10.5.2 The Big Five Personality Theory

In recent years, research has shown that five basic personality dimensions underlie all others and encompass most of the significant variation in human personality. The five personality traits in the Big Five Model are as follows:

1. **Extraversion:** This component of the Big Five focuses on the comfort level of an individual in their interactions with others. For example, an individual's behavior may range from being assertive, outgoing, talkative, open (extraversion) to being timid, quiet and reserved (introversion).
2. **Agreeableness:** This refers to an individual's behavior towards others while interacting with them. For example, the behavior may range from being warm, cooperative, and close (high agreeableness) to cold, antagonistic, and distant (low agreeableness).
3. **Conscientiousness:** This dimension of Big Five refers to the extent to which individuals show consistent and reliable behavior while working in an organization. An individual's style may range from being highly responsible, dependable, reliable, and consistent (high conscientiousness) to being unreliable, disorganized, and inconsistent (low conscientiousness); from performing work in a detailed and structured manner to performing work in a general and spontaneous way.
4. **Emotional Stability:** This refers to the ability of an individual to control his or her emotions at the time of crisis. Individuals with high stability are more controlled with their emotions and are calm and self-confident. On the other hand, those with low emotional stability are more nervous, depressed, and insecure in their approach.
5. **Openness to Experience**: This dimension measures the individual's ability to be open to any kind of experience that helps him or her to do the job effectively. Individuals who are open to

experience are more approachable, creative, and sensitive. However, those who are less open to experience are conservative in their approach and feel uncomfortable in a new environment.

THE "BIG FIVE" PERSONALITY FACTORS	
Extraversion	Sociable ⇄ retiring Fun-loving ⇄ sober Affectionate ⇄ reserved
Agreeableness	Soft-hearted ⇄ ruthless Trusting ⇄ suspicious Helpful ⇄ uncooperative
Conscientiousness	Organized ⇄ disorganized Careful ⇄ careless Disciplined ⇄ impulsive
Emotional stability	Calm ⇄ anxious Secure ⇄ insecure Self-satisfied ⇄ self-pitying
Openness	Imaginative ⇄ practical Preference for variety ⇄ preference for routine Independent ⇄ conforming

There are other personality attributes that influence the behavior of individuals in an organization. Some of these are as follows.

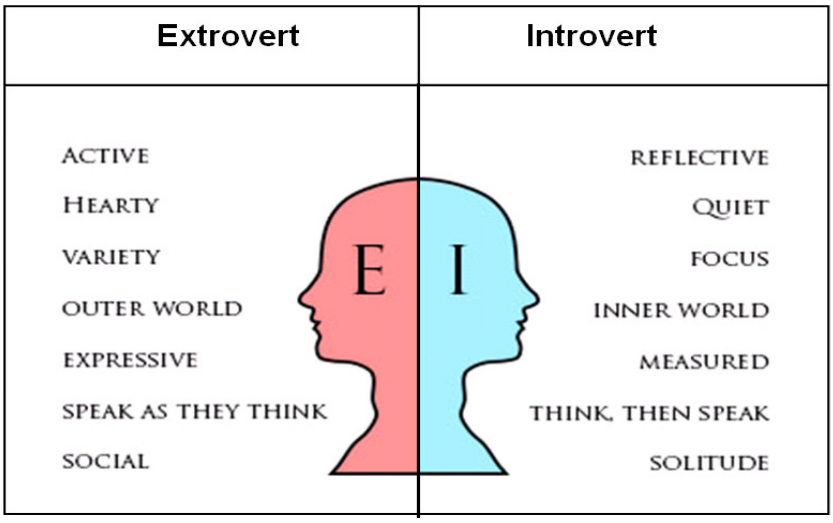
I. **Locus of Control:** It is a dimension of personality that explains the degree to which people believe that they, rather than external forces, determine their own lives. People who believe that they are responsible for what happens to them are internals. Those who believe that what happens to them is directly related to fate or other forces are externals. Externals on this basis have been further classified into external (others) and external (chance). For example, let us assume that two employees, one an internal and the other an external, fail to get a promotion. The internal is likely to attribute this to his or her performance, while the external (others) will probably blame an unfair boss or some other outside force, and external (chance) will put it on his fate, luck or destiny. Internals are likely to perform better on jobs that require initiative and also autonomy. Externals are more likely to seek structured jobs with clear directions.



II. **Machiavellianism:** It is a personality attribute that describes the extent to which a person manipulates others for personal gains. Niccolo Machiavelli proposed a ruthless strategy in early 1500 for seizing and holding political power. His approach was simple: other person can be manipulated or used for our purpose if we follow certain rules: (a) never show humility – arrogance is far more effective when dealing with others (b) morality and ethics are for the weak – powerful persons should feel free to lie, cheat and deceive whenever required to achieve personal goals (c) i t is better to be feared than loved. Those who want power, should be willing to do whatever it takes to get his way. Persons with Machiavellian orientation (called High Machs) are true pragmatists. Any means are justified as long as it helps High Machs to achieve their ends. This often gives them an edge over others who are guided by principles of morality. High Machs are confident, eloquent and competent. When they combine these traits with pure pragmatism, they achieve success easily.

III. **Extroversion and Introversion:** According to Carl Jung, individuals can be classified into two categories – Introverts and Extroverts. Introverts are inward-directed people. They are guided by their own ideas and philosophies. They are rigid, subjective-oriented and rarely speak to others on their own.

quiet, and enjoy solitude. Extroverts, on the other hand, are friendly, enjoy interaction with others, crave excitement and dislike solitude. Extroverts prefer job environments that offer opportunity, variety, unpredictability and sporadic bursts of intensity. On the other hand, introverts do not require as much excitement from external stimulation, and consequently they tend to perform better than extroverts on repetitive tasks or tasks occurring in environments that offer very little sensory stimulation.



IV. Type A and Type B Behaviors : Two cardiologists Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman have identified the typical characteristics of Type A behavior and Type B behavior in early 70s, while conducting research on the impact of job stress on heart disease. Type A personalities are aggressive – they are willing to oppose others to get what they want. Type A people are ambitious and hard-driving; they have very high standards for themselves. They try to schedule more and more in less and less time. They are also competitive. They do not find time to enjoy life; for them work is not a means to an end, but an end in itself. For them work is an addiction and work outside the company is unproductive, disinteresting and meaningless. Type A people tend to lack skill in interpersonal relations and the ability

to get along harmoniously with all types of people in various situations. In contrast Type B personalities are patient composed; they feel less pressure. They keep steadier pace, rather than working against the clock. They do not suffer from a sense of time urgency; concerned with quality rather than quantity. They are not as easily angered or disappointed by their own work or the work of others. They tend to be more relaxed and non-competitive. Because of their contemplative approach to problem-solving, Type Bs tend to be more creative than Type As. They are highly skilled in interpersonal relations and get along well socially.

V. **Authoritarianism:** It is the degree to which a person believes that status and power differences are appropriate in an

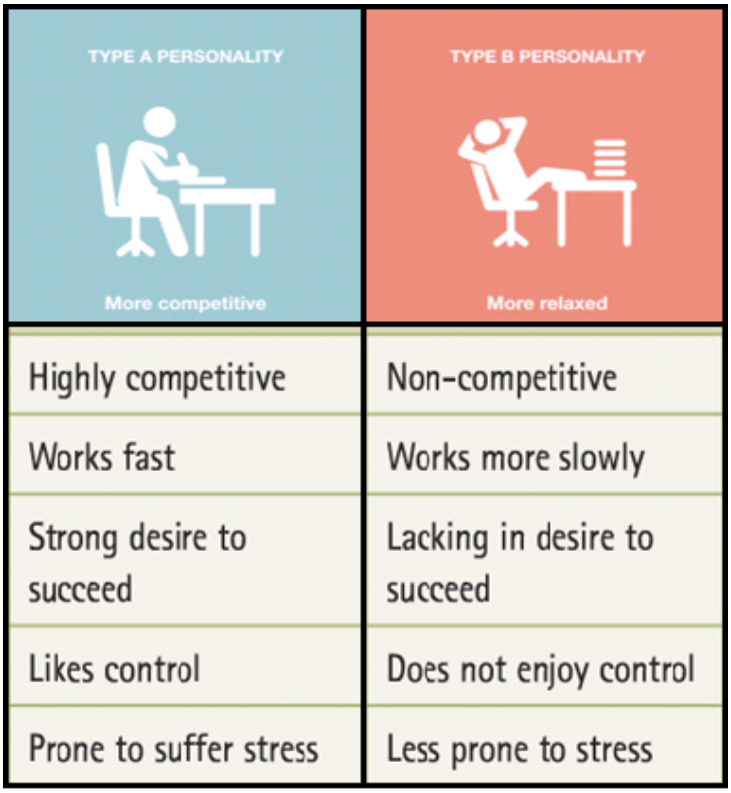


Figure 10.3: Type A and Type B Personality

organization. People high in authoritarianism tend to be autocratic and demanding with subordinates but are likely to accept orders and directions from superiors without questions. High authoritarian types would not fit well in organizations that require flexibility and quick change or sensitivity to people and cooperative behavior. They would fit better in a highly structured organization that values conformity.

VI. **Risk Taking:** People differ in their willingness to take chances. Difference in their propensity to assume or to avoid risk have been shown to affect how long it takes managers to make a decision and how much information they require before making their decision. For instance, in one study in which managers worked on simulated exercises that required them to make hiring decisions, high risk-taking managers took less time to make decisions and used less information in making their choices than did risk-averse managers. Interestingly, the decision accuracy was almost same in both the cases.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.2 Distinguish between extroversion and introversion.

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10.6: ELEMENTS OF THE PERCEPTUAL PROCESS

People receive stimuli from the environment through the five senses: taste, smell, hearing, sight, and touch. Perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment. Research on perception consistently demonstrates that several individuals may look at the same thing, yet perceive it differently. A number of factors influence to shape and sometimes

perceive it differently. A number of factors influence to shape and sometimes distort perception. These factors are in the *perceiver,* in the *target* being perceived, or in the *situation* in which the perception occurs. One manager, for instance, can interpret the fact that her assistant regularly takes several days to make important decisions as evidence that the assistant is slow, disorganized and afraid to make decisions. Another manager, with the same assistant might interpret the approach as evidence that the assistant is thoughtful, thorough, and deliberate. The first manager would probably evaluate her assistant negatively, and the second manager would probably evaluate the person positively. The point is that none of us actually sees reality. We interpret what we see and call it reality. Like we have all learnt that sun rises in the east and sets in the west, but in reality, it neither rises nor sets. And, of course, as the preceding example illustrates, we act according to our perception. Perception is the process of selection and organization of environmental stimuli and interpreting them to provide meaningful experiences for the perceiver.

A number of stimuli are constantly confronting people in the form of information, objects, events, people etc. in the environment. These serve as the inputs of the perceptual process. Some stimuli do not affect the senses of a person consciously, a process called subliminal perception. When a person receives information, he tries to process it through the following sub processes of selection, organisation and interpretation.

Many things are taking place in the environment simultaneously. However, one cannot pay equal attention to all these things, thus the need of perceptual selectivity. Perceptual selectivity refers to the tendency to select certain objects from the environment for attention. The objects which are selected are those which are relevant and appropriate for an individual or those which are consistent with our existing beliefs, values and needs.

10.7 IMPORTANCE AND FACTORS INFLUENCING PERCEPTION

Various external and internal factors which affect our selection process are as explained below:

demonstrates that several individuals may look at the same thing, yet **(i) External Factors:**

(a) Size:

The bigger the size of the stimulus, the higher is the probability that it is perceived. Size always attracts the attention, because it establishes dominance. The size may be the height or weight of an individual, sign board of a shop, or the space devoted to an advertisement in the newspaper. A very tall person will always stand out in the crowd, on the other hand, a very short person will also attract attention. A full page advertisement will always catch attention as compared to a few lines in the classified section.

(b) Intensity

Intensity attracts to increase the selective perception. A few examples of intensity are yelling or whispering, very bright colours, very bright or very dim lights. Intensity will also include behavioral intensity. If the office order says "Report to the boss immediately," it will be more intense and effective as compared to the office order which says "Make it convenient to meet the boss today."

(c) Repetition:

The repetition principle states that a repeated external stimulus is more attention drawing than a single one. Because of this principle, supervisors make it a point to give the necessary directions again and again to the workers. Similarly, the same advertisement or different advertisement but for the same product shown, again and again on the TV will have more attention as compared to an advertisement which is shown once a day.

(*d) Status:*

High status people can exert greater influence on the perception of the employees than the low status people. There will always be different reactions to the orders given by the foreman, the supervisor or the production manager.

(e) Contrast:

An object which contrasts with the surrounding environment is more likely to be noticed than the object which blends in the environment. For example, the Exit signs in the cinema halls which have red lettering on a black background are attention drawing or a warning sign in a factory, such as

In a room if there are twenty men and one woman, the woman will be noticed first because of the contrast.

(f) Movement:

The principle of motion states that a moving object receives more attention than an object which is standing still. A moving car among the parked cars catches our attention faster. A flashing neon-sign is more easily noticed.

(*g) Novelty and Familiarity*:

This principle states that either a novel or a familiar external situation can serve as an attention getter. New objects in the familiar settings or familiar objects in new settings will draw the attention of the perceiver. A familiar face on a crowded railway platform will immediately catch attention. Because of this principle, the managers change the workers' jobs from time to time, because it will increase the attention they give to their jobs.

(ii) Internal Factors:

The internal factors relate to the perceiver. Perceiving people is very important for a manager, because behavior occurs as a result of behavior. Following are the internal factors which affect perception:

1. Learning:

Although interrelated with other internal factors learning may play the single biggest role in developing perceptual set. A perceptual set is basically what a person expects from the stimuli on the basis of his learning and experience relative to same or similar stimuli. This perceptual set is also known as cognitive awareness by which the mind organizes information and forms images and compares them with previous exposures to similar stimuli.

2. Motivation:

Besides the learning aspects of the perceptual set, motivation also has a vital impact on perceptual selectivity. For example, a person who has a relatively high need for power, affiliation or achievement will be more attentive to the relevant situational variables. For example, when such a person walks into the lunch room, he may go to the table where several of his co-workers are sitting, rather than a table which is empty or on which just one person is sitting.

Another example is that a hungry person will be more sensitive to the smell or sight of food than a non-hungry person. In one experiment people who were kept hungry for some time were shown some pictures and were asked to describe what they saw in them. Most of them reported more food items in such perceptions.

10.8 CHALLENGES OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Closely related to learning and motivation is the personality of the perceiving person which effects formation of perception. This has implications for performance appraisal also. For example, the older senior executives often complain about the inability of the new young manager to take tough decisions concerning terminating or reassigning people and paying attention to details and paper work. The young managers, in turn, complain about the 'old guards' resisting change and using paper and rules as ends in themselves. Different perceptions in young and old are due to their age differences. Further, the generation gap witnessed in recent years definitely contributes to different perceptions.

In addition to the above two problems another problem is about the woman in the work place. Women are still not reaching the top levels of organizations. At least part of this problem can be attributed to perceptual barriers such as the established managerial hierarchy is not able to see (perceive) that qualified woman should be promoted into top level positions. Of course, there are individual differences in all age categories but the above examples show that how personalities, values and even age may affect the way people perceive the world around them.

Perceptual outputs encompass all that results from the throughout process. These would include such factors as one's attitudes, opinions, feelings, values and behaviors resulting from the perceptual inputs and throughputs. Perceptual errors adversely affect the perceptual outputs. The lesser our biases in perception, the better our chances of perceiving reality as it exists or at least perceiving situations with the minimum amount of distortions.