

## Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship between Personality Trait And Career Choice Among University Students

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**ABSTRACT:** Career choice remains a critical decision that has an impact on the future life pattern of an individual. The study investigated the influence of gender in the connection between personality traits and career preference of University of Cape Coast undergraduate students. Descriptive research design, the cross-sectional type was chosen for the study. Proportionate stratified sampling procedure with a common ratio of 0.411 was used in selecting 226 undergraduate psychology students to serve as respondents of the study. Big Five Personality Scale developed by Lounsbury, Hutchens and Loveland (2005) and Career Choice Inventory developed by Schein (1993) were adapted and used as the research instruments. Conditional Process analysis by Andrews Hayes was used to analyse the data. Findings showed that gender does not significantly moderate the relationship between personality trait and career choice. Results are discussed and implications drawn for educational policy and practice.

**KEYWORDS:** *Personality trait, Career choice, Influence.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Career choice is one of the crucial decisions in an individual's life (Alkhelil, 2016). People success in life and for that matter satisfaction and happiness depends on the accuracy of one's career preference (Alkhelil, 2016). It is an indisputable fact that people differ in several ways. The differences range from psychological to physical appearances. These differences have great influence on how people behave, think, and feel. Such differences have made psychologists to set out for a search of what shapes individual characteristics. The differences are also true for the kind of career that people choose for themselves. Career choice among tertiary students is an important stage that students have to go through during their course of study (Idd, 2007).

The process is not an easy one, as it is influenced by many factors, such as characteristics of people, life experiences, effectiveness, performance expectations, motivation and personal goals (Taasobshirazi, 2007). Sometimes the plight of choosing a career worsens when the individual is situated in a developing economy where there is high unemployment and under-employment situation. In recent competitive world of new information and continuous economic hardship, one is not only expected to make adequate self-investment but also comprehensive career information search before taking career decision so as to adjust to the advancing socioeconomic conditions (Wattles, 2009).

Career need some kind of unique characteristics to be performed well (Roberts & Robins, 2000). Some career call for specific personality characteristics that relate to attributes on the job (Schreuder & Mcoetzee, 2002). Career triumph is highly contingent on the agreement between personality trait and the job characteristics and this tend to produce maximum results (Roberts & Robins, 2000). Studies on occupational preference have presented evidence that occupational choice depends on personality traits (Murugesan & Jayavelu, 2017; Kemboi, Kindiki & Misigo, 2016; Cobb-Clark & Tan, 2011). Most of these studies found relationship between personality characteristics and career preference, however, they made no attempt to investigate the possible intervening variable(s) that possibly might have the potency to influence the connection between personality traits and career choice.

In this case the curious mind may ask, is it not possible that a person with a particular personality trait chooses a particular career path largely because of his/her gender? In other words, does gender has a calculable role in influencing the connection between personality traits and career choice? There is no readily available answer to this question. This is because, most of the researchers in the area of career preference have paid attention to just the connection between personality traits and career preference (Murugesan & Jayavelu, 2017;

Roberts & Robins, 2000), other researchers, especially, Ghanaian scholars, have also concentrated on factors that affect students' career preference (Woasey, 2015; Avugla, 2011; Adjin-Tettey, 2003; Amedzor, 2003). This leaves a knowledge gap in the literature especially, regarding the connection between personality characteristics and career preference and how gender influences this relationship. This study therefore sought to explore the connection between personality characteristics and career preference of University of Cape Coast students.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Concept of Personality

Personality as a concept emanates from the captivating spectrum of human singularity (Passer & Smith, 2004). It has been observed that people differ meaningfully, and have unique behaviour design that assist to explain one's identity as an individual. Unique and relatively permanent way of thinking, feeling and doing things that defines a person's response to situation is seen as personality (Passer & Smith, 2004). Essentially, it is worth noting that the Big Five personality traits have overtaken those traits proposed by earlier personality psychologists who earlier proposed extraversion-introversion personality (Boeree, 2006). For example, it also dominated the work of Eysenck (1952 and 1990), as cited in McAdams (1994), who insisted on the existence of three-piece traits only: Introversion/ Extraversion, psychoticism and neuroticism. Furthermore, the Big Five dimensions have also overtaken the popular work of Allport (1961) on the trait theory. For him, the structure of personality is characterized by traits (Allport, 1961; McAdams, 1994). Allport's trait theory proposed that human personality is made of three types of traits. These, captures secondary traits, cardinal traits and central traits (Allport, 1961; Boeree, 2006). The greater degree of consensus, which the Big Five Personality Traits Model has received over other trait taxonomies in the history of personality trait in psychology, is due to its empirical evidences.

### Big Five Personality Dimensions

Five-facet personality model that Goldberg proposed is termed as "Big Five Model" in psychology research (Goldberg, 1993). Openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism are the five-personality facet.

#### Agreeableness

Agreeableness is a personality attribute that describes people who are accommodating, flexible and supportive (Cattell & Mead, 2008). Critically, we are making reference to people who are generous, outgoing and friendly in character (Burch & Anderson, 2008).

#### Openness to experience

Individuals with this kind of attribute tend to be creative, visionary and ingenious (Howard & Howard, 1995). People with openness characteristic are generally sensitive to their thought and analytical prowess. They are curious individuals and deductive in nature (Cattell & Mead, 2008).

#### Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness characteristics dominated individuals are very cautious and think through thoroughly about their actions or decisions that they embark on (Cattell & Mead, 2008).

#### Extraversion

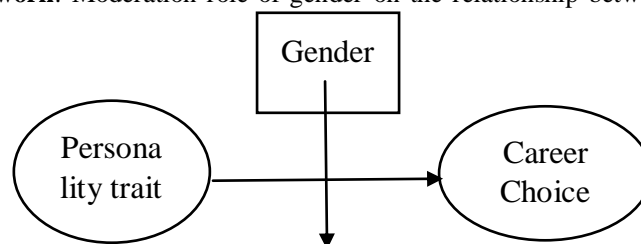
People who are dominated by extraversion trait are generally talkative and individuals who love to argue a lot (Cattell & Mead, 2008). They are individuals who love excitement in every bit of life and also tend to dominate groups to which they are members. On the other hand, individuals who are cold or reserved and are generally uncomfortable in making their identities known in group activities are also called introverts (Goldberg, 1992).

#### Neuroticism

Neurotic individuals are people who are quick tempered, self-blame and people who easily get frustrated when things aren't as they expect (Cattell & Mead, 2008). They are also individuals who are prone to intense stress and depression. This is a cardinal characteristic trait attributable to people who are pessimistic and reactive over trivial issues (Burch & Anderson, 2008).

**Conceptual Framework:** Moderation role of gender on the relationship between personality trait and career choice.

Figure 1



**Source: Authors' construct.**

Figure 1, indicate the conceptual model that the study seeks to test. In the model, the first assumption is that, personality trait predicts career choice. This assumption was actually deduced from empirical studies in

literature on the two variables (Alkhelil, 2016; Murugesan & Jayavelu, 2017). Literature has shown that personality characteristics predict career preference. The researchers are however, curious to know and therefore hypothesized that a third variable (gender) is also more likely to have some amount of influence on the connection between personality trait and career choice of people. The information about the influence of gender on the relationship between personality traits and career preference is what appears to be missing in personality psychology literature for which reason this study is being conducted.

### **Personality characteristics and Career Choice**

Mullola, Hakulinen, Presseau, Porras, Jokela, Hintsa and Elovainio (2018) explored the connection between the personality characteristics and career preference among medical students. Adapted version of the Big Five Inventory (S-BFI) was used to measure the personality trait of the respondents. Career preference inventory assisted in the measurement of respondents' career choice. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) statistical tool was used to analyze the data collected. Findings revealed that high openness was associated with working in the private sector and psychiatry specialization.

Penn and Lent (2018) investigated differential roles that career preference self-efficacy and the Big Five characteristics of extroversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness function in connection to career preference status and decisional complexity. Findings revealed that each of the personality trait (extroversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness) mediated the connection between career preference self-efficacy and choice/commitment anxiety and decidedness.

Murugesan and Jayavelu (2017) investigated the effect of the Big Five characteristics on the connection between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions. It was purported to examine whether the effect of a set of personality characteristics and self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention differs with respect to gender. The study population targeted students who enrolled in Bachelor of Technology (BTech). The findings offer support for the connection of neuroticism, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness and self-efficacy with entrepreneurial intention—except on the connection of entrepreneurial intention and extraversion.

Alkhelil (2016) examined correlation between personality characteristics and career preference and further explore whether personality attributes affect the decision of course major in the university or college. The study concentrated on the procedure for job selection and the effect of personality characteristics on this procedure from the relationship between how students acknowledge their personality characteristics and their preference for a particular job. 178 Damascus secondary school students were randomly selected for the research exercise. Findings showed that there was a significant relationship between personality characteristics and career preference.

### **Research Hypothesis**

H<sub>0</sub>: Gender does not significantly moderate the relationship between personality traits and career choice.

H<sub>1</sub>: Gender significantly moderate the relationship between personality traits and career choice.

### **Research Methods**

The design that was used for this study was a descriptive survey. This design was used because of its strength of providing an accurate and objective description of a picture of an on-going situation or real-life situation (Quartey & Awoyemi, 2002). The target population of the study comprised all undergraduate psychology students' in the University of Cape Coast, thus level 100 to 400 in the 2018/19 academic year. They were estimated to be 549 in number, however, for the purpose of convenience and also to ensure a more detailed study of the elements involved, the researchers used a sample size of 226 which was in line with Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling estimation criterion for a population of 549. The study sample was selected from the population using proportionate stratified sampling technique with a common ratio of 0.411. "Big Five Personality Scale" developed by Lounsbury, Hutchens and Loveland (2005) and Career Choice Inventory developed by Schein (1993) were adapted for the study. The two instruments were put together to form a multidimensional scale type with overall Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .92. Before the questionnaires were administered to respondents, they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of all information. Respondents' voluntary consent to participate was also sought. Two days were used for the data collection. The response rate was 100%. Conditional Process analysis by Hayes was used to get meaning from the data.

## **III. RESULTS**

H<sub>0</sub>: Gender does not significantly moderate the relationship between personality traits and career choice.

This hypothesis was tested using moderation analysis by Hayes. The analysis made use of 5,000 bootstrap samples with 95% confidence interval. Gender was the moderator; the predictor variable was personality trait and career choice was the criterion variable. Table 1, highlights on the results.

Table 1- Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship between Personality trait and Career Choice

Model	Effect	Boot SE	t-value	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Constant	47.756	20.438	2.336	7.489	88.024
personality	.347	.276	1.257	-.197	.891
Gender	-13.175	13.062	-1.008	-38.910	12.559
Personality* Gender	.158	.1760	.902	-.1880	.5056

Overall Model:  $F(3, 223) = .8137, p > .05, R^2 = .0029$

Table 1 depicts moderating role of gender in the connection between personality attribute and career preference. It was revealed that the overall model was not significant,  $F(3, 223) = .8137, p > .05$ . However, further analysis revealed that personality trait, gender, and the interaction term (personality\*gender) contributed about .29% of the variances in career choice. Gender was not found as a significant moderator in the connection between personality characteristics and career choice [ $b = .158, SE = .176, BootCI(-.1880, .5056)$ ]. In other words, if a person is dominated by a particular personality trait, the person is highly predisposed to the career path that the personality trait predicts regardless of gender.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Research hypothesis investigated the influence of gender in the connection between personality characteristics and career preference. Analysis of the data revealed that gender does not significantly moderate the correlation between personality characteristics and career preference. It appears that there has been a period of prolonged dormancy of information generation with respect to psychology researchers focus on intervening variables that middle between personality trait and career preference. Penn and Lent (2018) discovered that conscientiousness (which was measured a continuous variable unlike gender) moderate the connection of career preference self-efficacy to choice/career anxiety. Further analysis by Penn and Lent showed that extroversion moderated the connection of self-efficacy to decidedness. Majority of studies in literature acknowledge the fact that the two variables (personality trait and career choice) relates. Mullola, Hakulinen, Presseau, Porras, Jokela, Hintsa and Elovainio (2018) explored correlation between personality characteristics and medical career preference after graduating from medical school. They found out that private sector jobs and psychiatry had relationship with higher openness. Again, Alkheilil (2016) investigated the correlation between personality attributes and career decidedness. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between personality traits and career choice.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The study can conclude that the connection between personality characteristics and career path option of a person is not influenced by gender. In other words, gender as a third intervening variable does not affect how personality trait and career choice relate.

#### Recommendation

Guidance coordinators as well as counsellors in tertiary institutions should organize sensitization programmes that prioritize guidance and counselling services directed toward how students can be assisted to make meaningful decisions about career that matches their personality traits irrespective of their gender.

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