
Relationship Between Personality Traits And Choice Of Career

Personality refers to a unique set of characteristic patterns within an individual that work to influence their beliefs, motivations, emotions, behaviours and interaction with their environment (Goldberg, 1993). The study of the psychology of personality has been attempted by various researchers, whom have attempted to decipher the factors behind personality traits and their differing effects on individuals (Hussain, Abbas, Shahzad & Bukhari, 2011). Gordon Allport described particular traits that existed with the individual, which included central, secondary, common and cardinal traits, whilst Cattell's (1966) research explored sixteen primary and five secondary personality factors, and Eysenck defined only three traits: extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism, which have been demonstrated to be enough to explain the personalities of individuals (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). However, in more recent years, the Big Five Personality Theory proposed by Goldberg in 1992 has become one of the most accepted personality trait theories amongst psychologists, as it contains and explains core dimensions of personality (Hussain et al., 2011). A multitude of studies have been undertaken to test the effect of personality on choice of career, with results suggesting there is a significant relationship between personality factors and career. Studies conducted by Roberts & Robin (2000), and Gunkel, Schlaegel, Langella & Peluchette (2010), theorizes that the selection of a dissatisfying career path is due to the ignorance of specific personality types of the individual. John Holland incorporated this premise into his Theory of Career Choice, which further explains how an individual can begin on a career path that properly aligns with their respective personality types, using a six item matrix of personality types. The compatibilities among career choice decisions and the personality types of individuals will be further examined within this paper.

John Holland's Theory of Career Choice maintains that a career choice that is compatible with one's personality type is believed to be reinforced and rewarded by an academic environment (Kemboi, Kindiki & Misigo., 2016). His structural theory is centred on the premise that individuals will seek out careers that offer stimulating environments that are consistent with their respective interests and abilities. This premise has become the foundation of Holland's widely accepted Vocational Personality and Work Environment Theory (an evolved version of the Theory of Career Choice), which incorporates a framework of six distinct work environments (RIASEC) that the aligns to individual and unique personality traits. These include:

Realistic (R), an environment which requires physically manipulating the environment with tools, machines or animals; Investigative (I), requires modern problem solving and decision making, primarily involving complex and abstract thought; Artistic (A), promotes free and open creativity for problem solving and design; Social (S), an environment and fosters an understanding, interaction and care for other people; Enterprising (E), an environment which requires the ability to persuade or lead others to a common goal; and Conventional (C), an environment which requires the ability to organize, plan and follow directions.

Holland's theory has been extensively applied to the field of career counselling, which has allowed the relationship between an individual's personality traits and alignment to work environments to be examined efficiently. This interaction has been broken down into four unique constructs: congruence (similarity), differentiation, consistency (how close together the 6 types

are), and identity (how future goals are aligned). Sharf, 2009 conducted an experiment in which Holland's theory and personality were examined using the Self-Directed Search (SDS) – a form of career interest inventory questionnaire. According to Holland, the SDS has three major subsections, with the individual's self-reported levels for each section being indicative of that individual's abilities and preference for career: Activities, Occupations and Competencies. In the current study, a single volunteer was selected to participate in the experiment. This volunteer was a second grade teacher of fourteen years, with a bachelor's degree in School counselling, and had stated in the pre-interview that she was "unsatisfied with her current job", further adding "I like working with kids, but often check my watch frequently". The volunteer listed their dream jobs to be dental hygienist, police officer, nurse among others. These careers, upon initial examination, appear to fall into the Realistic (R) category of Holland's RIASEC matrix. The participants scores for each of the 6 categories were: R (6), I (14), A (13), S (17), E (10) & C (10). An analysis of the data reveals that these scores only aligned with three of the aspiration job personalities: nurse, veterinarian and dental hygienist, with the scores representing more of a social interest in helping others, with a high level of artistic interest in being creative and expressive. Prior to the SDS, the volunteer appeared to want to work in a Realistic field of work, but post-assessment analysis reveals their scores reflect more of a social type of work. These scores show Congruency and Identity (similar goals) with the participants current role as a teacher, meaning there is a consistency with current work environment rather than aspirational positions.

Upon discussion of these results with the volunteer, it was revealed that the only listed position they were interested in was the dental hygienist position, stating "I don't know what half of those jobs do". The volunteer further disclosed that their undertaking of the SDS assessment 'peaked' their interest in career, so she took the Myer-Briggs Personality Test (a career assessment tool built from Holland's theory) online. The results of this test revealed the volunteer's most salient personality traits were Introversion, Sensing, Feeling and Judging, with recommended careers including dental hygienist, nurse, teacher and librarian. The volunteer further stated that "it was good to see both tests showed me the same jobs". This further evidences the personality traits that inform ambitious career choices.

Different theories have attempted to explain the effect of personality traits on ambitious career choice, in particular the Five-Dimension Personality Model also known as the Big Five model of personality (Goldberg, 1992; Sancier and Goldberg, 1998; Hussain et al., 2011). This model consists of five personality traits; openness to experience; conscientiousness, or the affinity to be prepared; extraversion is the propensity to be gregarious and outgoing; agreeableness is the tendency to be sympathetic; and neuroticism is the tendency to be anxious and emotionally unstable (Goldberg, 1993; Hussain et al., 2012). Hussain et al., 2012 associated several career choices of individuals with the five factor model, as he made several claims based on the careers of managers and executives, where the scope of the job requires individuals to manage and operate business perfectly, which demands strong social interactions and an attitude that is ready to accept changes in external environment (Hussain et al., 2012), as well as careers within social, non-profit and public sectors. As stated earlier, recent studies suggest that there is a significant relationship between personality type and career choices, but in practice poor decisions are made due to the individual's ignorance of specific personality type. Therefore, there has become a need to provide knowledge and guidance for people entering the workforce, in order for them to choose an appropriate career (Moorjani et al., 2007).

Hussain et al studied individuals in various careers and positions in the work force, measuring

their respective scores on each of the Big Five traits. Firstly, managers and executives require an ability to respond to demands and have effective social interaction abilities. This role requires socially dominant behaviour to be able to respond to changes in the external environment to get things done more efficiently. Additionally, matching with personality traits, managers need to be highly efficient in time, resource and ability management, which is possible with a high ranking on the conscientiousness scale (Judge et al., 1999). The current study revealed that people ranking high on conscientiousness and agreeableness will perform better in managerial and executive positions within organisations, as well as those that rank low in neuroticism, as managers must possess strong financial and resource-oriented decision making skills, which often tend to make people emotional unstable. Those ranked averagely in openness and extraversion will also do quite well in managerial positions, as these traits allow negotiations to be successful, a capability to argue and clarify point of view.

Scientists, medical professionals and researchers tend to deal with complex problems, and as such need to be extensively experienced, sensitive and open to learn and perceive new knowledge (Catell & Mead, 2008). It has been found that the more people are exposed to an environment, the more he or she will have the capability and strength to cover all aspects of a single problem... meaning they will be more likely to introduce new ways of solving a single problem (Ackerman & Beier, 2003; Capretz, 2003). Hussain et al., determined that sensitivity is an essential personality trait to be able to effectively work in a research field. Individual's high in extraversion are generally less sensitive to the exposed environment and do not possess the ability to deal with problems in an environment as they occur (Catell & Meads, 2008). Results indicated that people ranking high on openness to experience are more likely to be successful in research, science and engineering roles, in addition to individuals ranking low on extraversion.

Ackerman & Beier (2003) have theorised that conscientiousness is the personality trait that allows individual's to excel in public sector professions. Public sector roles require punctuality and practicality, and as such a high ranking in conscientiousness allows people to be more time-bound, planned and organised with excellent management skills. Individuals that do not adopt methods to cope with stress and difficult situations often fail in these professions (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Hussain et al., further examined people in public sector officials, which have been shown to demand self-discipline, self-control and conscientiousness, as conscientiousness has been demonstrated to be the personality trait that allows individuals to excel in this industry (Ackerman & Beier, 2003). In his study, Hussain found that people that are more calm, relaxed and emotionally stable are likely to be successful in public sector professions, meaning a low neuroticism score is preferable (Mounet et al., 1998). Individual's high in neuroticism are less likely to work with time, rule and attitude (Howard and Howard, 1995), and constraints that are important in the public sector.

Lastly, for individuals working in non-profit and social professions, there is an apparent need to have empathy and help others by sacrificing own self interests (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Individuals with a propensity to trust and interact with others, as well as being emotionally stable will perform best in these roles. It has been found that people ranking high on agreeableness and extraversion personality traits are more likely to excel in non-profit businesses, as considering the concerns of others is not possible without ranking on this personality trait (Judge et al., 1999). This trait allows individuals to accommodate and help others at the cost of their own personal resources. In addition, those ranking average on the neuroticism scale are more likely to excel in the same industry as people moderately neurotic have more propensity to be

stable in emotionally hampering situations (Catell & Mead, 2008).

In summation, personality is a set of psychological processes which emerges from our brain, which defined as ongoing natures that craft the characteristic patterns of interaction with individual's environment (Goldberg, 1993; Oliver and Mooradian, 2003; Parks and Guay, 2009). Different personality factors, including the traits listed in the Big Five personality theory and John Holland's Theory of Career Choice, can indicate how individual personalities can inform an ambitious career choice. Ambitious careers, including managerial and executive positions, social, non-profit and public sector roles have been demonstrated to be related to the personality factors of Conscientiousness, Openness to experience and Neuroticism. Overall, all of the traits in both the Five-Factor model and John Holland's theory are good predictors of what careers best align with unique personalities, but an individual's ignorance of specific personality traits can lead to poor career choices and ultimately dissatisfaction in life.

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