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Effective Professional Functioning and Temperament in Corporate Employees – Specialists and Management Staff

Abstract

This study examined differences in temperament and occupational effectiveness between corporate employees in specialist and managerial roles, and tested whether temperamental traits were associated with occupational effectiveness. A cross-sectional survey was conducted using standardised psychological questionnaires: the Pavlovian Temperament Survey (PTS) and the Bochum Inventory of Personality Determinants of Work (BIP). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. No significant between-group differences in temperament were found. Across the full sample, however, temperamental traits showed positive associations with indices of occupational effectiveness. Managers reported higher self-rated effectiveness than specialists, a pattern that may reflect stronger motivation, flexibility, conscientiousness, social skills and emotional stability – attributes that are particularly salient for decision-making and team leadership. These findings suggest that incorporating assessment of temperamental traits into organisational recruitment, selection, and development processes may help to enhance occupational effectiveness, support job satisfaction, and build team capability.


Keywords: temperament, corporate employees, effective professional functioning, work performance, psychological predictors


Introduction


Work occupies a central place in the life course, shaping patterns of living and affording opportunities to deploy and develop skills. Although the nature and intensity of engagement vary over time, work remains a major arena for meeting needs and pursuing interests and passions (Kubat, 2015). Work-related activity spans the full spectrum of occupational participation, from the development and application of professional qualifications to the performance of work roles. Czechowska-Bieluga (2010) defines occupational functioning as employees' activity and participation in the workplace arising from the performance of professional roles; these roles are shaped by the interplay between employees' competences and working conditions, as well as the organisation's goals and tasks (Klimkowska, 2019). Czapiński (1992) further emphasises the role of happiness – understood as subjective well-being – as an integral element of occupational functioning and a cornerstone of success in life; he regards happiness as foundational to overall life satisfaction (Wirkus & Stasiak, 2018).

Kubat (2015) understands functioning as the enactment of roles in relation to others and to tasks. In this vein, occupational functioning comprises several inter-related components, including competences, formal qualifications, skills, duties and decision-making authority (Kossowska & Sołtysińska, 2002). These terms are often used interchangeably in everyday discourse, but they warrant careful distinction. Competences are not fixed traits; they evolve with professional and life experience.

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Extended education and continuous learning foster the development of competences and, in turn, enhance occupational functioning. Qualifications refer primarily to formal education and certified credentials, typically complemented by relevant experience and skills. Authority denotes the decision rights attached to a post, while duties (obligations) flow from the terms of the employment contract (Kubat, 2015).

Temperament has attracted sustained attention across multiple disciplines. Theoretical and empirical work converges on the view that it is a complex, multidimensional construct with significant implications for individual functioning, including occupational domains. It is amenable to objective assessment via behavioural and neurobiological indices, yet it is also shaped by genetic, biological, cognitive, and environmental influences. Temperamental traits constitute innate dispositions and vulnerabilities, including levels of emotional reactivity and resilience, that condition individuals' capacity to regulate their responses to adverse and favourable environmental contingencies. Crucially, these traits also calibrate susceptibility to environmental influence, shaping responses to stimuli and to the demands of the workplace (Kagan, 2003).

This article examines the association between temperament and effective occupational functioning among corporate employees, comparing specialists with managerial staff. We combine a critical review of the literature with a questionnaire-based survey using validated psychological instruments. Temperament and work-related functioning were assessed using the Pavlovian Temperament Survey (PTS) and the Bochum Inventory of Personality Determinants of Work (BIP), respectively.

Literature Review

Theories of **individual functioning at work** are a central concern in organisational psychology and human resource management. A prominent strand focuses on work-life balance (Work-Life Balance Theory). It is concerned with how employees can integrate paid work with other life domains, including family, relationships, leisure and health. Evidence indicates that sustaining such balance is associated with higher job satisfaction, better mental health and improved performance (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Work-life balance is dynamic, shaped by individual preferences, values and life goals (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Achieving balance typically requires control over working time and flexibility in how tasks are undertaken. Employers can support this by providing flexible scheduling, maternity and paternity leave, childcare support and time off for personal matters. Shen and Joseph (2021) emphasise that developing digital skills has become indispensable for effective professional performance, particularly in the context of rapid changes in the labour market.

A central challenge is the growing expectation that employees be constantly available and immediately responsive, especially in a digital era in which work and private life are increasingly intertwined (Gajendran

& Harrison, 2007). Nevertheless, establishing clear boundaries between work and non-work and honing time-management skills are important individual strategies for sustaining balance (Matthews & Barnes-Farrell, 2010).

Recent research on work-life balance in the context of the shift to remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that greater flexibility in where and when work is done can help employees manage work and non-work domains, with positive effects on balance. However, remote working can also erode boundaries, blurring work and personal life and generating conflict. As a result, remote workers – particularly those who are highly engaged – may experience fatigue as demands from both domains intensify and accumulate (Bhat et al., 2023).

This and other theories in the literature emphasise that careers are dynamic and evolve over time, and that individuals and organisations must make deliberate choices and adopt varied strategies to foster professional success. In this context, career success is often operationalised in terms of effectiveness, a construct widely used to describe individual and team performance (Skrzypek, 2012). Effectiveness shapes organisational performance and development and is influenced by both intra- and extra-organisational factors.

Employee motivation and commitment are key determinants of work performance and quality of life. Intrinsic motivation – grounded in one's interests and competencies – is associated with higher overall quality of life. Work, with its physiological and psychological dimensions, therefore plays a central role in human development and affords opportunities for personal growth (Sillamy, 1995).

An employee's effectiveness also depends on the workplace climate, the motivation system and working conditions. The motivation system is a key element of management, comprising mechanisms that initiate, direct and sustain behaviour. Different types of motivation can be identified; a common distinction is between extrinsic motivation, linked to rewards and benefits. The achievement of satisfactory results depends on the employee's effectiveness (Łukaszewski, 2002). Alongside extrinsic motivation, there is also intrinsic motivation, which stems from the activity itself and an interest in work. It arises when an individual is engaged in the type of work they do and seeks to develop in the role they hold, without necessarily expecting rewards. Humanistic psychology also emphasises motivational aspects related to development, fulfilment and self-realisation. These types of motivation coexist with characteristics such as openness to new experiences, being present in the moment, perceiving the world as a source of inspiration, a sense of control over one's own life, self-confidence, and the ability to think creatively and solve problems (Łukaszewski, 2002).

Effective employee motivation is central in contemporary organisations, hence supervisory roles are pivotal (Dworzecki, 2001). Managers should understand

their employees, including their needs and the stimuli that motivate them, so that they can deploy motivational mechanisms judiciously and thereby enhance employees' motivation (Czarnecka, 2011). Securing robust motivational outcomes, high levels of engagement and identification with the organisation's mission and objectives, whilst sustaining mutual satisfaction, requires strategies tailored to the specific characteristics of the organisational unit and to its processes (Steinerowska-Streb & Wronka-Pościech, 2022).

Beyond motivation, overall quality of life and job satisfaction are also important determinants of occupational effectiveness. Quality of life is a multidimensional construct grounded in both individuals' expectations and objective indicators (Ratajczak, 2006). Job satisfaction denotes the affective evaluation associated with performing one's work roles and tasks (Płaczkiwicz, 2016).

Temperament is a term used primarily to denote the formal properties of reaction and behaviour. It encompasses parameters such as energy level, tempo, intensity, strength, variability, speed and mobility (Strelau, 2001). From a predominantly biological (constitutional) perspective, Strelau characterises temperament in terms of the strength of excitation (an index of endurance, low reactivity and emotional resilience), the strength of inhibition (the capacity for behavioural self-control), the mobility of nervous processes (the ability to adapt behaviour rapidly to environmental change) and the balance of nervous processes (the relation between excitation and inhibition, often operationalised as the difference between them).

Within Jan Strelau's framework, the ratio of excitation to inhibition – the relative strength of these two processes – serves as an index of temperamental balance. It indicates whether an individual's functioning is characterised predominantly by excitation (energy, reactivity, impulsivity) or by inhibition (self-regulation, the capacity to suppress responses, resistance to overload).

The model posits that a predominance of excitation facilitates rapid, intense responding but increases vulnerability to disorganisation under high levels of stimulation, whereas a predominance of inhibition is associated with stronger behavioural control and greater stability of action. In general, a relative equilibrium between the two processes is the most adaptive configuration.

Temperament, understood as a biologically grounded disposition shaping patterns of reaction and behaviour, has significant implications in corporate settings, influencing how employees accommodate organisational demands. In organisational contexts, temperamental diversity can enhance efficiency and support adaptation to dynamic change and to the differentiated requirements of functions and departments. Sensitivity to temperamental profiles enables more effective team management by aligning roles, workflows and expectations with individuals' propensities for adaptation and self-regulation, thereby contributing to organisational performance.

The effective functioning of a corporation depends fundamentally on its workforce. In line with their strategic objectives, firms employ specialists from a wide range of disciplines and typically organise their activities into functional departments. Common functions include general management, finance, marketing, research and development (R&D), human resources (HR), information technology (IT), and legal affairs. Depending on the sector and the firm's priorities, additional functions may be established, such as engineering, architecture, design, data analytics or logistics, staffed by the relevant professionals.

Employees commonly work in teams, a mode of organisation that can be more effective than individual effort because it brings together diverse skills, experiences and perspectives (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Teams are often understood as small groups of individuals with complementary skills who are committed to a shared purpose and performance goals, and who hold themselves mutually accountable (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).

Professional expertise and career satisfaction develop over time through the acquisition of relevant competences. Early career is a formative phase in which newcomers and organisations learn from one another. During organisational socialisation, new employees come to understand both the formal requirements of the job and the tacit expectations associated with the role (Forbes & Piercy, 1991). It is common for new hires to experience 'reality shock' or 'culture shock' when their initial expectations collide with the lived realities of the work (Forbes & Piercy, 1991).

Schein (1978) identifies four principal challenges facing new entrants to organisations: the need to improve performance continuously; to hone technical competencies; to be ready to assume a range of organisational roles; and to make informed career decisions. Although demanding, meeting these challenges can lay the foundations for a productive and fulfilling early career (Schein, 1978). Ultimately, expertise is built through sustained investment of time, cumulative learning, and engagement with stretching assignments that generate valuable experience (Forbes & Piercy, 1991).

Individuals who deepen their knowledge across specialist and managerial domains are more likely to progress to the upper tiers of the organisational hierarchy and join the managerial ranks. The *Encyclopedia of management* defines the managerial cadre as those responsible for directing organisational units and achieving results through the work of others (Listwan, 2004). Managers operate in both commercial and non-profit contexts and can be classified along several dimensions, including organisational type, functional area, hierarchical level, and the nature of their involvement in delivering organisational tasks (Listwan, 2004).

The most familiar typology classifies managers by hierarchical level. Top management – typically chief executives and directors – sets organisational goals, formulates strategy, and makes pivotal decisions, such as approving mergers or entering new markets (Listwan, 2004). Middle management – such as

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departmental and operations managers – translates strategic direction into policies and coordinates the work of first-line managers (Griffin, 1993). First-line management – team leaders, supervisors, and forepersons – oversees day-to-day operations and the work of operational staff (Griffin, 1993).

Effective managerial practice rests on the capacity for situational analysis, goal-setting, effective communication and sound decision-making. It is equally important to understand the varieties of leadership behaviour and their organisational effects, and to use decision-making models judiciously in dynamic business contexts (Griffin, 1993; Robbins & Judge, 2017). Managerial effectiveness is critical to organisational success. It is shaped by managerial skill, professional experience, leadership style and organisational culture, and it can be assessed using methods such as 360-degree feedback. Understanding these factors informs HRM strategy and decisions about management development. Ongoing monitoring of managers' performance and the implementation of targeted improvement initiatives are essential to achieving organisational goals.

Analysing employees' performance – across both specialist and managerial roles – assumes particular salience when temperament is taken into account. Appreciating how temperament shapes job performance enables the tailoring of managerial approaches and the development of relevant capabilities within the organisation. Research in this area can generate robust practical implications for optimising performance at both team and individual levels.

Research Method

This study examined temperamental traits and professional effectiveness among corporate employees, specifically specialists and managers. Its specific aim was to test the association between temperamental traits and professional effectiveness in these two occupational groups. The study employed a questionnaire-based survey design using standardised psychological instruments (see Bryman & Bell, 2015). To address the research questions and test the hypotheses, statistical analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics.

In line with the study objectives, we formulated the following hypotheses:

- H1. Specialists and managers differ significantly in professional effectiveness.
- H2. Specialists and managers differ significantly in temperament.
- H3. Professional effectiveness is positively associated with temperament.

Research tools are instruments that enable scientists to measure and analyse research phenomena (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Two main instruments were used: the **Pavlovian Temperament Survey (PTS)** and the **Bochum Inventory of Personality Determinants of Work (BIP)**.

The Pavlovian Temperament Survey (PTS), developed by Strelau and Zawadzki (1998), comprises

57 items assessing three temperamental properties: Strength of the Excitation Process (SPP), Strength of the Inhibition Process (SPH), and Mobility of Nervous Processes (RPN). The instrument is grounded in Pavlov's theory of the properties of the nervous system (Strelau, 2001). Reported internal consistency is good (Cronbach's alpha: SPP = 0.88; SPH = 0.77; RPN = 0.82), with evidence of construct validity (Strelau & Zawadzki, 1998).

The Bochum Inventory of Personality Determinants of Work (BIP), developed by Hossiep and Paschen (2006), is an instrument for assessing personality in a professional context. It comprises 220 questions and measures the following scales: professional orientation (MOM – achievement motivation, MW – power motivation, MP – leadership motivation), professional behaviour (SU – conscientiousness, EL – flexibility, OD – action orientation), social competences (WS – social sensitivity, OR – openness to relationships, TO – sociability, OZ – team orientation, AS – assertiveness) and psychological characteristics (SE – emotional stability, PP – working under pressure, PS – self-confidence). Psychometric testing has confirmed high reliability (coefficients ranging from .80 to .95) and the validity of the instrument (Jaworowska & Brzezińska, 2014).

Research Results

The study used a random sample drawn from a clearly defined sampling frame comprising employees of international corporations based in Warsaw. The sampling frame was compiled in collaboration with selected organisations, which provided anonymised lists of employees who met the predefined inclusion criteria. The sample was selected using simple random sampling based on the principle of equal probability of selection, meaning that every individual meeting the inclusion criteria had the same random chance of being invited to participate.

The inclusion criteria were: (1) current employment in an international corporation headquartered in Warsaw, (2) full-time employment status, (3) at least one year of tenure in the current organisation, and (4) provision of informed and voluntary consent to participate in the study. Individuals employed on temporary contracts, interns, and employees with less than one year of organisational tenure were excluded in order to ensure a relatively homogeneous level of professional experience and organisational adaptation among participants.

The study was conducted electronically at the turn of 2023/2024 and included 80 participants. Women constituted the majority of the sample, accounting for 61.3% of respondents ($n = 49$), while men represented 38.8% ($n = 31$). The vast majority of participants had higher education (91.2%; $n = 73$), whereas 8.8% ($n = 7$) reported secondary education. In terms of occupational position, the sample was evenly divided between specialists and individuals in managerial roles, with each group comprising 50.0% of participants ($n = 40$).

Verification of Assumptions

The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to assess the normality of the variable distributions and indicated that all analysed variables were normally distributed. Equality of variances between the compared groups was assessed using Levene’s test, which confirmed homogeneity of variances for all analysed variables. Parametric tests were therefore used.

To determine the significance of differences between the two groups (independent variable: ‘Position’), Student’s *t*-test was used. The results are presented in Table 1.

To determine the significance of differences between the two groups (independent variable: ‘Position’), Student’s *t*-test was used. The results are presented in Table 2.

The *t*-tests did not indicate any statistically significant differences in the analysed variables (RPN, SPH, and SPP) when the sample was divided according to the ‘Position’ variable.

To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the RPN variable and the other selected variables, Pearson’s *r* correlation coefficient was used. The results are presented in Table 3.

The *r* correlation analysis indicates a significant positive relationship between the variables.

To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the SPH variable and the other selected variables, Pearson’s *r* linear correlation coefficient was used. The results are presented in Table 4.

The *r* correlation analysis indicates a significant positive relationship between the variables.

To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the SPP variable and the other selected variables, Pearson’s *r* correlation coefficient was used.

The Pearson’s *r* correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive relationships between the strength of the excitation process and several dimensions of professional and psychological functioning. The strongest correlations were observed

Table 1
Results of Student’s *t*-test – Significance of Differences between Two Groups (Independent Variable: ‘Position’)

Variable	<i>T</i>		<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen’s <i>d</i>	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
AS	–2.10	*	76.91	0.039	–0.47	–0.93	–0.04
EL	–2.19	*	77.66	0.032	–0.49	–0.94	–0.06
MO	–2.06	*	72.37	0.043	–0.46	–0.99	–0.02
MP	–5.74	***	75.06	<0.001	–1.28	–1.84	–0.88
MW	–2.34	*	77.08	0.022	–0.52	–1.01	–0.10
OD	–0.58		75.48	0.562	–0.13	–0.59	0.31
OR	–0.10		76.11	0.921	–0.02	–0.48	0.41
OZ	–2.47	*	77.81	0.016	–0.55	–0.98	–0.12
PP	–0.65		73.56	0.516	–0.15	–0.60	0.30
PS	–1.99	*	77.63	0.050	–0.45	–0.90	–0.03
SE	–2.25	*	76.71	0.027	–0.50	–0.92	–0.07
SU	–0.75		77.60	0.453	–0.17	–0.67	0.24
TO	0.13		75.63	0.899	0.03	–0.42	0.47
WS	–0.11		74.68	0.910	–0.03	–0.47	0.42

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: authors’ own work.

Table 2
Results of Student’s *t*-test – Significance of Differences between Two Groups (Independent Variable: ‘Position’)

Variable	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen’s <i>d</i>	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
RPN	0.53	77.88	0.601	0.12	–0.33	0.55
SPH	0.14	77.39	0.885	0.03	–0.40	0.51
SPP	–0.60	77.46	0.548	–0.14	–0.57	0.30

Source: authors’ own work.

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Table 3
Results of Pearson's *r* Correlation Analysis

Variable 1	Variable 2	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>		95% CI		<i>p</i>
					Lower	Upper	
RPN	AS	80	0.39	***	0.22	1	<0.001
RPN	EL	80	0.46	***	0.30	1	<0.001
RPN	MO	80	0.07		-0.11	1	0.261
RPN	MP	80	0.18		-0.01	1	0.060
RPN	MW	80	0.08		-0.11	1	0.247
RPN	OD	80	0.35	***	0.18	1	0.001
RPN	OR	80	0.60	***	0.47	1	<0.001
RPN	OZ	80	0.27	**	0.08	1	0.009
RPN	PP	80	0.25	*	0.06	1	0.014
RPN	PS	80	0.61	***	0.47	1	<0.001
RPN	SE	80	0.36	***	0.18	1	0.001
RPN	SU	80	0.00		-0.18	1	0.492
RPN	TO	80	0.22	*	0.04	1	0.025
RPN	WS	80	0.31	**	0.14	1	0.002

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: authors' own work.

Table 4
Results of Pearson *r* Correlation Analysis

Variable 1	Variable 2	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>		95% CI		<i>p</i>
					Lower	Upper	
SPH	AS	80	0.10		-0.09	1	0.190
SPH	EL	80	0.21	*	0.03	1	0.029
SPH	MO	80	0.16		-0.03	1	0.082
SPH	MP	80	-0.09		-0.27	1	0.787
SPH	MW	80	-0.07		-0.25	1	0.736
SPH	OD	80	0.51	***	0.36	1	<0.001
SPH	OR	80	0.11		-0.08	1	0.166
SPH	OZ	80	0.15		-0.03	1	0.088
SPH	PP	80	0.38	***	0.21	1	<0.001
SPH	PS	80	0.12		-0.07	1	0.143
SPH	SE	80	0.25	*	0.06	1	0.014
SPH	SU	80	0.20	*	0.01	1	0.038
SPH	TO	80	0.51	***	0.36	1	<0.001
SPH	WS	80	0.40	***	0.23	1	<0.001

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: authors' own work.

with flexibility ($r = 0.62, p < 0.001$), self-confidence ($r = 0.60, p < 0.001$), and the ability to work under pressure ($r = 0.58, p < 0.001$). A high level of strength of the excitation process was also significantly associated with emotional stability ($r = 0.49, p < 0.001$), assertiveness ($r = 0.44, p < 0.001$), achievement

motivation ($r = 0.38, p < 0.001$), and leadership motivation ($r = 0.34, p = 0.001$).

Moderate but statistically significant relationships were also found with openness to relationships ($r = 0.26, p = 0.010$), social sensitivity ($r = 0.23, p = 0.022$), and power motivation ($r = 0.21,$

$p = 0.034$). By contrast, the associations between the strength of the excitation process and team orientation, conscientiousness, and the remaining variables were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$); the weak negative relationship observed for conscientiousness was also not statistically significant.

Overall, the findings indicate that strength of the excitation process is an important predictor of effective functioning in contexts that require flexibility, emotional resilience, the ability to perform under pressure, and self-confidence, whilst showing weaker and non-significant associations with traits related to teamwork and conscientiousness.

Conclusions and Practical Implications of the Study

The study found no statistically significant differences in temperament between specialists and managers, but did identify a significant positive association between temperament and effective occupational functioning. Managers reported higher self-rated effectiveness than specialists, a pattern consistent with attributes commonly associated with leadership roles – motivation, adaptability, conscientiousness, social competence and emotional stability. This pattern plausibly reflects the distinctive demands of managerial work, including decision-making and team leadership. It is important to note that the BIP instrument used in this study assesses personality characteristics relevant to occupational functioning – potential psychological predictors of effectiveness – but does not directly measure effectiveness itself. Accordingly, the findings speak to predispositions for effective functioning rather than to participants' actual performance outcomes.

Psychometric assessment, including measures of temperament, may support improved person-role matching, with potential benefits for career success and job satisfaction. The evidence also underscores the value of cultivating leadership-relevant attributes such as assertiveness, adaptability and achievement motivation. However, the present results do not warrant definitive recommendations for selection practice, nor do they justify using temperament scores as standalone decision criteria in recruitment or human resource management. Nonetheless, they provide a basis for further inquiry into temperament as one of several contributors to effective professional functioning.

Psychometric instruments, such as temperament inventories, can usefully inform developmental processes, particularly the design of training, mentoring and coaching programmes intended to cultivate competencies critical to managerial practice. However, further research across sectors, incorporating objective performance indicators, is required to delineate more precisely the scope and nature of the association between temperament and professional functioning.

This study has several limitations. The sample comprised only corporate employees in Warsaw, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other occupational groups, sectors and cultural or

organisational contexts. In addition, both temperament and professional effectiveness were assessed via self-report. While self-report is widely used in research on temperament and occupational functioning, such methods are vulnerable to self-presentational bias and social desirability effects, and may have limited validity as proxies for actual behaviours and achievements.

In conclusion, the study offers valuable, albeit limited, insights into the role of temperament in professional contexts. Further in-depth analyses are required to clarify the practical implications of these findings for human resource management.

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