

## Personality Traits

Traits that characterize the personality of a person cannot be exclusive as different traits reflect the personality of a person in different situations. Different people exhibit different traits at different points of time. Personality traits are related to job performance and can affect management's decision about recruitment, selection, training, compensation promotion etc.

They create a framework for predicting individual behavior and therefore, are important for managers to know. Behavioral researchers conducted various studies to identify personality traits and concluded long lists of various traits. Some identified thousands, some in hundreds that identify the personality of a person and, thus, help in predicting his behavior. Personality traits can be classified as follows to understand the organizational behavior:

1. Big five personality Traits

### II. Other Personality Traits

#### 1. Big five personality Traits

Of the numerous personality traits that an individual may possess, there are five traits that have gained the attention of managers and researchers. These traits are important for a person to improve organizational effectiveness. These traits predict individual behavior relevant for organizations :

These are:

1. Conscientiousness
2. Emotional stability
3. Extroversion
4. Agreeableness
5. Openness

1. Conscientiousness: Conscientious means obedience to conscience, that is moral sense of right and wrong as felt by a person that affects his behavior. A highly conscientious person is focused, organized, systematic, disciplined and thorough. He is clear of his goals and is, thus, goal-oriented. Such persons are usually high performers; they perform their jobs sincerely which also contributes to organizational performance.

A person with low conscientiousness, on the contrary, behaves in the opposite direction His goals are not clear, he is not focused, determined, organized and systematic. Such persons are, low performers as they engage in a variety of jobs. Their contribution to organizational performance is also, therefore, comparatively low.

2. Emotional stability: Emotional means expressing emotions, that is, strong mental and instinctive feeling such as love or fear. A person with high emotional stability has control over his feelings and mood swings. He is calm, confident and resilient. He, thus, feels secure about his job and can handle job stress positively.

A person with low emotional stability, on the contrary, behaves in the opposite direction. He gets nervous, excited or depressed in stressful situations and therefore, usually has a feeling of insecurity.

3. Extroversion: It relates to a person being extrovert or introvert. An extrovert person directs his thoughts and interests to things outside himself. He is sociable, unreserved, assertive, open and gets along with others in a friendly manner. In the organizational context, such persons are more successful in activities which involve public relations like sales, publicity etc. An introvert person is principally interested in his own thoughts. He is reserved, shy, less sociable, less assertive, quiet and does not easily mix up with others to build relationships. In the organizational context, such people prefer to work in quiet environment with a close group of people. They are more suitable to work in departments like research and development.

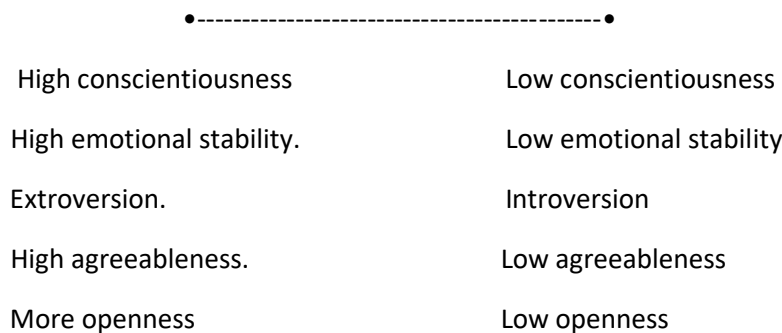
4. Agreeableness: It deals with how well a person gets along with others. Agreeable person agrees with others, is gentle in nature, co-operates and understands others. In organizational context, such persons create good relationships at work, with superiors, peers and subordinates, and also with outside parties; customers, suppliers and other stakeholders.

Less agreeable persons behave in a contrary manner. They do not easily agree to others' opinions, want the things to move their way, are argumentative and non-cooperative. In the organizational context, such persons generally do not maintain perfectly harmonious relationships with people inside and outside the organization.

5. Openness: Being open means being easily accessible to others. People with openness are flexible to new ideas. They are creative, accept new ideas and are willing to give up their existing thoughts. In the organizational context, such persons usually are better Performers and are also easily acceptable by others.

People with less degree of openness have rigid ideas and beliefs which they do not want to give up easily. They are less curious, non-creative, inflexible and usually not as easily acceptable as those who are more open to experience.

A person may rank high or low on some or all these traits. Together, the combination of traits, in varying degree, reflects his personality which can be used as predictor of his behavior. These traits lie on a continuum with positive outcome at one end of the continuum and not so positive on the other.



Researchers and managers rate personality traits of people on a scale of 5 points (agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly) that lie on the range of continuum to know their work-related behavior and job performance. It helps in knowing organized to improve their personality traits to bring them in tune with organizational way people behave the way they do and if, need be, training programmes are requirement.

The big five personality traits framework should be adopted by managers in accordance with the requirements of their cultures. While this framework works effectively in the US, as based on the research, it may not work equally well in other countries. Managers, therefore, have to judge these personality traits according to their organizational requirements. Some more traits or different traits may be in tune with organizational requirements of companies operating in different cultural backgrounds.

## **II. Other Personality Traits**

Besides the big five personality traits, other personality traits are also important for organizational behavior. These are discussed below:

1. **Authoritarianism** : It establishes the personality of a person with formal authority, obedience to superiors, respect of rules and regulations, rigid behavior, negative attitude towards people. It is a conventional personality trait which makes use of authority to get the work done and does not focus on subjective judgment because managers believe in autocratic leadership, directions, instructions and orders. They respect the hierarchy and people with legitimate authority enjoyed by virtue of their position,
2. **Locus of control**: It deals with the belief of people as to whether they control the events or the events control them (they are controlled by events). While those who control the events are called internals, those who are controlled by events are called externals. Internals relate the rewards to their efforts and performance and externals believe rewards occur by chance or factors beyond their control. Basic points of difference between internals and externals are highlighted below:

### **Internals :-**

- Events are within the control of a person.
- They attribute success and reward to their efforts.
- They are active and use their judgment and skills to work.
- They are satisfied with their work.
- They generally hold high positions and get quick promotions in life.
- They like to deal with innovative and unstructured work situations.
- Companies experience low absenteeism and turnover with such employees.
- They actively seek information to make decisions and have enough control their behavior
- They prefer participative style of management.

### **External :-**

- They are in control of the events.
- They attribute success and rewards to chance.
- They are inactive and allow events to occur on their own.

They are less satisfied with their work.

- They advance slowly in their careers.
- They like to deal in simple, routine and structured jobs.
- Companies experience high absenteeism and turnover with such employees.
- They are not active information-seekers and do not work in controlled behavior conditions.
- They prefer to follow commands than to decide on their own.
- They prefer directive style of management.

These personality traits are reflected in different behaviors of people which help managers in assigning jobs to them. Challenging and innovative projects can be handled by people with high internal focus of control better than those with high external focus of control.

**3.Type A and Type B behaviors:** There are two types of personalities – Type A personality and Type B personality. Their personality traits have important bearing on their behavior at the work place. Type A personalities work very fast, are always in a hurry, think of only work and are hard-pressed on time. Type B personalities are more patient, focus on interpersonal relations, understand people and do not have urgency for time. Differences between Type A and Type B personalities are highlighted below:

**Type A Personality:-**

- 1.They are always in a hurry and feel urgency for time.
- 2.They are competitive and set high standards for themselves.
- 3.They aggressive and irritable if things do not happen as they want.
- 4.They try to work more in less time. They want to work even during leisure time.
- 5.For them, work is not a means to an end; it is an end in itself.
6. In fact, they live to work they are workaholics and are disinterested in any work outside the company.
- 7.They do not get along well with people as they lack interpersonal skills.
8. They prefer to work alone.
9. They are more prone to stress at work and, therefore, physical and mental ailments.

**Type B personality:-**

1. They work patiently and do not feel urgency for time.
2. They are not competitive and work in a composed way.
3. They are relaxed and easy going.
4. They do not take work pressure and work at steady pace.
5. Work is means to the end. They work to live.

6. Though they are interested in work, they are not workaholics. They even extend deadlines, if required.
7. They have strong interpersonal skills and do not lose temper on others if the work is not done as scheduled. They are social and understand people.
8. They prefer to work in teams.
9. They do not take stress at work.

Type A and Type B personality traits affect individual behavior at the work place and managers analyses these traits carefully to relate them with organization's requirements.

**3.Machiavellianism:** Based on the writings of Nicol Machiavelli, a personality trait was defined called Machiavellianism. It means manipulating p People have power and they manipulate others for personal interests. They indulge in organizational politics through interpersonal game playing and power tactics. People with this trait manipulate other persons through their persuasive skills, form alliances with others if it is to their benefit and take advantage of others' innocence and emotions. Rated on this trait, people can be high machs or low machs. The difference between the two is highlighted below:

#### **High Machs**

1. They have no humility and deal arrogantly with others.
2. They feel free to use unethical measures for personal gains. Morality has no place in their personality.
3. They don't believe in compassion and love. They work for personal gain in whatever manner they can if people Fear them (Its like everything is fair in love and war).
4. They believe in use of power and politics in what ever way possible.
5. They generally look for situations where their power tactics can work; by manoeuvring situations through persuasion, changing rules to their advantage, disregarding emotions and sentiments of others.
6. They take control of the situations and do not accept directions.
7. Such people are appropriate for jobs that can be bargained and have substantial monetary gains associated with them.

#### **Low Machs**

1. Arrogance has no place in their behavior. They behave humbly with others.
2. They take actions which are morally right actions are those which are based on ethics.
3. They believe in love rather than fear. Others should love them for their actions and not fear them.
4. They do not manipulate facts through power as they do not want to harm others by their decisions.
5. They do not manoeuvre situations to their advantage. They take care of others' emotions and sentiments.
6. They accept directions to mutual benefit of both the parties.
7. They work in an environment of ethics and morality and not for personal monetary favours.

8. **5. Self-monitoring:** It refers to the ability of a person to adjust his personality to external factors. People have public personality and private personality. If a person can maintain balance between the two and behave differently in both the situations, he is said to be high on self-monitoring. High self-monitors can, thus, adjust their behaviour according to situational factors. They analyse the behaviour of others and act according to need of the situation. Such behaviour is particularly important for people who deal with different stakeholders as they can act differently with different audience.
- Low self-monitors are not flexible in their behaviour. Their behaviour is consistent in different situations. Such personalities are suitable to deal with a standard group audience where individual and organisational needs remain largely consistent. Of

**6. Self-esteem:** Esteem means regard or favour. Self-esteem means regard or favour for oneself. It refers to the extent to which a person likes or dislikes himself. Different people have different feelings about themselves. There can be people with high self-esteem and low self-esteem.