

APPROACHES TO PERSONALITY

18.1 Introduction

Having known the meaning of personality, would you like to know what type of person you are? In the previous lesson, we learnt that personality is the sum total of what the individual is. That is, starting from the external features, such as height, weight etc. up to the innermost aspects of an individual such as temperament, character, intellectual ability etc. In fact, the internal make-up of the individual is more important than the external features.

Considering this, can you identify the unique features you have in your personality and arrive at a picture that you are such type of person? In this lesson let us examine various traits and types of personality.

18.2 Objectives

After reading this lesson, you should be able to :

- list out some common personality types and traits which constitute the personality;
- explain various methods of personality assessment;
- know what type of personality you have.

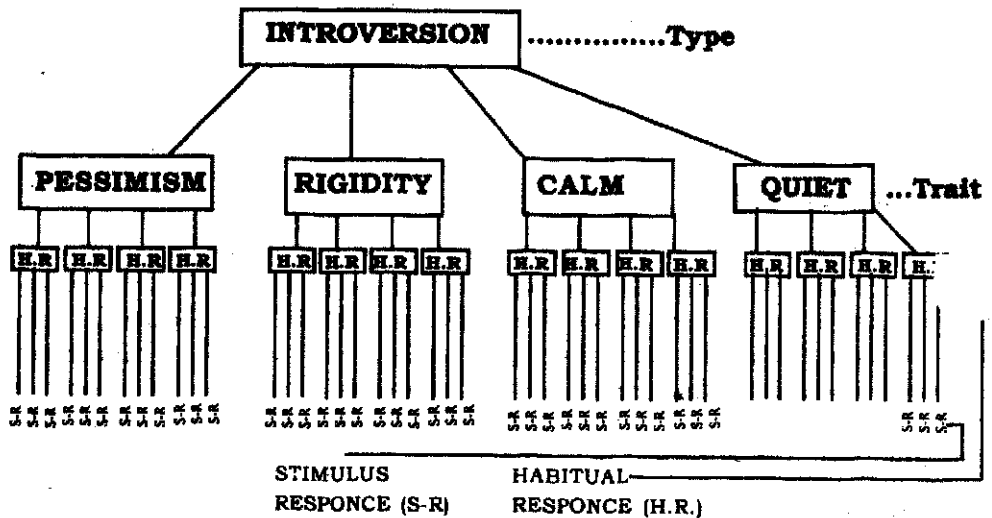
18.3 Type and Traits of Personality

As soon as you meet a person you tend to assess him/her to know what type of personality he/she has. The saying that first impression is the best impression is however, not true. Human personality is so

complex that you need to meet him/her, on some occasions and observe him/her. Repeated observation and assessment alone will enable you to know the personality. Your observation and information from others about this person may be only a personal opinion (i.e. subjective). But psychological tests will give you an objective (i.e. less subjective) assessment.

Psychological assessment gives you information on what kind (type) of personality you have. It also tells you what traits (characteristics) you possess. Traits are relatively stable and consistent characteristic that can be used to describe someone to a degree.

Individuals who are classified into various types, exhibit enduring and persistent behavioural patterns. Through these traits, various types are distinguished from each other. Constellation of several traits makes a type. The figure below illustrates this point.



From the figure above, we can infer that at first, response (R) occurs when there is a stimulus (S). Repeatedly if the same response keeps occurring to the same stimulus, it results in habit formation. Then it becomes a habitual response. If the same habitual response occurs repeatedly, that becomes a relatively permanent tendency of the individual to act in the same manner. Thus a trait emerges from several habitual responses. That trait interacts with other traits which have some common features.

Take the example of a young man in his twenties. He had aimed at becoming an engineer since school days as he was a very bright student. However, he lost his rank due to ill health. He began to believe he would never achieve his goal. All attempts from his family & friends to encourage him to re-appear for the college examinations failed. He slowly developed a negative attitude towards himself and his ability to do well. This led him to become a pessimist, looking at life with bleakness. This is the trait of pessimism which grew out of habitually

viewing opportunities and life negatively. Likewise he acquires the other traits such as rigidity, calmness, being quiet etc. All these traits namely pessimism, rigidity, being calm and quiet, interact with each other and produce introversion. Thus the individual becomes an introvert which is a type. If we look at the traits like pessimism, rigidity, calmness and being quiet, the common feature that connects all of them is the tendency to look inward and accordingly the individual becomes an introvert or a person who thinks seriously.

Like this, one can go on listing several traits from which different types emerge.

Being moody, anxious, rigid, sober, pessimistic, reserved, unsociable, quiet, passive, careful, thoughtful, peaceful, controlled, reliable, even tempered, calm etc., are traits which characterize introverts. However among introverts some are emotionally stable while some are not. Who are those emotionally stable introverts? The introverts who are emotionally stable are the ones who are careful, thoughtful, peaceful, controlled, reliable, even-tempered, calm etc. The introverts who are emotionally unstable are moody, anxious, rigid, pessimistic, unsociable, reserved etc. Thus two types of introverts are found namely

- (i) emotionally stable introverts and
- (ii) emotionally unstable introverts.

Similarly two types of extroverts are found

- (i) emotionally stable extroverts and
- (ii) emotionally unstable extroverts.

The emotionally stable extroverts will have the following traits :

- (a) sociability
- (b) leadership
- (c) talkativeness
- (d) being responsive
- (e) lively
- (f) easygoing
- (g) optimistic etc.

The emotionally unstable extraverts on the other hand will have the traits of being :

- (a) touchy
- (b) restless
- (c) active
- (d) aggressive

- (e) excitable
- (f) changeable
- (g) impulsive
- (h) outgoing, etc.

Intext Questions 18.1

1. What are traits ?

2. List five traits of emotionally stable extrovert,

Try it yourself

1. List out the traits present in your personality.
2. Analyze the personality of your dearest friend and mention the traits that you observe in her/him.

18.4 Assessment of Personality

Personality can be assessed by using the following three major techniques

- (i) Observation,
- (ii) Interview and
- (iii) Psychological tests.

First and the second technique has been dealt with in the 2nd chapter of book 1.

Every aspect of personality, can be objectively observed and one must follow a scientific procedure for the assessment of personality. Some of the responses that can be observed are given below as examples

- (i) **Walking** : the way an individual generally walks, for instance, fast or slow, upright, bent etc.
 - (ii) **Sitting** : the manner in which an individual generally sits whether on the edge of a chair or with erect spine or in a bending posture,
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- (iii) **Standing** : while standing whether the individual leans forward or stands straight like a statue or leans away
- (iv) **Talking** : whether the individual talks to the point, in a commanding voice, politely, rudely etc.

After collecting the basic details on various aspects of personality through observation, the person who is in the process of assessing the personality of an individual collects further information, clarifying certain points through an interview. This will provide a strong foundation for further systematic psychological testing for which tests are used. Generally the psychological tests which measure personality are of two types : they are

- (i) projective tests and
- (ii) inventories or questionnaires.

Projective tests are basically either totally unstructured, thereby ambiguous or semistructured (partly ambiguous). These projective tests are useful in extracting the true inner aspects of the individual. Widely used projective tests are :

- (i) Rorschach Ink Blot Test
- (ii) Thematic Apperception Test (TAT),
- (iii) Sentence Completion Test and so on.

Rorschach test is an ink blot test where there is no definite shape or form for the ink blot. The individual who is assessed, gives as many responses as possible on seeing the ink blot. By analyzing the responses, one can infer the unconscious motives, feelings, thoughts etc., which form the personality of the individual.

In Thematic Apperception Test, the individual tells a story based on what the picture contains with reference to what is happening in the scene (present), what would have happened in the past and what would happen in future.

In sentence completion test, the individual completes each and every sentence which is incomplete.

For example, "My father seldom-----," " My life in future will be -----."

Through these completions the psychologist assesses the personality.

Some of the well known and widely used inventories for personality assessment are

- (i) Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)
- (ii) 16 P.F Test,
- (iii) Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI).

Some of the individuals on whom these inventories are administered are quite likely to give desirable answers which may not be true. For example to an item "Are you a short-tempered Person?" the individual who is definitely a short tempered person may say "no". To find out whether the respondents lie, some of these inventories have a scale called lie scale. If a person scores high on the lie scale, the responses given by him/her cannot be taken as genuine.

To conclude it may be said that the assessment of personality is done through observation, then proceeding to interview and finally ending with administration of tests of personality.

Intext Questions 18.2

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words.

1. Personality is assessed through _____.
 2. The commonly used projective tests are _____ and _____.
 3. Most commonly used inventories are _____, _____, _____.
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Try it yourself

1. Observe your own behaviour and make an analysis of your personality.
2. Interview your friend to gather further information after a thorough observation for making an assessment of his/her personality.
3. Visit any nearby Institute where a qualified psychologist is employed for rendering psychological service and observe the way the psychologist assesses the human personality through observation, interview and psychological tests.

What you have learnt

- ★ Traits are formed by habitual responses.
- ★ A group of several traits makes a type.
- ★ Personality can be assessed through observation, interview and standardized psychological tests.
- ★ Tests of personality are basically of two types namely projective tests and inventories or questionaries.

Terminal questions

1. Differentiate traits from types.
 2. Critically evaluate tests of personality.
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Key to intext questions

18.1

1. Traits are relatively stable characteristics that can be used to describe a person.
2. (a) Sociability (b) Leadership (c) Lively
(d) easy going (e) Optimistic

18.2

1. Observation, Interview Psychological test
2. TAT, Sentence Completion
3. MMPI, 16 P.F., EPI.

Answers to terminal questions

1. A trait is any enduring and persistent behavioural pattern by which an individual can be distinguished from others. Lethargy, spontaneity, procrastination, pessimism can be cited as examples of traits. A type on the other is said to emerge from a cluster of traits. For instance extraversion is a type because extraversion is the common feature of optimism, spontaneity, sociability, changeability all of which are traits. Therefore anyone who has these traits in high degree is labelled as an extravert.
2. Personality can be assessed by two types of psychological tests namely (a) projective tests and (b) inventories. In the projective tests, the individual without knowing much about the objectives of testing is quite likely, to come out with "uncontaminated" or rather pure inner aspects of one's personality. There is not much scope for the individual to respond in a manner that is either predetermined or false. Personality inventories, in order to overcome this sort of social desirability, in which some individuals are quite likely to indulge, have lie scales. If the individual's lie score is high, his/her responses cannot be taken as genuine. Further probing is essential to get to the truth of one's personality.