

**A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BIG FIVE
PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS AND JOB INVOLVEMENT IN A
FOREIGN BASED BANK/FINANCIAL INSTITUTION IN PENANG**

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ABSTRAK (MALAY)

Seramai seratus lima (105) orang pegawai bahagian jualan/perkhidmatan pelanggan di sebuah bank/institut kewangan antarabangsa yang beroperasi di wilayah utara Malaysia, telah disoal-selidik untuk mengkaji perhubungan di antara Lima Dimensi Besar Personaliti dan tahap Penglibatan Kerja. Hipotesis ini telah diuji dengan menggunakan kaedah regresi hirarki “hierarchical regression “ bersama beberapa faktor “moderator”. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa dimensi personaliti orang yang lincah peramah “extroversion” dan dimensi personaliti orang yang sentiasa bersetuju “agreeableness” mempunyai perhubungan yang positif dengan tahap penglibatan kerja. Hanya faktor “moderator” jantina, mempunyai kepentingan “significant” dalam perhubungan di antara dimensi personaliti dan tahap penglibatan kerja. Secara keseluruhannya, keputusan kajian ini telah dicapai walaupun ianya tidak sebegitu kukuh dan meluas. Had kajian, implikasi teori dan praktikal, serta cadangan untuk kajian lanjutan di masa depan juga telah dibincang.

ABSTRACT

The relationship between the Big Five Personality Dimensions and job involvement was examined in a questionnaire study with a sample of one hundred and five (105) sales/customer service staff of a foreign based banking/financial institution in the Northern Region of Malaysia. Hypotheses were tested by means of hierarchical regression with the inclusion of a few moderating factors. Results indicate that extroversion and agreeableness are positively related to job involvement. Gender seems to be the only moderating factor that has significance on the relationship between the personality dimension of extroversion and job involvement. Overall, the findings established the existing of a relationship between the Big Five Personality Dimensions and job involvement, although they are not very strong or extensive. Also discussed were the limitations of the study, theoretical and practical implications and suggestions for future studies.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the background of the study, identifies the problem statement, research objectives and research questions, explains the significance of the study, definition of the key terms and outlines the organization of all the chapters.

1.2 Background of the Study

Over the last century many profound psychologists have identified numerous personality traits or dimensions. However, Digman (1990) confirmed that only in the last 25 years or so, a consensus has formed to describe the human personality in five dimensions or factors. Accordingly, there are not many studies investigating the relationship between the Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions and job involvement in various occupational sectors. In the past, discussion of the relationship between personality and job involvement either did not include the Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions, or only discussed the relationship between personality and other concepts, such as job motivation, job satisfaction and job performance.

1.3 Problem Statement

Lately, most of the banking/financial institutions are focusing on the area of customer service and relationship management. This is because the banking/financial institution's products and services are very competitive. It has come to a point now where

customers are making comparisons among these institutions and choosing whichever gives better quality service. Their decisions are based on the services rendered by the institution's sales/customer service staff.

At times, these sales/customer service staff would go through a personality change either due to personal or job related issues in their daily life. They could be emotionally, mentally or physically down which could affect their personality dimensions; which, in turn, could affect their level of job involvement.

Besides the possible change of personality, if it were to cause a lack of job involvement by the individual, this could potentially result in poor service rendered to their customers. So the problem here would be that staff that give poor service would avert their customers from the institution. Customers would be very unhappy and move out to another institution seeking better service, while staff that give better quality service would retain their customers and attract more new customers. Therefore, it looks like the sales/customer service staff are intellectual capital of the banking/financial institutions and a determining factor in the institution's success.

In recent years the turn over rate among the sales/customer service staff is fairly high in banking/financial institutions, especially during their early vintage. They leave due to either incompatibility of the sales/customer service job function with their individual personality or because they are given a better offer for the same job by another banking/financial institution. When they leave the job they hijack the customers' information to their next employment for business penetration. Over time, the banking/financial institutions loose not only their staff but also their valuable customers. In addition to that, lots of monetary and non-monetary resources which were channeled to

these staff by way of remuneration, incentive schemes, bonuses, training and physical infrastructure facilities, are all wasted.

As such, it is vital to these banking/financial institutions to emphasize the quality of services rendered by their staff to their customers. This is because staff are at the front line of servicing customers. It is proposed that the right staff with the right personality traits, in the right department, such as sales/customer service, would naturally be happy in executing their duties and progress well as they would exhibit a high level of job involvement.

Thus, the consistent job involvement and quality servicing of these staff would be noticed and appreciated by the customers. This could increase customer satisfaction and grow the customer's financial and wealth management portfolio with the institution. These existing customers could then be ambassadors, or promoting agents, going around promoting the institutions to their relatives and friends. Hence, this could attract new customers to join the banking/financial institution. This could possibly stimulate the popularity, profitability and growth of the institution among the other competitors.

These staff are the asset of the institutions, as they play an important role in managing the customers, meeting their needs and giving them satisfaction. Staff's behaviors are reflected by their individual personality traits. Therefore, it is important to analyze and understand their personality.

The Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions are employed in the study as a model to measure this from the perspective of Organizational Behavior. According to Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Matteson (2008) the five (5) dimensions are extroversion, emotional stability/neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience.

It is expected that staff who are high in these dimensions would be high in job involvement and may be more readily multi-tasking in providing proper services to the customers. Hence, this study uses the Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions to analyze and understand the employee's personality in relation to their job involvement in the banking/financial institutions.

Therefore, the problem that initiated this study is the high sales/customer service staff turn over rate, customers who are opting to bank elsewhere and the wastage of monetary and non-monetary resources spent on these staff and customers.

1.4 Research Objective

This study attempts to identify the relationship between the Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions and job involvement at a foreign based banking/financial institution operating in Penang for many years. It is doing very well and is a frontier in global financial and wealth management services. The reason this particular bank/financial institution was chosen is because it is one of the pioneer foreign based bank/financial institutions in Malaysia and it is well established compared to the rest.

The objective of the research is to investigate whether there is a relationship between the Independent Variable: The Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions, namely extroversion, emotional stability/neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience, and the Dependent Variable: job involvement; AND whether the four (4) Moderating Factors: age, gender, marital status and years of working experience, moderate the relationship between the above mentioned variables.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions in relation to this study are:

- Is there a positive relationship between a high level of extroversion and job involvement?
- Is there a positive relationship between a high level of emotional stability/neuroticism and job involvement?
- Is there a positive relationship between a high level of agreeableness and job involvement?
- Is there a positive relationship between a high level of conscientiousness and job involvement?
- Is there a positive relationship between a high level of openness to experience and job involvement?
- Does age moderate the relationship between the personality dimensions and job involvement?
- Does gender moderate the relationship between the personality dimensions and job involvement?
- Does marital status moderate the relationship between the personality dimensions and job involvement?
- Do the years of working experience moderate the relationship between the personality dimensions and job involvement?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study could be a tool to identify and manage the problems encountered by the banking/financial institutions as addressed in the earlier problem statement. The Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions are used to distinguish and investigate the influence on the staff in relation to their job involvement. Hence, this study could benefit the Human Resource Department (HRD) and the Strategic Business Planning Department (SBPD) of banking/sales institutions.

In the HRD, this study may be able to provide a basic platform during future recruitment process to identify the kind of personality dimensions required for the sales/customer service job in banking/financial institutions. Whereby, if the candidates have the necessary personality dimensions, they stand a good chance of being recruited and could be expected to exhibit a high involvement in their job. Besides, it may also be able to assist the HRD in job matching according to the employees' personality dimensions. Through that, the department could formulate an appropriate personal development and career path for their staff.

Whilst in the SBPD this study may be able to assist the banking/financial institutions to utilize their limited resources diligently to maximize their profit and growth. Through the Big Five Personality Dimensions, the institutions could make sure that the right persons are doing the right job.

Secondly, based on the study it would allow the SBPD to understand their staff better. Therefore they would be able to focus their strategic business planning activities on further developing their staff's skills and competencies, and manage their career development. Furthermore, the results of the study could be used for succession planning

of the institution. With this in hand, SBPD could confidently formulate the necessary trainings, opportunities and career progression path in line with their institution's goal. If the department feels that these staff no longer fit into the sales/customer service role, then they could be channeled into other suitable roles within the company. This could help strategically manage their resources of human capital.

Thirdly, from the perspective of the customers' benefit, the department could develop contemporary financial products and services to better suit the needs of their customers. One of the primary ways for SBPD to obtain such information is through their sales/customer service staff. This is because the sales/customer service staff are the main people in direct contact with the customers. They are the rightful agents in channeling the customers' feedback back into this department. So if they have the wrong staff positioned in this sales/customer service role, then this information would not be available. Only staff with the right personality dimensions and job involvement would be able to accomplish this task.

In summary, this study may have a strong significance and a range of benefits for banking/financial institutions. The findings of this study may be able to be used as a potential tool for the banking/financial institutions to manage the sales/customer service staff's high turn-over rate and wastage of monetary and non-monetary resources. They could also retain and grow the financial portfolios of their existing customers who would otherwise be hijacked by the competitors.

Riipinen (1996) suggested in his research that the relationship between the personality traits and work involvement varies across occupations. Meaning each and every occupational sector may have a different relationship between the personality

dimensions and job involvement. The findings of a particular sector neither apply to nor are of any significance across the board to other sectors. Bozionelos (2004) did a similar study but the respondents were confined to white-collar public sector staff. Bozionelos (2004) further emphasized that it would be wise to investigate the relationship between The Big 5 and work involvement in other organizational and occupational contexts. For example, working in a commercial organization probably has more demands and involvement than in the public sector.

As such, this study is pursued in the non-public sector i.e. commercial sector specifically in banking/financial organizations, to determine the personality role and job involvement in this area.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The key terms: Personality, Big Five Personality Dimensions and Job Involvement, used in the study are defined in a very basic term below.

1.7.1 Personality

Personality is simply defined as a set of human characteristics and tendencies that determine the differences and commonalities in the behavior of people at any point in time (Ivancevich et al., 2008). According to them, individual personality is referring to a relatively stable set of feelings and behaviors that have been significantly formed by genetic and environmental factors through years of development. It is well accepted that these personality traits have a strong influence in a person's reaction to their surroundings, may they be formal or casual.

1.7.2 The Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions

The Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions consist of extroversion, emotional stability/neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. According to Ivancevich, et al. (2008) the five (5) dimensions are simply defined as:

- *Extroversion* refers to the tendency to be sociable, gregarious, assertive, vocal and active. Individuals high in extroversion tend to enjoy talking and interacting with people.
- *Emotional stability/neuroticism* is the tendency to experience positive emotional states, such as feeling psychologically secure, calm and relaxed in any situation either at work or in their personal life.
- *Agreeableness* is associated with being courteous, forgiving, tolerant, trusting and soft-hearted.
- *Conscientiousness* is exhibited by individuals that are described as dependable, organized, thorough and responsible. Individuals of this nature tend to persevere, work hard and enjoy achieving their goals.
- *Openness to experience* reflects the extent to which an individual has broad interests and is willing to take risks.

1.7.3 Job Involvement

In simple terms, job involvement means an individual's genuine and natural commitment to their job (Kanungo, 1982). Employees who are content with their personal nature, the job that they are pursuing and the management of the organization are said to be highly involved in their job.

1.8 Organization of Remaining Chapters

It is useful to provide a brief outline on the organization of the chapters. A five chapter thesis format was employed in this study. This thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter 1 Introduces the background of the study, identifies the problem statement, research objectives and research questions, explains the significance of the study, definition of the key terms and outlines the organization of all the chapters.

Chapter 2 Presents an intensive review of literature relevant to the Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions and job involvement. It is then followed by the theoretical framework of the study and the development of hypotheses.

Chapter 3 Outlines the detailed methodology employed in obtaining the required information for analysis in this empirical study. This chapter consists of five major sections for discussion. The research design in this study is presented in the first section, followed by the population/sample in section two. Section three consists of questionnaire data, whilst data collection is explained in section four and analyses/measures in the final section five.

Chapter 4 Presents the empirical results of this study. The first section is an overview of the profile of the respondents. The sequence of presentation in the subsequent sections follows the sequence of data analysis applied in Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). This includes the goodness of measure, consisting of the

validity and reliability analysis of the questionnaire and testing of hypotheses shown with relevant tables and figures. Lastly, a summary of results is presented for hypothesis testing, whether it's accepted or rejected.

Chapter 5 Concludes the writing of this study by recapitulating the study's findings, presenting comprehensive discussions and highlighting the important implications of this study. The limitations experienced by the researcher in conducting the study will then be discussed. Finally, possible areas are suggested for future research, followed by the conclusion.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an extensive review of literature relevant to job involvement, personality and the Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions. Literature on job involvement consists of historical perspective of job involvement, job-related attitudes and job involvement as an attitude. While the literature on personality consists of historical perspective of personality, definition of personality, theories of personality including the Big Five (5) Personality Dimensions, personality and behavior, personality and attitude, and lastly, how personality can be changed. The last part of this chapter is followed by the theoretical framework of the study and the development of hypotheses.

2.2 Job Involvement

In simple terms, job involvement would mean an individual's genuine and natural commitment to their job. Employees who are content with their personal nature, the job that they are pursuing and the management of the organization are said to be highly involved in their job. However, in reality, the meaning of job involvement is far greater than this simple equation.

2.2.1 Historical Perspective of Job Involvement

The two constructs of job involvement and organizational commitment are somewhat similar to each other that they are both concerned with an employee's

identification with the work experience. However, the constructs differ in that job involvement is more closely associated with identification with one's immediate work activities whereas organizational commitment refers to one's attachment to the organization (Brown, 1996). It is possible, for example, to be very involved in a specific job but not be committed to the organization or vice versa (Blau & Boal, 1987).

Lodahl and Kejner (1965) were firmly credited with coining the term "job involvement" as an operationalized protestant work ethic and a stable attitude that developed when the value of work became part of the self-concept. Employees who were not job involved were characterized as "living off the job" and their identity/self-concept was neither determined by the type nor the quality of their work.

Further refining job involvement, Kanungo (1982) observed that prior researchers' definitions were contaminated by other constructs such as intrinsic motivation, and that oftentimes experimenters interchanged the term job with work, which is more general and non-equivalent. Kanungo (1982) argued that "job involvement is a descriptive belief that is contemporaneously caused whereas work involvement is a normative belief that is historically caused." The former was related to the need satisfying potential of one's current job, and the latter was stated to be a general conviction regarding the value of work that developed via socialization in a specific culture. Later, Paullay, Alliger, and Stone-Romero (1994) verified Kanungo's (1982) distinction between job involvement and work involvement, which they called work centrality, via confirmatory factor analysis.

On the same token, research studies over the past two decades by Sekaran and Mowday (1981) and, Sekaran (1989) have explored the construct of job involvement.

They have approached it from two different perspectives. The first perspective views job involvement as an individual difference variable, which is believed to occur when the possession of certain needs, values or personal characteristics predispose individuals to become more or less involved in their jobs. For instance, Rabinowitz and Hall (1977), in their review of literature on job involvement found that individual characteristics such as age, education, sex, tenure, need strength, level of control, and values were linked to job involvement. The second perspective views job involvement as a response to specific work situation characteristics. In other words, certain types of jobs or characteristics of the work situation influence the degree to which an individual becomes involved in their job. For example, research has demonstrated that job involvement has been related to job characteristics such as task autonomy, task significance, task identity, skill variety and feedback, and supervisory behaviours such as leader consideration, participative decision making and amount of communication (Brown, 1996).

It is clear now, with the above literature arguments presented by the respective researchers on the construct of the term “job involvement” and the real difference with “work involvement”. For the purpose of this study, the term job involvement should be understood and implied as Kanungo (1982) and the other researchers have precisely defined it.

2.2.2 Job-related Attitudes

For a long time, job-related attitudes have been the subject of research. This is mostly because industrial sociology is very preoccupied with in-plant factors. Such factors as type of occupation, size of firm, and management style have been thought to affect the attitudes of employees, and many studies have attempted to prove this, though

not altogether successfully. Much of this work has relied on attitude scaling with an attempt to standardize and measure common dimensions at the root of the way employees perceive their jobs. This knowledge is sought to be of use in comparing different groups and in contrasting attitudes characteristic of particular situations (Marshall 1998).

Future success of an organization is indicated through the attitudes of its employees (Hurst, 1995). Attitude is the psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). A person's attitudes influence that person to act in one certain way instead of another (Cooper & Croyle, 1984). Attitudes are formed on the basis of affective or emotional experiences and could be seen as cognitive structures that represent past experience (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Reflecting more deeply-held beliefs at the organizational and societal level enables attitudes to be influenced by the overall cultural context. In an organizational context such attitudes as commitment and satisfaction, which indicate whether individuals will be affectively connected to an institution or would quit (Holton & Russell, 1999; Meyer & Allen, 1997), are crucial.

Uhrbrock (1934) was involved in the actual creation of sophisticated scales for examining attitude. Later, along the same lines, Uhrbrock (1934) showed interest in research on topics such as job satisfaction, job organizational commitment and job involvement. While reviewing on work attitude, Uhrbrock (1934) concluded that the use of employee attitudinal research be very helpful in determining how to create a loyal and cooperative attitude in one's employees. Due to this widespread interest in the possible role of job in the prediction of employee efficiency and performance, Kornhauser (1933)

noted that, "Management's interest in employee attitudes arises from the belief that attitudes are important determinants of efficiency."

Just like the job satisfaction and job commitment, job involvement is also an attitude people have about their job. This is based on employees' perception of their jobs and the extent to which it would fit between the employee and the organization.

Commitment attitudes could lead to commitment behavior, which would, in turn, influence commitment attitudes (Reichers, 1985). O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) define organizational commitment as psychological attachment to the organization. Meyer and Allen (1997) differentiate between affective, continuance and normative commitment. Only affective commitment is considered an emotional reward and primary motive for remaining together (O'Malley, 2000). During the implementation of radical change requiring changes to attitudes and values, continuance and normative commitment are not enough, affective commitment is necessary.

Job satisfaction, defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job (Locke, 1976), is considered a combination of attitudes about various aspects or facets of the job, which form the overall job satisfaction construct (Spector, 1997). Researchers have broken job satisfaction up into extrinsic elements affecting behavior and intrinsic elements affecting attitudes, beliefs and values. Needs connected to extrinsic factors need to be fulfilled before one can progress upwards to intrinsic motivators (Maslow, 1954).

2.2.3 Job Involvement as an Attitude

In his work, Kanungo (1982) defined Job Involvement as a simple and distinct identification with a job or work. This definition implies that a job-involved person sees their job as an important part of their self-concept (Lawler & Hall, 1970), and that jobs define one's self-concept in a major way (Kanungo, 1982). In practicality, Job Involvement would simply mean the degree of commitment and interest one would give to their job compared to any other faculty of human life. It is the degree to which one is cognitively preoccupied with, engaged in, and concerned with one's present job (Paullay et al., 1994). Therefore, if a person has high job involvement then the job becomes part of one's identity and a high priority in life.

Job involvement involves the internalisation of values about the goodness of work or the importance of work in the worth of the individual (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). As such, individuals who display high involvement in their jobs consider their work to be a very important part of their lives and whether or not they feel good about themselves is closely related to how they perform on their jobs. In other words, for highly involved individuals, performing well on the job is important for their self esteem (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). Because of this, people who are high in job involvement genuinely care for and are concerned about their work (Kanungo, 1982).

There are numerous studies, in which Job Involvement is linked to other management concepts. Two of which are linked with absenteeism (Blau, 1985; Farrell & Stamm, 1988; Shore, Newton, & Thornton, 1990; Scott & McClellan, 1990), and to turnover or intent to leave (Baba & Jamal, 1991; Huselid & Day, 1991). One of the most well presented correlations of job involvement is job satisfaction (Shore et al., 1990;

Baba & Jamal, 1991), which states that a person with high job involvement would exhibit a strong level of job satisfaction.

For the purpose of this study, job involvement is simply construed as a significant and voluntary attitude of being attached to executing their job at work with full dedication and satisfaction. Based on that fact, job involvement is initiated naturally from within an individual. If it is there, then they would give the best performance and contribution on their job. Hence, job involvement becomes a crucial attitude of aspiration and motivation which most organizations would admire and set higher expectations of their employees accordingly.

2.3 Personality

Catell refers to personality to cognitive and behavioral patterns that show stability over time and across situations (as cited in Bozionelos, 2004). Hence, Olver and Mooradian (2003) expand by affirming that it is reasonable to expect that personality traits would influence personal values and attitudes.

2.3.1 Historical Perspective of Personality

From ancient times, people have tried to understand and explain behavior by categorizing personalities into distinct types. One of the oldest methods of typing personality that is known is called the “Enneagram” which categorizes personalities by dividing them into 9 numbered types. This method is believed to have originated from the sacred geometry developed by the Pythagoreans 4,000 years ago. It then came through the change of time and culture to the days of Plato, esoteric Judaism in the Cabalistic

traditions of the Tree of Life, and finally into modern times (“Personality Test,” 2001-2005).

The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates believed as early as 400 BC that people could be typed into four distinct categories. These were named after various bodily fluids that were believed to influence personality. They were called “Melancholic,” “Sanguine,” “Choleric,” and “Phlegmatic.” These were also based on the four elements of fire, air, water and earth. These types were referred to as “humors” and are now referred to as “Guardians,” “Artisans,” “Idealists,” and “Rationalists.” Guardians are defined as fact oriented, artisans as action oriented, idealists as ideal oriented and rationalists as theory oriented (“Personality Test,” 2001-2005).

In his model, the Swiss Psychiatrist Carl Jung outlined eight kinds of personality types based on how people processed and applied information and on whether they were more introverted or extroverted. His book, *Psychological Types*, was originally written in German in 1921 and mentioned the following categories in detail: One who uses his physical senses to acquire information is called a “sensor” and one who gathers information based on his internal mind patterns is called an “intuitor.” A person who makes decisions based on logic is known as a “thinker” and one who makes decisions based on emotion is known as a “feeler” (“Personality Test,” 2001-2005).

The history of the study of personality and development of personality typing methods continued in 1926 when a psychologist at Harvard University; William Moulton Marston came up with the DISC system, which is discussed in his book: *The Emotions of Normal People*. During World War II this system was widely used as part of the US Army’s recruitment process and later it came to be a popular commercial tool. Every

individual was thought to be a different combination of four key areas based on human behavior response. The areas were called Dominance, Influencing, Steadiness, and Compliance (“Personality Test,” 2001-2005).

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator was the next prominent method to emerge, and it is still popular today. This system was developed in 1958 by two American women, Katherine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers. It is based on the work of Carl Jung (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). The main difference between this method and that of Jung, from which it originated, is that Briggs and Myers added an additional concept of auxiliary or “back up” functions. For example, if a person is an extrovert, their back-up function which would appear when they are under stress would be introversion. It talks about 16 basic personality modes, allowing two choices for each. A few of these are: “E” and “I” for extraversion and introversion, which relate to one’s orientation. With regard to uptake, there is “S” for sensing and “N” for intuition. The options for judgment are “T” for thinking and “F” for feeling and the options for decision making are “J” for judgment and “P” for perception. They believed that such personality traits as perfectionism and leadership come out of these basic functions. This is a highly popular method. Even today it is employed by over 4 million people annually (“Personality Test,” 2001-2005).

2.3.2 Definition of Personality

The word “personality” derives from the Latin word “persona” which means “mask”. Significantly, in the theatre of the ancient Latin-speaking world, the mask was not used as a plot device to disguise the identity of a character, but rather as a convention

employed to represent or typify that character. Thus the study of personality can be understood as the study of “masks” that people wear. These are the “personas” that people project and display, but also includes the inner parts of psychological experience which we collectively call our “self” (“Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia”, 2008).

Personality is not easily defined. Basically, “personality” refers to our attempts to capture or summarize an individual’s “essence”. Personality is person-ality, the science of describing and understanding persons. Clearly, personality is a core area of study for psychology, if not the core. No two people are exactly the same - not even identical twins. Some people are anxious, some are risk-taking; some are phlegmatic, some highly-strung; some are confident, some shy; and some are quiet and some are loquacious. This issue of differences is fundamental to the study of personality (“What is Personality,” 2007).

According to Adams, 1954 (as cited in Schultz & Schultz, 1994) personality is “I”. Adams suggested that we get a good idea of what personality is by listening to what we say when we use “I”. When you say I, you are, in effect, summing up everything about yourself - your likes and dislikes, fears and virtues, strengths and weaknesses. The word “I” is what defines you as an individual, as a person separate from all others (Schultz & Schultz, 1994).

Smith and Vetter (1982) emphasized that personality is not an existing substantive entity to be searched for, but a complex construct to be developed and defined by the observer.

Personality can be defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviors in various situations (Ryckman, 2004).

A contemporary definition for personality is offered by Carver and Scheier (2000): Personality is a dynamic organization, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create a person's characteristic patterns of behavior, thoughts, and feelings. Carver and Scheier (2000) suggest that the word personality conveys a sense of consistency, internal causality, and personal distinctiveness.

2.3.3 Theories of Personality

There are many theories of personality being identified and evolved over the years. Some of which are the Trait Theories, Type Theories, Psychoanalytic Theories, Behaviorist Theories, Cognitive Theories, Humanistic Theories and lastly, the Biopsychological Theories. Critics of the personality theories claim that personality is “plastic” across time, places, moods, and situations. Changes in personality may indeed result from diet (or lack thereof), medical effects, significant events, or learning. However, most personality theories emphasize stability over fluctuation (“Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia”, 2008). Hence, for the purpose of this study the two most common and widely used personality theories of Trait and Type will be given due concentration in relation to the Big Five Personality Dimensions.

2.3.3.1 Trait Theories

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association states that personality traits are enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself that are exhibited in a wide range of social and personal contexts. Most theorists of psychology state that personality traits influence behavior, vary among people (e.g. some people are shy; some are outgoing) and remain relatively unchanged over time (“Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia”, 2008).

Personality trait models are often criticized for only describing various kinds of personalities; while failing to explain the underlying causes. However, Eysenck’s theory proposes that biological mechanisms drive traits. In addition, researchers of modern behavior genetics have demonstrated that they have a clear genetic structure. Another possible shortcoming of trait theories is that they make people settle for over simplified classifications, or even seem to give advice based on a superficial analysis of a person’s personality. In addition, trait models usually fail to give adequate mention of how specific situations can effect people’s behavior. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that traits are merely statistical generalizations and, as such, only correspond to an individual’s behavior part of the time (“Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia”, 2008).

The most common trait models bring together between three and five broad factors or dimensions. Extroversion vs. introversion is one of the least controversial dimensions and has been observed since the time of the ancient Greeks. Some of the most well-known trait theories are (“Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia”, 2008):

Gordon Allport described different kinds of traits, which he also referred to as dispositions. He classified them into four basic categories: Central traits are those which are basic to one's personality; while secondary traits are those which are more superficial. Common traits are those which are recognized by a particular culture and, therefore, vary from one culture to another. Finally, cardinal traits are those by which a person may be easily identified ("Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia", 2008).

Raymond Cattell made a two-tiered personality structure prevalent through his research in which he mentioned sixteen "primary factors" (16 Personality Factors) and five "secondary factors" ("Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia", 2008).

Hans Eysenck believed that just three traits were enough to describe human personality, those being extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Cattell and Eysenck preferred different forms of factor analysis, which created differences in their work. Eysenck used orthogonal rotation for analysis; while Cattell preferred oblique analysis. They used these different methods to analyze the factors that emerged when personality questionnaires were statistically analyzed. Building on the work of Cattell and others, the Big Five factors have the weight of a considerable amount of empirical research ("Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia", 2008).

Lewis Goldberg later proposed a personality model with five dimensions, nicknamed the "Big Five." Extroversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience make up the five dimensions. Extroversion refers to outgoingness and stimulation-oriented as opposed to quietness and stimulation avoiding. The meaning of neuroticism is emotional reactivity, proneness to negative emotions as opposed to calmness, optimism and imperterbability. Agreeableness means to be affable,