

Your spouses personality trait that affects your career success

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‘You marry your spouse “for better, for worse” and “for richer, for poorer,” but does your choice of partner make you richer or poorer?’ Your choice of a spouse affects (apart from your general happiness) your job satisfaction, job performance, the likelihood of promotion, productivity, etc. Turns out, your husband or wife could be boosting your office work ethic and preparing you for success or possible failure. With this in mind, is your spouse gearing you up for success or failure in your career?

Researchers from Washington University in St Louis conducted a study covering almost 5,000 married people between the ages of 19 and 89 over a span of five years. The participants took a personality test to assess how he or she scored on the big five personality traits: openness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness. The researchers further took annual surveys that tracked salary increases and measured how satisfied the participants were with their jobs and how likely it was they would be promoted. The aim of the study was to analyze spouse’s personality influences on occupational success. The researchers found that the only spousal trait that was important to an employee’s work outcomes was conscientiousness. For both male and female partners conscientiousness was seen to be the major personality trait that predicts future job satisfaction, income, and likelihood of promotion. The study went on to show that more conscientious partners are likely to perform more household tasks, exhibit more diligent behaviours that their spouses are likely to emulate and promote a more satisfying marriage enabling their spouses to focus more on work.

So does this mean that one’s success in their career is dependent on them being in a successful relationship? Well, this is not the case, there are a number of single people in organisations who are successful. According to an article by the Harvard Business Review (2015) research has also shown that in certain circumstances, being single can help CEOs run their companies: firms led by unmarried chiefs invest more aggressively and take greater risks than other firms. However, according to one of the researchers from Washington University (Brittany C. Solomon) successful people often turn out to have strong marital relationships. “When you’re in a relationship, you’re no longer just two individuals; you’re this entity,” she says. The more solid the entity, the greater your advantage.

Employees are not only part of organisational teams but are also part of other teams (marriage) which can adversely affect how they perform in the workplace. A healthy supportive marriage or relationship, especially with a high conscientious partner, is likely to have a positive effect on one’s performance in the workplace. Solomon goes on to remark that if organizations really understood the workplace effects of strong outside relationships, they might be more amenable to policies like flextime and working from home that makes it easier for employees to spend time with their significant others.

Sheryl Sandberg (Facebook COO), who jump-started the “Lean In” movement, remarked, “the single most important career decision that a woman makes is whether she will have a life partner and who that partner is.” The results from the research demonstrate that the characteristics of the person one marries

influence important aspects of one's professional life. So to all those who are still in the process of searching for a life partner, it is important to think about how this particular individual will contribute to either your success or failure in your career. And to those who are already married, is your partner conscientious? Is he or she contributing to your success or failure or how are you contributing to their success or failure in the workplace?

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