

Personality theories

[Psychology](#), [Personality](#)



Introduction The purpose of this essay is to review theories that have been linked and discussed in regards to personality. It aims to define personality, summarize the main ideas across different articles, pointing out the strengths and weaknesses that are in the articles. It also links my personal experience of personality traits to the theory of personality. The essay begins by defining personality from different articles and books, then analyzing critically the key definitions.

Furthermore the essay discusses the relationship between personality and job performance and the relationship between personality and motivation. The essay contains a reflective writing section, based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a theory of motivation and personality, in which my personal experience is discussed. Definitions The word personality has many definitions across many fields, in different articles. Hogan and Holland (2003), defines personality as the unique pattern of psychological and behavioral characteristics by which each person can be distinguished from other people.

This means each person's characteristics are different from the other, and people are unique beings. Unlike Griffin (2007), who suggests that personality is understood by some people to mean self concept, by others, the consensus of other people's opinions about one's character, and by others, one's true character. This definition is vague and over simplistic. It places individuals in single categories, ignoring the fact that every personality represents a unique combination of qualities. Walter (1986) goes on further to look at personality from two angles, the actors view and the observers view.

Personality from the actors view is a person's identity, which is defined in terms of the strategies a person uses to pursue acceptance and status, identity controls and actors social behavior. Personality from the observers view is a person's reputation, and it is defined in terms of trait evaluations- conforming, helpful, talkative, competitive, calm, curious and so forth. However, the common trait on the definitions is restored on the following definitions. Griffin (2007) defines personality as the relatively stable set psychological attributes that distinguish one person from the other.

This is often referred to as the long standing debate often expressed as nature versus nurture, that people's personality is shaped by both inheritance and environment. The next definition introduces a new trait that of interaction with others. It is suggested that personality is the term used to describe the overall combination of characteristics or traits that reflect the nature of a person and the way they react to and interact with others (De Janasz, Wood, Gottschalk & Schneider, 2006). Here the authors suggest that personality determinants appear to be shaped by inheritance, environmental and situational factors.

Hellriegel and Slocum (2006) also define personality as the overall profile or combination of stable psychological attributes that capture the unique nature of a person. This definition suggests that personality combines a set of physical and mental characteristics that reflect how a person looks, thinks, acts and feels. Hellriegel and Slocum's definition contains two important ideas, the first being what sets people apart and what they have in common

and the second refers to personality as being stable and happening overtime.

The relationship between personality and job performance Since 1990 analytical reviews have shown that personality measures are useful predictors of job performance. Although these results represent a substantial revision in how appliedpsychologyviews personality assessment (cf. Guion & Gottier, 1965; Locke & Hulin, 1962), there is still no agreed theoretical account for the findings. A theory of individual differences in work effectiveness that links assessment to performance would enhance the value of personality measures for forecasting occupational outcomes.

The current study organized criterion measures into the broad themes of getting along and getting ahead, and big five personality categories (Hogan & Roberts, 2001). The results suggest that there is some practical utility for the theory driven research. Nevertheless, some researchers have criticized the big five factors as an incomplete taxonomy and have suggested that important relationships are obscured when analysis is limited to the big five rather than a seven factor model. Tellgen & Waller (1987) found seven factors, five of which corresponded to the big five and two additional factors.

This goes on to show that more extensive research is needed and current theories are not enough to draw conclusions from. However, research related to personality has recently clarified the utility of using personality variables for predicting job performance. This research by (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hough, 1992; Salgado 1997) has demonstrated that personality constructs are indeed associated with work performance. Other traits are correlated

with specific occupations. However, very little research has examined the mechanisms through which personality traits influence performance.

Barrick and Mount (1991) found autonomous goal setting, and to a lesser extent goal setting, to mediate relationships between measures of job proficiency and supervisory ratings of job performance and sales volume for sales representatives. Organizational researchers have long been interested in relationships between personality traits and job performance. With the resurgent interest in theories of personality and the discovery of the big five model structure, research in this area has flourished.

Researchers of personality and performance studies frequently make the implicit assumption that performance is a stable construct and thus rely on cross sectional and one time measures of performance to capture something that by its very nature unfolds across time. In depth studies have shown that the relationship between personality and performance measures have been the norm despite longstanding evidence that performance is dynamic (Bass, 1962). *The relationship between personality* and motivation

Personality has had an uneven history in work motivation research. Most researchers would implicitly agree that there are individual differences in motivation, and these differences can be traced to dispositional tendencies. In response to a question about what is known in regards to individual differences in motivation, Austin and Klein (1996) commented, “ Despite studies addressing individual differences within each of the perspectives, a considerable amount of research is needed before precise statements can be made about their role”.

Gellatly (1996) noted that “attempts to empirically link personality characteristics with motivational variables have produced inconsistent results”. This is a result of lack of theoretical progress and conceptual clarity in the motivational area itself. However, motivational research has made substantial theoretical progress and with respect to the theory for which the most progress has been made it is not clearly defined. As Locke, Shawn, Saari and Latham (1981) noted in their seminal review, the only consistent thing about studies of individual differences in goal setting is their inconsistency.

A more likely explanation for the lack of progress in personality and motivation literature is as Hogan and Roberts (2007) put it, “there are thousands of personality measures in the published literature”. These authors commented further that past personality research was sprawling in conceptual disarray, with no overarching theoretical paradigm and the subject matter was operationalized in terms of a large number of poorly validated scales with different names. With so many traits related to different aspects of motivation, it is no surprise that reviews of the literature have come away apathetic by the observed findings.

Reflective Writing Maslow’s hierarchy aims to explain human behavior in terms of basic requirements for survival and growth. These requirements are arranged according to their importance for survival and their power to motivate the individual. The most basic physical requirement, such as food, water and oxygen constitute the lowest level of the need hierarchy. These needs must be satisfied before other higher needs become important to

individuals (Scmuttle, 2002). While the order of satisfaction is subject to debate, I have worked as a farm manager and the most of my subordinates only cared about the first two needs.

The physiological and safety needs. The basic needs of survival are what seemed to motivate them to work. The farm workers were not driven by ambition, esteem needs or self actualization needs. If by chance the basic requirements were lacking the workers would revolt, but in abundance farm output would double or triple in certain quarters. Although Maslow agrees that other needs do not fit into his hierarchy for example cognitive needs such as curiosity and scientific interest. I feel that in developing countries those needs are not yet valued and hence a forfeited which renders the hierarchy of needs valid.

In conclusion, the literature on personality and job performance, and personality and motivation shows a connection between each of the two. In theory a strong connection exists but often that is not the case. Incorrect assumptions about personality in relation to job performance and motivation could result in erroneous conclusions in firms and organizations, which can be costly. However, this does not render the theories invalid, in my personal experience the connection was evident but only on the first two levels of the hierarchy.

The differences can be attributed to different cultures and values between developing countries and Western countries. References Austina, J. T & Klein, H. J. (1996). Work motivation and goal striving. In K. R. Murphy (Ed), Individual differences and behaviour in organizations. San Francisco: Jossey-

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