A Relational Analysis of the Big Five Model in Search for the Most Suitable Employee Personality Traits in Nigeria Banking Industry Environment

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ABSTRACT

The sustainability of banking industry in any national economy is based on "public confidence" which is anchored on honesty and integrity of the banking operators. These two character elements (honesty and integrity) are considered best-fit for banking jobs. Many of the studies based on relationship between personality traits (Five Factor Model) and job performance across many job descriptions have been carried out by many scholars and they show empirical evidence of their correlation. It is observed that neither of these studies had been found to have examined the extent to which each of the Five Factor Model relate to honesty and integrity. The purpose of this study is just to do that, that is, find out the intensity of honesty and integrity in each of the FFM. The study is a survey. A structured Likert Scale questionnaire of 1 to 5 was used to get information from the 68 senior employees across 8 banks in Enugu State of Nigeria. Mean score was used to determine the degree of these character elements in each of the personality traits in the model. Results indicate that out of the five personality traits in the FFM, only two – conscientiousness and extroversion were highly rated in their relationship with honesty and integrity. The balance of the three did not meet the criterion and were therefore lowly rated in their relationship with variable of interest. It is, therefore the conclusion of this study that **Conscientiousness** and **Extroversion** are the best personality traits suitable for banking jobs in Nigeria or anywhere else. It is recommended that human resource managers in Banking Industry seek for persons whose dominant personality traits centre on conscientiousness and extroversion for deployment in sensitive banking jobs.

KEYWORDS: Five Factor Model (FFM), Public Confidence; Honesty and Integrity, Bank Environment.

INTRODUCTION

There is convergence of opinions by scholars which strongly support that efficient or inefficient organizational performance is a function of the individual personalities that constitute the workforce or employees in an organization, hence organizational employees are considered the greatest assets the organization possesses as compared to other organizational resources such as structures, input resources, technologies, finances and processes. It is argued that these other resources are "inanimate tangible and intangible phenomena which usefulness is limited to the extent they are able to assist people in the achievement of the organisational goals"[1,2,3,4]. To further corroborate this position, it has been asserted that the development of national economy of any nation is dependent upon the quality of human resources available to that nation. Consequently, efficient or inefficient performance of the organizational tasks as assigned to each individual employee in a workplace environment is equally a function of the personality traits of the individuals.

From organizational behaviour viewpoint, personality refers to the relatively stable pattern of behaviours and consistent internal states that explains a person's behavioural tendencies and how likely these tendencies could influence or impact positively or negatively on the performance of employees in organizational setting. Expert opinions explain that personality has both internal and external elements. The external traits are the observable behaviours that are relied upon

to identify someone's personality as for example how one lives and interacts with other people and how comfortable or otherwise one is in relation with other persons in social or organizational settings. The internal states represent the thoughts, values, and genetic characteristics that could be inferred from the observable behaviours.[5]

There has been debate on whether personality traits could be used to measure employee performance in organizational setting. While some scholars put doubts on the efficacy of such measure given the fact that experiences, situations and environmental realities are known to have impact on the personality traits such that individuals could act differently in the face of those realities and otherwise in their absence, others believe that traits are valid predictor of organizational performance. For example there is empirical evidence that personal experiences, personal skills, work experiences, and previous job performance are usually better than abstract personality traits at predicting on-the-job behaviour and performance.[6] This position deterred, in the past, organizational leaders from using personality test as a means of determining employee suitability for job positions.

However, recent studies have established clear links between personality traits and job performance. There is empirical evidence that personality traits seem to help individuals find the jobs that best suit their needs. It also predicts certain work-related behaviours, stress reactions and emotions fairly well under certain conditions. Many organizations are known to have reintroduced personality tests to help them become more aware of themselves and find better career directions.[6] But prior to the discovery of personality traits as organisational performance predictors, following the abridgement into five categories or the FFM of about 60 adjectives that describe personality traits through factor-analysis,[7,8] workforce recruitment and selection were based essentially on academic qualifications, experiences and cognitive abilities discovered during the interview component of the recruitment and selection process. But workforce deviation, those voluntary behaviors that violate institutionalized norms and threaten the well-being of the organization[9], those actions of the employees that run counter to the interests, objectives and advancement of the organization, such as pilfering, soldering (withholding of efforts), absenteeism, lack of commitment, violence and intimidation, sexual harassment, etcetera are issues that are not dependent on the educational qualifications or experiences or cognitive abilities of the employees. These negative attitudes could be innate or learned and only discoverable in the personality traits of the individual employees. This immediately underscores the overriding importance of management function of organizing in which recruitment and selection and subsequent placement of appropriate and qualified individuals to positions in organizations are subsumed according to current management thinking. It is, therefore, critically important for contemporary organizations to seek to recruit and select not only potential high performing employees as could be depicted in the educational attainment, experiences and other variables of the individual potential employees, but also those whose personality traits are best-fit or match for particular jobs.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Cradle of Personality Development Process

Psychologists tell us that every individual person is composed of three elements that work simultaneously together to give identity to a person. These three elements of personality are referred to as the id, the ego, and the superego.[10] It is opined that the id is the component of the personality that is present from birth; the aspect of personality that is entirely unconscious and includes the instinctive and primitive behaviours; the source of all psychic energy, making it the primary component of personality. The id is driven by the pleasure principle which strives for immediate gratification of all desires, wants, and needs and pushes one into action to seek for the satisfaction of these desires, wants and needs, without regards to any ethics, law or order.[11]

The second personality element which is known as the ego comes in to moderate the cravings of the id for immediate satisfaction of needs or wants, having regards to the fact that satisfying these needs is not always realistic or even possible. The ego, therefore, is the component or element of personality that is responsible and deals with reality. Psychologists explain that the ego develops from the id and ensures that the impulses of the id are expressed in a manner that is acceptable in the real world. The ego operates based on the *reality principle*[12] which strives to satisfy the id's desires in realistic and socially appropriate ways.

The third element in the personality is the *Superego* – the higher "I". The superego holds all of our internalized moral standards and ideals that we acquire from both parents and society and creates in the person the sense of right and wrong. The superego provides the guidelines for making judgements and it has two components: *The ego ideal* which includes the rules and standards for good behaviours that are approved by parental and other public authority figures. The second component is *the conscience* which includes information about things that are viewed as bad by parents and society. The superego acts to perfect and civilize individual behaviours. Summarily, a normal and properly developed personality calls for a balance among these three personality elements. Imbalance in favour of id makes individuals irrational and irresponsible and so they act without considering the consequences of their actions as long as their needs are satisfied, reference the Machiavellian theory of "the end justifies the means"; imbalance in favour of the ego makes individual persons ascetics who see the body as a necessary evil whose desires must be quenched and conquered; imbalance in favour of superego makes individuals unnatural and angelic, and therefore, incompatible with the natural world. The

point is that there is need for a balance in these three elements to make a fully developed personality. Personality traits are a combination of these three personality elements all of which are represented in the "Big Five" theory. It is, therefore, plausible to assert that personality tests are designed to ascertain the extent of imbalance of these elements in the job seeker and depending on the nature of the job position to be filled, selection of appropriate persons possessing the desired traits in the desired level is made.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are various theories that underlie personality traits and these theories, though different from one another usually overlap or converge around one another. Some of such theories are the **nomothetic** and **idiographic**. The nomothetic approach teaches that personality is hereditary and that environmental factors have little roles to play in the formation of individual personality. This position implies that behavioural patterns of individuals, whether in a workplace environment or not are instigated by personality traits embedded within the individual and may be difficult to change as long as the behavior is considered hereditary and issues from within the individual. On the other hand, the *idiographic* approach deals with the whole personality of an individual and is not compared with another individual. It considers the uniqueness, the richness, and the complexity of an individual and helps understanding to get deeper.[13] The idiographic approach upholds the uniqueness of each individual and implies that no two individuals are same. This would mean that individuals perceive, act, or behave differently from one another. The theory of nomothetic agrees with id – natural inclination as the only and one element of personality, while the *idiographic* approach corroborates the rest of the elements of personality traits as earlier mentioned – the ego and superego. There is yet another theory: the extroverts and introverts. The extroverts are sociable and do not like to be alone. They like parties, have lots of friends, are optimistic and like change. Introverts, on the other hand, are shy, quiet, and reliable; they like to plan things in advance and are pessimistic.[14] There exists a developed personality matrix with four functions that drive human actions and the way they deal with things. These are thinking, sensing, intuition and feeling.[15] Thinking makes use of decision-making and is the understanding and evaluating of information. Sensing is receiving information through the means of senses. Intuition is a natural feeling of knowing something beforehand. Feeling is similar to thinking in terms of evaluating information but it also evaluates emotional responses. Everyone possesses these functions but proportions are different[16]. Another influential trait theory of personality is the **E and N dimension theory** which consists of two categories of people – extroverts and introverts. The **N dimension** examines personality on a scale from neuroticism to stability. Neurotics are emotional, nervous, unstable, and are pessimistic, not happy with life, feel that they are failures and stay depressed. Stable individuals are confident, optimistic, practical, and are free from guilt and stay happy. These theories are based on the nomothetic approach.[17]

The **'looking glass self'**[18] is another concept of personality traits which teaches that the people we interact with are our mirrors. This theory has three components – we imagine how we must appear to others; we imagine and react to what we feel their judgement of that appearance must be; and we develop our self through the judgements of others. Thus, the argument is that development of self is a function of an interactive process through which connections are made between the personal subjective self of the viewer and the external world of other people. People tend to see themselves as other people they relate with see them. The point is that one reflects in one's character or traits those characters and traits that one sees in the other persons one relates with. If people are favourable and sweet towards us, a positive self-concept is developed and we become favourable and sweet. If people are rude and unfavourable towards us, a negative self-concept develops and we become negative and abstruse in our relationship. This implies that the environment does play a role in determining the personality of the individual through interaction. Individuals learn to accept values, attitudes, beliefs and expectations of the society they are brought up in. The point is that personality traits are environmentally-specific – the usual adage "tell me the type of friends you go with and I will tell you who you are" fits in here. The correct environment, for example, where one is not bullied or criticized or harassed for who one is but rather respected, trusted and valued will birth a trusting individual with a positive self-concept to live and work with others in peace and harmony. The reverse will be the case in an unfriendly environment. Yet we ought to know that the components (people) of a given environment are made up of "saints" and "sinners" not angels sent down to earth from heaven. Thus, it becomes difficult to have a perfect environment wherein the quality of behavior of the "saints" would rob off upon the behavior of the "sinners" and produce uniform and acceptable behaviours. Given this scenario, the "looking glass-self" approach simply returns to idiographic approach of individual uniqueness!

The "Big Five" Personality Theory or Dimension is about the most popular of all the personality theories among scholars and researchers. It is also called the FFM (Five Factor Model) and was derived from among 60 adjectives that describe human personality traits.[19] These dimensions include: **Conscientiousness, Emotional stability (Neuroticism); Openness to experience; Agreeableness** and **Extroversion.** Researchers are agreed that depending on the degree to which these traits are available in any given person, to that extent the person's performance in the organization setting could be measured depending on the nature of the job, that is, if these traits are very high in the individual there is the likelihood that the person will perform very well, or very badly depending on the nature of the tasks. These traits are discussed below:

Conscientiousness refers to personality trait that is associated with thoroughness, carefulness and vigilance. Conscientious people are considered efficient and organized, self-disciplined, dutiful and achievement-conscious. They are known to focus on relatively few goals at one time, are likely to be organized, systematic, careful, thorough, and responsible as they work to pursue those goals. Further credits going for people who are conscientious is that they are usually neat, smart and systematic. However, those who are overly rated in conscientiousness are usually workaholics, perfectionists, and compulsive. Others that score low in conscientiousness, however, tend to take on a wider array of goals and, as a result they become more disorganized, careless and irresponsible, as well as less thorough and lack self-discipline, and could even become antisocial and criminal-minded.[20] There is research evidence that more conscientious people tend to be higher performers than less conscientious people across a variety of different jobs. This pattern seems logical, of course, because more conscientious people will take their jobs seriously and will approach the performance of their jobs in a highly responsible fashion, as they are less ambitious.

Neuroticism/Emotional Stability Neuroticism is personality trait which refers to people who are known to be anxious, angry, envious, and guilty. They are equally jealous, worrisome, and lonely; indecisive, unstable and subject to mood swing and depressed, [21] They are self-conscious, shy, and find it difficult to control urges and delay gratification and equally feel frustrated and usually find it difficult to handle certain tasks. On the opposite side are those who have high emotional stability. These are known to be poised, composed, secured and calmed and are more likely to handle job stress, pressure and tension better. These are even-tempered, less reactive to stress and less likely to feel tense or rattled.[22]

Openness to **Experience** is a personality dimension considered most complex by many scholars. It has to do with a person's rigidity of beliefs and range of interests. People with high level of openness are able to listen to new ideas, beliefs, and attitudes as a result of new information. They tend to have broad interests and to be curious, imaginative, and creative. On the other hand, low levels of openness tend to be less receptive to new ideas and less willing to change their minds.

Agreeableness – this includes the traits of being courteous, good-natured, empathic, and caring. People with this trait have the ability to get along with others. It causes some people to be gentle, cooperative, forgiving, understanding, and good-natured in their dealings with others. Those on the opposite side tend to be irritable, short-tempered, uncooperative, and generally antagonistic towards other people. There is anecdotal evidence that people who are agreeable will be better able to develop good working relationships with coworkers, subordinates, and higher-level managers, whereas less agreeable people will not have particularly good working relationships.

Extroversion depicts people who are known to be assertive, outgoing, talkative and sociable. The opposite is introversion, which refers to those who are quiet, shy, and cautious. This does not mean that introverts lack social skills. These are more inclined to direct their interests to ideas rather than to social events. Introverts feel quite comfortable being alone, whereas extroverts do not. The discussions above could be represented in summary form as in the table below:

Table 1: Personality Traits: Summary of their Positive and Negative Features		
Big Five Traits	**Positive Features**	**Negative Features**
Conscientiousness	Organized, systematic, self-disciplined, careful, diligent, thoughtful, responsible, thorough.	Disorganized, careless and irresponsible; indiscipline, unreliable and workaholics.
Emotional Stability	Dependable, poised, stead-fast, composed, secured, calmed.	Depressed, anxious, indecisive and subject to mood swings.
Openness to Experience	Curious, creative, imaginative, innovative, knowledgeable.	Rigid, simple, unimaginative, less receptive to new ideas and less willing to change minds.
Agreeableness	Polite, flexible, participative, patient, compatible.	Apathetic, hatred, heartless, stubborn, selfish, ambitious.
Extroversion	Outgoing, sociable, talkative, assertive, gregarious	Reserved, shy, and cautious.

It could be observed from the discussions above that each of the various theories of personality traits somehow finds a place in the big five theory, hence, we shall adopt the "big five" model as variables of interest and basis for this study.

Empirical Review

Many studies have been carried out by scholars on the correlation between job performance and personality traits and there is congruence of empirical evidences that prove their correlation across many job descriptions. For example, one study analysis shows that personality is a significant predictor of educational outcomes. The study discovered four traits that were significant for academic success; Introversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Openness to experience. This study had negative correlation between Conscientiousness and academic success.[23] Another study not only confirmed correlation of the big five model with job performance but introduced organizational commitment as a mediator between these traits and job performance.[24] Other research evidences indicate that individuals scoring high on extraversion chose more social and enterprising positions (r = .26 and .44, respectively); people scoring high on opening chose more artistic and social jobs, (r =.32 and .26 respectively), Conscientiousness was positively correlated with choosing enterprising and conventional occupations (r =.33 and .44) respectively; and negatively correlated with artistic positions (r = -.20. people scoring high on agreeableness were less apt to chose enterprising and social occupations (-.25 and .20, respectively.[25] However, none of these studies was found to have considered the appropriate personality traits that could be said to support high performance ratio in a banking environment. In this particular study, therefore, we intend to find out the intensity or degree of honesty and integrity that is associated with each of the Big Five Personality Traits in search for the best personality traits that could be deployed for a sensitive job positions in a banking environment in Nigeria or elsewhere in the world.

PECULIAR NATURE OF BANKING INDUSTRY

Banking industry, all over the world, survives only on public confidence. The roles of banking institutions in the development of national economies of countries of the world are not in doubt. In fact it is doubtful if there is any development initiative that does not involve finances and by expansion, the banks. Banks perform essentially double roles - depository and intermediary functions. It is because the public has confidence on the integrity and honesty of bank operators that makes them handover their hard earned money to the banks for keeps having the assurance that whenever they had need for the deposits, they would be availed access to their money and other valuables in the banks without stories. Expert opinion corroborates that a bank's ability to perform its depository and intermediary functions depends upon a correlative ability to attract and retain deposits, and in turn, this capability presumes and is dependent upon the perceived and actual safety of deposited funds, the availability of funds to depositors on demand, and the payment of deposits at par.[26] The ability of banks to meet the demands of depositors is the reason they (banks) should continue to enjoy continued relationship with customers; it is also the only hope they have to continue to be in business. Nigeria banking industry went into reform not too long ago[27] basically because of the need to reassure the banking/investing public that the banks could be trusted and depended upon to deliver unquestionable and unhindered services to her customers. Given previous experiences of bank failures which heightened deterioration and loss of public confidence in Nigeria banking industry, the Central Bank of Nigeria embarked upon the reform in order to win back, secure and preserve public confidence in the sector. Bank distresses or failures have always been blamed on illiquidity, occasioned most often, by human problems of fraud, mismanagement, insufficient capital base, political interference, and etcetera, hence the reform strategies were among others, to fortify the capital base of each of the banks operating in Nigeria so they would not, for any reason, suffer illiquidity which is the major cause of loss of confidence by the investing/banking public, including other regulatory provisions to forestall those human problems responsible for bank failures. For instance, the reform insisted that the capital base of each of the banks operating in Nigerian soil should be raised from the status quo ₦2,000,000,000 (Two Billion Naira) to ₦25,000,000,000 (Twenty Five Billion Naira). This policy triggered off spirited efforts by operators which led to mergers and acquisitions and at the end of the exercise the number of banks reduced drastically and only very few survived the reform onslaught.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem for which this research is embarked upon is that among the many studies on relationship between personality traits and organizational performance there is none that has considered or attempted to measure the extent to which each of the FFM of personality traits is associated with **honesty** and **integrity** which are supposed to be the most appropriate character elements that should be sought for in potential employees for banking jobs in Nigeria and world over. Could any of the big five model be more amenable to these character elements than others?

Objective/Significance of the Study

The one and only objective of this study is to find out whether there is/are one or more of the big five models that is/are more amenable to honesty and integrity than the rest. Such discovery will be very significant to banking industry,

especially to the human resource managers in banks whose responsibility it is to recruit, interview and select potential employees to work in the banking sector.

Research Questions

The research questions that will guide this study are five, one for each of the personality traits in the "big five" model. These include:

1. To what extent does conscientiousness relate with honesty and integrity?

2. To what extent does agreeableness relate with honesty and integrity?

3. To what extent does emotional stability relate with honesty and integrity?

4. To what extent does openness to experience relate with honesty and integrity?

5. To what extent does extroversion relate with honesty and integrity?

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Research Design: This research is a survey designed to investigate the extent to which each of the personality traits as contained in the "big five model" is associated with **honesty/integrity.** A structured questionnaire was developed to elicit information from respondents. The questionnaire items are designed using honesty/integrity scale of 1 to 5 , Very High (5), High(4), Low(3), Very Low(2) and Undecided(1) This method is adopted because it is believed that in each of the five traits there should be some degree of honesty and integrity. What is sought for is whether there is any of the big five models that possesses greater degree of these two character elements than others? Respondents were required to assign weights they consider represent the extent of honesty/integrity that is associated with each of the variables of interest – Conscientiousness; Agreeableness; Extroversion; Open to Experience, and Emotional Stability. The numbers of respondents under each weight represent the percentage of the total sample figure that voted that weight for each of the variables.

Population of the Study: This is made up of all the management staff of 8 banks in Enugu State of Nigeria. The 68 persons represent those who actually filled and returned the questionnaire and were therefore adopted as the sample size of this study. Thus our n = 68.

Data Analysis: The number of respondents under each weight is multiplied with the value of the weight to get the total score for each item. Then the total values of all the weights in each variable are determined and divided by n to determine the mean values for each of the variables. The mean value for each variable is then compared with those of the others to identify which is higher. In order to determine the degree of respondents' position in each of the variables of interest, nominal values were assigned to the options in each variable as has been stated above, that is 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. A cut off was determined by finding the mean of the nominal values using the formula: $\overline{X} = \frac{\sum X}{n}$, where, $\overline{X}$ = Mean, $\sum X$ = summation of nominal figures, n = number of items. Thus we have $\overline{X} = \frac{5+4+3+2+1}{5} = \frac{15}{5} = 3$. Our decision rule, therefore, is that any of the personality traits in the FFM that scores a mean of 3.0 and above is considered highly rated and has greater intensity of honesty and integrity while a mean score that is below 3.0 by any of the FFM component is taken as index of inadequacy and considered not significantly associated with honesty and integrity.

This paper, however, notes the debate on whether mean value could be used to measure ordinal data such as in this work. It is the considered opinion of this paper that mean value is a good measure of the Likert Scale data sets in this study as has been opined by experts in the debate[28]. What is needed in this study is to find the variables whose mean value(s) is (are) greater than those of the others. It is believed that any of the traits in the FFM that is highly rated in honesty and integrity than the others should be considered best-fit and suitable personality trait in banking industry in Nigeria.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to Their Responses to Each of the Research Questions							
	HONESTY/ INTEGRIGY SCALE						
	Undecided (1point)	**Very Low (2 points)**	**Low (3 points)**	**High (4 points)**	**Very high (5 points)**	**Total**	**Mean**
CONSCIENTIOUSNESS	6x1 = 6	7x2=14	10x3=30	17x4=68	28x5=140	258	3.794
AGREEABLENESS	29x1=29	24x2=48	06x3=18	05x4=20	04x5=20	135	1.985
EMOTIONAL STABILITY	24x1=24	30x2=60	07x3=21	04x4=16	03x5=15	136	2.000
OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE	25x1=25	10x2=20	16x3=48	07x4=28	10x5=50	171	2.515
EXTROVERSION	9x1=09	08x2=16	10x3=30	18x56	23x5=115	226	3.324

The above table could be represented in a graph as shown below:
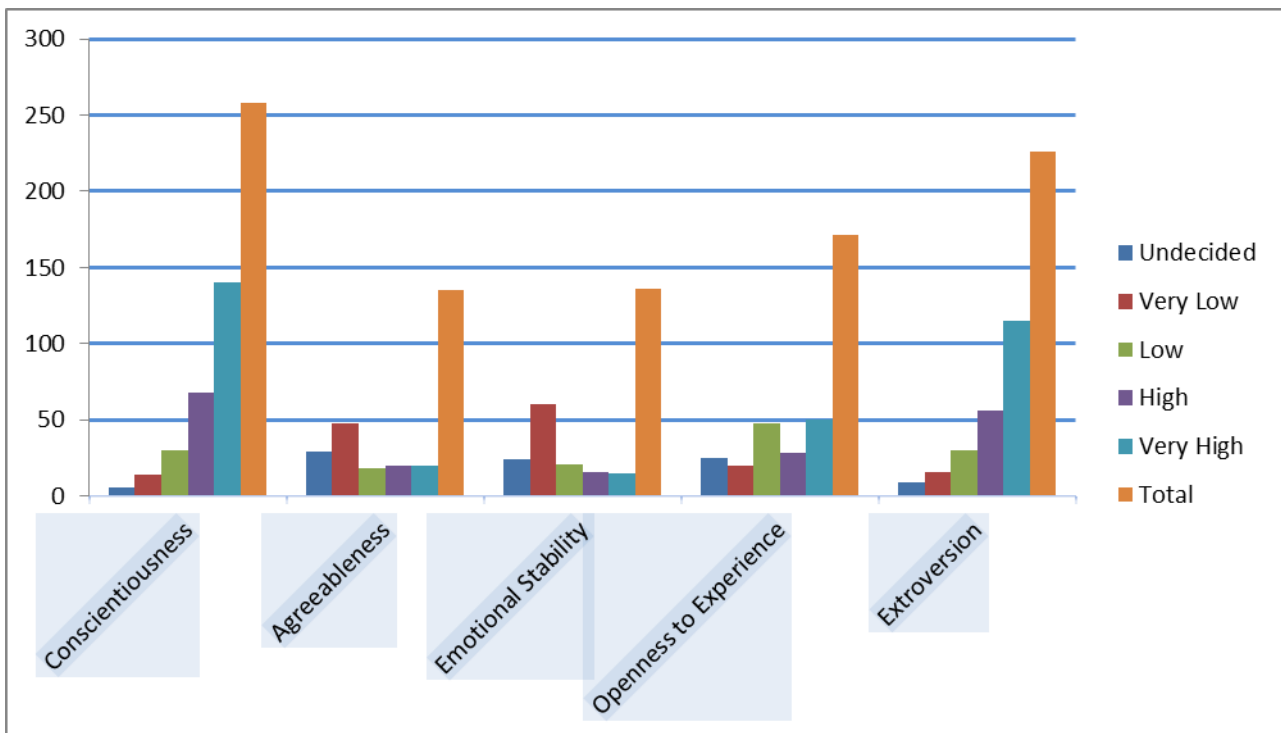
The above descriptive statistics prove that the most agreeable traits are conscientiousness with a total score of 259 and a mean score of 3.794, followed by extroversion with a total score of 226 and a mean score of 3.324 respectively. The balance of the other three traits – Agreeableness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience had mean scores less than our cut off and therefore are low rated in their relationship with honesty and integrity.

Discussions

This study examined whether any of the personality traits as contained in the Big Five Model has greater degree of honesty and integrity which are two character elements considered most appropriate in a banking environment. It is this study's considered opinion that among the factors that contribute to loss of public confidence and bank failures include bank fraud, mismanagement, inadequate capital, political interference, and other uncontrollable economic variables. All

of these factors are human character issues, except uncontrollable economic variables. While other means could be employed to tackle those factors such as the strategy employed to raise the capital base of the banks in Nigeria as discussed above or instituting technological devices to discover and prevent fraud or improving the management skills of bank officials to take care of mismanagement or equipping management officials with forecasting skills to predict or corner economic trends to best advantage, the best control measures against fraud and loss of public confidence in banking industry in Nigeria or any other nation in the world remain **honesty** and **integrity.**

Given the sensitive nature of bank jobs which requires utmost good faith (absolute honesty and integrity) of the operators, it is plausible to adjudge that the degree to which employees of banks possess these character elements, is also the degree to which it is possible to eliminate or reduce to insignificant minimum level occasions of loss of public confidence and bank failures in the banking industry in Nigeria. The point is that honesty and integrity are the best control measure against the human problems associated with loss of public confidence and consequently possible bank failures.

It is interesting to discover that two, out of the five personality traits in the FFM, namely, Conscientiousness and Extraversion were rated high in our variable of interest and, therefore, considered most favourable for bank jobs. In spite of this result, the study, however, does not suggest that people who possess other personality traits with less volume or intensity of honesty and integrity are not qualified to work in the bank, it only means that certain aspect of the bank jobs with high risk of fraud and embezzlement should be better assigned to employees who are rated high in conscientiousness and extraversion.

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