

# The Mediating Effect of Self-Efficacy on Relationship Between Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Contextual Performance: An Evidence from Higher Educational Institutions from Oman.

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## ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to assess the impact of conscientiousness (CON) and agreeableness (AG) on contextual performance (CP). Also, to identify the mediating role of self-efficacy of staff on the relationship between conscientiousness and agreeableness on contextual performance. The study is exploratory in nature that established a theoretical concept for hypotheses testing guided by learning theory and the theory of individual differences in task and contextual performance. The research used quantitative data collected from 150 faculty members of private higher education institutions in Oman using a self-administered questionnaire measuring instrument items on a seven-point Likert scale. The outcomes of statistical analysis revealed that conscientiousness and agreeableness positively influence contextual performance. Furthermore, self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between CON and CP, and AG and CP. This research contributes significantly to the literature and provides an insight into predictors of contextual performance in the academic environment. The results of the study indicate the need to explore employees' intrinsic motivation for transformational leadership.

**Keywords:** Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Contextual Performance, Self-Efficacy, HEIs, Oman

## 1. Introduction

Performance is an observable behavior of employees works concerning the goals of the organization. Conventionally, the proficiency of an individual evaluates the performance. In changing nature of jobs and the environment has put the concept of performance to other dimensions as well. (Borman and Brush 1993) introduced new taxonomies explaining the performance: -in-role performance -extra-role performance and divided the domain of performance into the task and contextual performance. Hence, job-related behavior defines task performance and contribution to organizational outcomes defines contextual performance. In the current era due to high competitiveness, both task and contextual performance are important for achieving organizational performance. Organizations are more concerned about managing both the dimensions of performance by recognizing different factors that affect performance. Among them, motivation (Kuranchie-Mensah and

Amponsah-Tawiah 2016) personality (Björkelo, Einarsen, and Matthiesen 2010) and individual characteristics (Karatepe et al. 2006) are the antecedents of performance.

There is a higher correlation between personality and contextual performance, and similarly between personality and overall performance (Hogan, Rybicki, and Borman 1998). Self-efficacy as a motivational factor is one of the most influencing factors of performance (Bozionelos and Singh 2017) which explains employees' beliefs about their abilities. Based on the strong correlation between self-efficacy and performance (Judge et al. 2007). Self-efficacy is explained under organizational behavior and psychological capital as a basic concept for predicting work-related effectiveness.

Personality characteristics predict creativity, performance, and comprehensive work behavior (Da Costa et al. 2015; Raman, Sambasivan, and Kumar 2016; Woods et al. 2018). Despite the greater acceptance of personality traits as predictors of performance, some researchers

(Grieve and Hayes 2016; Salgado 2016) have pointed out that other factors such as motivation and the personal selection process also affect performance. Performance is an adjustable behavior in terms of ability and relevance to the goals of the organization. Researchers have a great consensus on two dimensions of performance: task and contextual performance (Folorunso, Adewale, and Abodunde 2014; Ramos Villagrasa et al. 2019). Task performance relates to job tasks included in the job description and contextual performance is the contribution of employees beyond their task obligations (Dorsey, Cortina, and Luchman 2010; Hoffman and Dilchert 2012).

Academic management and the decision-making bodies are setting extra-role performance unlike conventional hierarchical framework (Agasisti et al. 2019). Top management endeavors to implement performance programs in the framework of the comprehensive management approach that broadens the scope of the performance. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are no longer considered as a place of teaching and scholarly activities only rather this has become a complex and competitive business model as well (Aas et al. 2009). Competitiveness, regulatory compliance, and societal demand for better education with higher student satisfaction are among the major challenges of today's higher education. Above the mediocre approach, HEIs must adopt change and do excellently to make quality as necessary core competence (Abas 2016; Ingusci et al. 2019). There is a growing concern emerging on diverse skills, abilities, and personality traits of academic staff regarding quality inputs and outcomes. Therefore, the scope of performance management is beyond the conventional evaluations of task-based assessment. Higher education institutions in Oman are accountable for maintaining quality under the quality assurance framework of the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) for measuring the quality of HEIs in Oman (Al-Amri et al. 2020). A varying set of perceptions of stakeholders, regulators, and quality assurance audit agencies ultimately sets the requirement for contextual performance by employees in the academic cadre of HEIs in Oman. Most of the published research related to HEIs in Oman is

related to miscellaneous topics (e.g., management of HEIs, job satisfaction, work-life balance); none of the notable research addressing the factors influencing the contextual performance of academic staff in Omani Higher education Institutions.

Therefore, contemplating the above, this research aims to analyze - the extent to which personality traits (i.e., conscientiousness and agreeableness) predict the contextual performance among academic staff working in private colleges in Oman. Furthermore, to test whether self-efficacy mediates the relationship between conscientiousness and agreeableness on contextual performance.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Contextual performance**

Contextual performance is a conduct encompassed by employees to observe the organization rules, strategies, and go for additional efforts to help others and imparting information with colleagues for solving problems (Borman and Brush 1993; Motowildo, Borman, and Schmit 1997). Contextual performance supports the core task performance and helps in enhancing the organizational effectiveness and up-gradation of the social environment inside the organization.

### **2.2 Agreeableness and contextual performance**

Agreeableness as a core personality dimension is associated with interpersonal relationships (Judge and Ilies 2002).

This personality dimension is an interpersonal facilitation tool for competitive positivity that promotes consensus, cooperation, and guidance for individuals to play a role in their social context. Agreeableness coexists with other traits and relates to interpersonal competence. As an emergent state of interpersonal process, agreeableness includes team cohesion and effectiveness. Agreeableness is a significant predictor of the performance which is integrated through important aspects of organizational related behavior and attitude. The agreeableness of members improves performance in teams (Altaf et al. 2020). Hence, team members with agreeableness are believed to have stronger

commitment which leads to contextual performance (Lado and Alonso 2017).

### 2.3 Conscientiousness and contextual performance

Conscientiousness is the consistent predictor of the performance of individuals which represents the elevation effect at the team level. Team members with high conscientiousness are task-oriented, hardworking, responsible, and self-disciplined (Da Costa et al. 2015). Conscientiousness is the strongest driver of work role performance across all the indicators of personality (Ellershaw et al. 2016) and elevation of conscientiousness has a positive relationship with team performance. Drawing on personality and diversity theories (Gill et al. 2020) revealed that having more instrumental network ties and the ability to provide task advice conscientious team members perform better. Employees' conscious behavior motivates them to become dedicated and engaged in the work, leading to better contextual performance (Bhatti, Alshagawi, and Juhari 2018).

### 2.4 Self-Efficacy and Contextual Performance

There are several predictors of the relationship between personality and contextual tasks. Identifying which of the traits influences the contextual performance analysis of moderators is very important (Christian, Garza, and Slaughter 2011). Cognitive skills, job structuring, and satisfaction (Judge and Ilies 2002) are worthy moderators. Prior research suggested goal setting, self-management, and self-efficacy (Judge et al. 2007; McIlroy et al. 2015) as mediators of the relationship between personality traits and performance. Employees having high self-expectations of themselves will perform effectively and successfully. (Bandura 1986) has supported self-efficacy as an actual ability of an individual that provides a working model that engages individuals to produce desired outcomes. (Chen, Casper, and Cortina 2001) reported a strong pathway between self-efficacy and job performance. Proceeding on similar arguments researchers (Jawahar et al. 2008; Petitta and Vecchione 2011) revealed that self-efficacy positively relates to professional efficacy as a

feeling of competence and ability to make a valuable contribution to the organization.

### 2.5 Theoretical background and hypotheses

This research is guided by learning theory (Hunter 1986) and the theory of individual differences in task and contextual performance (Motowildo et al. 1997). The first theory explains that cognitive abilities determine the task and contextual performance. The second theory proposes an integration of personality, contextual knowledge, and skills that contribute to contextual performance. This theory included contextual performance to the domain of job performance and identified antecedents of job performance (figure 1). The theory of individual differences suggests that personality traits (noncognitive tendencies) lead to contextual habits, skills, and knowledge, which in turn affect contextual performance. Several studies (Delgado-Rodríguez et al. 2018; Hameed 2013; Hurtz and Donovan 2000; Jiang, Wang, and Zhou 2009; So et al. 2016; Tyler and Newcombe 2006) have reported conscientiousness and agreeableness as important predictors of contextual performance; self-efficacy that plays an important role in the acquisition of human competence. Personality traits and self-efficacy are linked (Judge et al. 2007; Judge and Ilies 2002) ; conscientiousness (Brown et al. 2011) facilitates the engagement in the task and enhances a higher belief of self-efficacy; and agreeableness supports in entering into new activities leading to increased self-efficacy.

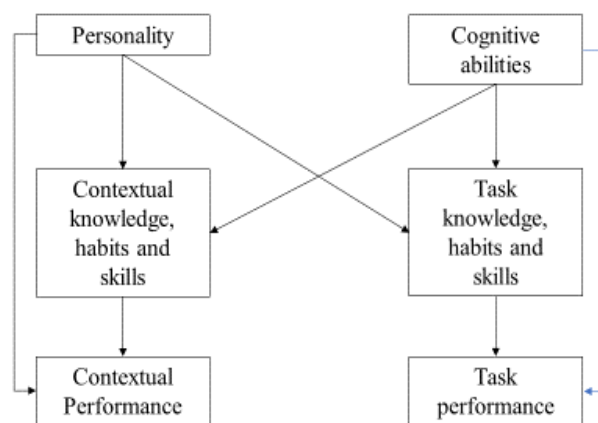


Figure 1: Summarized model of theory (Borman and Motowildo 1993; Hunter 1986)

Therefore, based on the literature review and theoretical insights, hypotheses are proposed in the event of a study of the academic staff of private higher education institutions in Oman.

*Hypothesis 1: Agreeableness influences contextual performance.*

*Hypothesis 2: Conscientiousness influences contextual performance.*

*Hypothesis 3: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between conscientiousness and contextual performance.*

*Hypothesis 4: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between agreeableness and contextual performance.*

### 3. Methodology

The current research used quantitative data. Based on convenience sampling, a self-administered structured questionnaire measured on a 7-point Likert scale (strongly disagree =1, strongly agree =7) was distributed to 150 faculty members in private higher education institutions in Oman to collect responses. Out of the total distribution, 87 faculty members (57 male and 31 female) responded with useable responses. The research used variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) using the partial least squares (PLS) path modeling method because this is advantageous in case of limited sample size and prevents the issues of normality of data (Hair Jr et al. 2017). The research model (Figure2) postulated conscientiousness and agreeableness as predictors and contextual performance as a criterion variable. Self-efficacy is the mediating variable between the influences of predictors on contextual performance. Measures of conscientiousness (competence, organization, self-discipline,

deliberation, obedience, the pursuit of achievement) and measures of agreeableness (empathy, confidence, compliance, harmony, cooperation) have been adapted from big five (BFI) inventories (John and Srivastava 1999). In terms of contextual performance, the measurement instrument has been adapted from (Borman and Brush 1993) taxonomies (attitude, endorsement, volunteerism, concern for mission and organizational objectives, work to effect change).

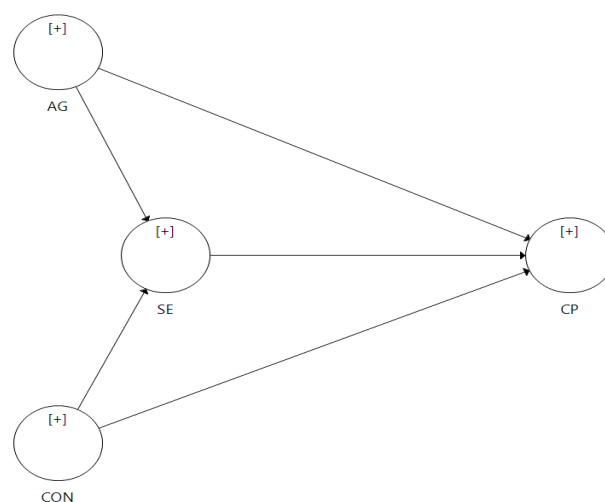


Figure 2: Research Model

### 4. Measurement Model

To assess the measurement model, convergent and discriminant validity were used with measures of reliability (Table1). The values of average variance extracted (AVE), and item loading (factor loadings > 0.708, AVE > 0.5) confirmed the convergent validity (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2013). Composite reliability (CR), Cronbach's alpha (C>0.70) (Hair et al. 2018), and  $\rho_A$  above 0.70 (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2015) suggested internal consistency and reliability.

Table 1: Construct Validity

Construct	Items	Outer loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A
Agreeableness (AG)	agr1	0.791	0.616	0.865	0.792	0.811
	agr2	0.730				
	agr3	0.856				
	agr4	0.758				
Conscientiousness (CON)	con1	0.843	0.597	0.855	0.775	0.793
	con2	0.768				
	con3	0.771				
	con4	0.702				
	con5	0.723				
Contextual Performance (CP)	contp1	0.803	0.586	0.844	0.748	0.794
	contp2	0.832				
	contp3	0.877				
	contp4	0.686				
Self-Efficacy (SE)	seff1	0.743	0.656	0.883	0.823	0.834
	seff2	0.746				
	seff3	0.865				
	seff4	0.876				

4.1 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was established by examining the cross-loadings of each item in the constructs and

the square root of AVE calculated for each construct. Each latent factor exceeds the respective squared correlation (Table 2) between factors (Fornell and Larcker 1981) which provides the evidence of discriminant validity.

Table 2: Fornell–Larcker criterion

	AG	CON	CP	SE
AG	<b>0.785</b>			
CON	0.779	<b>0.773</b>		
CP	0.749	0.769	<b>0.765</b>	
SE	0.688	0.715	0.815	<b>0.81</b>

Values in bold are square roots of AVE

5. Structural Model

The pattern of relationship among constructs is specified by the structural model. Analysis used bootstrapping (5000 samples) to test statistical significance of relationships (Preacher and Hayes 2008). The hypothesized relationships (Table 3) indicated that relationship between agreeableness (AG) and contextual performance (CP) was significant (H1:  $\beta = 0.222$ , t-value = 2.096,  $p < 0.05$ ). The relationship between conscientiousness (CON) and CP was also significant (H2:  $b = 0.255$ , t-value = 2.233,  $p < 0.05$ ). Other direct relationships: AG and self-efficacy (SE) ( $b =$

0.355, t-value = 3.008) is significant, CON and SE ( $b = 0.453$ , t-value = 3.482) The relationship between SE and CP ( $b = 0.478$ , t-value = 4.75) were positive and significant.

Mediation Analysis:

The indirect effect (AG -> SE -> CP:  $\beta = 0.160$ ,  $t = 2.455$ ) is significant; H3 is supported. Indirect effect (CON -> SE -> CP:  $\beta = 0.216$ ,  $t = 3.512$ ) is significant; H4 is supported. All postulated direct effects are significant and hypothesized indirect effects are significant. This indicates a partial mediation (Zhao, Lynch Jr, and Chen 2010) of SE.



Table 3: Analysis of path co-efficient

Hypothesis	Path	St. Beta	SE	t-statistics	p-values	95% BcaCI		Decision
						LL	UL	
H1	AG -> CP	0.222	0.106	2.096*	0.109	[0.005,0.036]		Supported
	AG -> SE	0.335	0.112	3.008*	0.002	[0.111,0.003]		
H2	CON -> CP	0.255	0.114	2.233*	0.112	[0.035,0.026]		Supported
	CON -> SE	0.453	0.118	3.842*	0.000	[0.229,0.000]		
	SE -> CP	0.478	0.105	4.575*	0.000	[0.261,0.000]		
Mediation (Indirect effect)								
H3	AG -> SE -> CP	0.160	0.065	2.455*	0.014	[0.050,0.307]		Supported
H4	CON -> SE -> CP	0.216	0.072	2.995*	0.003	[0.097,0.386]		Supported

Predictor: Contextual performance (CP)

\*Significant at 95 % CI, AG: Agreeableness, CON: Conscientiousness, SE: Self-efficacy,

BcaCI: bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap (BCa) confidence intervals (CIs), LL: Lower level, UL: Upper level

### 5.1 Predictive Quality

Q<sup>2</sup> value above zero refers to predictive relevance (i.e. Q<sup>2</sup> > =0 small, 0.25 medium and 0.5 large) (Hair et al. 2018). R<sup>2</sup> values indicated a moderate variance explained (i.e., CP= 75.1 % and SE 55.4 %) by endogenous latent constructs. R<sup>2</sup> values demonstrate very good and moderate variance.

(Henseler et al. 2015; Sarstedt, Ringle, and Hair 2017) explained by constructs. VIF values of constructs are close to 3. VIF>3.5 indicates possible collinearity issues (Hair et al. 2018). Hence, there is no collinearity issue. The f<sup>2</sup> (f<sup>2</sup>> 0.02 small, 0.15 medium, and 0.35 large) criterion (Cohen 1988) determine the effect size .

Table 4: Model analysis

Endogenous latent constructs	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Adjusted	Q <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup> _predict	Relationship	VIF	f <sup>2</sup>
CP	0.751	0.742	0.415	0.538	AG->CP	2.794	0.071
					SE->CP	3.001	0.408
					CON->CP	2.243	0.087
SE	0.554	0.544	0.348	0.525	AG->SE	2.541	0.099
					CON->SE	2.541	0.181

Q<sup>2</sup>: predictive relevance, R<sup>2</sup>: Coefficient of determination, VIF: Variance inflation factor, f<sup>2</sup>: effect size

### 5.2 Predictive relevance

The comparison of RMSE values of PLS (Table 6) with the naïve LM benchmark indicated Q<sup>2</sup>\_predict >0 for all values and the majority RMSE in LM are larger than RSME in PLS-SEM (Shmueli et al. 2019). Therefore, the model indicates a moderate predictive power.

Table 5: PLS predict assessment of manifest variables

	PLS-SEM		LM		PLS_RMSE-LM_RMSE
	RMSE	Q <sup>2</sup> _predict	RMSE	Q <sup>2</sup> _predict	
contp3	1.22	0.453	1.24	0.423	-0.020
contp2	1.176	0.425	1.293	0.301	-0.117
contp1	1.387	0.296	1.401	0.28	-0.014

contp4	1.375	0.235	1.474	0.129	-0.099
seff4	1.26	0.376	1.292	0.351	-0.032
seff1	1.327	0.288	1.443	0.158	-0.116
seff2	1.278	0.285	1.257	0.309	0.021
seff3	1.137	0.408	1.198	0.35	-0.061

LM: linear regression model, RSME: root mean squared error

## 6.. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between two personality facets (conscientiousness and agreeableness) and contextual performance in the academic setting. The hypotheses sought the mediating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between conscientiousness and contextual performance, agreeableness, and contextual performance. Conscientiousness and agreeableness maintain a positive effect on contextual performance. This finding was \_ consistent with previous studies (Ellershaw et al. 2016; Gill et al. 2020; Jawahar and Carr 2007; Lado and Alonso 2017). The interaction of mediator self-efficacy (mediator) was significant on the relationship between conscientiousness, agreeableness, and contextual performance. Results indicated that self-efficacy maintains a significant relationship with contextual performance and partially mediates the relationship between conscientiousness, agreeableness, and contextual performance. The results are consistent with earlier research studies (Hameed 2013; Jiang et al. 2009; So et al. 2016; Tyler and Newcombe 2006) and support mediation hypotheses. \_Also, the strength of the relationship between conscientiousness and contextual performance, \_increases self-efficacy.

### *Theoretical implications:*

In theory, this research provides an insight into predictors of contextual performance in the academic management environment. This research contributes significantly to the literature since there has been little research on this subject related to the academic sphere, especially in the context of higher education institutions. First, by investigating the role of two personality dimensions towards contextual performance under the mediating influence of self-efficacy in the context of higher education institutions in Oman. The study has explored the mechanism of predictors of performance and applied a

conceptualization for assessing contextual performance in HEIs in Oman using selected dimensions of personality. Second, the study has investigated the mediating effect of self-efficacy as the dimension of motivation on the relationship between selected dimensions of personality and contextual performance.

### *Practical implications:*

At the managerial level, the outcomes of the study indicate to explore the intrinsic motivation among employees concerning transformational leadership. The significant interaction effect of self-efficacy with conscientiousness and agreeableness reflects the need for an effective transformational leadership role. The relationship between transformational leadership and self-efficacy is positive and (Chen et al. 2001; Nielsen and Munir 2009) revealed that transformational leadership enhances self-efficacy. This is important for the academic management of higher education institutions to motivate employees for voluntary behavior for the achievement of organizational goals. Recent research (Chan 2020) has revealed that transformational leadership is positively associated with volunteer performance behavior and self-efficacy mediates this relationship. In the context of change by quality assurance premises, along with intrinsic motivation development of harmonious passion (HP) as a motivational mechanism could affect employee engagement and creativity in an atmosphere of support from the management (Dey 2015). The same applies to empowering supervisory staff at HEIs to strengthen the relationship between change-driven leadership and contextual performance (Sirén, Patel, and Wincent 2016). A transformational leadership culture focused on quality assurance as a determinant of the workplace climate could nurture employee personality dimensions to contribute to contextual performance (Belias and Koustelios 2014). Therefore, transformational leaders with high inspiration can involve the

volunteer participation of staff for better outcomes through contextual performance.

#### *Limitations and recommendations for further study:*

An important concern in this study was that respondents' rating of conscientiousness and agreeableness might have reflected their self-perception of personality. For example, those who possess a high level of traits may see contextual performance as their competence instead of discretionary or volunteering role. The size of the sample was very small, particularly when assessing the mediating effect. Medium predictive relevance in a particular role setting based on convenience sampling does not allow to generalize the results outside the boundaries of the given business model (HEIs). Moreover, conditions of situated learning factors were not addressed through this research. Therefore, further research is recommended to address situated learning factors influencing contextual performance along with other dimensions of personality. The role of transformational leadership is vital in explaining the personality factors of employees and their performance. Therefore, combining the role of transformational leadership as the mediator in explaining the relationship of personality dimensions and contextual performance will better explain the phenomenon of contextual performance in higher education institutional settings.

## **7. Conclusion**

Recently, contextual performance has emerged as one of the important aspects of the overall performance of academic staff; staff engagement in contextual performance contributes to the culture and climate of educational institutions. The study evaluated the effect of two main personality dimensions (conscientiousness and agreeableness) on contextual performance mediated by self-efficacy in the context of Omani higher education institutions (HEIs). With responsibility for quality assurance standards, higher education institutions view performance as different from the conventional definition. A change in the perceptions of stakeholders, regulators, and quality assurance agency sets out the contextual performance requirement of

employees of higher education institutions in Oman. The outcomes of the study revealed that conscientiousness and agreeableness influence the contextual performance of academic staff. Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between conscientiousness and contextual performance, and agreeableness and contextual performance under a theoretical framework. The study successfully investigated and analyzed the effect of two main dimensions of personality and their behavioral characteristic (self-efficacy) on contextual performance. Consequently, the study provides a practical overview of the understanding of performance requirements and the role of management to improve performance. Therefore, in the context of change due to quality assurance needs, intrinsic motivation development as a mechanism through management support will enhance employee engagement and creativity to contribute to contextual performance.

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