

PERSONALITY

Introduction

People tend to have a general notion that personality refers to a personal appearance with charming smile, or outlook. But psychologists view the concept as dynamic in nature concerned with growth and development of a person's whole psychological system.

Personality can be defined as the consistent psychological patterns within an individual that affect the way they interact with others and the situations they encounter. Personality is defined as relatively stable and enduring characteristics that determine our thoughts, feelings and behavior. Personality is a complex phenomenon and there are various perspectives of personality construct. One common and simple definition of Personality is: It is the consistent psychological patterns within an individual that affect the way they interact with others and the situations they encounter.

"Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristics behaviour and thought" (Allport, 1961, p. 28).

"The characteristics or blend of characteristics that make a person unique" (Weinberg & Gould, 1999).

Personality Determinants

There are several factors that determine the formation or shaping of our personality. Among them the three major factors are:

- i) **Heredity:** The genetic components inherited from our parents at the time of conception determine strongly the personality characteristics of an individual. The color, height, physical statutory, facial attractiveness, gender, temperament, muscle composition, inheritable diseases etc are considered to be inherited from our parents.
- ii) **Environment:** The culture in which people are brought up in their lives and they type of socialization process such as family's child rearing practices, socio economic status of the family, number of children in a family, birth order, education of the parents, friends and peer group pressures, religious practices, the type of schooling and recreational activities, pastime behavior etc play a critical role in shaping our personalities.
- i) **Situation:** The type of specific situation which a person encounters also equally shapes the type of personality characteristics. For example, an individual's exposure to a job interview and the type of experiences encountered during that time will shape certain personality characteristics. Similarly, going for a picnic with friends and encountering the type of experiences whether pleasant and unpleasant will shape the personality characteristics of individuals.

Personality Traits

Popular characteristics including shy, aggressive, submissive, lazy, ambitious, loyal and timid. Those characteristics, when they exhibited in large number of situations, are called personality traits or enduring characteristics that describe on individual's behavior.

Primary Traits

Cattell (1973) identified 16 source traits/Primary Traits. These traits were found to be generally steady and constant sources of behaviour. But there was found to be no scientific relevance.

Sixteen Source Traits

1. Reserved - Outgoing
2. Less intelligent - More intelligent
3. Affected by feelings - Emotionally stable
4. Submissive - Dominant
5. Serious - Happy go Lucky
6. Expedient - Conscientious
7. Timid - Venturesome
8. Tough minded - Sensitive
9. Trusting - Suspicious
10. Practical - Imaginative
11. Forthright - Shrewd
12. Self-Assured - Apprehensive
13. Conservative - Experimenting
14. Group-dependent - Self-sufficient
15. Uncontrolled - Controlled
16. Relaxed - Tense

In the type approach, several behaviours are seen as cluster characterising individuals with high degree of stability.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

MBTI describes four dimensions of Personality Types:

- (a) Extroversion versus Introversion: (The ways in which people relate to the world)
- (b) Sensing versus Intuition: (Becoming aware of and perceiving information)
- (c) Thinking versus feeling: (Ways of deciding and prefer to make judgments)
- (d) Judging and Perception: (The amount of control exercising and organizing people)

a) Extroversion and Introversion: This deals with whether the focus of attention is directed towards outwardly or inwardly. Where do you prefer to focus your attention?

Extroversion: Extroverted attention flows outward to the world of objects and people or external ideas. They are interacting more with people. Characteristics associated with people who prefer Extraversion are:

- Attuned to external environment
- Prefer to communicate by talking

- Work out ideas by talking them through
- Have broad interests
- Sociable and expressive
- Readily take initiative in work and relationships

Extroverts are usually active, sociable, like variety and stimulation, and are often good speakers, sales people or public relations professionals.

Introversion: Introverted attention focused on the subjective, inner world of thoughts, feelings and ideas. Introverts like quiet reflection, can concentrate on one idea or thought for longer than an extrovert, and are less active and prone to change. Characteristics associated with people who prefer Introversion are:

- Drawn to their inner world
- Prefer to communicate in writing
- Work out ideas by reflecting on them
- Learn best by reflection, mental “practice”
- Focus in depth on their interest
- Private and contained

Research scientists, academicians and librarians are often introverts.

b) Sensing Versus Intuition:

This aspect deals with the ways of collecting information and ideas.

Sensing: A person with a sensing preferences focuses on the specific, practical and tangible. The sensing person relies more on the physical or material reality of the world of the five senses: touch, sight, sound, taste or smell. Sensing managers take in information through their senses and attend to the details of the problem. They like to solve problems in standard ways. They are patient with routine details and are precise in their work. They distrust creative inspirations and usually work all the way through to reach conclusions. They emphasize action, urgency and bottom-line results. Characteristics associated with people who prefer Sensing:

- Oriented to present realities
- Factual and concrete, precise and practical
- Focus on what is real and actual
- Observe and remember specifics
- Build carefully and thoroughly toward conclusions
- Understand ideas and theories through practical applications
- Trust experience

The sensing person is likely to provide a practical solution to problems. They may be good at repairing machines, sports, building, handicrafts, or keeping the detailed records of a business.

Intuition: This person relies more on their insights and based on that they guess, assume and draw the inferences. Ideas, associations or creative process often accompany the presence of

intuition. They focus on the relationships and connections between facts. Intuition manager like solving new problems and are impatient with routine details. They perceive the problem in its totality and consider several alternatives simultaneously. They are imaginative and futuristic, enjoying mind testing games. Characteristics associated with people who prefer Intuition:

- Oriented to future possibilities
- Imaginative and verbally creative
- Focus on the patterns and meanings in data, sees beyond the surface
- Remember specifics when they relate to pattern
- Move quickly to conclusions, follow hunches
- Want to clarify ideas and theories before putting them into practice
- Trust inspiration

The intuitive person is likely to have an affinity for music, literature, the arts, higher mathematics, and science and abstract theories. People with high level of intuition are also likely to be creative, adaptable and open to new ideas, and they are often artists, musicians, strategic players or architects.

c) Thinking versus Feeling:

These deals with the way people make decisions.

Thinking: The person with a preference for thinking tends to be objective, analytical and impersonal in decision and judgments. Thinking managers are logical and analytical in their problem solving and search for additional information in a logical manner. Characteristics associated with people who prefer Thinking:

- Solve problem with logic,
- Use cause and effect reasoning
- Strive for an objective standard of truth
- Can be “tough-minded”
- Fair – want everyone treated equally

Feeling: People who use feelings to make decision are more likely to be empathetic, loyal, and appreciative and tactful. Feeling types consider the person and are likely to bend the rules if the situation warrants. Feeling managers heavily emphasize the human aspects in dealing with organizational problems and is more process oriented. They enjoy pleasing people and avoid conflicts.

Intuitive Feelers (NF) have personal charisma and commitments to the people they lead. They communicate their caring and enthusiasm. They are comfortable in an unstructured, group-centered management system that lets employees participate in the decision making process. If adequate NF's are not available in organization, an organization will become cold, sterile and dull.

Possible Shortcomings; NF's make decision on the basis of personal likes and dislikes.

They often try to please others all the time. Characteristics associated with people who prefer Feeling:

- Empathetic
- Guided by personal values
- Assess impacts of decisions on people

- Strived for harmony and positive interactions
- Compassionate
- May appear “tenderhearted”

They like helping other people and often work as nurses, counselors and artists. They use past experiences and values and seek harmony when making judgments.

d) Judgment versus Perception

This aspect deals with the amount of control a person has over events and organizing things.

Judgment: The strong Judgment oriented people tend to live in a planned, decided and orderly way, wanting to regulate their life and control events. They are given more responsibility and authority because their operating mode is stable and predictable. Characteristics associated with people who prefer Judging:

- Scheduled
- Organize their lives
- Systematic
- Methodical
- Make short and long term plans
- Like to have things decided
- Try to avoid last-minute stresses

The person with a strong orientation for judgment will therefore be good at making decision and planning. They usually make good managers, engineers and lawyers.

Perception: Perceptive people tend to live in a flexible, spontaneous way, wanting to understand life and adapt to it. They often appear to be more relaxed and less organized than judging types and are less attracted to schedules and routines. Characteristics associated with people who prefer Perceiving:

- Spontaneous
- Flexible
- Casual
- Open-ended
- Adapt, change course
- Like things loose and open to change
- Feel energized by last minute pressures.

The perceptive type, on the other hand, may wait until all the information and aspects of situation are seen before they make a decision. Artists, consultants, musicians and counselors tend to be perception oriented.

Big Personality Traits

There are five Big Personality Traits which have a significant impact in individual’s life.

They are as follows:

- a) **Extroversion:** Extroverts are sociable, lively, and gregarious and seek outward interaction. Such individuals are likely to be most successful working in marketing division, public relations etc. where they can interact face to face with others. Introverts are quite, reflective, introspective and intellectual people, preferring to interact with a small intimate circle of friends. Introverts are more likely to be successful when they can work on highly abstract ideas (accountant, R&D work etc) in a relatively quite atmosphere.
- b) **Agreeableness:** This refers to the extent to which individuals agreeing and cooperating with others. Highly agreeable people are cooperative, warm and trusting. People who score low on agreeableness are cold, disagreeable and antagonistic. This characteristic is very important and critical in attaining a successful achievement in their life.
- c) **Conscientiousness:** This refers to the extent to which people are responsible and dependable in their work and life. A highly conscientiousness person is responsible, organized, dependable and persistent. They are likely to move upward direction very quickly and attain remarkable achievement in their life. Those who score low on this dimension are easily distracted, disorganized and unreliable.
- d) **Emotional Stability:** This refers to the extent to which people have the ability to withstand stress. People with positive emotional stability tend to be calm, self confident and secure. Those with highly low level of emotional stability tend to be nervous, anxious, depressed and insecure.
- e) **Openness to experience:** This refers to the extent to which people are more imaginative, artistic sensitivity and intellectualism. Individuals tend to vary widely ranging from conservative to creative or artistic. Extremely open people are creative, and artistically sensitive. Whereas not so open category personnel are very conservative and find comfort in the familiar or routine activities.

Major Personality Attributes Influencing OB

Locus of control: People are assumed to be of two types: 'Internals' and 'Externals'. Internals are people who believe that much of what happens to them is controlled by their destiny. Externals believe that much of what happens to them is controlled by outside forces.

Machiavellianism: High Machs tend to take control, especially in loosely structured situations; Low Machs respond well to structured situations. High Machs tend to be more logical, rational and Pragmatic. They are more skilled in influencing and coalition building.

Self-esteem

People differ in the degree to which they like or dislike themselves. This trait is called self-esteem. Individuals with high self-esteem will take more risks in job selection and more likely to choose unconventional jobs than people with low self-esteem.

Self-monitoring

A personality trait that measures on individuals ability to adjust his or her behavior to external, situational factors. Individuals high in self-monitoring show considerable adaptability in adjusting their behavior to external situational factors. They are highly sensitive to external cues and can behave different situations.

Risk Taking

This refers to the extent to which people are willing to take chances. This propensity to assume or to avoid risk has been shown to have an effect on their decision making capabilities and information gathering process. High risk taking managers made more rapid decision and used less information in making their choices than did the low risk taking managers.

Type 'A' or Type 'B'

People who are Hard-driving, impatient, aggressive, and super competitive are termed as Type 'A' Personality. Those who are easy-going, sociable, laid-back and non-competitive are termed as Type 'B' Personality. Type A people tend to be very productive and work very hard. They are workaholics. The negative side of them is that they are impatient, not good team players, more irritable, have poor judgment. Type B people do better on complex tasks involving judgment, accuracy rather than speed and team work.

Suggestive Readings:

- Organizational Behaviour, by Stephen P. Robbins
- Understanding Human Behavior by Udai Pareek