A study on relationship between personality traits and employment factors of college students

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Abstract

The goal of vocational education is to enhance students' professional knowledge, technical skills, and professional ethics to make them readily available for employment and capable of satisfying the needs of economic constructions. Vocational education plays an important role in guiding and assisting students in seeking employment. However, in addition to school education, individual personality traits largely affect students' employment. This paper used students at a college in Taiwan to investigate the relationship between students' personality traits and their employment factors.

Keywords: personality traits, employment factor

I. INTRODUCTION

With the improvement of living standards and education levels among citizens, students' job expectations and cognitions have also changed. In nowadays, people seek not only employment but also satisfaction, security, and recognition in jobs. Through employment, they expect to realize the meaning of their life as well (Yu, 1996). Many students will change their views about their future occupations while still at school. They wish to switch to occupations that are more compatible with their personality traits because they find their personality traits in conflict with values practiced in the area they originally chose to engage in. Therefore, this paper conducted an in-depth research on the relationship between personality traits and employment factors in hope of understanding how students' personality traits affect their job choice.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Personality traits

"Personality" derived from the Latin term "Persona" which means (1) a mask worn by theater actors to represent their role and personality in the play; (2) the authentic self, which includes one's intrinsic motivations, emotions, habits, and ideas (Chan, 1996). Allport (1974) described personality as "a dynamic organization within the individual of those psychological systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment". Robbins (2001) viewed personality as "the sum total of ways in which an individual reacts and interacts with others". Simply put, personality can be defined as a compound of human characteristics and variables. For instance, an employee considered to be "ambitious and smart" by his superior has a personality formed by the compound of these two characteristics. Besides, behavioral scientists tend to agree that personality remains constant throughout one's life. Hence, it can be said that personality comprises of human characteristics that do not quickly vary and can be used to predict one's short-term behavioral models.

Moulton (1999) proposed four types of personality, including "dominance", "inducement", "submission", and "compliance", or commonly known as DISC. D-type people are aggressive, demanding, adventurous, and active. They usually play the roles of reorganizers, project leaders, idea makers, and pioneers. I-type people are talkative, social, and good at communications. They love to be actors, optimists, idea makers, and advocates. S-type people are focused, prudent, stable, sure-footed, and organized. They usually play the roles of a stabilizer or a balancing power in an organization. C-type people are accurate, clear-minded, and seekers of perfection. They usually play the role of an internal controller. They are rule followers and critical of others' performance. Super (1982) proposed A/B personalities. Type A personality is characterized by a high level of ambition and a strong will to attain the expected goal. Type B personality is just opposite to Type A personality. Type AB personality is a mix of Type A and Type B personalities. In other words, people with Type B personality may also have some traits of Type A personality.

In this paper, A/B personalities introduced by Super (1982) were adopted as the basis for questionnaire development.

2. Employment factors

Factors affecting students' choice of a future employment can be generally classified into individual factors and environmental factors.

(1) Individual factors

Super (1970) thought that people progress through five stages during their career development process, including growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. Based on individual needs, Hoppock (1963) had put forth ten assumptions about the choice of occupations as follows:

A. Both physical and mental needs affect an individual's decisions.
B. The choice that most satisfies an individual's needs will be taken.

C. Individual needs are dominated by not only the conscious mind but also the subconscious mind.
D. One's orientation in the choice of an occupation will be affected when he/she realizes that a particular occupation can satisfy his/her needs.
E. One's orientation in the choice of an occupation varies by satisfaction of his/her expectations, which also vary by personal knowledge of the occupation and cognitive ability.
F. One can better identify the occupation that he/she is more likely to be successful in it if he/she really understands individual needs. Therefore, understanding individual needs is critical to one's choice of an occupation.
G. Sufficient knowledge and understanding of other occupations helps one compare them with the current one and find a suitable one.
H. One's choice of an occupation depends on how much his/her current job meets his/her original expectations.
I. One's job satisfaction is determined by satisfaction of current needs and confidence about satisfaction of future needs.
J. Choice of an occupation is variable. One makes the choice when he/she is assured that a certain occupation can satisfy his/her needs.

(2) Environmental factors

Chang (2000) proposed that graduation is the time for students to make a choice about their future careers. Graduating students generally consider their parents' and teachers' advices, personal experiences of success or failure, and conditions or constraints of the environment (such as family economic status) in the choice of a future occupation. According to Super (1982), an individual's career development would be affected by the following social systems, where the former were more influential than the latter.

A. Family, school, and society.
B. Peer relations, neighbors, and ethnic groups.
C. Geographic area, social status, and racial background.
D. Values and ethic norms.

Roe & Siegelman (1963) argued that one's choice of an occupation is significantly affected by his/her parents, family, and family environment. One tends to choose a "person-oriented" occupation if his/her parents are loving, accepting, and protecting. In contrast, one tends to choose a "non-person-oriented" occupation if his/her parents are demanding, rejecting, and neglecting. According to Wang (1992), family is the most important environment for human growth. Factors affecting an adolescent's family include (1) family socioeconomic status: parents' occupation, education, and income; (2) parenting attitude: parents' attitude toward childhood disciplinary practices varies by family structure and social values and will cause significant impacts on children's development. Besides, parents' marital status and harmony are also influential to children's development.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire survey was adopted in this paper. A questionnaire consisting of three sections, including "basic data", "personality traits", and "employment factors" was developed and administered to students at a college in Taiwan during Feb ~ June 2008. A total of 170 valid responses were obtained.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS RESULT

1. Basic data analysis

The respondents consisted of 118 females (69.4%) and 52 males (30.6%). Among the 170 respondents providing valid responses, 26 are studying in the first year (15.3%), 32 in the second year (18.8%), 50 in the third year (29.4%), and 62 in the fourth year (36.5%). The survey result showed that 17 respondents had no job experience (10.0%), 129 respondents had experiences of taking part-time jobs (75.9%), and 24 respondents had experiences of

taking full-time jobs (14.1%).

In addition, 65 students reported that they were not taking courses that match their interests (38.2%), and 105 students reported that they were taking courses that match their interests (61.8%). A majority of the respondents (139 students, 81.8%) showed that they have never participated in any skills competition, and only 31 students reported that they have such experience (18.2%).

2. Factor analysis of the measurement scale

(1) Validity analysis

The personality traits scale and employment factors scale were tested using KMO test and Bartlett's test. The KMO values were .904 and .863 separately, and the results of the Bartlett's test all reached significance level (.000). Thus, the data were good for factor analysis. Through factor analysis, three factor constructs and five factor constructs were extracted separately from the personality traits scale and employment factors scale. All these constructs had an eigenvalue greater than 1. Factors with an eigenvalue smaller than 1 were deleted. The factor analysis results were presented in Table 4-1 and Table 4-2.

The above analysis concluded that student personality can be measured by three major traits, including leadership, innovativeness, and socialness. Employment factors can be divided into individual factor and environmental factor, and environmental factor can be further divided into family factor, school factor, social factor, and peer factor.

(2) Reliability analysis

The analysis result showed that the reliability of the personality traits scale is .908 and that of the employment factors scale is .883. The detailed result was provided in Table 4-3. According to Chou (2002), the measurement scales have adequate internal consistency.

3. Differential Analysis

Statistical analysis showed that there is no significant difference in "personality traits" among students with different employment experiences (Wilk's Λ=.931, $p > .05$). However, students between different genders showed significant differences in "personality traits". Males showed a higher degree of leadership and innovativeness than females as Table 4-4.

Moreover, students who have taken courses that match their interests had a higher level of leadership than those who have not as Table 4-5. And students with experience of participating in skills competitions exhibited a stronger leadership than those who have not as Table 4-6.

4. Regression analysis

Before conducting the regression analysis, collinearity in the regression model using DW, VIF, and CI measures was detected. Collinearity will not be a problem if DW falls between 1.5~2.5, VIF below 10, and CI below 30. As shown in Table 4-7 and Table 4-8, collinearity was inexistent in the regression analysis of personality traits on individual factors or environmental factors. Hence, the data were good for regression analysis.

As shown in Table 4-9 and Table 4-10, personality traits affected the individual factors and environmental factor among the student employment factors. In particular, socialness has significant and positive influence on the individual factors.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research concluded that student personality can be measured by three major traits, including leadership, innovativeness, and socialness. Employment factors can be divided into individual factors and environmental factors, and environmental factors also include family factor, school factor, social factor, and peer factor. In general, males exhibited higher levels of innovativeness and socialness than females.

Remarkably, students who had received interests-related courses demonstrated a higher level of leadership competence than those who have not. It can be inferred that leadership quality can be developed through school education. Moreover, students who have experiences of participating in skills competitions also exhibited a stronger leadership quality than those who have no such experience. Therefore, students studying at vocational schools should be more encouraged to participate in accreditation tests and skills competitions, so as to enhance their leadership competence. The regression analysis result suggested that students' personality traits affected the individual factors among the employment factors, and students characterized by a higher level of socialness were more concerned about their future careers and development.

Besides, the results revealed that male students demonstrated higher adaptability, competitiveness, vigor, innovativeness, dominating ability, and favor for group works than female ones. This finding suggests that male students are more highly adaptable to the external environment. As gender equality is emphasized in the modern environment, female students should manage to enhance their adaptability to the external environment so as to compete with them on an equal footing. In nowadays, accreditation of professional skills is increasingly important. Schools should not only assist students to acquire knowledge and skills required by the job market but also guide them to take vocational licenses and participate in various skills contests, which could help enhance students' leadership competence and boost their confidence and competitiveness in the job market.

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Tables Summary

Table 4-1 Factor analysis of the personality traits scale

Construct	Item	Content	Factor loading	Eigen value	Variance explained (%)	Total variance explained (%)
Leadership	10	I am very efficient at work.	.772	7.667	42.594	56.684
	11	I am motivated at work.	.747			
	3	I can encourage others.	.695			
	2	I can accept challenges.	.638			
	6	I am discerning.	.593			
	1	I have leadership qualities.	.579			
	13	I need persistent growth.	.553			
	12	I can take risks.	.516			
Innovativeness	14	I often propose new ideas.	.788	1.423	7.907	
	15	I have the ability of logic and critical analysis.	.709			
	9	I am creative and innovative.	.705			
	16	I desire possession and dominance.	.633			
	7	I am competitive.	.613			
	18	I am flexible at work.	.436			
Sociality	5	I like to make friends.	.768	1.113	6.184	
	4	I am adaptable.	.579			
	17	I like group works.	.566			
	8	I am energetic.	.548			

Table 4-2 Factor analysis of the employment factors scale

Construct	Item	Content	Factor loading	Eigen value	Variance explained (%)	Total variance explained (%)
Individual factor	3	I care about my future development in an occupation.	.884	8.123	30.418	64.218
	2	I care about my job performance.	.865			
	4	I care about the social status of my occupation.	.836			
	5	I care if I can utilize my skills in my work.	.828			
	6	I care if I can gain self-recognition through employment.	.803			
	1	I care about my employment.	.780			
	9	I worry about my future employment.	.739			
	8	I like challenging jobs.	.696			
	7	I believe that certificates help my employment.	.616			

Family factor	13	My parents will discuss employment issues with me.	.881	3.541	13.114	
	10	I will tell my parents employment problems I have encountered.	.855			
	22	My parents will show their care about my worries over employment.	.841			
	14	My parents will encourage me to try new things.	.794			
	19	My parents usually ask me what has happened.	.655			
School factor	16	My teachers will encourage us to ask.	.793	2.524	9.350	
	17	My teachers will guide us to solve problems.	.775			
	18	My mood will be affected if I encounter difficulties in school works.	.716			
	15	My teachers will use new teaching materials to assist me to seek employment.	.702			
	23	My choice of an occupation will be affected by my academic achievement.	.688			
	20	My school supports my choice of an occupation.	.430			
Social factor	26	My decision to take further studies or enter the job market will be affected by social values.	.791	1.740	6.445	
	25	I will choose to take further studies because landing a job is difficult.	.718			
	24	I will change my views about employment because of a certain opinion of others.	.558			
Peer factor	11	I enjoy learning with my classmates.	.833	1.321	4.891	
	27	My friends will provide me with new employment information.	.638			
	12	I enjoy discussing employment issues with my classmates.	.558			
	21	I will discuss worries about employment with my classmates.	.423			

Table 4-3 Reliability analysis of the scales

Scale	Construct	Item	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α
Personality traits	Leadership	1.2.3.6.10.11.12.13	.867	.908
	Innovativeness	7.9.14.15.16.18	.829	
	Socialness	4.5.8.17	.644	
Employment factors	Individual factors	1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.	.682	.883
	Family factors	10.13.19.22.14	.790	
	School factors	15.16.17.18.20.23	.840	
	Social factors	24.25.26	.598	
	Peer factors	11.12.21.27	.662	

Table 4-4 Differential analysis between different genders

Factor	Gender	Number	Mean	t-value	p-value
Leadership	Male	52	3.680	.590	.556
	Female	118	3.624		
Innovativeness	Male	52	3.619	2.646	.009**
	Female	118	3.369		
Socialness	Male	52	3.832	2.673	.008**
	Female	118	3.587		

Note: p**<.01

Table 4-5 Differential analysis by status of taking courses

Factor	Gender	Number	Mean	t-value	p-value
Leadership	No	65	3.514	-2.319	.022*
	Yes	105	3.720		
Innovativeness	No	65	3.418	-.481	.631
	Yes	105	3.462		
Socialness	No	65	3.608	-.990	.324
	Yes	105	3.695		

Note: p* <.05

Table 4-6 Differential analysis by status of participating in skills competitions

Factor	Gender	Number	Mean	t-value	p-value
Leadership quality	No	139	3.596	-2.193	.030*
	Yes	31	3.843		
Innovativeness	No	139	3.409	-1.742	.083
	Yes	31	3.608		
Socialness	No	139	3.649	-.614	.540
	Yes	31	3.718		

Note: p* <.05

Table 4-7 Regression analysis of personality traits on individual factor

Dependent variable	Independent variable	VIF	CI	DW
Individual factors	Leadership	2.399	16.236	1.957
	Innovativeness	2.460	21.712	
	Socialness	2.011	24.077	

Table 4-8 Regression analysis of personality traits on environmental factor

Dependent variable	Independent variable	VIF	CI	DW
Environmental factors	Leadership	2.399	16.236	2.099
	Innovativeness	2.460	21.712	
	Socialness	2.011	24.077	

Table 4-9 Regression analysis of personality traits on individual factors

	Standard error	B	t-value
Intercept	.259		8.334***
Leadership	.097	.192	1.799
Innovativeness	.097	.055	.506
Socialness	.091	.267	2.731**
R=.461	R^2=.213	Adjusted R^2=.198	F=14.939***

Note: p** < .01, p***<.001

Table 4-10 Regression analysis of personality traits on environmental factors

	Standard error	B	t-value
Intercept	.208		12.804***
Leadership quality	.078	.005	.039
Innovativeness	.078	.227	1.953
Socialness	.073	.087	.830
R=.296	R^2=.088	Adjusted R^2=.071	F=5.310**

Note: p** < .01, p*** < .001