

Assessment of High Performing Teachers: The Role of Personality Traits

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Abstract

The majority of the successful organizations of the world are using personality assessment tests like Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) for recruitment and selection (R&S), and to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of their high performing employees. MBTI research divides humans into 16 categories and also proposes that those having specific personality traits can adopt the teaching profession, as it suits their personality. Employers in Pakistan hardly use any personality assessment tools for recruitment and selection, and still rely on more conservative methods like ‘interviews’. As a result, many of their recruitment decisions cannot produce the desired pool of employees, which could perform as well as their other ‘high performing staff’. An assessment was conducted to analyze the personality types, using MBTI questionnaire, of ‘high performing teachers’ working at the primary and secondary levels in the private educational sector of Islamabad. Sample of 98 out of 400 high performing teachers was selected, based on their teaching skills, personal qualities, and relationship with students. The convenience sampling technique used to select students to identify their high performing teachers. Results of this study suggested that the majority of these high performing teachers fall into 03 MBTI categories out of 16. This finding can guide employers of Pakistan in devising their recruitment and selection as well as retention strategies at primary and secondary levels.

Keywords: Personality traits, Personality assessment, Primary and secondary level teachers, Teachers, Private sector, MBTI test

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Introduction

Personality is defined as “the psychological qualities that add to an individual’s continuing and distinguishing patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving” (Dawson, 2015), and also characterized by constant patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors which vary between persons (Cattell, Eber, & Tatsuoka, 1970; Costa & McCrae, 2008). In broader terms, “personality may be regarded as a compound system of traits” (Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

“Personality-job fit theory” highlights that each profession requires specific personality traits, and this match can ensure better overall performance for an organization. The good thing is, each existing and potential employees can be evaluated with the help of various personality assessment tools to better understand their personality traits (Tomat, Trkman, & Manfreda, 2021).

The humans possess varied personalities and have always tried to understand fellow humans by utilizing adaptable methods. One such method is the utilization of personality assessment tests like Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). For exploring and understanding human personalities, the 19th century witnessed the development of psychological tests to measure individual differences and for personality classifications (Dashiehl Stoops, 1909) developed a psychological test to measure the traits and aptitudes necessary and desirable in employees. Later, these tests were used by the companies like the American Tobacco Company, and the Boston Elevated Company for the selection of their salesmen and conductors respectively. Further developments were made in personality testing during World War 1, and these testes were used to select soldiers for special missions (Black, 1994).

In 21st century, research indicates that effective workers do twice as much work as non-effective workers. Also, each year they remain with an organization, they workers contribute a monetary value added equivalent in the range of 70% to 140% of their annual salaries (Turner, 2004). During recruitment and selection (R&S), how can an employer search in depth about an applicant’s strengths and weaknesses? In fact, finding good high performing workers is a difficult task. The starting point in an effective recruitment and selection (R&S) process for an employer is to assess the personalities of their current high performers, and then with the help of personality assessment tools, look for applicants who share the same personality traits (Greenberg & Sweeney, 2008).

To start this thorny journey of recruitment and selection (R&S) of good workers, many American corporations use personality tests as part

of the hiring and promotion process. Also, Two and a half million Americans each year take personality assessment tests like Myers-Briggs type indicator. Eighty nine companies out of the Fortune 100 also make use of it, for hiring and training sessions to help employees understand them and their colleagues (Nevins, 2004).

In a developing country like Pakistan, publication by UNESCO, UNICEF, suggests that construction and maintenance of the physical features of schools is important but R&S of qualified and trained teachers is must for enhancing the quality of education in Pakistan (Farooq, 2018). Interviews with the management of few of the private schools in Islamabad region suggested that they don't assess the personalities of their high performers, and hardly use any personality assessment tests while hiring teachers and are still using more conventional methods like 'interviews'. The purpose of this study was to assess the personalities of high performing teachers at primary and secondary levels in Islamabad, Pakistan, working in the private sector educational institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Face to face interviews with the management of few of the private school chains in Islamabad, Pakistan suggested that currently they do not utilize any personality assessment tests like Myers Briggs Type Indicator to assess their high performers, and for the recruitment and selection (R&S) of their teachers. Rather, they still rely on more conventional methods like 'interviews'. A majority of these teachers, selected only through interviews, cannot deliver as good as their current pool of high performing teachers. Resultantly, sooner or later, many of these new hires are fired from their services, and the employer not only wastes his/her time and resources, but this search of hiring good teachers continues indefinitely.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study were:

- To develop guidelines for employers for their recruitment, and selections, and retention strategies
- To explore the personality types of high performing teachers at primary and secondary levels in private education sector of Pakistan

Research Questions

Following are the research questions of this study:

- RQ-1: Which personality traits employers must focus on during R&S process and retention strategies?
- RQ-2: What type of personality traits high performing teachers at primary and secondary levels possess in Pakistan?

Literature Review

An understanding of personality is essential for self-development. Perhaps improved familiarity of oneself and others, in terms of motivators, strengths and weaknesses, and thinking as well as working styles, it all helps in effective self-management and to be a useful team member. The more a person understands about his or her own personality and the personalities of others, the better the individual's understanding of how others react to him or her, how they recognize him or her, and how they respond to his or her personality and style of working (Osborne, 2012).

Each individual is different from the other on the basis of their strengths and weaknesses etc. During recruitment and selection process, personality testing tools help in finding these differences among various applicants (Goldman, 2009). The good news is, according to Jung, everyone is born inclined to certain personality preferences, and human actions are not random but expected and classifiable (Taggar & Parkinson, 2007). Therefore, organizations use personality assessment tools to predict individual behavior under different circumstances and it helps them in better utilizing every employee to their best possible potential (King, 2012).

A survey suggests that majority of employer's hiring decisions have negatively affected them in some way i.e. bad hires means headaches for co-workers, human resources officers and the management, which eventually results in not only more turnover cost but overall employee morale also suffers (Lazear & Gibbs, 2014). Obviously, bad hiring decisions affect all type of organizations as well as professions including teaching. Therefore, need to be studied in more detail.

Personality assessment tools are successfully used by companies for hiring, coaching and staff development etc. Same tools can also be used to assess the personality types of high performing teachers at primary and secondary level education in the private educational institutions of Islamabad. This information will obviously guide employers in their future R&S and retention strategies.

On the other hand, there is a global consensus that the most vital and complex variable in the educational process is teacher's personality. A study conducted on high performing teachers found a predominance of 'ENFP' type profile (Göncz, 2017).

Also, to improve and strategically enhance hiring decisions by human resources and the employers, algorithm-based decision tools are available, which helps them in moving from "gut feeling" to more data-driven decisions. A study by the Harvard Business Review also reports that "a simple equation outperforms human decisions by 25%" (Kim, Liu, & Love, 2015).

Personality assessment tests can help formulate interview questions and are also good for applicants with skinny resumes. They also claim lower turnover, and increased sales for their clients. They reveal things that human interviewers frequently miss like what job seekers enjoy doing, and are ultimately good at (Kim et al., 2015). These days, increasingly popular for companies is the use of web-based screening and selection assessments (Stuart, 2015). It's now possible, after assessing applicant's personalities, to identify those who would be happiest and more successful in the roles employers have to offer. "I used to think when I hired someone that I had a 50-50 chance that it would work, but with a personality assessment, it has a 75 percent chance of the new hire working out" (Calvasina & Calvasina, 2016).

Other studies also suggest that all of personality traits (Introversion, extroversion, sensing, intuition, feeling, judging etc.) are indeed very relevant to a team's success, and further indicates that performance improves when a team pays attention to its individual personalities, and sharing personality information about each other facilitates this essential awareness (Wilde, 2010).

A Gallup survey found that more than 70 percent of American workers having low productivity problem because of emotional disconnection from their workplace. Eventually, it effects overall organizational effectiveness. For human resources professionals, major challenge is to help the employer hire a specific type of individual, and to rule out those who don't fit (Fink, 2012).

Studies also show that companies make better hiring decisions by using personality assessments and the companies which use these tools are ranked among the most successful in the World. Majority of most successful companies of the world use personality assessment tools for hiring, coaching, human resource development (HRD), and team building etc. Research also confirms that a few elite/high performing workers

contribute the most towards the overall productivity of an organization (Walsh et al., 2014).

As discussed above, organizations can utilize various personality assessment tools to help them make better hiring and recruitment decisions. The educational sector in Pakistan can also learn from the successful practices of the world and can utilize personality assessment tools like Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to effectively manage their human resources (HR) needs.

Theoretical Framework

Carl Jung, a Swiss psychologist, presented the theory of psychological type and suggested that people use their mental capacities differently, which uses the main reason behind their general behaviors.

He also highlighted the following two general mental functions of people:

- Taking in information, which he referred to as perceiving, and
- Organizing information and coming to conclusions and referring it as judging.

Whether perceiving or judging, Jung observed that people prefer to perform that function in one of two ways, which are called preferences. Jung concluded that “Each person seems to be energized more by either the external world (extraversion) or the internal world (introversion). What he called a person's psychological type consists of his or her preference in each category” (Jung & de Laszlo, 1958).

In 1921, Jung published *Psychological Types*, introducing the idea that each person has a psychological type.

It was Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother Katherine Cook Briggs, during World War II, who made it possible to use Jung's theory in everyday life. With the help of their research people became able to identify their psychological types (Jung & de Laszlo, 1958).

Later, Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a popular psychometric instrument/questionnaire, was developed from Jung's theory of psychological types.

MBTI describes a human personality as a combination of one preference from each of the following:

- Extroversion (E) or Introversion (I)
- Intuition (N) or Sensing (S)
- Feeling (F) or Thinking (T)
- Perceiving (P) or Judging (J)

MBTI test/questionnaire is used to determine a combination of a person's four preferences (E or I, N or S, F or T, P or J), which provides four-letter code such as ENTJ. In the same way, a total of 16 following preferences are identified by MBTI researchers (Hirsh & Kise, 2012):

| | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| ISTJ | ISFJ | INFJ | INTJ |
| ISTP | ISFP | INFP | INTP |
| ESTP | ESFP | ENFP | ENTP |
| ESTJ | ESFJ | ENFJ | ENTJ |

Researchers have also proposed certain professions for the above 16 preferences, in which they will be more satisfied and would be able to perform at their best e.g. ESTJ, ISFJ, ISFP, INTJ, ENFJ, INFJ, ENFP, INFP can adopt teaching as a profession as it suits their preferences/personality (Walker, 1997).

This study compared the personalities of high performing teachers working at the primary and secondary level in Islamabad, Pakistan with MBTI proposed categories i.e., ESTJ, ISFJ, ISFP, INTJ, ENFJ, INFJ, ENFP, INFP, and will highlight the similarities or differences thus found for future guidance of employers.

Hypotheses

In this study, the following hypotheses were tested:

- H₀₁: Employers in Pakistan while devising recruitment, selection and retention strategies do not focus on the personality traits of employees
- H₀₂: High performing teachers in Pakistan at primary and secondary levels do not possess the same personality traits as suggested by MBTI

Methodology

Research Design

In this descriptive study mixed method was utilized, quantitative and qualitative technique used, survey method i.e., Myers Briggs Type Indicator questionnaire and interviews. Population of this study was the 'high performing teachers' working at primary and secondary-level at one of the private-schools in Islamabad, which has 12 branches, and 400 primary and secondary level teachers are working in these branches. These high performing teachers were identified after face-to-face interviews with

the principals, and students. Interviews were conducted with the principals and students of 12 branches to identify their 98 high performing teachers, which became the sample for this study.

In this study, multistage convenience sampling technique was used to select the high performing teachers. On the first stage interviews were conducted with the respective principals and on the second stage with the students to identify their high performing teachers.

Research Instrument

This study was conducted in 2 phases:

- Phase-I comprised the interviews with school management/principals, and students to identify their high performing teachers.
- Phase-II consisted of utilizing Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), personality assessment test/questionnaire (Myers, McCaulley, & Most, 1985), to evaluate the personality types of identified high performing teachers. Empirical evidence suggests 'MBTI' questionnaire to be a relatively stable instrument (Francis & Village, 2022), and this study also found test-retest reliabilities of continuous scores across a 6-week period of .81 for EI, .84 for SN, .87 for TF, and .79 for JP.

Results

High performing teachers (98), at 12 branches, were selected through interviews with the management/principals and students and were given Myers Briggs Type indicator questionnaire. The returned questionnaires were analyzed, to find out the personality type of each high performing teacher, and the following table shows the frequency distribution of these respondents:

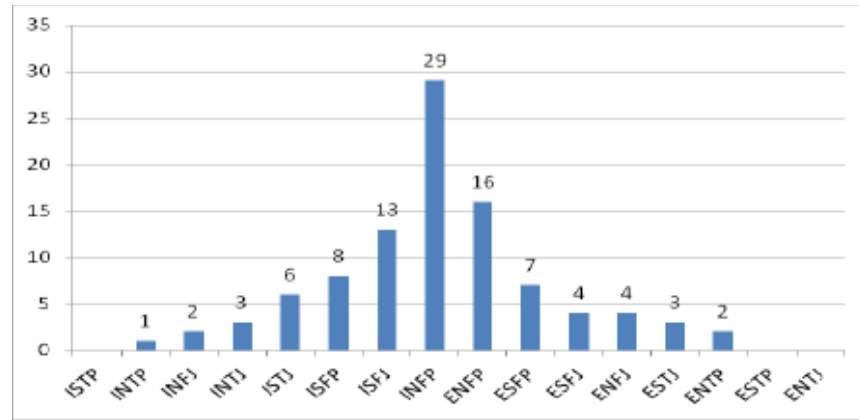
Table 1
MBTI Personality-Wise Frequency Distribution of High Performing Teachers

| Category | Br. 1 | Br. 2 | Br. 3 | Br. 4 | Br. 5 | Br. 6 | Br. No. 7 | Br. No 8 | Br. No 9 | Br. No, 10 | Br. No, 11 | Br. No, 12 | TOTAL |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|------------|------------|-------|
| ISTP | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| INTP | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| INFJ | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | 2 |
| INTJ | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 3 |
| ISTJ | | | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 1 | 6 |
| ISFP | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 2 | | 1 | | 2 | | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| ISFJ | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | | 2 | 13 |
| INFP | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 29 |
| ENFP | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 16 |
| ESFP | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 2 | 7 |
| ESFJ | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 4 |
| ENFJ | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | | 2 | | 4 |
| ESTJ | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | 3 |
| ENTP | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| ESTP | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| ENTJ | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| Total | 9 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 98 |

*Br - stands for branch

Table 2

MBTI/personality trait-wise frequency distribution of 98 performing teachers at primary and secondary level at 12 branches.



In the studied sample of 98 high performing teachers at 12 branches of one of the private school chains in Islamabad, the most important finding of this study is that majority of these high performing teachers at primary and secondary level i.e. 58 possess personality types INFP, ENFP and ISFJ. Out of these 58 teachers, 29 fall in INFP, 16 in ENFP and 13 in ISFJ categories.

Table 3

Frequency distribution of 58 teachers

| Personality Type | Frequency |
|------------------|-----------|
| INFP | 29 |
| ENFP | 16 |
| ISFJ | 13 |

Discussion

Results of this study highlight that employers in Pakistan do not utilize personality assessment tools during recruitment, selection and devising retention strategies. Therefore, “Ho1: Employers in Pakistan while devising recruitment, selection and retention strategies do not focus on the personality traits of employees” is accepted.

Secondly, this study’s result also suggests that majority of high performing teachers i.e. 58 out of selected sample of 98 possess 03

personality types. Out of these 58 high performing teachers, 29 possess INFP, 16 ENFP, and 13 share ISFJ personality traits.

Chi-squared test i.e. $\chi^2_c = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$ was used to test H₀₂: “High performing teachers in Pakistan at primary and secondary levels do not possess the same personality traits as suggested by MBTI”

Since, chi-squared calculated value i.e. $\chi^2_{calculated} = 62.3077 > \chi^2_{7(0.05)} = 14.05$.

It implies that H₀₂ i.e. High performing teachers in Pakistan at primary and secondary levels do not possess the same personality traits as suggested by MBTI” is rejected and thus alternate hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance. Hence, we conclude that the eight categories of personality types have significant difference to each other because χ^2 test statistic shows independence of the eight categories.

A study conducted on high performing teachers found a predominance of ‘ENFP’ type profile (Göncz, 2017). Also, another research proposes specific list of professions for the 16 MBTI personality types, in which they will be more satisfied and would be able to perform at their best e.g. ESTJ, ISFJ, ISFP, INTJ, ENFJ, INFJ, ENFP, INFP can adopt teaching as a profession, which suits their personality (Walker, 1997), but this study found that at primary and secondary level, majority of high performing teachers belong to ISFJ, INFP and ENFP personality types. This inconsistency in results of this study may be due to various factors e.g., demographics, cultural, regional etc. So, further research is proposed in these areas.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to assess the personality types of high performing teachers at primary and secondary levels in the private education sector and found that these teachers possess 03 personality types i.e., INFP, ENFP, and ISFJ. Also, employers do not utilize personality assessment tests to understand their current as well as potential employees.

Recommendation

As identified in this study, for recruitment & selection, and retention purposes of primary and secondary level teachers, employers must utilize personality assessment tools and they may look for personality type i.e., ISFJ, INFP, and ENFP, as these three are shared by the high performing teachers.

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