO- Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) test could be improved through separating 12 items including the most negative and positive elements of each five traits of NEO-PI. NEO-FFI test seems appropriate for the people older than 17. The results obtained in the study were used for making a test for the current study[28].

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In order to conduct the research two different categories of questionnaires were considered to collect data. The first group of questionnaire related to evaluation of the necessary competencies of CMs highlighted at table1.1 (referred to Appendix A), were responded by the supervisors and the superiors in construction projects for evaluating CMs. The second group of questionnaire related to "Big Five" traits test, were responded by each CM in

projects. Therefore, there were two various questionnaires and following that, the two different data related to each CM retrieved from construction projects. The data transferred in to SPSS software to be analyzed by correlation and regression tests. Given the explanations, the null hypothesis could be developed that there is no relationship between “Big Five” traits and competency level of each CM.

4.0 DATA COLLECTION

4.1 Background of the Participants in the Research

The participants of this research were 30 project managers, 30 supervisors as the superiors in order to evaluate 30 construction managers’ competency level and the construction managers to be evaluated on their body type. All the respondents were experienced more than 10 years of experiences in construction projects. All of respondents were males.

4.2 The Data of Competency Level

To discover the specialists’ competency level, project managers, supervisors and senior managers were requested to evaluate and grade the competencies that were collected as the necessary competencies of construction managers (CMs). According to the necessary competencies, a schedule based on the competencies were provided and submitted for evaluation. The respondents were asked to weight their insights according to the five-point scale while number 1 signifies very weak and number 5 means very good to determine the level of their subordinates’ competencies (CMs’ competencies) for each item.

4.3 The Data of “Big Five” Traits Test

As stated at third section, the valid questionnaires of “Big Five” traits test including 25 questions were distributed among CMs in construction projects to gather the related data. Then the data transferred to SPSS in order to be analyzed.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The data gathered were based on competency level and type of construction managers in different areas of Iran with the same projects’ characteristics such as size and scope. In order to analyse the data, those were transferred into SPSS software. The correlation test was taken to investigate the relations between the two variables. Following that the regression test was applied to develop the proposed equation.

5.1 The Correlation between the Variables

The competency level and Big Five personality level of CM’s were measured by its own questionnaires prepared at literature section for each CM specified. Pearson's correlation analysis was performed between CM competency level and five variables of Big Five personality traits. The data from Table 5.1 confirm that only four personality traits except of Neuroticism are correlated significantly with the CM competency level (Sig< 0.05). Meaning that among the five personality factors only Neuroticism is not correlated with Competency level (Sig≥0.05) In other words, P-value≥0.05 shows that the null hypothesis is not rejected for this item (There is no correlation between CM competency level and its neuroticism trait). Other four Big traits are correlated with competencies positively and negatively. The correlation analysis showed that the order of correlation from highest to lowest for Big Five personality traits that affected CM level competency is as follows: Extroversion (0.80) with sig=0, Openness (0.87) with sig=0, Conscientiousness (0.82) with sig=0, Agreeableness (-0.87) with sig=0.00 which shows the negative correlation with the dependent variable, and Neuroticism (-0.37) with sig=0.2 which its correlation is not accepted.

Table 5.1 Pearson Correlation between competency level and Big Five Personality traits

		Correlations					
		Competency	Extraversion	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Agreeableness	Openness
Competency	Pearson Correlation	1	.801**	.827**	-.222	-.873**	.869**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.200	.000	.000
	N	35	35	35	35	35	35
Extraversion	Pearson Correlation	.801**	1	.803**	-.147	-.674**	.705**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.401	.000	.000
	N	35	35	35	35	35	35

Conscientiousness	Pearson Correlation	.827**	.803**	1	-.167	-.764**	.712**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.338	.000	.000
	N	35	35	35	35	35	35
Neuroticism	Pearson Correlation	-.222	-.147	-.167	1	.131	-.166
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.200	.401	.338		.453	.340
	N	35	35	35	35	35	35
Agreeableness	Pearson Correlation	-.873**	-.674**	-.764**	.131	1	-.819**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.453		.000
	N	35	35	35	35	35	35
Openness	Pearson Correlation	.869**	.705**	.712**	-.166	-.819**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.340	.000	
	N	35	35	35	35	35	35

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5.2 The Equation between Personality Traits and CM Competency Level

Regression analysis was applied to develop the equation between the independent variables and CM competency predictor. Regression analyses were performed using CM competency items and the scores of personality traits as the predictors. According to the correlation analysis done, the four items of Big Five traits had been selected to do regression analysis. Table 5.2 shows the selected items as the variables after analyzing the data.

Table 5.2 Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Openness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness		Enter
a. Dependent Variable: Competency			
b. All requested variables entered.			

According to the correlation analysis done, the four items of Big Five traits had been selected to do regression analysis. Table 5.3 shows the coefficient obtained from regression analysis.

Table 5.3 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	77.323	15.760		4.906	.000
	Extraversion	.990	.530	.206	1.868	.072
	Conscientiousness	.707	.492	.174	1.438	.161
	Agreeableness	-2.064	.754	-.333	-2.738	.010
	Openness	1.566	.561	.326	2.793	.009
a. Dependent Variable: Competency						

Following the results of the regression tests shown, it could be stated that there are significant relationships between independent variables in this table and dependent Variable. Therefore, the related equation between the variable and predictor model for CM competency based on unstandardized Coefficients is as follow:

$$\text{Level of CM Competency} = 0.990\text{Extraversion} + 0.707\text{Conscientiousness} - 2.064\text{Agreeableness} + 1.56\text{Openness} + 77.323$$

6.0 CONCLUSION

The authorities in organizations and construction projects have to recognize the best candidate to employ the competent managers in order to achieve competitive advantages in the business world with such a dominant

complexity in each industry sector. Therefore, they must consider several variables to evaluate and predict a competent CM as a workforce. Big Five Personality Traits test is one of the most common tests applied in different kinds of worksites around the world to evaluate applicants. The trait includes Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. In this research, the relation between “Big Five “ traits of CMs and their competencies level was investigated in 30 construction projects with the same project condition. The competency level and “Big Five” trait test were measured by different questionnaires. According to the correlation and regression analysis in SPSS software on the data collected, it was revealed that, among the five personality factor, only Neuroticism is not correlated with Competency level. The equation model based on the regression model is developed as follows:

$$\text{Level of CM Competency} = 0.990\text{Extraversion} + 0.707 \text{ Conscientiousness} - 2.064\text{Agreeableness} + 1.56 \text{ Openness} + 77.323$$

The competency level can be predicted by the variable of “Big Five” trait in addition to the other evaluating variables to find out the most competent CM. The authorities can be acquired the competency level of each applicant before employment to guarantee their projects’ success by one of the most vital roles in the projects.

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APPENDIX A

COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

To the participants

Please read the definition of each competency. Identify the proficiency degree that best describes the behaviors of the construction Manager (MR/Ms.....) of the project that you are also engaged in to demonstrate his job from 1 to 5.

1= very weak 2=Weak 3=Average 4= Good 5=Very good

	Name	Position	Name of Project
The person assessing			
The person assessed			

No.	Competencies	Degree	No.	Competencies	Degree
1	Physical Fitness& Mental health		15	Time Manager	
2	Proficient& Technical		16	Impacting& influencing	
3	Planner& Organizer		17	Self-Confident	
4	Sociable		18	Problem Solver	
5	Team maker& Cooperator		19	Meeting Person	
6	Adaptable& Flexible		20	Stress Controller	
7	Negotiator		21	Creative& Innovative	
8	Knowledge Manager		22	Creative& Innovative	
9	Conflict Manager		23	Up to date	
10	Predictor		24	Judge& Decision Maker	
11	Empowering &Delegating		25	Willingness to Change	
12	Self Manager		26	Strategic Thinker	
13	Oral expression ability		27	Trust Builder	
14	Computer skills and IT		28	English language knowledge	