

Personality, political skill, and job performance

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Abstract

Based on the socioanalytic perspective of performance prediction [Hogan, R. (1991). Personality and personality assessment. In M. D. Dunnette, & L. Hough, (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 873–919). Chicago: Rand McNally; Hogan, R., & Shelton, D. (1998). A socioanalytic perspective on job performance. *Human Performance*, 11, 129–144.], the present study tests whether motives to *get along* and to *get ahead* produce greater performance when interactively combined with social effectiveness. Specifically, we investigated whether interactions of the Five-Factor model constructs of agreeableness and conscientiousness with political skill predict job performance. Our results supported our hypothesis for the agreeableness-political skill interaction. Additionally, after correcting for the unreliability and restricted range of conscientiousness, we found that its interaction with political skill also significantly predicted job performance, although not precisely as hypothesized. Implications of the results and directions for future research are provided.

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1. Introduction

Although, there has been evidence over the years that personality predicts job performance, the results have been quite inconsistent (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1993; Hogan, Hogan, & Murtha, 1992). Hogan, (1991) and Hogan and Shelton, (1998) suggested that personality cannot be expected to ignite quickly, but instead requires social effectiveness skills to energize it into action, so it can exhibit its influence. By implication, strong personality prediction of job performance should not be expected without the presence of social effectiveness skills. Political skill is a recently developed social effectiveness competency, which already has demonstrated its

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effectiveness as a predictor of important work outcomes (e.g., Ferris et al., 2005; Jawahar, Meurs, Ferris, & Hochwarter, in press; Semadar, Robbins, & Ferris, 2006). In addition, it might be that political skill also plays a facilitating role with personality in the prediction of job performance.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the interaction of political skill with both agreeableness and conscientiousness in the prediction of job performance. Building on Witt and Ferris (2003), and drawing from Hogan (1983,1991); Hogan & Shelton (1998), we test the hypothesis that higher levels of personality characteristics (i.e., agreeableness and conscientiousness) will be associated with higher levels of job performance for individuals high in political skill. However, for individuals low in political skill, higher levels of personality characteristics will be associated with lower levels of job performance.

1.1. A socioanalytic perspective on job performance

Hogan and Shelton (1998) argued for a socioanalytic view of job performance, which suggests that people are motivated to *get along* and *get ahead*. In order to get along, people need to comply and cooperate with others in a friendly and positive way (Hogan & Holland, 2003). To get ahead, individuals seek responsibility, are competitive, and try to be recognized (Hogan & Holland, 2003). Although people are motivated to *get along* with and *ahead* of others, the desire, ability, and ultimate success of individuals to engage in these endeavors differ from person to person. In empirical research, personality has been used as a proxy for motivation by researchers (e.g., Mount, Barrick, & Strauss, 1999; Witt & Ferris, 2003).

Because performance in the substantial majority of present day jobs depends on social interactions (Hogan & Shelton, 1998), a person's social skill also is an important part of the socioanalytic perspective on performance prediction. Additionally, as noted by Mount, Barrick, and Stewart (1998), the importance of social skill can be seen in the growth of service-sector jobs, which have been found to employ over two-thirds of the US workforce (Albrecht & Zemke, 1985), and in the increasing use of teams (Lawler, Mohrman, & Ledford, 1995).

Hogan and Shelton (1998) contended that social skill is a moderator of the relationships between these motivations and performance evaluations. Through social skill or effectiveness, one is able to transform intentions to *get along* and *get ahead* into actions that are perceived and evaluated by others. Prior to discussing the present study, we review the particular social effectiveness construct (i.e., political skill) used in our research.

1.2. Political skill in organizations

We believe that one measure of social skill or effectiveness in organizations is political skill, which is an interpersonal effectiveness construct that combines social understanding with the ability to adjust behavior to the demands of the situation in ways that appear sincere, inspire trust and support, and effectively influences others (Ferris et al., 2005, 2007). Politically skilled persons possess social competencies that enhance their personal and/or organizational goals through their understanding and influence of others at work.

Moreover, political skill has been associated with higher job performance. Ferris et al. (2005) demonstrated that political skill predicted managerial ratings of performance in two samples. Semadar et al. (2006) found that political skill was a stronger predictor of a manager's job performance than self-monitoring, leadership self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence. The results of a study by Jawahar et al. (in press) demonstrated that political skill was a stronger predictor of contextual than task performance and that it was a stronger predictor of contextual performance than self-efficacy. Additionally, political skill has been found to moderate the relationships between stressors and strain reactions (e.g., Perrewé et al., 2004), and between influence tactics and performance outcomes (e.g., Treadway, Ferris, Duke, Adams, & Thatcher, 2007).

1.3. Present study

We operationalized *getting along* and *getting ahead* in two personality constructs, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, respectively, arguing that each interacts with political skill in prediction of job performance.

1.4. Agreeableness

A person who is high on agreeableness can be described as sympathetic, kind, altruistic, generous, fair, and eager to help others (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1992). Agreeableness has been argued to stem from the temperamental self-regulatory system, involving control abilities such as anger regulation and cognitive inhibition (e.g., Ahadi & Rothbart, 1994). Borman, Penner, Allen, and Motowidlo (2001) reviewed a number of studies that found significant relationships between agreeableness and various measures of citizenship performance, and Mount et al. (1998) demonstrated that, of the five dimensions, agreeableness was the best predictor of performance in jobs requiring team-based interaction.

Some have argued that agreeableness concerns a person's motives for maintaining positive relations with others, and allows individuals to minimize the negative effects of interpersonal conflict and get along in groups (e.g., Hogan, 1983). In short, research supports the characterization of agreeableness as a personality trait that reflects the individual's desire to *get along* with others (Hogan & Holland, 2003; Wiggins & Trapnell, 1996).

In accordance with the arguments of Hogan and Shelton (1998), we maintain that social skill (i.e., political skill as an operationalization) and agreeableness interact in the prediction of job performance. Therefore, we contend that the interactive combination of agreeableness and political skill yields greater job performance by providing the complementary motivation and ability that each alone is lacking. Those with political skill have the social capacity to effectively portray their agreeableness to others in ways that appear sincere and influence them.

However, we also believe that for those low in political skill, higher levels of agreeableness are associated with lower levels of job performance. As argued by Mount et al. (1998), too much agreeableness can be detrimental to job performance, particularly in service industries. Although co-operation is vital in service-sector positions, employees who are too compliant to customer demands will have difficulty meeting the goals of the organization. Additionally, managers and associates who are too cooperative with peers and supervisors will have difficulty obtaining the necessary resources and/or objectives for their position. Therefore, we present the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant interaction of agreeableness and political skill on job performance. Specifically, for individuals high on political skill, higher levels of agreeableness are associated with higher levels of job performance. For individuals low on political skill, higher levels of agreeableness are associated with lower levels of job performance.

1.5. Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness individuals are characterized as organized, hardworking, determined, self-disciplined, and achievement oriented (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1992), and some (i.e., Schmidt & Hunter, 1992) have called conscientiousness the most important trait-based motivation construct in the organizational sciences. It has been well-established that, of all of the FFM personality dimensions, conscientiousness has demonstrated the strongest relationship with job performance, generalizing across a range of positions (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997).

However, despite these findings, some (i.e., Barrick & Mount, 1993) have contended that a consideration of moderators of the personality–performance relationship is warranted to account for the differences in validities across studies. Similarly, one study found that the effects of conscientiousness on performance were primarily mediated by expectancy (i.e., Gellatly, 1996), and Barrick, Stewart, and Piotrowski (2002) demonstrated that the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance was mediated by accomplishment striving (i.e., as opposed to communion or status strivings). As noted by Barrick, Mount, and Judge (2001), accomplishment striving can be characterized as a nonsocial, task orientation, and Hogan and Holland (2003) suggested that task performance is akin to the motivation to *get ahead* in organizations. Therefore, due to its strong association with accomplishment striving and task performance, conscientiousness appears to be a measure of *getting ahead*.

Many studies of the relationship between conscientiousness and performance have considered moderators, such as autonomy (Barrick & Mount, 1993) and extraversion (Witt, 2002). Further, one important moderator of the conscientiousness–job performance relationship that has yet to be examined is political skill. Witt and

Ferris (2003) demonstrated that social skill moderated the relationship between conscientiousness and interpersonal facilitation and contextual performance in four studies. The results of this body of research suggest that for those high in political skill, conscientiousness will have a positive relationship with job performance.

We also contend that, for those low in political skill, conscientiousness will exhibit a negative relationship with job performance. It has been argued that in the absence of social skill, conscientiousness can lead to problems (Goleman, 1998). Also, Witt and Ferris (2003) argued that conscientious persons without social skill could be perceived as unreasonably demanding or inflexible. They demonstrated that, for three of their four studies, conscientiousness was negatively related to performance for those low in social skill, and, in the other study, the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance was non-significant for those low in social skill. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant interaction of conscientiousness and political skill on job performance. Specifically, for individuals high on political skill, higher levels of conscientiousness are associated with higher levels of job performance. For individuals low on political skill, higher levels of conscientiousness are associated with lower levels of job performance.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants and procedure

The study was conducted in the city triangle of Cologne, Bonn, and Düsseldorf, which is an economically leading region of western Germany. Surveys were mailed to 610 persons currently active in the working world for at least 12 h a week. The mean number of working hours per week of the target persons was 42.25 ($SD = 12.03$). Addresses for the study were obtained by personal contact. Target participants received a package in the mail with the political skill questionnaire and a personality questionnaire. In addition, participants received two performance questionnaires with the instruction to give them to supervisors, peers, or subordinates. The questionnaires were sent together with prepaid return envelopes. Data were collected for 392 target participants and 529 assessors, yielding a return rate of 64.3% and 43.4%, respectively. However, 66 targets only answered incompletely or no job performance assessment was returned for them, and their responses could not be used in further analyses. Thus, 326 complete data sets were available, i.e., one complete survey response from a target and at least one or two complete response sets from the assessors (see below). Of the 326 target participants 46.6% were females and 53.4% were males. Their age ranged between 20 and 65 years with a mean age of 41.40 ($SD = 11.99$ years.).

Of the complete response sets, in 145 cases, targets' job performance was assessed by one other person, namely by 31 supervisors, 76 peers, 36 subordinates, and two persons in other positions. In 181 cases, targets' performance was assessed by two other persons, namely 60 supervisors, 131 peers, 168 subordinates and three persons in other positions.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Big Five inventory—short version (BFI-K)

The BFI-K is a German adaptation of the Big Five inventory (BFI, John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991) by Rammstedt and John (2005). We used the BFI-K to measure agreeableness with four items and conscientiousness with four. Items use a 5-point Likert-type scale for response. Although this is a brief questionnaire, the psychometric properties in the validation samples were quite satisfactory. Findings showed factorial validity, convergence of self-reports with partner ratings, and convergence with other inventories assessing the Big Five personality factors (Rammstedt & John, 2005).

2.2.2. Political skill inventory (PSI)

The PSI (Ferris et al., 2005) is comprised of 18 items. Items are responded on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Sample items include, "I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others.", and "I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me." Ferris et al. (2005) found that PSI items do not correlate with social desirability. The measure has an alpha of .90.

The translation process of the *PSI* from American English to German proceeded in the following steps. First, a German version of the *PSI* was generated and back translated to American English by three translators. The back translation was then compared with the original *PSI* items by four American industrial and organizational psychologists, and inconsistencies were then resolved.

2.2.3. Job performance ratings

Job performance was assessed with the following items: “(1) How fast does this person usually complete her tasks?; (2) How is the quality of this person’s performance altogether?; (3) How successful is this person in dealing with unforeseen and/or unexpected events (disturbances, interruptions, losses/deficiencies, crises, stagnations) in her job activity generally?; (4) How well does this person adjust herself to changes and innovations?; (5) How sociable does this person act in co-operation with others?; (6) How reliably does this person meet work-related commitments and agreements?” Items 1 and 2 represent important aspects of task performance, items 3 and 4 represent important aspects of adaptive performance, and items 5 and 6 represent important aspects of contextual performance (Schmitt, Cortina, Ingerick, & Wiechmann, 2003).

The rating anchors ranged from “a great deal better than other persons in a comparable position” to “much worse than other persons in a comparable position,” with “better than,” “as good as,” and “worse than” as intermediate anchors. For each item, raters also had the opportunity to choose the option, “can’t say.”

Because we sampled jobs from varying domains (e.g., social, enterprising, and conventional), and as job performance demands typically differ within the same domain from job to job, we also directly assessed the importance of each performance facet by the raters. The rating anchors were “very important in this job,” “important in this job,” “less important in this job,” and “not important in this job,” as intermediate anchors, as well as the answer option “don’t know.” The rating of how well a job incumbent performed in a given domain was weighted by the importance rating of the respective aspect ranging from 0 (irrelevant) to 1 (highly relevant). “Don’t know” responses were coded as missing. The job performance ratings were aggregated across all supervisor-, peer-, and subordinate-ratings available for a particular target participant. The weighting was done at the level of each rater. Subsequently, the weighted ratings were averaged for each target.

2.3. Control variables

2.3.1. Demographic variables

Previous research has shown gender (i.e., Bowen, Swim, & Jacobs, 2000) and age (i.e., Waldmann & Avolio, 1986) to have an impact on performance ratings. Therefore, gender and age served as control variables in the analyses.

2.3.2. Data analyses

Hierarchical moderated multiple regression analyses (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003) were conducted to examine the interaction effects of political skill, agreeableness, and conscientiousness on job performance ratings. Gender and age were entered in the first step to control for potential demographic effects. In the second step, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and political skill were entered. In the third step, the cross-product terms of agreeableness and political skill and conscientiousness and political skill were entered. All predictors were centered. A significant change in R^2 in the last step identifies an interactive effect.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations

Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and coefficient alpha (α) internal consistency reliability estimates of all variables. Unfortunately, the coefficient alpha of the conscientiousness scale was low ($\alpha = .54$). Additionally, there was a ceiling effect of the conscientiousness scale. The mean of this scale in the present sample was higher than the means of the validation samples (Rammstedt & John, 2005). In addition, the variance of the conscientiousness scale was considerably smaller compared to the two validation sam-

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, coefficient alpha reliabilities, and intercorrelations

| Variables | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|----------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Gender | 326 | 1.53 | 0.50 | — | | | | | |
| 2. Age | 326 | 41.40 | 11.99 | .15** | — | | | | |
| 3. PSI | 326 | 5.06 | 0.65 | -.07 | .01 | (.86) | | | |
| 4. Agreeableness | 326 | 3.27 | 0.78 | -.08 | .08 | .05 | (.64) | | |
| 5. Conscientiousness | 326 | 4.08 | 0.58 | -.12* | .04 | .10 | .07 | (.54) | |
| 6. Job performance | 326 | 0.27 | 0.23 | -.01 | .05 | .10 | .02 | .10 | (.80) |

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, Gender (1, female; 2, male).

ples presented by Rammstedt and John (2005) (sample one: $F(458,325) = 1.415$, $p < .005$; sample two: $F(390,325) = 1.584$, $p < .005$).

Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability estimates of the performance ratings was $\alpha = .80$. The fit of a one-factor model of job performance was tested. The confirmatory factor analysis starting from a covariance matrix and using maximum likelihood estimates had the following fit indices ($GFI = .962$; $AGFI = .912$, $NFI = .924$, $NNFI = .900$, $CFI = .940$, $RMR = .004$, $SRMR = .044$). Spector (2001) summarized the criteria of good fit for the different index types ($GFI \geq .90$; $AGFI \geq .80$, $NFI \geq .90$, $NNFI \geq .90$, $CFI \geq .90$, $RMR \leq .05$, $SRMR \leq .05$).

According to these criteria, the general factor model of job performance in the present study had a good overall fit. Finally, the overall inter-rater correlation of the job performance assessors was $r = .39$ ($N_{\text{Targets}} = 181$, $p < .005$; $r_{\text{Supervisor, Supervisor}} = .63$, $n_{\text{Targets}} = 10$, $p < .05$, one-tailed; $r_{\text{Supervisor, Peer}} = .18$, $n_{\text{Targets}} = 39$; $r_{\text{Peer, Peer}} = .23$, $n_{\text{Targets}} = 42$; $r_{\text{Peer, Subordinate}} = .48$, $n_{\text{Targets}} = 9$; $r_{\text{Subordinate, Subordinate}} = .46$, $n_{\text{Targets}} = 82$, $p < .05$) which is within the normal range (Viswesvaran, 2001) of the observed inter-rater correlations.

3.2. Hierarchical moderated regression results

Table 2 presents moderated regression results for the political skill \times agreeableness and political skill \times conscientiousness interactions. After all the variables were entered on the first two regression steps, the political skill \times agreeableness interaction term was significant, explaining incremental variance in job performance ratings ($\beta = .125$, $p < .05$, $\Delta R^2 = .015$). The amount of explained variance for the interaction term is comparable to that expected (i.e., 1–3%) for moderator effects in field studies (Champoux & Peters, 1987; Chaplin, 1991). However, the interaction term for political skill \times conscientiousness was not significant.

The form of the agreeableness \times political skill interaction was illustrated according to the procedure proposed by Cohen et al. (2003). Three levels of political skill were plotted: at one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and at one standard deviation above the mean. Fig. 1 illustrates the significant political

Table 2
Hierarchical moderated regressions on job performance

| | Predictors | Job performance | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|--------|
| | | β | R^2 |
| Step 1 | Gender | 0.005 | |
| | Age | 0.048 | |
| Step 2 | Agreeableness | 0.013 | |
| | Conscientiousness | 0.091 | |
| | Political Skill (PSI) | 0.088 | |
| ΔR^2 | | | 0.018 |
| Step 3 | Agreeableness \times PSI | 0.125* | |
| | Conscientiousness \times PSI | -0.080 | |
| ΔR^2 | | | 0.020* |

Note. $N = 326$, * $p < .05$, moderator and predictors were centered.

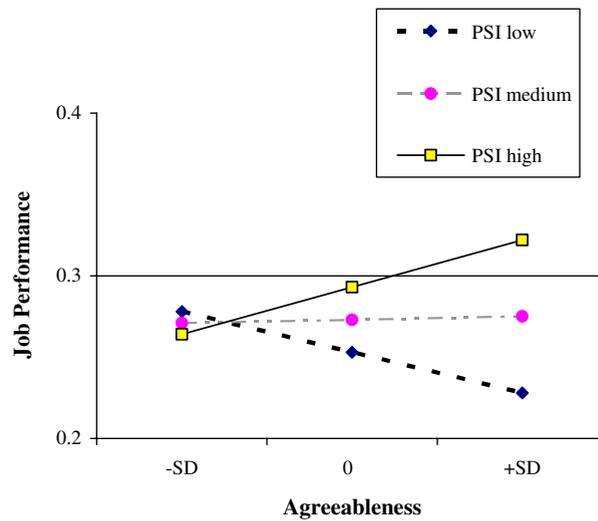


Fig. 1. Interaction of political skill and agreeableness on job performance.

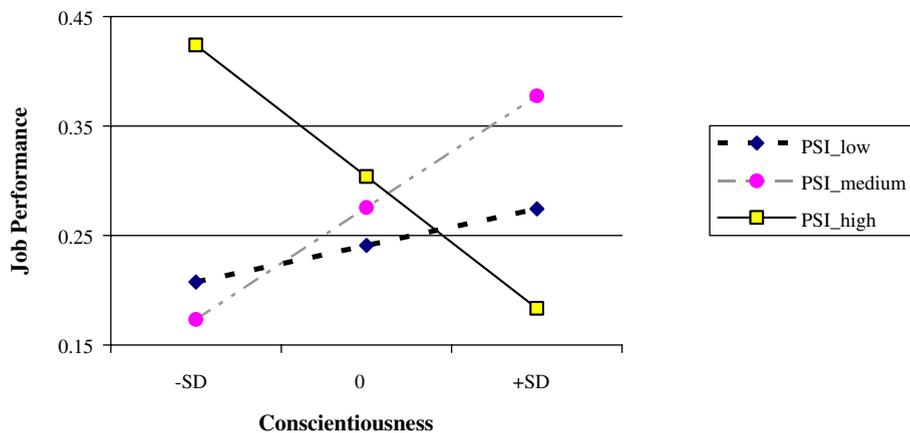


Fig. 2. Interaction of political skill and conscientiousness on job performance after correcting for reliability and range restriction.

skill \times agreeableness interaction effect. As expected, for individuals high on political skill, higher levels of agreeableness were associated with higher levels of job performance. For individuals low on political skill, higher levels of agreeableness were associated with lower levels of job performance.

3.3. Correction for range restriction and unreliability to test hypothesis 2

Because range restriction reduces correlations between predictors and criteria measures (see Hunter & Schmidt, 2004), the observed correlation between conscientiousness and performance ($r = .10$, Table 1) was corrected with the formulas for indirect range restriction by Hunter and Schmidt (p. 233). Correction for unreliability of the conscientiousness scale also were made (Cronbach's $\alpha = .54$, restricted sample).

To correct range restriction, the ratio of the observed restricted sample and the unrestricted sample was calculated. To avoid over-correcting, we chose the smaller of the validation sample standard deviations ($SD = .69$). Furthermore, we took into account that employee samples are more homogeneous than total population samples regarding their personality traits (SD job applicant sample/total sample = .96/1; Ones & Viswesvaran, 2003).

Range restriction also can have an impact on moderator effects. The following procedure was used to calculate the moderator effect of political skill on the conscientiousness–performance relationship. First, the sample was divided into low ($x < M - \frac{1}{2} SD$), medium ($x > M - \frac{1}{2} SD, x < M + \frac{1}{2} SD$), and high ($x > M + \frac{1}{2} SD$) political skill groups. In the second step, the corrections for unreliability of conscientiousness and range restriction were separately applied in all three groups. (More detailed information concerning the correction procedures can be obtained from the first author.) The corrected value in the group of those with low political skill was $r = .056$, in the group of those with medium political skill $r = .185$, and in the group with high political skill $r = -.202$.

The estimated true moderation effect is reflected in the difference between the corrected correlations of the three groups. The difference between the correlations in the medium and high political skills groups (.387) was significant ($Z = 2.908, p < .01$). Thus, in our *post hoc* tests, we found a significant interaction of conscientiousness and political skill on job performance. However, the form (cf. Fig. 2) of the interaction was different for each of the two significant groups (i.e., medium and high political skill). For individuals of medium level political skill, higher levels of conscientiousness were positively associated with higher levels of job performance. For individuals high on political skill, higher levels of conscientiousness were associated with lower levels of job performance.

4. Discussion

We hypothesized and tested relationships of agreeableness and conscientiousness with job performance as moderated by political skill, in a test of the socioanalytic perspective of Hogan (1983,1991) and Hogan and Shelton (1998). Overall, we found support for our hypotheses. Concerning hypothesis 1, individuals who were high on both agreeableness and political skill demonstrated greater job performance than those who were low on either or both. Furthermore, the combination of high agreeableness and low political skill was associated with the lowest job performance levels.

It is interesting to note that, of the persons who were low on political skill, those low on agreeableness demonstrated *higher* performance than those who were high on agreeableness (see Fig. 1). Although this was not an anticipated finding, prior research could explain these results. Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, and Hair (1996) found that persons who were low on agreeableness evaluated power assertion tactics as more effective than those who were high on agreeableness. This could suggest that for those who are low on agreeableness, possessing political skill is ineffective because of such persons' inability to be compliant, fair, or helpful when interacting with others, and because of their preference for tactics involving the overt use of power.

Similarly, Robinson and Wilkowski (2006) argued that a disagreeable interpersonal approach could be more effective when moral codes or unstructured social relationships dominate the social landscape. A person low on political skill is likely to view the social environment as being relationally unstructured and morally ambiguous, whereas, the politically skilled individual will be able to interpret and understand social interactions in ways that make sense of the complex organizational surroundings. This is an area of needed investigation.

Concerning our second hypothesis, we found mixed support. Our multiple regression analysis did not demonstrate the hypothesized interactive effects between conscientiousness and political skill. However, in our *post hoc* analysis, political skill was demonstrated to have moderation effects for persons with medium and high degrees of political skill. Specifically, the results from our corrections for unreliability and range restriction of conscientiousness showed that conscientiousness was related to higher levels of job performance for those with moderate amounts of political skill; whereas, conscientiousness was negatively correlated with performance for those with high political skill.

The *post hoc* findings could be anomalies of our sample, particularly because they are contrary to previous research (i.e., Witt & Ferris, 2003). Additionally, these results may reflect the inverted-U shaped relationship between conscientiousness and performance suggested by researchers (e.g., Murphy, 1996). In other words, differences in political skill could make the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance non-linear.

However, these results also could indicate another possibility. The construct of social skill or effectiveness could be interpreted as involving not only social presentation, but also social influence (Hogan & Lock, 1995; Hogan & Shelton, 1998). Therefore, because influence attempts often have the intention of personal or organizational advancement, it is possible that social skill (e.g., political skill) has some aspects that concern

motives to *get ahead*. Consequently, one explanation is that persons who are high on conscientiousness and high on political skill are perceived by others as expending too much effort trying to *get ahead* and too little effort to *get along*, leading to decreased job performance ratings.

4.1. Strengths and limitations

Our research has several strengths. First, we tested and found support for the socioanalytic perspective of performance prediction. Second, we sampled employees from a range of occupations and rankings in organizations, improving the generalizeability of our findings. Third, the majority of our job performance ratings of a target person were given by two persons, and our sample includes performance assessments by individuals with a range of functional relationships to a target person, including supervisors, peers, and subordinates. Finally, our study adds to the expanding literature that relates social effectiveness constructs (e.g., political skill) to job performance.

One limitation of our study is that we used a measure of overall performance. Research has demonstrated that performance has task and contextual components (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993), and preliminary evidence suggests that political skill is more closely related to contextual than task performance (Jawahar et al., in press). Another limitation is that we used broad factors of personality (i.e., agreeableness and conscientiousness) as predictors, but some researchers (e.g., Murphy & Dzieweczynski, 2005) have suggested using narrower facets of these factors, particularly when the criterion also is narrow.

4.2. Directions for future research

As discussed above concerning persons low on agreeableness, future research should examine the relationship between social effectiveness and motivations to *get along* in social interactions. In accordance with our findings, it could be that persons who have little desire to get along with others (i.e., disagreeable) benefit from a lack of social skill. A disagreeable person who attempts to use their social skill might create unnecessary conflict with others that leads to decreased work performance. Future research should investigate the complex relationship between desires to get along and social skills. In addition, as mentioned above concerning the *post hoc* analyses of the conscientiousness–political skill interaction, future research could further test whether high social skill or effectiveness is beneficial or detrimental to strong desires to *get ahead*.

Another avenue for future research is to investigate the composition of social skill or effectiveness. As articulated by Hogan and Lock (1995), and reviewed by Hogan and Shelton (1998), social skill has been argued to contain seven dimensions, including sensitivity to others, flexibility, ability to persuade others, ability to instill trust in others, consistency in interactions, accountability to others, and ability to maintain communication with a wide range of persons. These seven categories appear to describe many aspects of a politically skilled person, such as the abilities to persuade and to instill trust in others, and having interpersonal sensitivity and flexibility. Future research could test the socioanalytic model using social ability constructs that address other aspects, such as consistency or accountability. These investigations could further our understanding of the nature of social effectiveness.

5. Conclusion

Our study tested the notion, and found support, that personality and social skill reflect interactive and important relationships with job performance. We examined one social skill construct (i.e., political skill) that deserves continued attention from researchers. Further delineation of social skill and its interactive relationship with personality in performance prediction seems to be a promising avenue for future investigation.

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