
A double-edged sword: The moderating role of conscientiousness in the relationships between work stressors, psychological strain, and job performance

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Summary

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Work stressors are associated with psychological strain and job performance. However, the relationships between work stressors and psychological strain and between work stressors and job performance are not always consistent. This study examined the moderating role of conscientiousness in the relationships between work stressors, psychological strain, and job performance. A sample of 250 employees from a large Chinese company was surveyed. Results showed that conscientiousness moderated the relationships between work stressors and psychological strain and between work stressors and job performance. Specifically, for high conscientiousness employees, work stressors were positively related to psychological strain and negatively related to job performance. For low conscientiousness employees, work stressors were negatively related to psychological strain and positively related to job performance. These findings suggest that conscientiousness plays a double-edged sword in the relationships between work stressors, psychological strain, and job performance.

Keywords: conscientiousness, work stressors, psychological strain, job performance, moderation

Introduction

Work stressors are associated with psychological strain and job performance. However, the relationships between work stressors and psychological strain and between work stressors and job performance are not always consistent. This study examined the moderating role of conscientiousness in the relationships between work stressors, psychological strain, and job performance. A sample of 250 employees from a large Chinese company was surveyed. Results showed that conscientiousness moderated the relationships between work stressors and psychological strain and between work stressors and job performance. Specifically, for high conscientiousness employees, work stressors were positively related to psychological strain and negatively related to job performance. For low conscientiousness employees, work stressors were negatively related to psychological strain and positively related to job performance. These findings suggest that conscientiousness plays a double-edged sword in the relationships between work stressors, psychological strain, and job performance.

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Challenge stressors, hindrance stressors, and outcomes

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1991; F z & ... , 2009; I , M , & ... , 1982; J z & ... , 2008; ... z , ... , &
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... I ... (L ... , 2004; L ... , 2005), ... I ... (C ... , 2000). B ... (L ... , 2004; L ... , 2005). D ... (... , B ... , 2004; L ... & A ... , 1996; L ... , 2004; L ... , 2005; ... , 2007; ... , 2011). (... & F ... , 1984) (J ... , 1998; ... , C ... , & J ... , 1989). E ... (C ... , L ... , & ... , 2010; ... , 2007). I ...

The moderating role of conscientiousness

I ... (G ... , 2010) ... A ... (H ... , 1989, 2001), ... (CO ...) ... (... , L ... , & ... , 2011; ... & C ... , 2006). ... ; F ... & L ... , 1980, 1985). O ... A ... (L ... , K ... , & E ... , 2006; ... , M ... , & ... , 2010), ... (... & C ... , 2006). A ... (C ... & M ... , 1988), ... (C ... & M ... , 1992). I ... (M ... , D ... , & B ... , 2009; ... , L ... , & ... , 2009; ... , B ... , & K ... , 2012). H ... C ... (M ... , 2001), ... (B ... , ... , & ... , 2002), ... (J ... & I ... , ...)

2002), (B , 1993; , A , & H , 2011), A (, J , & N , 2004), (, C , & H , 1994). (, & E , 2007; , C , & H , 1994). (, F , I , A ,)

Hypothesis 1a: C

(C , 2000; L , 2005; , 2007). N (E (B & E , 2010) (J & D , 2009). G (J & I , 2002), (I) (A (N , 2014).

Hypothesis 1b: C

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Hypothesis 2a: Consciousness will be positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and negatively related to organizational deviance behaviors (ODBs). Specifically, we expect that individuals who are more conscious will be more likely to engage in OCBs and less likely to engage in ODBs. This is because conscious individuals are more likely to be aware of their actions and their consequences, and they are more likely to be motivated by a sense of responsibility and a desire to do the right thing (Gardner & Lurie, 2007). As a result, we expect that conscious individuals will be more likely to engage in OCBs and less likely to engage in ODBs.

Hypothesis 2b: Consciousness will be positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and negatively related to organizational deviance behaviors (ODBs). Specifically, we expect that individuals who are more conscious will be more likely to engage in OCBs and less likely to engage in ODBs. This is because conscious individuals are more likely to be aware of their actions and their consequences, and they are more likely to be motivated by a sense of responsibility and a desire to do the right thing (Gardner & Lurie, 2007). As a result, we expect that conscious individuals will be more likely to engage in OCBs and less likely to engage in ODBs.

Method

Participants and procedure

A total of 300 participants were recruited from a large university in the United States. The participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: a control condition and an experimental condition. In the control condition, participants completed a survey that measured their level of consciousness and their OCBs and ODBs. In the experimental condition, participants completed the same survey, but they also received a brief intervention designed to increase their level of consciousness. The intervention consisted of a series of questions and exercises that were designed to help participants become more aware of their thoughts and feelings. After completing the survey, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation. The data were analyzed using a 2 (condition) x 1 (consciousness) factorial design. The dependent variables were OCBs and ODBs. The independent variables were consciousness and condition. The results of the analysis are reported in the following sections.

25.74 (SD=4.24); 0.4, 51.20, 41.6
 8.0, 50.0
 1.47 (SD=1.69).

Measures

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 E... C...
 E... F... E...
 (94.7) ... M...

Challenge and hindrance stressors

C... (2000) 11-... E...
 5 (a great deal of stress). C... (α=.93) ...
 “... I...” (fi...; C... α=.83)
 “... ” “... ”

Conscientiousness

... (1994) (C... α=.71...
 M... (G..., 1992), ... M...-M...
 NEO F...-F... I... (M... & N..., 1996). I... 40
 “...” “...” L... 1
 (extremely inaccurate) 5 (extremely accurate).

Psychological strain

12-... G... H... (GH-12) ... L... (2011)
 (C... α=.89...). GH-12...
 G... (1988)
 (..., L..., & C..., 2013).
 (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). A... “T... ” H...

Job performance

E... (1997) (C... α=.96...).
 (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). A... “... ”

Control variables

... (A, D, & B, 2003; C, 2000; E, 2004; Lff & C, 1992; , 2004; , 2002; "1", 2009). I "2", fi

Results

... 1. A (r = .25, p < .01). H (r = -.17, p < .01). H (r = .12, p = .06) fi (r = .08, p > .10).

Testing measurement model

... LI EL 8.80 (J & , 2006). (,) fi $\chi^2(550) = 1422.74, p < .01, CFI = 0.90,$ LI = 0.90, M EA = 0.08. A -38 .35. (345.36 ≤ $\Delta\chi^2$ Δdf = 4 ≤ 2162.86, p < .01).

Testing moderation effects

B (B, 2000; K & K z, 2000). (HLM) M HLM 6.08 (, B, & C, 2007). A HLM ff ff fi ff f' .I .I fi .I fi .A L 1 f, fi f /, B f ff fi, f fi HLM () f 1.30, 0.33. $\chi^2(25) = 117.26, p < .01.$.20, 20 /, . F

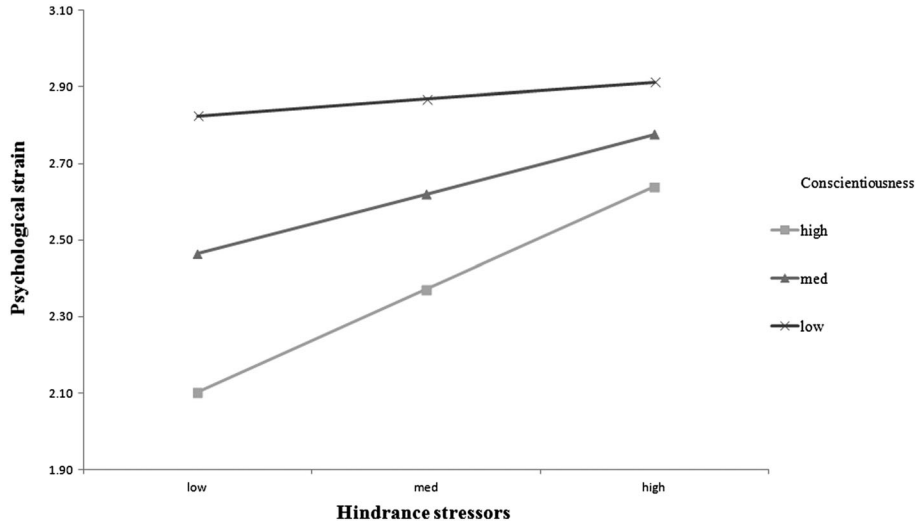


Figure 4. Interaction of hindrance stressors and conscientiousness on psychological strain.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between hindrance stressors and psychological strain, and how this relationship is moderated by conscientiousness. Results showed that hindrance stressors are positively related to psychological strain, and this relationship is stronger for individuals with lower conscientiousness. This finding is consistent with the theory of stress and coping, which suggests that individuals with lower conscientiousness are less likely to engage in effective coping strategies, leading to higher levels of psychological strain in response to stressors. The interaction effect was significant, indicating that the relationship between hindrance stressors and psychological strain is not uniform across all levels of conscientiousness. Specifically, the slope of the relationship is steeper for the low conscientiousness group compared to the high conscientiousness group. This suggests that individuals with lower conscientiousness are more vulnerable to the negative effects of hindrance stressors. The findings have important implications for organizations and individuals. Organizations should be aware of the potential negative effects of hindrance stressors on employees, particularly those with lower conscientiousness. Interventions aimed at improving coping strategies and reducing hindrance stressors may be beneficial for these individuals. For individuals, the findings suggest that developing higher levels of conscientiousness and effective coping strategies may help reduce the negative impact of hindrance stressors on psychological strain.

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Theoretical implications

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B...

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Practical implications

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