Moderators of the Personality-Performance Relationship:

An Investigation of Job Meaning and Autonomy

Jeffrey Muldoon
Emporia State University

Jennifer L. Kisamore
University of Oklahoma-Tulsa

Eric W. Liguori
University of Tampa

I. M. Jawahar
Illinois State University

Joshua Bendickson
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

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ABSTRACT

Purpose—This study investigates whether job meaning and job autonomy moderate the relationship between emotional stability and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).

Design/methodology/approach—One hundred and ninety supervisor-subordinate dyads completed three surveys. Linear and curvilinear analyses were used to assess the data.

Findings—Results indicate emotionally stable individuals are more likely to perform OCBOs in low autonomy and/or low job meaning situations than are employees low in emotional stability. Conversely, individuals who have high autonomy and/or high meaning jobs are likely to engage in OCBOs regardless of personality.

Research limitations/implications—As a survey-based research study, causal conclusions cannot be drawn from this study. Results suggest future research on the personality-performance relationship needs to more closely consider context and the potential for curvilinear relationships.

Practical implications—Managers should note that personality may significantly affect job performance and consider placing individuals in jobs that best align with their personality strengths.

Originality/value—This study sheds light on factors which may have led to erroneous conclusions in the extant literature that the relationship between personality and performance is weak.

Keywords:
job meaning; job autonomy; organizational citizenship behavior; personality; emotional stability

Moderators of the Personality-Performance Relationship: An Investigation of Job Meaning and Autonomy

Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between emotional stability and job performance (Ren *et al.,* 2015). However, debate continues regarding the extent to which situational (also known as contextual) factors influence the personality-performance relationship (Barrick and Mount, 2005). Situational factors, features of a circumstance or context that provide clues on how to act (Mischel and Peake, 1982), have been shown to moderate the relationship between personality and performance (Liguori *et al.,* 2013). Locke and Latham (2004) urged scholars to examine whether situational factors mitigate or eliminate the predictive power of personality on performance. Building on past research which explored how situational factors influence organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs; Kamdar and Van Dyne, 2007), this paper examines the role of additional situational factors, job meaning and job autonomy, on the relationship between emotional stability and OCBs targeted toward the organization.

Situational Factors

Work relationships are a common and notable aspect of life in which a situation is likely to interact with personality to affect behavior. Social Exchange Theory (SET) suggests people use rewards and punishments to gain resources from others (Blau, 1964), whereas Trait Activation Theory (TAT; Tett and Burnett, 2003) posits behavior is a function of the interaction between personality and current situational factors. Applying these theories together can aid in a greater understanding of the interaction between personality and situational factors at work.

Personality Strength

The extent to which situational factors affect the relationship between personality and performance is affected by the strength of the given personality construct. Locke and Latham

(2004) asserted some personality traits are strong and thus are less susceptible to situational factors. Thus, strong personality traits should be stable across diverse circumstances. Though emotional stability has not garnered as much attention in work-related research as other personality factors (i.e.conscientious), scholars have suggested emotional stability may enhance personnel selection due to its performance implications across a wide array of jobs (Barrick and Mount, 2000). This suggests emotional stability may be a strong personality trait, although further research is needed for substantiation.

The Current Study

The current study contributes to existing literature by building on the scholarship of Fuller and colleagues (2010) through the use of an alternative measure of performance (i.e., OCBOs), a diverse sample, and multiple data sources to minimize the potential for common method bias. The study also builds upon the work of Fuller and colleagues (2010) to investigate possible moderating effects of job meaning and autonomy in the emotional stability–job performance relationship based on Trait Activation Theory (Tett and Burnett, 2003) and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). It also expands upon current understanding of the personality-performance relationship by going beyond results of a recent meta-analysis by Chiaburu and colleagues (2011), which indicated the presence of moderators in the emotional stability-OCBO relationship. While previous research has shown mixed results or shown the moderation effect to be negligible (Judge and Erez, 2007), we seek to determine the most probable reason for these mixed findings. Additionally, the current study clarifies whether emotional stability should be considered a strong or weak personality trait. Finally, the current study examines the nature of the personality-performance relationship, specifically testing it based on both linear and curvilinear assumptions.

The manuscript proceeds in the following order. First, extant literature on the personality–performance relationship is reviewed highlighting the issue of emotional stability's poor predictive ability. Second, hypotheses consistent with TAT and SET suggesting situational characteristics (i.e., job autonomy and job meaning) moderate the emotional stability–performance relationship are posited. Third, a series of moderated hierarchal regression analyses on a large, diverse sample of supervisor–subordinate dyads are used to test the hypotheses. Finally, results are discussed including their implications for managers, the limitations of the current study, and directions for future research.

Emotional stability. Emotional stability, the counterpart of neuroticism, is one of the Big Five factors. After conscientiousness, it is considered to be the most important personality trait in employment contexts (Barrick and Mount, 2000) and provides incremental validity in predicting future performance over general mental ability (Mount *et al.,* 2008). Emotionally stable individuals are calm, steady, self-confident, and secure (Costa and McCrae, 1985) and are less likely to view situations as threats and be extremely stressed, and more likely to be task-oriented (Barrick and Mount, 2000). Conversely, individuals who score low on emotional stability (or high on neuroticism) tend to have higher negative affect (Djurkovic *et al.,* 2006) and may be more prone to committing counterproductive work behaviors. Like conscientiousness, emotional stability is viewed as applicable to most jobs given that unstable workers tend to be costly for organizations (Barrick and Mount, 2000).

Contextual performance. Organ (1977) identified dual domains of job performance: focal (or task) performance and contextual performance (also called OCBs). Focal job performance contributes directly to organizational goals and is the result of performing specified job tasks (Organ, 1997). Conversely, contextual performance includes actions that are neither

required nor rewarded but nevertheless strengthen the organization's social and psychological core (Motowildo *et al.,* 1997). Focal job performance is related to intelligence and thus reflects ability (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998). Conversely, contextual performance which is not formally rewarded, is a function of intrinsic motivation (Organ, 1977, 1997). Scholars have argued (i.e. Barrick *et al.,* 2003) and research suggests (Podsakoff *et al.,* 2000) the primary means through which personality affects job performance is through motivation.

Because contextual performance reflects chosen, discretionary behavior (i.e., motivation) whereas focal job performance reflects ability (i.e., intelligence), it makes sense to use contextual performance measures when examining the personality-performance relationship. Motowildo *et al.* (1997) asserted that OCB performance should be positively related to personality given ability has been factored out. In fact, previous research has suggested an inverse relationship between negative affectivity and OCBs (Organ and Ryan, 1995), suggesting emotional stability and OCBs are positively related.

Emotionally stable individuals should be able to more easily perform helping behaviors because they (a) are not hindered by their own problems (Organ *et al.,* 2006), (b) are likely to see themselves as part of a social system (Barrick and Mount, 2000), and (c) want to engage in activities that will promote the well-being of that social system (Oh and Berry, 2009). Individuals who are high in emotional stability may also engage in OCBs as a means of socializing (Oh and Berry, 2009). Because this paper focuses on job characteristics that stem from organizations, it focuses on the emotional stability-OCBO relationship (Lavelle *et al.,* 2007). Accordingly, we propose:

Hypothesis 1. Emotional stability will be positively related to engagement in OCBOs.

Despite past empirical research providing evidence of an emotional stability-OCB relationship, the magnitude and consistency of the relationship leaves much to be desired (Mount *et al.,* 2008). Organ and McFall (2004) argue job characteristics may suppress the effects of personality because situational influences can limit the extent to which individuals can act spontaneously. Ultimately, situational clues and constraints, such as expectations from supervisors or coworkers, may play a role in determining the impact of personality on job-related behaviors including OCBOs.

Situational strength. Lavelle *et al.* (2007) argued OCBs are more likely to occur in social exchanges than economic exchanges. Work contracts, however, as economic exchanges with rational bounds and limited enforcement, only consider some aspects of job performance. This limitation is in part why employees often enter into social-exchange relationships with other employees. Unlike economic exchange where the terms and repayment of the exchange are known upfront, social exchange has a "general expectation of some future return, [although] its exact nature is definitely not stipulated in advance" (Blau, 1964: 93).

One of the key elements from social exchange is reciprocity, the idea individuals reward those who reward them and punish those who punish them. Thus, individuals attend more to those relationships they find rewarding (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Rewards exchanged can include tangible and intangible gains (Foa and Foa, 1974, 1980). Scholars have found increased performance when workers have a favorable social exchange relationship with the organization and its agents (Lavelle *et al.,* 2007), including finding that the personality-performance relationship diminishes the stronger the social exchange relationship (Kamdar and Van Dyne, 2007). Kamdar and Van Dyne (2007) theorized favorable social exchange relationships stimulate individuals to perform, whereas an individual's personality will have

more influence on behavior in unfavorable social exchange relationships. Thus, when sufficiently powerful, reward contingencies can neutralize the influence of personality (Tett and Burnett, 2003).

When exchange partners have successful exchange relationships, they begin to experience positive feelings towards each other (Lawler, 2001) which act as internal reinforcers. Thus the exchange partners continue the exchange relationship, performing future behaviors in exchange for future benefits (Lawler, 2001).

The current paper seeks to analyze how the resources of a successful social exchange relationship influence the relationship between personality and OCBs specifically using job autonomy and job meaning as products of successful social exchange relationships (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). Because these moderators are based on organizational constructs rather than individual-level constructs, the moderators should influence relationships involving OCBOs rather than OCBIs (organizational citizenship to individuals). With regard to OCBIs, workers are able to target their OCBs to individuals within the organization who have rewarded the worker (Lavelle *et al.,* 2007) based on the notion of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Conversely, because job autonomy and job meaning largely are influenced by job design and the social structure, both should influence OCBO (Spreitzer, 1996). This prediction is consistent with previous research that found a stronger relationship between job satisfaction and OCBO than job satisfaction and OCBI (Lavelle *et al.,* 2007).

Job autonomy. An individual's behaviors are dependent on the degree of autonomy he or she has in a particular situation (Milgram, 1963). Autonomy is a function of the extent to which an individual has a choice in whether and how to instigate and control his or her own behavior

(Deci *et al.,* 1989). Employees wish to experience autonomy as it enables them to follow their own interests (Deci and Ryan, 1995). Lack of job autonomy can exacerbate stress at work.

Consistent with social exchange research (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), workers are expected to be willing to perform OCBs when their autonomy is high, regardless of whether they have high emotional stability. On the other hand, when autonomy is low, an individual's personality is expected to influence whether or not he or she engages in OCBs. This expectation is also consistent with what would be expected based on social-exchange theory. Emotionally stable individuals may perform OCBs in order to acquire resources (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; viz., objects, states, and relationships which they value) and because they have significant resources already. Because positive outcomes are associated with the relationship, the opportunity to acquire resources encourages an individual to continue performing the behavior (Homans, 1961). Conversely, resources for individuals who are low in emotional stability are likely to be taxed to such an extent in both dealing with their own problems and the lack of autonomy that they do not have the resources to devote to extra role behaviors (see Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Because autonomy is valued, however, all employees should be incentivized to perform OCBs when autonomy is high. In such a situation, the effect of personality should be low.

> *Hypothesis 2. Autonomy will moderate the positive relationship between emotional stability and OCBO such that the relationship will be stronger when autonomy is low than when it is high.*

Job meaning. Autonomy has been the most often examined moderator of the personality-performance relationship (Fuller *et al.,* 2010). Other situational variables, including job meaning (James and Mazerolle, 2002), however may also moderate the personality-OBC relationship. Job meaning is a facet of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995) and refers to the extent to

which individuals believe they can find personal fulfillment on the job (Spreitzer, 1995). Meaning emerges from successful relationships (Homans, 1961). Consistent with work by Farzaneh, Dehghanpour Farashah, and Kazemi (2014), we believe employees who perceive their job as meaningful will be more likely to perform OCBs. Job meaning fits the definition of a resource (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005) that helps individuals cope with work demands (Clausen and Borg, 2011). Thus, consistent with the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), we expect individuals who report higher levels of job meaning will perform more OCBs. Conversely, when job meaning is low, we contend personality will matter. Specifically, consistent with extant research, individuals with low levels of emotional stability are unlikely to have the resources to perform OCBs, whereas those with high levels of emotional stability are expected to perform OCBs to garner more resources (Hobfoll, 1989) and reap future rewards (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995).

> *Hypothesis 3. Job meaning will moderate the positive relationship between emotional stability and OCB such that the relationship will be stronger when job meaning is low than when job meaning is high.*

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

We used a targeted sampling method due to potential range restriction concerns (Organ *et al.,* 2006). We used targeted sampling so that we included employees from multiple industries (Watters and Biernacki, 1989) given differences in perceptions of autonomy and meaning may be limited within a specific company or industry due to reliance on similar job designs (Conger and Kanungo, 1988).

One hundred and ninety full-time employees participated in the study. Participants were recruited with the assistance of approximately 300 students enrolled in six sections of an

introductory management course at a large public university in the southern United States. Students were incentivized with extra credit for nominating a supervisor-subordinate dyad that met the following criteria: currently employed for at least 30 hours per week, possess a minimum of three years full-time work experience, and willing to both participate in the research study and provide supervisor contact information. From 334 nominations received, 190 paired dyad responses were collected.

To ensure data integrity, student recruiters were asked to provide the contact information of the individuals agreeing to participate in the study; researchers then contacted the participants via web survey. Participants provided supervisor contact information, and the researchers contacted the supervisors directly. Three surveys were administered. The first survey collected data on control variables and emotional stability. The second survey collected data on autonomy and meaning, and the third survey collected supervisor-rated performance (i.e., OCBO) data. This process follows recommendations by Podsakoff and colleagues (2003) to minimize the possibility of common method biases. To ensure candor, participants were assured individual responses would be kept confidential and only aggregate data would be reported.

Participants were predominately female (62%, *N*=119) and Caucasian (72%, *N*=138). Participants ranged in age from 19 to 72 years with an average age of 38.6 years (*SD* =12.62) and an average organizational tenure of 7.2 years (*SD*=8.73). Participants represented more than 20 industries, including retail, healthcare, oil and gas, professional services, and restaurant.

Measures

Several established scales were used. Internal consistency reliability coefficients were calculated for each scale and are provided along the diagonal in Table 1.

Emotional stability. Eight self-report items taken from Goldberg's (1999) emotional instability-MPQ Stress Reaction scale were used to assess emotional stability. Items were recoded to reflect emotional stability rather than instability. A representative item is "I seldom feel blue." A 5-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from *very inaccurate* (1) to *very accurate* (5) was used; higher scores indicated higher levels of emotional stability.

Job autonomy. Job autonomy was assessed using three self-report items from Spreitzer (1995). A representative item is "I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job." A 5-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5) was utilized; higher scores indicate participants perceived greater job autonomy.

Job meaning. Consistent with work by Spreitzer (1995), three self-report items developed by Tymon (1988; as cited in Spreitzer, 1995) were used to assess job meaning. A representative item is "The work I do is very important to me." Responses were made on a 5-point Likert-type scale with anchors ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Higher scores indicate greater perceptions of a job's intrinsic value.

Organizational citizenship behavior. Williams and Anderson (1991) found extra role behaviors loaded best on a two factor structure, splitting OCBs into OCBO and OCBI. Accordingly, we used Williams and Anderson's (1991) six-item OCBO scale. Supervisors provided ratings of their subordinate's performance on the OCBO items. A representative item is "Defend the organization when other employees are criticizing it." A 5-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5) was utilized; higher scores indicate greater engagement in OCBOs.

Control variables. Past research has suggested relationships may exist between performance and variables such as age, race, gender (Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989) and tenure

(Weekley and Ployhart, 2005). Education was also included as a demographic control (Fuller *et al.,* 2010). It was assessed on an 8-point scale with successively higher values indicating greater amounts of formal education. All control variables were self-reported in this study.

Analysis

Moderated hierarchical linear regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, independence, and homoscedasticity, as well as multicollinearity. Following Aiken and West (1991), both main effects variables were centered prior to creating the interaction term by subtracting the mean value of the variable from the score of each respondent. Centering prior to creating the interaction term minimizes the potential for multicollinearity among main effect variables to bias the interaction term (Aiken and West, 1991). Control variables were entered in Step 1. Race was a dichotomous variable with minority participants coded as 0 and non-Hispanic Caucasian participants coded as 1. Main effects were entered in Step 2. Interaction effects were entered in Step 3.

While regression analyses are typically run assuming variables are linearly related, linear relations may not be the best assumption for personality-performance investigations. Based on a call by Burch and Anderson (2008, p. 287) for more thorough investigation of the personality-performance relationship, and in light of findings by Le et al. (2011) showing curvilinear relationships between various personality and performance dimensions, we tested for both linear and curvilinear relationships. For the curvilinear analyses of hypotheses 2 and 3, we modified Le et al.'s (2011) procedure to allow for control of age, gender, tenure, education and race in step 1. The subsequent four steps followed Le et al.'s (2011: 119) steps with the relevant situational factor (job meaning or autonomy) entered in step 2, personality (emotional stability) entered in

step 3, the quadratic term (the square of the personality factor) entered in step 4, and testing of the interactions between the simple and quadratic terms for emotional stability and the relevant situational factor in step 5.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1-Emotional Stability and OCBO

Study variable summary statistics and inter-correlations are reported in Table 1. Each latent variable scale exhibited acceptable internal consistency reliability ($\alpha > .70$). Findings were consistent with Hypothesis 1; emotional stability was significantly positively related to OCBO performance ($\beta = .18$; $p < .05$).

Insert Table 1 about here.

Hypothesis 2-Autonomy

Linear analysis. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, results of a linear regression analysis showed autonomy significantly moderated the relationship between emotional stability and OCBO ($\beta = -.16$; $p < .05$). In low autonomy situations, emotionally stable individuals were more likely to perform OCBOs (simple slope test: $\beta = .26$, $p < .05$), and in high job autonomy situations, emotional stability was not significantly related to OCBOs (simple slope test: $\beta = .05$, *ns*). Results of the linear regression analysis are shown in Table 2, and the interactive effect is illustrated in Figure 1.

Insert Table 2 and Figure 1 about here.

Curvilinear analysis. Based on the quadratic term, emotional stability and OCBO conformed to a curvilinear relationship ($\beta = -.85$; $p < .05$). Results of the regression analysis suggests an inverted-U relationship between the two variables such that the relationship was

initially positive but that the relationship weakened, disappeared and reversed as the level of emotional stability increased. Because the quadratic term was significant in step 4, an additional step was conducted to test whether autonomy moderated the simple and quadratic relationships between emotional stability and OCBO, with results showing a simple interaction between autonomy and emotional stability ($\beta = -1.05$; $p < .05$) as well as an interaction between autonomy and the quadratic term of emotional stability ($\beta = 1.75$; $p < .05$) in predicting OCBO. Regression results are shown in Table 3. Based on formula 2 presented in Le et al. (2011: 119), the Z-score based points of inflection were found for individuals who scored below and above the median on autonomy.[1] Inflection points were 2.61 standard deviations below and 1.91 standard deviations above the mean of emotional stability for individuals who indicated low and high job autonomy, respectively.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Hypothesis 3-Job Meaning

Linear analysis. Hypothesis 3 posited job meaning would moderate the relationship between emotional stability and OCBO. The regression results show a significant interaction effect ($\beta = -.19$; $p < .01$) supporting this hypothesis. In low job meaning situations, emotionally-stable individuals were more likely to perform OCBOs (simple slope test: $\beta = .17$, $p < .05$), and in high job meaning situations, emotional stability was not significantly related to engagement in OCBOs (simple slope test: $\beta = .01$, *ns*). Results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 2 and the interactive effect is illustrated in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here.

***Curvilinear analysis*.** Regarding autonomy, the results of step 4 of this analysis showed emotional stability and OCBO were curvilinearly related (β = -.84; $p < .05$). Because the quadratic term was significant, additional analysis was conducted to test whether job meaning moderated the curvilinear relationship, with results showing a significant interaction between meaning and emotional stability (β = -.86; $p < .05$) and a marginally significant interaction between job meaning and the quadratic term of emotional stability (β = 1.21; $p < .10$) in predicting OCBO. Results of the curvilinear regression analysis are shown in Table 3. The inflection points were 2.98 and 2.40 standard deviations above the mean of emotional stability for individuals who indicated low (i.e., below the median) and high job meaning, respectively.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which job autonomy and job meaning moderate the emotional stability-OCBO relationship. Because these moderators are organizationally-based, we posited they should support engagement in OCBOs. Our data supported these assertions indicating that while emotional stability is positively related to engagement in OCBOs situational factors impact this relationship. The important implication is social exchanges on the job may influence the personality-performance relationship.

Because job autonomy and job meaning are important aspects of work (Pink, 2011), it is important for organizational leaders to understand employee performance of OCBOs will vary by employee in some situations. Specifically, employees who are less emotionally stable are also less likely to engage in OCBOs when they perceive their jobs have little autonomy and meaning. Conversely, based on results of the curvilinear analyses, at high levels of autonomy and meaning, very high levels of emotional stability may hinder engagement in OCBOs because individuals are overly self-controlled. Jobs that are high in autonomy and meaning likely involve

working with others to create solutions that require innovation and some degree of flexibility; being overly self-controlled may hinder those processes.

Our results suggest emotional stability is related to engagement in OCBOs up to the point of inflection, when the relationship becomes non-existent or potentially negative. Regarding emotional stability, based on work by Eisenberg and colleagues (2000), there is an optimal range of emotional stability for functioning in social situations. Below that range, an individual's behavior is viewed as erratic; above that range, the individual's propensity for self-control is so strong that it limits his or her ability to engage in normal social relationships. Jobs with lower meaning and autonomy are likely to result in more experienced stress due to the perceived lack of intrinsic value of the job and/or constraints on performance in the job, respectively. Thus, it makes sense that the point at which the emotional stability-OCBO relationship becomes inconsequential is higher for jobs that are low in autonomy and meaning than those high in these characteristics.

This offers researchers and practitioners a lens by which they can increase OCBO even by individuals who are low in emotional stability by increasing their position's job autonomy and meaning. That being said, based on our data, when individuals perceived higher levels of either job meaning or job autonomy, there was not a significant relationship between emotional stability and engagement in OCBOs. This is depicted by the dotted lines in Figures 1 and 2 which are nearly horizontal. Besides exploring two situational characteristics not previously examined (Kamdar andVan Dyne, 2007), this paper offers additional generalizability to the literature via its highly diverse sample spanning multiple industries, organizations, and job functions, given there is some evidence personality attracts people to certain industries and influences behaviors (Schneider *et al.,* 1998).

A goal of this research was to better understand the reason for the generally weak correlations between emotional stability and performance. This research is overdue since exploring situational interactions on the relationship between personality and performance is necessary to improve performance (Tett and Burnett, 2003). Because OCBOs focus on what someone "will do" rather than what they "can do," they are more likely to be spontaneous acts than focal performance tasks. In addition, unlike focal performance which is influenced by intelligence and job-related abilities, OCBOs aren't similarly influenced. The present study focused on spontaneous actions, that is, extra-role behaviors. Our results indicate the emotional stability – OCBO relationship is moderated by situational factors. We show emotional stability still has a positive association with OCBOs in situations with low job meaning and low job autonomy which consequently suggests emotional stability is not a strong personality trait; emotional stability can be tempered or enhanced by situational factors. Thus, low correlations between emotional stability and performance reported in the extant literature may be due to situational factors, curvilinear relationships or alternatively may be a function of range restriction given that neurotic individuals (i.e., those low on emotional stability) are less likely to remain employed and thus are not well represented in most samples of employed adults.

The findings suggest the relationship between personality and job performance is affected by both choice and value. When individuals have greater job meaning, they are more likely to perform OCBOs. This further suggests emotional stability is not a strong personality trait; certain situations will counteract possible effects of emotional stability. These findings concur with those of Wright and Mischel (1987) who found when comparing personality and its outcomes, one must examine them within the situational context given that relationships will vary as circumstances change. Wright and Mischel (1987: 1162) focused on "functionally equivalent

classes of situations." Functional equivalency emerges if the pertinent motivational, social, and physical competencies are similar. If the situations are dissimilar, different behaviors will emerge.

The net result of this research is that low correlations likely were found in earlier studies because previous scholars have looked at universal, rather than specific domains and almost exclusively assessed for linear rather than curvilinear relationships. This is not to say other issues, such as poor validity of personality tests, faking results, or range restriction no longer plague research. Rather we suggest when researchers examine personality and performance, they realize, unlike general intelligence, personality does not have a monotonic relationship with performance (Murphy and Dzieweczynski, 2005). As such, we concur with Wright and Mischel (1987) that when comparing behaviors, researchers must consider context and the potential of non-linear relations. Personality research is often limited by the fact that individuals have a degree of similarity to the company and career to which they are attracted (Schneider, et al., 1998). This range restriction has been an issue within the OCB literature as well (Organ *et al.,* 2006); individuals who are too dissimilar could be eliminated from consideration. Using samples comprised of participants who represent several different careers, companies, and levels of tenure is needed to address this issue.

Our selection of OCBs may lead to a better understanding of how organizational characteristics can influence the personality–performance relationship. Some scholars suggest OCBs are targeted toward at an individual or an organization (Lavelle *et al.,* 2007). This targeted nature of OCBs allows for the further examination of the situational aspect of personality across both organizations and professions. While this research focused on OCBO, other variables may moderate the relationship between personality and OCBIs.

Importantly, the results demonstrated the emotional stability-OCBO relationship is enhanced in low job autonomy and low job meaning situations. Mischel (1977) and others argued that in low job autonomy situations, behaviors will be more discretionary. The findings here indicate in situations of low job autonomy and job meaning, however, individuals with high emotional stability will engage in more OCBs. It appears circumstances can encourage OCB performance and emotionally stable individuals are more likely to recognize situational clues and act upon them. This view is consistent with the results of past research exploring Leader-Member Exchange as a moderator between conscientiousness and task and contextual performance (Kamdar and Van Dyne, 2007).

Implications for Managers

In general, workers with higher levels of emotional stability will be more likely to improve the psychological and social well-being of the firm indicating emotional stability is an important factor worthy of consideration in employee selection situations. Results of the current study, however, reaffirm that for selection decisions to be most successful, personality traits should be matched to situations. That said, improving the psychological and social core of the firm will take more than hiring individuals who are emotionally stable (Fuller *et al.,* 2010). Managers should also look to build strong relationships with their workers and inform workers of the meaningfulness of the work they complete (Chen *et al.,* 2007). Thus, through good selection and relationship building, managers may increase employee engagement in OCBs through heightened perceptions of empowerment as well as job and organizational fit (Farzaneh *et al.,* 2014),

Social support has been found to increase job meaning (Spreitzer, 1996). Therefore, the greatest potential take away from a managerial perspective is managers who wish to have a

strong psychological and social core need to be prepared to provide autonomy to workers and create an environment where job meaning can be maximized. Lastly, managers may also find it valuable to note that enhancing the overall environment makes for a better and more productive workplace.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are several limitations to this study. First, this study did not employ an experimental design, and, thus, causal conclusions cannot be drawn from its findings. Second, though attempts to control for organizational bias were made, the recruitment method may have produced other types of bias. One example may be only workers with strong relationships with their supervisor may have completed the supervisor section, therefore limiting range. It is also possible only conscientious students recruited study participants; thus a more conscientious sample of participants may have been recruited since students would be more likely to select potential participants similar to themselves.

It's also possible that by controlling for tenure and job title we may have reduced the degree of variation in the autonomy variable. Replication is needed to further explore the connection between emotional stability and other outcomes such as voice behavior, taking charge, deviance, counterproductive work behavior, and turnover. Finally, the amount of variance explained was low which is considered by some scholars to be a limitation. Our findings, however, are consistent with previous research on personality (Barrick and Mount, 1993), and the amount of variance we were able to explain is in line with organizational research where there is little control (Harris and Kacmar, 2006). The current study makes an important contribution by revealing more aspects of the personality-performance relationship on the job.

Going forward, other non-organizational moderators should be examined between emotional stability and OCBs. Although we have researched OCBO and emotional stability, future research could examine OCBs directed to coworkers or supervisors. For instance, what impact would both a social relationship and collegial relationship have on emotional stability-OCB relationships? Would friendship antecedents, including length of the friendship, moderate the emotional stability-OCB relationships? As such, there is still a need for exploring the situational interaction between emotional stability and performance. Another line of inquiry is examining the extent to which the findings hold for either industries or corporations. A final future line of inquiry is examining other personality traits demeaned as unpleasant, such as the dark triad. Theoretically, sufficient reinforcement exists to mitigate or eliminate those traits. For any of these lines of inquiry, researchers should also consider the possibility of and examine potential non-linear relationships between the variables assessed.

In conclusion, we examined the effects of job autonomy and meaning upon the emotional stability-OCBO relationship and found this relationship was strongest when job meaning and job autonomy were high. Thus, we found that individuals low in emotional stability may still be motivated to perform OCBOs when they have a rewarding relationship at work. Finally, we suggested managers redesign jobs to promote job autonomy and meaning.

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TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities

	Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	OCBO	4.44	0.62	(.92)								
2	Emotional Stability	2.41	0.80	.18*	(.75)							
3	Job Autonomy	4.01	0.70	.17*	.11	(.84)						
4	Job Meaning	4.12	0.80	.16*	.26**	.42**	(.96)					
5	Gender	–	–	.11	-.11	.07	-.04	–				
6	Tenure (months)	97.62	101.81	.03	-.01	.16*	.10	-.08	–			
7	Race	–	–	.13	-.02	-.00	-.05	-.02	.16*	–		
8	Age	40.71	12.49	.12	.11	.30**	.10	.03	.52**	.21**	–	
9	Education	–	–	.03	.03	.08	.09	.15*	-.12	-.12	-.12	–

Note. $N = 190$. Numbers in parentheses are alpha coefficient reliabilities from the present study. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.
Race was coded as 0-minority; 1-non-Hispanic Caucasian

TABLE 2
Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis-Linear

Predictors	**Step 1** *(controls)*	**Step 2**	**Step 3** *(interactions)*	***F***	***Adj. R²***	***R²***	***ΔR²***
Hypothesis 2 (Autonomy)							
Gender	.12	.13†	.15*				
Tenure	-.03	-.02	.01				
Race	.12	.14†	.13†				
Age	.11	.04	.04				
Education	.08	.06	.07	1.66	.02	.04	
Emotional Stability		.18*	.19*				
Job Autonomy		.13†	.12	2.66*	.06	.09	.05**
Emotional Stability x Autonomy			-.16*	2.97**	.08	.12	.02*
Hypothesis 3 (Meaning)							
Gender	.12	.14†	.15*				
Tenure	-.03	-.02	.00				
Race	.12	.13†	.15*				
Age	.11	.07	.06				
Education	.08	.06	.06	1.67	.02	.04	
Emotional Stability		.16*	17*				
Job Meaning		.12†	.06	2.65*	.06	.09	.05**
Emotional Stability x Meaning			-.19*	3.16**	.08	.12	.03*

Note. $N = 190$. Standardized beta coefficients are shown. † $p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

TABLE 3
Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis-Curvilinear

Predictors	**Step 1** *(demographic controls)*	**Step 2** *(contextual variable)*	**Step 3** *(emotional stability)*	***Step 4*** *(quadratic term)*	***Step 5*** *(interactions)*	***F***	***Adj. R²***	***R²***	***ΔR² ;***
Hypothesis 2 (Autonomy)									
Gender	.12	.11	.13†	.13†	.14†				
Tenure	-.03	-.04	-.02	-.02	.00				
Race	.12	.13†	.14†	.13†	.12				
Age	.11	.07	.04	.04	.05				
Education	.08	.06	.06	.05	.07	1.66	.02	.04	
Job Autonomy		.14†	.13†	.12	-1.40†	1.98†	.03	.06	.02†
Emotional Stability			.18*	1.02*	1.07**	2.66*	.06	.09	.03*
Emotional Stability (quadratic)				-.85*	-.90*	2.96**	.08	.12	.02*
Autonomy x Emotional Stability					-1.05*				
Autonomy x Emotion. Stab. (quad)					1.75*	3.32**	.11	.16	.04*
Hypothesis 3 (Meaning)									
Gender	.12	.12†	.14†	.14†	.15*				
Tenure	-.03	-.04	-.02	-.02	-.02				
Race	.12	.13†	.13†	.13†	.13†				
Age	.11	.10	.07	.07	.08				
Education	.08	.06	.06	.05	.04	1.67	.02	.21	
Job Meaning		.16*	.12†	.12	-1.15	2.27*	.04	.26	.03*
Emotional Stability			.16*	.99*	.80*	2.65*	.06	.30	.02*
Emotional Stability (quadratic)				-.84*	-.68†	2.93**	.08	.34	.02*
Meaning x Emotional Stability					-.86*				
Meaning x Emotion. Stab. (quad)					1.21†	3.14**	.10	.15	.03*

Note. $N = 190$. Standardized beta coefficients are shown. † $p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

FIGURE 1

Autonomy as a moderator of the relationship between emotional stability and OCBOs.

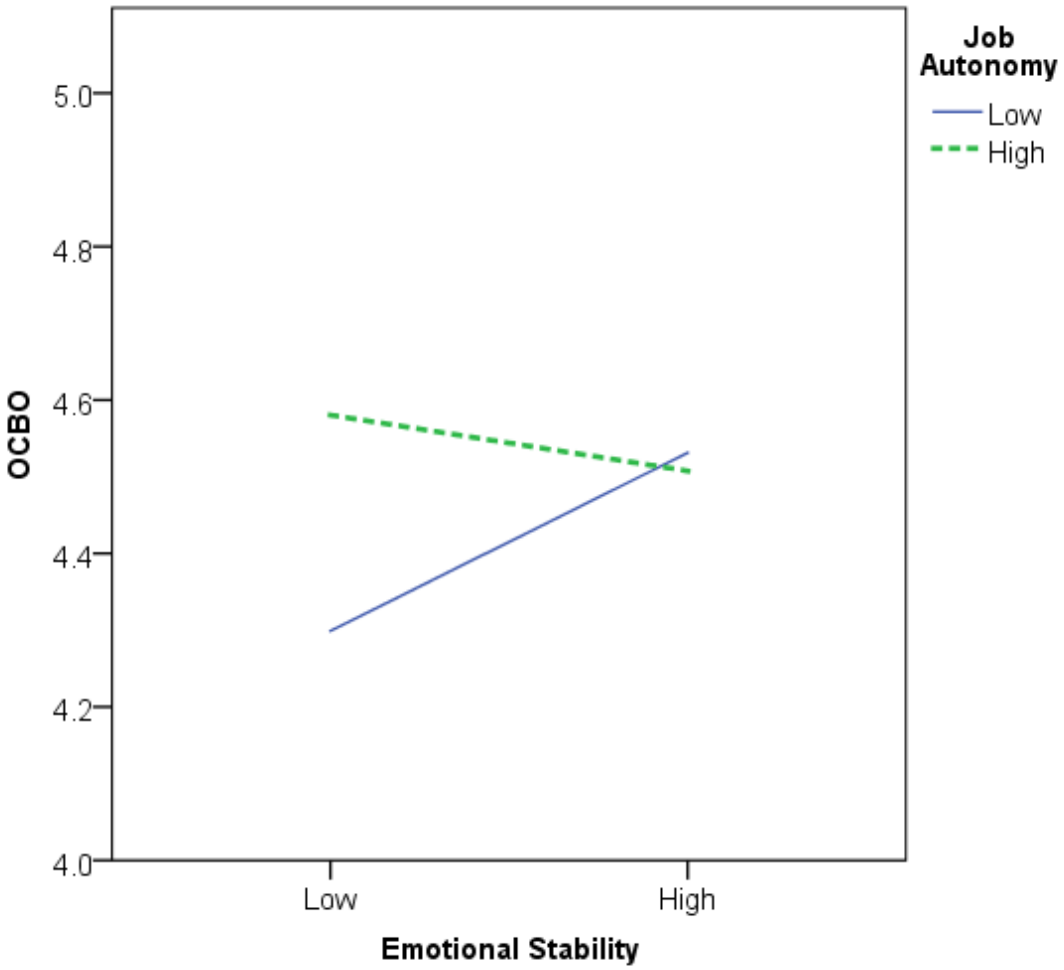
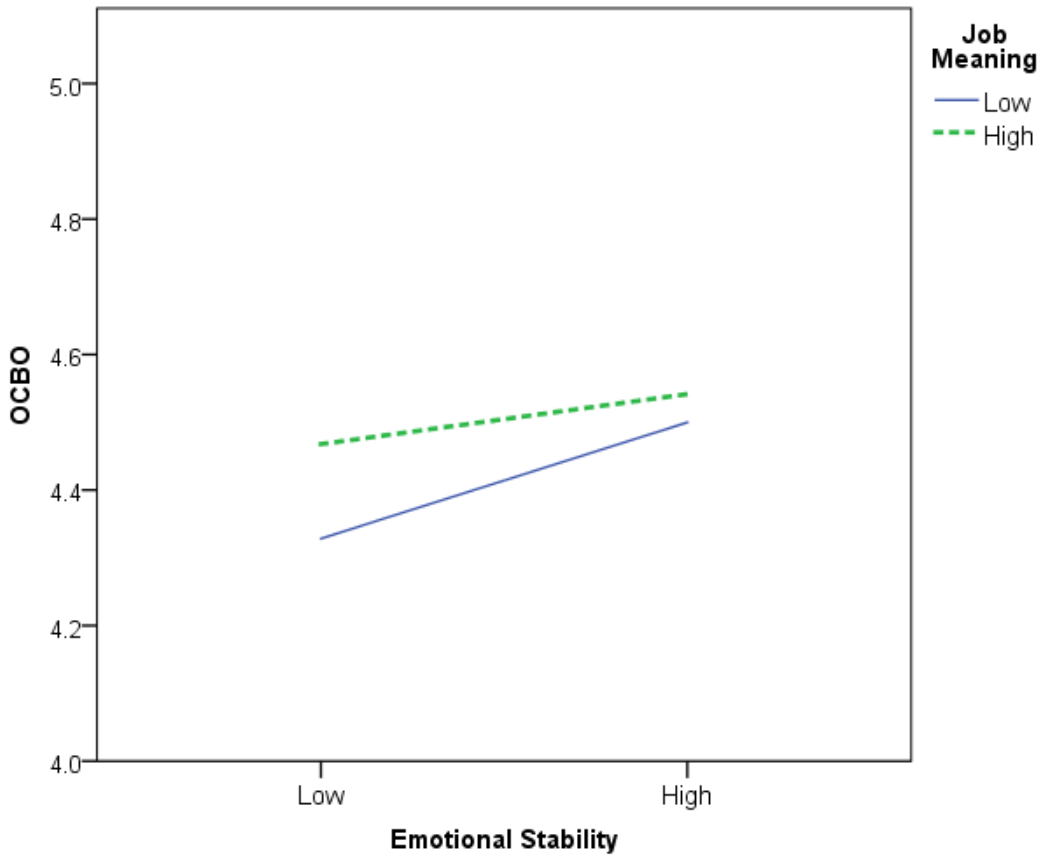


FIGURE 2

Meaning as a moderator of the relationship between emotional stability and OCBOs



[1] The current study used a median split rather than examining scores above and below 1 SD from the mean on the moderator variable as was conducted by Le and colleagues (2011). The mediational split was used due to an insufficient number of cases available at more extreme levels of autonomy and job meaning in the current study.