

# The Relationship between Personality Traits and Career Choice: A Case Study of Secondary School Students

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## Abstract

The main purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between personality traits and career choice and if these traits can affect the choice of major in the university/college.

This study try to concentrate on the way jobs are chosen and the impact of personality traits on this process from the connection between how students seen their personality and the various choices they prefer.

The target population of this study was 178 personnel consisting students were randomly selected from five secondary schools in damascus. And the results indicate that there is a significant relationship between personality traits and career choice in the most cases as explored in the results section.

**Keywords:** Personality Traits, Career Choice.

## Introduction

Today, changes and transformations have taken place in all areas, and the effects of this process have reflected in the working life.

Career choice is a developmental process that extends throughout life; it involves not a single decision but a series of decisions. Career decision is not just a matter of selecting an occupation that is good match with person's characteristics, but in reality, the process is a lot more complicated.

Career choice is the most important event in an individual's life. Person's success and consequently, satisfaction and happiness depend on how accurately he chooses his career. Improper selection of the career or frequently changing the career is very harmful for psychological health.

Good career planning includes a match between requirements for a job, aptitude interests, personality of the youth and expectations from the parents. Good career planning leads to good career adjustment.

Personality influences the essential choices we make in life including choice of partner, education and career (Moorjani et al., 2007).

Of course, people desire to choose a profession that best fit to their own ability, to work in accordance with the profession and to make a career in the profession throughout the working life. Having a career gives the identity and status of the person.

Career increases the individual's self-esteem, gives sense of belonging and facilitates to establish a relationship with the other members of the society for these reasons, career is important for individuals and this raises the issue of the right choice of a career.

Making right choice of a career requires considering the possessed individual values are the source of individual differences. They function to evaluate our own behaviors and attitudes as well as others. Values vary from person to person and the social and personal preference is the result of continuous beliefs that act in a particular way of living and behaving or vice versa. It also allows us to find good and bad, right and wrong. Naturally, the good and bad and right and wrong is a value judgment, so varies from person to person (Onoyase et al., 2009). Developmental theories of career emphasize the importance of personal interests, skills, and values when expressing the barriers in decision-making (Newton et al., 2003). The values of the individuals affect their attitudes, behaviors and thoughts. Therefore, the values also affect career choice and so important. The choice of career is one of the most important decisions in the lives of people.

### **Research Objectives**

The aim of this study was to investigate whether personality has an influence on career Preference In this context, the study aims to investigate the relationship between career choices that affect the lives of individuals and individual values which are the source of individual differences affecting the people's behavior.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Several parents ignore the role of the Big Five personality traits in determining a person's choice of major at the university/college level and depend only on family background that can affect badly on the choice of career.

### **Research Questions**

In this study we will try to discuss some query like:

- Are certain personality types better adapted for certain job types?
- How do personality traits affect the career choice?
- Are there any statistical means differences between individual of the study sample from the gender point?

### **Research Important**

The study tries to find out the Compatibilities among career choice decisions and the personality type of the incumbents opting for job because people make decisions of their career choices and their personality types

Therefore, there is a need to provide guidance to help new incumbents to choose the right career choice to make their life more successful.

## **The Concepts of the Study**

### **Career**

Career is seen as a series of individual perceived attitudes and behaviors and integrated work-related activities during the life experience of a person.

Career can be defined as “the sequence of employment related positions, roles, activities and experiences encountered by a person” (Newton et al, 2003)

Or “a set of occupational experiences and roles that make up a person’s working life” (Mcoetzee, 2002)

### **Career Choice**

Making the choice of profession means a lot for the individual in terms of guiding and shaping the life. Because the choice of profession for an individual is the means of income-generating job satisfaction, providing security, having respect and success.

Understand the career choices and the career decisions of the individuals is an important component of recruitment and retention strategies because career choice of individual depends on many situational and organizational factors (Kochung et al., 2011). Also the career decision covers the training decisions, as well as the professional decisions (Larson et al., 2002).

In this study we will choose three main sectors as a career choice in exploring and measuring the relationship between these choices and personality traits.

### **Managers/Executives (General Management)**

The general management choice describes a need to manage people and or organizations. Three key individual competencies are described by (Ososki et al., 2006) in Connection with this choice:

- Analytical competence, the ability to analyze information and solve problems in uncertain conditions.
- Interpersonal competence, the ability to supervise and lead others towards the achievement of organizational goals.
- Emotional competence, the ability to be stimulated rather than exhausted by a crisis, the ability to exert power without guilt.

Their view of career success is objective by regarding to Status, and the amount of responsibility these individuals are given which contribute to their feeling of success. They will define themselves in relation to their organization’s success or failure. They are likely to include details of the size and scope of their organization when introducing themselves.

### **Scientists/Researchers (Creativity)**

Scientists and researchers or other practitioner have to cope up with different complex nature of problems and obstacles that need more than an ordinary look.

For that, they need to be very experienced, sensitive, open to learn and perceive new things and to deduce newness from old rigid thoughts (Benet-Martinez et al., 1998). Therefore, they will be more likely to introduce new ways of solving a single problem (Cutler et al., 2006).

Success is measured by innovation, creating something that bears their name or is entirely their own achievement, looking for ways to improve things. Their creativity and achievements become an extension of themselves and a basis for their identity.

### Technical Competence

Individuals who choose Technical competence define career success as achieving the status of expert in their chosen profession rather than through hierarchical progression and monetary rewards.

They place a high value on getting the job right and increasing their skills in one particular area. They are not interested in management but preferring instead to take on a mentoring role allowing them to pass their skills on to others or a functional management role that enables them to remain in their area of expertise.

At the job these individuals appreciate opportunities for learning and development, as they are keen to continuously improve their skills and their sense of identity is strongly tied to their profession and to any professional organizations associated with this.

Also, these individuals appreciate opportunities to attend specialist conferences and events would be valued by individuals with this

### Personality Traits

Why are some people quiet and passive, whereas others are loud and aggressive? Before we can answer these questions, we must address a more basic one: What is personality?

**Personality** can be defined as the sum total of ways in which an individual reacts to and interacts with others. It is most often described in terms of measurable traits that a person exhibits.

The early research on the structure of personality revolved around attempts to identify and label enduring characteristics that describe an individual's behavior and the popular characteristics include shy, aggressive, submissive, lazy, ambitious, loyal, and timid.

Those characteristics, when they're exhibited in a large number of situations, are called personality traits.

#### *Five Factors Model of Personality*

The five-factor model is a hierarchical model of personality traits having five broad factors, which represent personality at the broadest level of abstraction.

The model was captured through analyses of trait adjectives, factor analytic studies of existing personality inventories, and expert judges

These five dimensions are: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The description of these five factors is given as:

1. Agreeableness: these individuals value getting along with others; therefore, they are considerate, friendly, generous, helpful, and willing to compromise their interests with others (Edwards, & Quinter, 2011).
2. Conscientiousness: it deals with the way in which we control, regulate, and direct our impulses. These people are intelligent and try to avoid trouble and achieve success through purposeful planning and persistence (Cutler, 2006).
3. Extroversion: extroverts enjoy the gathering of people, are full of energy, often experience positive emotions, assertive, talkative, more enthusiastic, action-oriented individuals (Cutler et al., 2006).

4. Neuroticism: these individuals have the tendency to experience negative emotions have high-levels of anxiety, anger, depression, and they mostly interpret ordinary situations as threatening (Goldberg, 1999).

5. Openness to experience: they are imaginative, creative people from down-to-earth, conventional people, intellectually curious, appreciative of art, sensitive to beauty, and are more aware of their feelings (Goldberg, 1999).

### **Literature Review**

Initially, it was Holland in 1992 and 1997 who believed that persons who possess certain traits tend to affiliate together and match the work environment to fit their needs.

Most of researchers have found that personality traits are related to certain style of behaviors a person prefers (Hussain et al., 2011).

When considered individually these traits are certainly different and the outcomes of possessing certain traits could be different for individuals as well.

1. Extraversion: A person high on extraversion has a tendency to be sociable (Besser & Shackelford 2007). This can be confirmed by studies which indicate that extraverted persons do select jobs which have an opportunity for social contact (Bryant, et al 2005). Another study indicates that extraverts are inclined to perform better in jobs related to sales occupations and management (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Judge et al, 1999 believed extraversion can lead to career success as well. On the other hand persons who are ambitious, achievement- oriented and did not care much for affection were likely to be choose Marketing according to (Mount et al, 2005).
2. Conscientiousness: These includes traits like reliability, perseverance, dependability and hard work (Peng, 1996) and persons with these traits are likely to perform better academically since they are motivated more, than vice versa (Singaravelu et al., 2005) Proceedings of World Business and Economics Research Conference (Udoudoh et al., 2012). Furthermore these persons are careful about the implementation of future plans (Carter, 2003)
3. Agreeableness: Some studies show that persons with high agreeableness and emotional stability prefer jobs with team work and customer relations that are dyadic (Mount, 2005). Persons with this trait are more pleasant and friendly (Peng, 1996). This traits helps one to negotiate to maintain balance (Chuenyane, 1983)
4. Neuroticism: emotional stable persons are more likely to choose technical and business studies, math, economics and law compared to social sciences and humanities because they like structured rules and situations more. (Peng, 1996) (Chuenyane, 1983) also pointed out that career indecisiveness is related to neuroticism because of negative thoughts and feelings. (Singaravelu et al., 2005) that emotional stability is a trait that could be positively related to performance in all jobs.
5. Openness to Experience: Persons with this trait have a deductive ability to analyze problems (Judge et al., 1999), also Consists of traits like being artistic, philosophical, broad-minded and curious (Hossain et al., 2012) and being open to experience has been found to have a positive relationship with intelligence (Besser & Shackelford, 2007).

## Methodology

### Measures

Responses to the measures were rated on a 5 - point scale (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The appendix provides a detailed list of scales.

### Personality Traits

The Big Five Personality is measured using 50 items from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg et al., 2006).

The Cronbach's alpha for the five traits are :( 0.79) for openness to experience, (0.75) for conscientiousness, (0.82) for extraversion, (0.81) for agreeableness and (0.75) for neuroticism which indicates a good reliability of the answers.

### Career Choice

The career choice is measured by using items from three choices (Moorjani et al., 2007)

The Cronbach's alpha for the three choices are: (0.75) for Managers and executives choice (0.77) for Scientists/researchers choice (0.80) for Technical competence choice.

### Data Collection

For the collection of data structured questionnaire were distributed. The distribution was made personally and the questionnaire was used comprised only closed-ended questions.

### Population, Sample and Procedures

Damascus University in Syria was selected for as population of research and sample size is 178.

### Study Hypotheses

H1: People ranking on openness to experience are more likely to choose research and science roles.

H2: People ranking high on extraversion are more likely to choose technical roles.

H3: People ranking on conscientiousness and agreeableness are more likely to choose managerial and executive roles.

H4: People ranking on neuroticism are more likely to choose managerial and technical roles.

H5: People ranking on openness to experience are more likely to choose managerial roles.

### Study Results

Table -1

*Shows the correlations among the all variables as a tool to test our hypotheses.*

	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Openness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism
Managerial	0.33*	0.45**	0.25	0.53**	0.33*
research and science	0.44**	0.22	0.45**	0.25	0.35*
Technical	0.55**	0.28*	0.42**	0.36*	0.23

Note. \*p <05, \*\*p<01

**H1:** People ranking on openness to experience are more likely to choose research and science roles.

For the first hypothesis we can notice that the correlation between openness to experience as personality trait and the research and science roles as a career choice is (0.45\*\*) so the correlation between two variables is very good and subsequently the first hypothesis is accepted.

**H2:** People ranking high on extraversion are more likely to choose technical roles.

For the second hypothesis we can notice that the correlation between extraversion as personality trait and Technical roles as a career choice is (0.55\*\*) so the correlation between two variables is very good and subsequently the second hypothesis is accepted.

**H3:** People ranking on conscientiousness and agreeableness are more likely to choose managerial and executive roles.

For the third hypothesis we can notice that the correlation between conscientiousness as personality trait and managerial roles as a career choice is (0.53\*\*) so the correlation between two variables is very good and correlation between agreeableness as personality trait and managerial roles as a career choice is (0.45\*\*) also the correlation between two variable is very good and subsequently the third hypothesis is accepted.

**H4:** People ranking on neuroticism are more likely to choose managerial and technical roles.

For the fourth hypothesis we can notice that the correlation between neuroticism as personality trait and managerial role as a career choice is (0.33\*) so the correlation between two variable is good, but the correlation between neuroticism as personality trait and Technical role as a career choice is (0.23) so there is no correlation between the two variables subsequently the fourth hypothesis is partially accepted

**H5:** People ranking on openness to experience are more likely to choose managerial roles.

For the fifth hypothesis we can notice that the correlation between extraversion as personality trait and managerial roles as a career choice is (0.25) there is no correlation between the two variables subsequently the fifth hypothesis is unaccepted.

### **Discussions/Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between personality traits and career choice and the results agree that the personality of individual is attracted to can impact the choice of major, next to cognitive ability (Hussain et al., 2011). and other studies show that even a person choice of occupation can be determined from personality traits (Hossain et al., 2012).

Based on the results of study the managerial roles have been chosen by most of the sample without opens to experience because managing or executing things perfectly demands strong social interaction ability in individuals and it demands attitude ready to accept changes in external environment. Secondly, it requires socially dominant behavior to rapidly adapt these changes in order to get things done efficiently and effectively.

These capabilities can help them to become strong negotiators and will help them to achieve positions more acceptable by both parties

Research roles have been chosen by most of the sample without both of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness so we can refer that to Sensitivity roles is key to get things deduce for which others seem blind, and the opens to experience is the personality trait that can help these people to have a multi angled look for a single problem Certainly, this personality trait will be more likely to have scientific exploration, new ideas and new theories to add in existing literature.

Technical roles have been chosen by most of the sample without Neuroticism Most of the personality traits can help the individuals to excel in these professions, these persons to be time bounded assignment fulfillment, planned and organized in every transaction People who are more calm, relaxed and emotionally stable are more likely to be successful. To achieve this capability, people that rank high on neuroticism are not preferable as they are less likely to work with time rule and attitude

### **Limitations and Future Research**

There are several limitations of this study that can be addressed in future research.

**First**, the demographics of this study limit the external reliability of the findings specifically due to the uniqueness of the students in Syria.

**Second**, the researcher could also conduct cross-cultural studies to get a better idea of personality traits in various cultures and discover what motivates persons from different cultures with choice of major.

**Third**, An under emphasis of the importance of other external factors, like cognitive skills, socio-economic status, family background, life-time earnings, peer influences etc which are factors that can influence choice of major subjects at the undergraduate level are minimized, as it is presumed that only personality plays an important part.

It is also likely that there are surely gender differences in each culture with regard to choice of major and the crowding hypothesis could occur with certain majors like Nursing Science or teachers for women and Engineering or medicine for men depending on the culture. Longitudinal studies may also provide an idea about changes that occur with student's choices and the reasons for the choices

**Finally**, it is well known that individuals who make career choices based on personal interests and abilities, show significantly higher levels of job satisfaction and are more productive workers. It is important to evaluate the satisfaction of that employee after many years through future research.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix 1: career choice**

<b>Technical Competence</b>	Strongly agree	agree	Not Certain	disagree	Strongly disagree
I would rather leave my organization than be promoted out of my area of expertise					
I will accept a management position only if it is in my area of expertise					
Remaining in my area of expertise rather than being promoted into general management is important to me					
Remaining in my specialized area as opposed to being promoted out of my area of expertise is important to me					
My main concern in life is to be competent in my area of expertise					
I see myself more as a generalist as opposed to being committed to one specific area of expertise					

<b>Managerial Competence</b>	Strongly agree	agree	Not Certain	disagree	Strongly disagree
To be in a position in general management is important to me					
To rise to a position in general management is important to me					
The process of supervising, influencing and leading people at all levels is important to me					

I would like to reach a level in an organization where my decisions really make a difference					
I want to achieve a position that gives me the opportunity to combine analytical Competence with supervision of people.					

<b>Creativity</b>	Strongly agree	agree	Not Certain	disagree	Strongly disagree
I have been motivated throughout my career by the number of products I have been directly involved in creating					
To be able to create or build something that is entirely my own product or idea is important to me					
The use of my skills in building a new business enterprise is important to me					
I would like to accumulate a personal fortune to prove to myself and others that I am competent.					

**Appendix 2:** The International Personality Item Pool

Extraversion	Agreeableness	Openness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism
I am the life of the party.	I am interested in people.	I have a rich vocabulary.	I am always prepared.	I am easily disturbed.
I don't mind being the centre of attention.	I sympathize with others' feelings.	I have a vivid imagination.	I pay attention to details.	I change my mood a lot.
I feel comfortable around people.	I have a soft heart.	I have excellent ideas.	I get chores done right away	I get irritated easily.
I start conversations.	I take time out for others.	I am quick to understand things.	I like order.	I get stressed out easily.
I talk to a lot of different people at parties.	I feel others' emotions.	I use difficult words.	I follow a schedule.	I get upset easily.
I don't talk a lot. <i>(reversed)</i>	I make people feel at ease.	I spend time reflecting on things.	I am exacting in my work	I have frequent mood swings.
I keep in the background. <i>(reversed)</i>	I am not really interested in	I am full of ideas.	I leave my belongings around. <i>(reversed)</i>	I often feel blue.

	others. (reversed)			
I have little to say. (reversed)	I insult people. (reversed)	I am not interested in abstractions. (reversed)	I make a mess of things. (reversed)	I worry about things.
I don't like to draw attention to myself. (reversed)	I am not interested in other people's problems. (reversed)	I do not have a good imagination. (reversed)	I often forget to put things back in their proper place. (reversed)	I am relaxed most of the time (reversed)
I am quiet around strangers. (reversed)	I feel little concern for others. (reversed)	I have difficulty understanding abstract ideas. (reversed)	I shirk my duties. (reversed)	I seldom feel blue. (reversed)