

## Personality of business learners: Are they introverts or extraverts

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### Abstract

This article aims to discuss the dominant personality type of Arab undergraduates in the field of business then relate the characteristics of those types to the field of study. The contradicted findings of current literature about the dominant personality type in different domains urged the need for such investigations. Besides, most of the existing research examined personality traits in the business workplace, but rarely in the classroom. Therefore, this study discusses which of the personality types: introversion or extraversion is dominant among business students and explains how the underpinning features of those types aid in the business world. The present article describes personality types according to the Myers and Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Results revealed that introversion seemed to be the dominant personality type in the given setting. Other related findings are explained and discussed.

**Keywords:** Personality, business school, MBTI, adult learners

### 1. Introduction

Personality is a set of qualities that mirrors what people say and how they do what they do as a way of putting “a unique stamp on their action” (Carver & Scheier, 2012) <sup>[13]</sup>. According to Jung’s theory, each individual has a natural preference, that when used preferably, usually “succeeds better and feel more competent, natural and dynamic” (Behaz & Djoudi, 2012) <sup>[6]</sup>. Jung’s Psychological Types theory offered six types in which individuals differ. Those types are categorized into three groups; attitudes (extraversion and introversion), perceptual functions (intuition and sensing), and judgmental functions (thinking and feeling). Extraversion and introversion attitudes classify individuals’ mindset in the way of dealing with others. For instance, an extravert is outgoing, concerned about people and environment; an introvert, however, is more internally focused.

An extravert is “a person whose conscious interests and energies are more often directed outwards other people and events than towards the person themselves and their own inner experience”, while an introvert is seen as “a person who tends to avoid social contact with others and is often preoccupied with his or her inner feelings, thoughts, and experiences” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002) <sup>[33]</sup>. Contrary to the common misconception, introversion is not allied with psychological problems, anti-social personality disorder, or social phobia (Helgoe, 2013; Pennington, 2012) <sup>[17, 30]</sup>, neither does this mean someone is insane or criminal (Cain, 2012) <sup>[11]</sup>. Nevertheless, introverts are commonly sensitive, in fact, 70% of highly sensitive people tend to be introverted and they are less expected to be narcissistic (Dembling, 2012) <sup>[15]</sup>

Usually, people confuse shyness with introversion; shyness is more a fear of social judgement while introversion as noted previously, emphasis on the ‘me time’ to recharge. Introverts become immersed in their inner world and run the risk of losing touch with their surroundings or their outer world. They also tend to be introspective and keep their social circle limited (Cain, 2012) <sup>[11]</sup>.

Extraversion on the other side is the most widely researched construct in personality psychology. Extraversion is associated

with social engagement, positive emotion, and life satisfaction (Ashton *et al.*, 2002; John & Srivastava, 1999) <sup>[4, 21]</sup>. An extravert prefers getting energy from lively involvement in events and engaging in different activities moving from one action to another. Extraverts like to be around people and to energize other people. Generally, an extravert is seen as outgoing or as a ‘people person’ who feels comfortable in groups and like working in them, social and someone who acts before thinking (Martin, 2015) <sup>[24]</sup>

Regarding perceiving preferences, an intuitive person concentrates on meaning rather than details. While a sensing individual observes information realistically and accurately. The Judgment or understanding of perceived stimuli is embodied in two ways; thinking individuals are likely to be impersonal, logical and analytical, whereas feeling people ground more on values than logic (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1997) <sup>[36]</sup>

According to Myers-Briggs and Myers (1980) introverts and extraverts complete each other, yet they are quite different. Cain (2013) <sup>[11]</sup> claimed that “the most effective teams are composed of a healthy mix of introverts and extraverts” (p. 93). An introvert is more subjective, reserved, questioning, and someone who lives when he/she understands. An extravert, on the other hand, is more objective, relaxed, comfortable, and someone who lives to understand. In general, introverts seek to understand the meaning while extraverts seek sensory stimulation (Carnevale, 2006) <sup>[12]</sup>

In business education, even though, technology improved learning environments and hence, many colleges and universities have introduced programs to support the use of laptop computers in the classroom (Pennington, 2012) <sup>[30]</sup>. However, classroom interaction is still an essential aspect to ensure an effective learning and better outcomes. Most business schools emphasize on scientific approaches, they very slightly support the areas of up-to-date science that most likely embrace the maximum aptitude for business education: cognitive science and neuroscience. Where innovative researchers use magnetic resonance imaging technology to examine brain’s behaviour when making economic decisions,

taking into consideration other factors such as gender differences (Bennis & O' Toole, 2005)<sup>[7]</sup>

Since behaviour follows individual's personality, it is acceptable to assume that individual differences in business or entrepreneurship functions as an individual's personality—despite the fact of whether that individual is a business owner, manager, student or employee (Ahmetoglu *et al*, 2011; Kuratko, 2007)<sup>[2, 22]</sup>. Economic theory can be changed fundamentally if it follows personality psychology. For instance, a recent work on multidimensional screening added personality skills to traditional screening and signalling models and produced an essential reformulation of signalling theory (Araujo *et al*, 2007)<sup>[3]</sup>

Hence, various studies mentioned the role of personality in the different domains of the business world. Based on a comparability of four theoretically similar studies (Vienna Entrepreneurship Studies), Frank *et al* (2007)<sup>[16]</sup> investigates the changing roles of personality aspects in business start-up intentions, in start-up success and in business success. Their results proposed that principally for the growth of business start-up intentions it is crucial to endorse personality characteristics in schools and universities.

Another research by Järnlström (2000)<sup>[20]</sup> aimed to study the relationship between the personality and career expectations of 533 Finnish business students. Using both the Myers and Briggs Type Indicator and Schein's career orientation framework. Her results reported that Business students' career expectations mostly belonged to the Technical Competence (26%), Managerial Competence (17%) and Independence (14%) career anchors.

Concerning vocational preference, Holland (1966)<sup>[18]</sup> proposed the theory of career choice which suggests that an individual who owns an accurate perception of self and reality picks out a matching environment with his or her own personal orientation. Based on the common stereotypes of business vocations, “the accountant is conservative, restrained, conscientious, and in control of his or her personal behaviour, but not actively aware of the surrounding social cues. People in the marketing and sales professions are likely to be extroverted and outgoing and to have a chameleon-like ability to adapt their behaviour to suit their present environment and interactions. Management information professionals often are assumed to be uninhibited and easy going individuals who lack both a concern for self-presentation and a general awareness of social cues” (Noël *et al*, 2003)<sup>[29]</sup>

Even though, Extraversion has been shown to be important for success in salespeople (Vinchur *et al*, 1998)<sup>[39]</sup>. Helgoe (2013)<sup>[17]</sup> claimed that, especially in Japan, an introverted businessperson is more likely to be noticed than a “fast talker” (pp.7). As for Arabs, limited research included their common personality types. In fact, to the researcher's knowledge, only one initiative study has been done by Ayoubi and Ustwani (2014)<sup>[5]</sup>. Their study aimed to investigate the relationship between university student's psychological types (as determined by MBTI) and the extent of their enthusiasm measured by their level of “like” to the field of study, and students' grade point average (GPA). Their findings showed an estimated extraversion dominance in a sample of 89 Syrian undergraduates.

Although much leftover to be discovered, a systematic empirical and theoretical research on personality is prosperous

and very fruitful for economics. Personality qualities predict socioeconomic success and a deep understanding of personality types assures the enrichment of economic theory.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1 Participant and Setting

Probability sampling is the most common sampling technique since it provides a precise target population and an accurate level of variations in population, therefore, much of research biases is avoided (Aaker, 2004)<sup>[1]</sup>. A simple random (probability) sampling was used for this research where students had an equal chance of selection. Participants were 50 male undergraduates in the second year in Business Administration College at Taibah University, Madinah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### 2.2 Material

In this research, an Arabic version of MBTI Form M questionnaire has been adopted for a deeper insight into undergraduate's personality types. This study implements the latest version of MBTI Form (M) that contains 93 forced-choice items. Those items are framed either as words or statements where subjects have to take a decision about.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a self-report, forced-choice questionnaire that measures personality according to Carl Jung typologies (Salkind, 2006)<sup>[35]</sup>. The MBTI was issued as a research measurement by the Educational Testing Service in 1962. Since then MBTI promises to afford a universal language aiming to cherish interpersonal differences.

Today, the MBTI is universally applied in counselling, education, organizations, and spiritual development. In organizations, for instance, MBTI is applied for team building, leadership development, communication advancement and career development. Although the related issues of translation and cultural effect affected the use of MBTI and multicultural applications are in the initial stages, yet, the Jungian types are remarkably alike worldwide.

MBTI assesses personality in four separate scales; Extraversion versus Introversion, Sensing versus Intuition, Thinking versus Feeling and Judging versus Perceiving (Rushton *et al*, 2007)<sup>[33]</sup>. The MBTI four-letter formula (type dynamics) offers a short description of the correlation of the four processes. The first and the last letters (E/I, J/P) represent the attitudes and orientations that involve interaction with the world. The two middle letters (NT, NF, ST, and SF) are called function pairs as they represent the mental functions based on brain's work (The Myers and Briggs Foundation)<sup>[38]</sup>.

A number of educators and researchers doubted the MBTI reliability (Stricker & Ross, 1962; Howes & Carskadon, 1979; McCarley & Carskadon, 1983; Clark & Estes, 2002 and Pittenger, 2005)<sup>[38, 19, 25, 14, 31]</sup>. However, most of the criticism targeted the earlier versions of MBTI. For the most part of the addressed issue is that MBTI users may not have experienced other personality assessments to estimate their reliability. MBTI Form M consistency is displayed through the test-retest reliabilities which imply the improvement from the former (Form G). Wheeler (2001)<sup>[40]</sup> described in which way MBTI form M has been improved.

## 3. Results & Discussion

In order to determine the dominant personality type of the

Arab business undergraduates, a descriptive analysis was run. The power of descriptive statistics is its capacity to collect, organize and compare huge amounts of data in a more handy form. Also, descriptive statistics provide fairly direct process that describes and summarizes. However, descriptive statistics does not correlate data or create any kind of statistical modelling relationship among multiple variables as inferential statistics that might lead to inferred conclusions or a hypothesis.

Generally, descriptive statistics apply systematic observations of central tendency. This kind of statistics attracts the mind in innovative ways of thinking about phenomena and information (Philips, 2000)<sup>[32]</sup>.

Statistics showed that introversion (top of the table) was observed to be the dominant personality type, i.e. a total of 60% of the participants compared to 40% who are extraverts.

**Table 1:** Distribution of personality types

Personality Type	Percent (%)
INFJ	2.0
ISFJ	2.0
ISTJ	12.0
INTP	6.0
INFP	10.0
ISFP	16.0
ISTP	12.0
ENFP	14.0
ESFP	8.0
ESTP	4.0
ENTJ	2.0
ENFJ	2.0
ESFJ	8.0
ESTJ	2.0
Total = 14	100

Of the introverts, the Introverted-Sensing-Feeling-Perceiving (ISFP) type represented the most number, i.e. eight out of 30. Of the extravert the Extraverted-iNtuitive-Feeling-Perceiving (ENFP) type comprised the most number, i.e. seven out of 18. According to Myers and Briggs (1962)<sup>[28]</sup> the MBTI comprise 16 diverse personality types. As can be seen from the Table above, only 14 personality types are present in the sample of the present study. From the data in the table, the INTJ and ENTP types are missing from the L1 Arabic participants. However, these types are considered to comprise a minority as explains Lawrence & Martin (2001)<sup>[23]</sup> in the following Table.

**Table 2:** Frequency of the sixteen personality types in the United States population

	Total		ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
E	45-53%	49%	11-14%	9-14%	1-3%	2-4%
I	47-55%	50.7%	11.16%	13.8%	1.5%	2.1%
			ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
S	66-74%	73%	4-6%	5-9%	4-5%	3-5%
N	26-34%	26%	5.4%	8.8%	4.4%	3.3%
			ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
T	40-50%	40.2%	4-5%	4-9%	6-8%	2-5%
F	50-60%	59.8%	4.3%	8.5%	8.1%	3.2%
			ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
J	54-60%	54.1%	8-12%	9-13%	2-5%	2-5%
P	40-46%	45.9%	8.7%	12.3	2.5%	1.8%

Table 2 shows that the most common types are ISFJ 13.8%,

ESFJ 12.3% and ISTJ 11.6%, Whereas, ENFJ, ENTJ, INTJ and ENTP types are less common as they represent only 3.3% or less. Further, the ‘Total’ section (left side of the table) shows the distribution alongside the four dichotomies i.e. E-I, S-N, T-F, J-P. As can be seen, the data suggest that introverted individuals are more frequent than extraverted individuals, sensing individuals are more prevalent in the population than those who prefer intuition, feeling individuals are more familiar than thinking people and judging individuals are more common than those who prefer perceiving. Lawrence and Martin (2001), results are shown to be true in the present research. As mentioned above, introversion was the dominant type over extraversion. Sensing types are more prevalent (64%) than intuition types (36%). Also, feeling types are more common (62%) than thinking types (38%). However, perceiving types are more prevalent (70%) than judging types (30%) in the present study. Until recently, there has been a common misconception that extraverted personality types constitute a majority, and introverted types make up only one-third of the population.

Even though extraversion seems to be the preferred personality type in many domains in different countries such as America where extraversion is the admired personality type and introverts mostly are seen as antisocial, depressed and quiet. Introversion is still considered as a preferred type in other parts of the world especially in Asian cultures (Helgoe, 2013)<sup>[17]</sup>.

The present findings indicate that introverted types outnumbered extraverted types, which in return doubt the common conception that extraversion is more likely to stand out in the business domain. Even more, some personality experts consider holding extraversion qualities build up a successful business leaders. Somehow, this seems to be true as extraverts’ powerful communicative skills aids in effortlessly built relationships since they are labelled as very social individuals. However, introverted qualities are vital as well in the business world. Introverts beat extroverts in their independence, steadiness and the way they spend more time listening than speaking.

Bernstein (2015)<sup>[8]</sup> reported in The Wall Street Journal that various entrepreneurs and CEOs are considered as introverts or own substantial introvert qualities such as Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft, Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple, Larry Page, co-founder of Google, Mark Zuckerberg, co-founder of Facebook, Marissa Mayer, current president and CEO of Yahoo, and Warren Buffett, chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway.

3.1 Features of dominant MBTI types

Of the introverts and according to Myers *et al* (1998)<sup>[26]</sup>, an ISFP is easy-going, less assertive, among the types least likely to stay in college but expected to value a work environment which provides security, clear and simple instructions, and no extra work hours. ISFPs represent a minority among MBA students and small business owners but commonly found in occupations related to health care, business, and law enforcement. Whereas, an ISTJ is calm, stable, steady, cautious, and conventional. ISTJ types considered as one among four highest types in college GPA. ISTJs are more likely to be bank officers, financial managers, MBA students, and small business owners, precisely, in management, administration, law enforcement, and accounting. While, an ISTP is seen as critical, detached, guarded, independent, and

resourceful. Yet, considered among the least likely types to complete. On a personal level, ISTPs value self-sufficiency at college; value stability at work, security, independence, and achievement. ISTPs are mostly found in skilled trades, technical fields, agriculture, law enforcement, and military occupations.

Of the extroverts and based on Myers *et al* (1998) [26], ENFP are seen as enthusiastic, outgoing, spontaneous, changeable, impulsive, energetic, and one of the types that cope well with stress. Regarded by psychologists as among most likely of all types to have trouble in school. Yet, academically tend to be among talented elementary school students. Personally, ENFPs value home and family, friendships, creativity, learning, and community service. ENFPs usually found in counselling, teaching, religion, and arts careers. ESFPs on the other side, are seen as changeable, energetic, forceful, initiating, and resourceful. They are likely to chase authority in education rather than expressing intellectual curiosity and favor hands-on learning. ESFPs are among the most likely types to stay in college. On a personal level, ESFPs value home/family, health, friendships, financial security, and spirituality. They are more likely to occupy in health care, teaching, coaching, and child care jobs.

#### 4. Conclusions

This article aimed to discuss the dominant personality types of Arab undergraduates in the field of business then relate the characteristics of those types to the field of study. Contrary to the common misconception, the present findings showed that introverts outnumbered extraverts in a business classroom. However, and since the number and gender of participants were narrowed in the current research due to time and financial constraints, further research is suggested where a large, diverse sample is encountered.

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