

Personality and Career Choice

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This chapter examines how individuals explore a suitable career that fits their characteristics. It discusses the domains of careers and personality. It also explores the link between personality and career choice. In examining these issues, this chapter discusses the contemporary concepts of personality. Then, in this chapter, the author mentions different theories of personality and discusses the Big Five Model and the RIASEC Model of Personality. It reviews the various definitions of "career" and tries to discuss the different career choices of individuals. Then, it presents empirical evidence regarding the relationship between personality traits and career choice. It also tries to conclude with the analysis of career choice and personality matching. After studying the chapter, the reader can answer questions like: Is it essential to have a definite personality when choosing a career?

Introduction

Selecting a career that is a good fit for one's personality is considered a key determinant for future success in the workplace. Different jobs are better suited to different personalities. So, one should be cautious while selecting a career (Alwis, 2018). Personality, abilities, intelligence, background, attitudes, perceptions, motivation, culture, roles they play, gender, race, and disability are all variables that distinguish individuals. These factors are the primary contributors to individual behavior. People desire to pick a profession that best suits their abilities. A career provides a person with identity and status. It boosts a person's self-esteem, creates a sense of belonging, and makes it easier to form relationships with other members of society. For these reasons, a career is crucial for individuals. It raises the issue of the right career choice (Alkhelil, 2016).

What is Personality?

Personality is the sum of how an individual reacts to and interacts with others. Personality refers to measurable traits that a person exhibits (Robbins and Judge, 2019). Britannica (2002) defines personality as a

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"characteristic way of thinking, feeling, and behaving." According to Long (2000), personality refers to those stable characteristics that distinguish individuals and serve as the foundation for their actions. It is a term used to describe interpersonal behavior; for example, we would say that someone who is socially outgoing has an extrovert personality. Personality is a distinctive variation in the general design of human nature (McAdams, 2015). Personality evolves during the span of a person's life, from birth to old age. A person's personality develops throughout their life. Academics discuss personality models and approaches, such as:

- ✓ The Five-factor Model of Personality
- ✓ The RIASEC Model of Personality
- ✓ Extroversion Introversion Typology
- ✓ Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
- ✓ Personalities of Types A and B
- ✓ Eysenck's Approach
- ✓ The Dark Triad

Much of the empirical research on career and personality has employed the Big Five model and the RIASEC model of personality. These models are stable, reliable, valid, and universal. So, academicians use these models frequently. The five-factor model and the RIASEC model have shown stability across cultures based on comparisons of information acquired from various nations. These two models claim to be comprehensive, as evidenced by meaningful convergence among other main personality structures.

The Five-Factor Model of Personality

The five-factor model has five broad factors. It represents personality at a comprehensive level of abstraction. Consciousness (C), agreeableness (A), neuroticism (N), openness to experience (O), and

extraversion (E) are the big five-factor; generally used acronyms for the big five-factor are "CANOE" or

"OCEAN". *Table 1* shows these factors and their descriptions. Every single dimension of the big five denotes a group of some distinct but closely connected personality traits that explain a continuum between two extreme poles. Here is the description of these five factors:

- i) ***Openness to Experience:*** Individuals with this trait are highly innovative, independent-minded, sensitive to internal beliefs, and creative. They can examine problems in a different way, show an interest in art, and have a desire for uniqueness and diversity. They are interested in recognizing unknown thoughts and deducing them to various points of view (Cattell and Mead, 2008). These types of individuals are open to new ideas, knowledge, perspectives, and experiences.
- ii) ***Conscientiousness:*** Conscientiousness is an individual's ability to be organized, thoughtful, self-managed, and forward-thinking. Conscientious employees are careful, orderly, graceful, self-disciplined, and trustworthy. Professional success has an impact on them. They tend to be very cautious about their plans, schedules, and surroundings. They prefer to avoid risk (Burch and Neil, 2008). Conscientiousness is about regulating, organizing, and managing one's impulses and involves several personality qualities such as being analytical, responsible, cautious, patient, and hardworking. It relates to a person's ability to be disciplined, organized, and goal-oriented (Abdullah, Omar, and Rashid, 2013).
- iii) ***Extraversion:*** People with this trait are energetic, social, forceful, and emotionally upbeat. They are talkative, argue their points of view, interact with everyone openly, and seek excitement in all aspects of life (Burch and Neil, 2008). This personality trait causes people to be more social, with an outgoing personality that is constantly eager to communicate with others.
- iv) ***Agreeableness:*** This type of person prefers social conformity and cooperation. They are kind, cooperative, and courteous. Agreeable people grow along well with other people as they are positive towards human nature. People who were more agreeable as a personality attribute were more accommodating, trusting, giving, tolerant, and sympathetic. Individuals who score highly on this attribute are always trying to help others, are prepared to solve problems by producing a win-win situation, and are generally liberal in their negotiations in a sociable atmosphere to maintain equilibrium with the concerns of their opponents. They desire societal peace and collaboration. Because they are born with the desire to help others, they assume that others are similarly honest and trustworthy (Olorunleke, Adesida, and Benjamin, 2020).

- ⌋) **Neuroticism:** The common characteristics of a neurotic personality are frustration, anxiety, loneliness, envy, worry, fearfulness, emotional instability, and jealousy. Frustration, anger, despair, tension, and self-blame are all symptoms of high neuroticism. They are commonly pessimistic and overreact to their failures and flaws. They are emotional and worried (Orthogonal, 2002). When expressing feelings and behaviors, they are virtually always unhappy and frustrated.

Table 1: The Big Five Personality Model

Factors	Description	
	High Score	Low Score
Conscientiousness	Structured, efficient, accountable, reliable, achievement oriented, and steady.	Careless, unreliable, lethargic, chaotic, and unorganized.
Agreeableness	Supportive, kind, good-natured, gullible, cooperative, and forgiving.	Unkind, antagonistic, self-centered, offensive, and uncooperative.
Neuroticism/Emotional Stability	Adjusted, self-confident, cool, unwavering, and resilient.	Nervous, awful, tense, doubtful, and neurotic.
Openness to Experience	Creative, flexible, probing, visionary, intellectual and innovative.	Artless, closed-minded, and shallow.
Extraversion	Reward-seeking, outgoing, garrulous, aspiring, enthusiastic, and assertive.	Shy, introvert, silent, unadventurous, and reserved.

Source: Personality traits and personal values: A meta-analysis. Parks-Leduc, L., Feldman, G., and Bardi, A. (2014). Personality and Social Psychology Review, 19(1), pp. 4.

The RIASEC Model of Personality

American psychologist John L. Holland developed a career choice theory based on personality types commonly known as Holland Occupational Themes (RIASEC). It is one of the most studied and applied ideas in the field of career choice. The theoretical framework of the RIASEC hexagon (*Figure 1*) consists of six basic personality attributes: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. Here is the description of John Holland’s six occupational personality types:

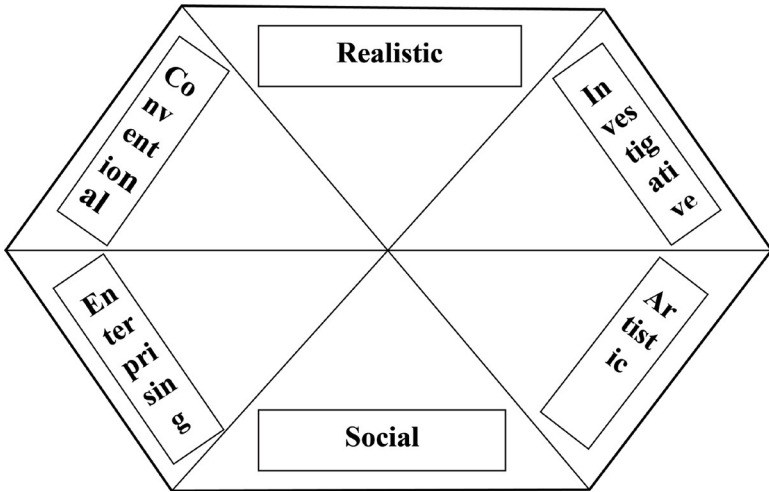


Figure 1: John Holland's Hexagonal RIASEC Model of Occupational Personality

- i) **Realistic (R):** People with this trait like tasks that involve physical labor, motor coordination, skills, and other activities that are traditionally associated with men. They are not particularly social and value money, prestige, and power (Holland, 1997). Individuals who are realistic normally desire to learn in a task-oriented and practical context rather than sitting in a classroom for long periods. Realistic people speak straightforwardly and directly. They are proficient in mechanical pursuits but are not comfortable in interpersonal relationships.
- ii) **Investigative (I):** Investigative individuals are not particularly gregarious and prefer to participate in tasks that require thoughtfulness, organization, reasoning, abstract thinking, and comprehension. In investigative environments, they use math and science to solve problems (Bastien, 2014). They like ambiguous tasks and may suffocate in structured settings. This type of person appreciates reasoning and resolving abstract and complicated problems. They frequently operate independently and do not pursue leadership responsibilities since they are attentive to solving innovative problems. They love science and consider themselves intellectually and scientifically capable.
- iii) **Artistic (A):** Artistic people express themselves in many creative ways and use these ways to interact with others. These types of people

are creative, spontaneous, and novel and love ingenious activities such as writing, painting, acting in or directing stage productions, and composing songs. They are emotional, introverted, and feminine. This type seeks chances to express them through artistic conception. They have a preference for ambiguity and flexibility. The artistic surroundings are open and creative.

- iv) ***Social (S)***: Individuals with this trait are accountable, human-centered, optimistic and worried about the well-being of other persons. People with social inclinations like working with others but dislike intellectual or physically demanding tasks. This type, unlike realistic and investigative types, prefers close relationships. They prefer to participate in training, counseling, healing, and counseling others. They are concerned with resolving interpersonal conflict, love interpersonal relations, and enjoy social activities. This type prefers tasks that require them to perform as a part of a team, and resolve issues via interpersonal communication. They generally dislike tasks that require them to utilize machinery or equipment methodically.
- v) ***Enterprising (E)***: People with this trait are energetic, ambitious, adventurous, dominating, manipulating, socially adept, and self-confident. Risk and power play are part of the entrepreneurial environment. Although they are normally good at verbal skills, they are inclined to utilize these skills for personal benefits rather than to assist other people. They exercise interpersonal, leadership, and persuasion skills to achieve organizational or financial goals, yet they may avoid routine or methodical work. They like public speaking, love actions that need to influence other people and seek out leadership positions.
- vi) ***Conventional (C)***: People with a conventional mindset are conformists, well-organized, cautious, careful, and efficient. This type of person is preoccupied with rules and regulations as well as power and position. They prefer order and structure and so desire a structured work environment. They are adept at keeping and processing data, handling machinery, and preparing schedules. Conventional personalities pride themselves on being responsible, organized, and efficient, and they excel in administrative, clerical, and mathematical capabilities. These people perceive themselves as being deficient in creativity and imagination.

What is a Career?

A career is a person's lifelong collection of work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside the organizations that establish a distinct pattern (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). This definition includes perceptions of career events, options, and results. A career does not develop in a vacuum. Many contextual and personal elements impact a career path. For many individuals, a career is the part of life that involves work. From a professional viewpoint, it refers to the total of all jobs you may hold during your lifetime. These definitions, however, fall short of capturing the meaning of a career properly. In a broader and life-encompassing way, a career is the culmination of decisions that have an impact on social, educational, political, economic, and spiritual aspirations as well as life values and personality traits (Phifer, 2003). A person's career is a collection of individual perceived attitudes and behaviors. It is an integrated work-related activity during a lifetime. An individual's career is a series of employment-related positions, activities, duties, and experiences (Newton et al., 2003). According to Cetzee and Schreuder (2002), a career is a series of occupational experiences and duties that make up the working life of individuals.

Career Choice

The decision to pursue a career is a significant event in an individual's life. Success, commitment, and happiness depend on how well a person chooses his career. Wrong career choices or frequent career changes are detrimental to mental health. The right career choice depends on individual values. They are used to assess our own and others' behavior and attitudes. Values differ from one person to the next. Long-term beliefs create social and personal preferences that lead to a specific way of living and behaving or vice versa. It also enables us to distinguish between right and wrong. Good or bad, right or wrong, are all value judgments that differ from one person to another (Onoyase et al., 2009). Income, job satisfaction, security, respect, and achievement depend on the right career choice. Therefore, it has a significant impact on directing and shaping an individual's life. Different situational and organizational circumstances influence individual career choices. So, career choice is an essential component of an organization's recruitment, selection, and retention strategy (Edwards and Quinter, 2011).

- **Managers/Executives:** To manage or execute things properly requires good social interaction abilities. It also requires an outlook prepared

to accept modifications to the external setting. Getting things done efficiently and effectively necessitates socially dominant behavior. People who can keep control over their activities and accomplish their tasks under time constraints can handle their schedule according to their own mental contentment (Ackerman and Margaret, 2003). They tend to be more social and need to interact and negotiate with others to get things done.

In many situations, managers have to make decisions based on money, time, and supplementary resources constraints that make them fearful and emotionally unstable. As a result, emotional strength and the capacity to cope with certain circumstances realistically are required (Judge et al., 1999). They need to articulate and clarify their viewpoint to engage in effective negotiations. So, they need to be average extroverts to succeed in their life and work environment (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Executives with average extraversion and an openness to experience will perform better than others (Hussain et al., 2012).

- **Technical Experts:** People who select technical competence describe career success as gaining expert status in their chosen field. Technical experts place great importance on doing the job right and increasing their skills in a chosen field. They are not interested in managing but would like to take on a mentorship position, which would allow them to pass on their skills to others. Besides this, they prefer a functional management post that permits them to stay in their area of expertise. These people value learning and development opportunities at work because they want to improve their skills. Their sense of identity is strongly related to their job and any affiliated professional organizations. These people also value the opportunity to attend professional conferences and activities (Alkhelil, 2016).
- **Entrepreneurship:** People who want to be an entrepreneur require a risk-taking mentality and the personal ability to take initiatives to reach the pinnacle of success. Starting a new enterprise demands openness to experience and practical knowledge. Individuals who profit from new enterprises must have a propensity for dominance in their actions and strong social connections. They must be vigilant and creative in their activities to achieve an optimal result.

Entrepreneurs with high openness to experience are necessary to start and expand ventures in a competitive environment. This trait helps them learn and adjust to new changes in their environment.

For the proper operation of their business, they must be compact and manageable in their actions. As a result, having a highly conscientious personality trait allows individuals to be cautious and meticulous planners. (Zhao and Seibert, 2006). An emotionally stable individual can accomplish the best outcomes in the worst of situations.

- ***Social/Nonprofit Making Professions:*** Those who choose non-profit and social occupations must have strong empathy for others and be willing to sacrifice their rest, tranquility, and time to serve others. There must also be a willingness to rely on other people and engage with them. Working for others' well-being and empathy need agreeable personality traits. These people are constantly willing to accommodate and aid others at the expense of their resources. Low neuroticism personality traits are inept at feeling for others and having no care (Cattell and Alan, 2008). Extraverts achieve personal fulfillment by selecting and succeeding in these social services (Ackerman and Margaret, 2003).
- ***Public Sector Professions:*** To be successful in the public sector, people must have self-discipline, self-control, management skills, and conscientiousness at all times. The primary emblems of public-sector organizations are punctuality and pragmatism. Emotionally capable people can perform their tasks in time-constrained and stressful situations (Cattell and Alan, 2008).

People who are calmer, relaxed, and emotionally stable have a better chance of succeeding in the public sector. People with a high level of neuroticism are not preferred for this capability because they are less likely to work within the time, rules, and attitude constraints. These issues are critical in the public sector (Mount et al., 2011). Conscientiousness is a personality trait that can assist people in achieving success in these fields (Ackerman and Margaret, 2003). Conscientious individuals can complete time-bound assignments (Cattell and Alan, 2008).

- ***Engineers and Researchers/Scientists:*** Engineers and scientists deal with many challenges and obstacles that require thinking from a different point of view. Therefore, they must be highly experienced, sensitive, and open to learning and recognizing new things (Cattell and Mead, 2008). The more an individual can explore their surroundings, the more capable s/he will be at dealing with all the facets of a single situation. As a result, he/she is more likely to contribute novel

approaches to a particular problematic situation (Ackerman and Margaret, 2003; Capretz, 2003). People who have a high openness to experience score are more likely to succeed in engineering, science, and research. Individuals who have a highly introverted personality are more likely to succeed in engineering, science, and research (Hussain et al., 2012).

Career and Personality Matching

This chapter's goal was to examine the link between personality and career choice. The findings agree that personal traits can influence an individual's career choice (Hossain and Siddique, 2012). Most people have selected managerial careers without being open to new experiences, because managing things necessitates social interaction skills in individuals and a mindset that is willing to accept ups and downs in external settings. It necessitates publicly leading attitudes to promptly adjust to these fluctuations to get things done effectively and efficiently. Individuals who have a high openness to new experiences are more likely to pursue careers in science and research. Individuals with a high extraversion score are more inclined to pursue technical careers. Conscientious and agreeable individuals choose management and executive positions. Individuals with a high level of neuroticism are required for technical and managerial positions (Alkhelil, 2016).

Kabir and Sajib (2014) explore that individuals who want to work for a renowned foreign or local leasing and financing institution are highly agreeable, open to new experiences, moderately extrovert, conscientious, and have low neurotic personality traits. People who like to work for national or multinational consumer goods companies are somewhat agreeable, open to new experiences, moderately extroverted, conscientious, and have a low neurotic disposition. Individuals who are moderately agreeable with low openness to experience, high conscientiousness, low extraversion, and low neurotic personality traits are eligible for government jobs through the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC). Those who choose to start new enterprises or other services have a high level of agreeability, a high level of openness to experience, a low level of conscientiousness, highly extroverted personality traits, and a high level of neurotic personality characteristics. These findings are summarized in *Table 2*.

Table 2: Career Preferences at Different Levels in Each Personality Trait

Career Preferences	Levels in each Personality Trait				
	Agree- ableness	Open- ness to Experi- ence	Conscien- tiousness	Extra- version	Neurot- icism
Renowned foreign or local leasing and financing institutions	High	High	High	Moder- ate	Low
National or multi-national firms producing consumer products	Moderate	High	High	Moder- ate	Low
Government jobs and services under Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC)	Moderate	Low	High	Low	Low
Entrepreneurship or other services	High	High	Low	High	High

Source: Do personality traits influence career decisions in Bangladesh? – A study on undergraduate business students of different public and private universities. Kabir, T., and Sajib, M. R. H. (2014). ASA University Review, 8(1), pp. 121.

Although John Holland's theory of occupational choice is more than sixty years old, it is still one of the most applied and most quoted occupational theories (Kennelly, Sargent, and Reardon, 2018). It concludes that individuals should pursue job environments that fit their vocational interests to be successful and satisfied (Hartmann, Heine, and Ertl, 2021). Holland's theory proposes that people express their personalities while choosing a career. Compatibility between personal traits and work environments determines occupational stability (Greenhaus, Callanan, and Godshalk, 2019). The match between Holland's personality traits and career decisions, explored by Ahmed, Ahmed, and Salahuddin (2019), Holland (1985), Kidd (2006), Rounds, McKenna, Hubert, and Day (2000), is present in *Table 3*:

Table 3: Holland’s Typology of Personality and Career Choice

Construct	Career Choice
Realistic	Agriculture, carpentry, housework, mathematics, science, protective services, waiter/waitress, dry cleaner, army, navy, and air force.
Investigative	Researcher, scientist, engineer, medicine, computer programmer and professor.
Artistic	Musician, composer, stage director, writer, actor/actress, interior decorator, fashion designer, and photographer.
Social	Teacher, clinical psychologist, nurse, social worker, counselor, travel agent, airhostess, and receptionist.
Enterprising	Insurance agent, real estate, politician, salesperson, manager, business executive, and car dealer.
Conventional	Court reporter, bookkeeper, financial analyst, government officials, cost estimator, auditor, banker, and tax expert.

Conclusion

Is it necessary to have a definite personality when choosing a career? The Big Five Model and the RIASEC Model of personality traits were used to investigate the answer to this question. Selecting a profession early in life can help people build their careers efficiently. Future employment success depends on a career choice that matches one’s personality. It facilitates individuals' success in their careers and assists in achieving organizational success. So, companies must recruit and select personnel based on appropriate personality attributes for performing the task to ensure superior quality and interruption-free productivity. Individuals should first identify the personality type they belong to, along with a thorough understanding of the constructs that comprise that personality, and then choose the most suited job to prevent work-related frustrations, dissatisfactions, and other negative results. The fit of the incumbents' traits with the job requirements is critical to their career success. Aligning personalities with careers can produce optimal results.

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