CPSQ

Cambridge
Personal Styles Questionnaire

How the Big Five personality traits in CPSQ increase its potential to predict academic and work outcomes

A literature-based approach

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Big Five in CPSQ

Personality refers to the dispositions or preferences in how we tend to think, feel and behave. Over several decades of research, five core factors have emerged that can be used to describe personality characteristics or traits – the "Big Five": Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Extraversion. The Big Five categorises a myriad of behaviours into these five major character traits. It offers a common language that people can use to understand themselves and others.

The early origins of the Big Five lie with Francis Galton's 1884 "Measurement of character" paper, which proposed that any important individual differences between people would over centuries have become encoded in language. During the 1930s and 40s various surveys of language were made in an attempt to classify thousands of personality descriptors. From this work five factors began to take shape, but it was not until the 1960s and the availability of computer-powered statistical techniques that real progress was made. Since then large numbers of people globally have rated themselves or others against personality trait descriptors. The analyses of these results led to a near consensus that five factors could consistently and universally account for individual differences in personality.

The Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire (CPSQ) assesses everyday behaviours that map to the five big traits. The aim of this document is to demonstrate through research evidence that the application of the Big Five to CPSQ boosts its ability to predict both academic and workplace performance.

The Big Five is used to structure this document and within each of the five sections, evidence is presented from two sources: the existing research literature, and Cambridge Assessment's own studies using various questionnaires including CPSQ.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness describes individuals who are achievement-striving, self-disciplined, hard-working, ordered, careful and reliable (Costa and McCrae, 1992a). Given their positive attributes it is no surprise that the conscientious tend to act in accordance with a range of effective study and workplace competencies, e.g. self-directed study and self-management. Conscientiousness also taps into the concept of "conscience" which is essentially about observing social rules and meeting moral obligations.

Academic outcomes

Conscientiousness has been consistently found to predict academic outcomes and has been popularised in education and beyond as the concept of "grit", which refers to *aspiration* and *perspiration* (Duckworth et al., 2007). These two conscientious characteristics can be translated into the Big Five's language of achievement-striving (e.g. a need to achieve high standards) and self-discipline (e.g. initiating action, focused attention and perseverance). Both of these qualities emerged as important drivers of academic performance from O'Connor & Paunonen's (2007) post-secondary education meta-analysis (analysis of many research results). They concluded that overall Conscientiousness demonstrated useful and good associations with academic success. They proposed that one reason for this result is that higher education places an emphasis on continuous assessment and this favours motivational factors and personality characteristics as performance enablers.

In secondary education there is growing evidence that prior academic attainment is not the only predictor of examination performance at school. Before the development of CPSQ, Cambridge Assessment conducted a large-scale research study using the examination results of over 1,900 students in British secondary education (aged 14–16 years), to investigate the relationship between personality traits and academic achievement. The result was that self-motivation (drive and determination), a characteristic which draws on many positive aspects of conscientiousness, along with low impulsivity (reflective and less likely to give in to urges) were significant predictors of achievement for nearly all science subjects (Vidal Rodeiro et al., 2009). Impulsivity has a negative relationship to conscientiousness (Costa and McCrae, 1992a). Those with a propensity to act in the moment are going to be distractible and less able to stay on task. Likewise, a study of undergraduates discovered that students who scored significantly higher on conscientiousness were better able to focus on an academic task (through self-discipline) and acquired more information (Kelly, 2001).

In our study, personality traits predicted science subject results after taking into account previous academic attainment. It appears that for some, aspects of conscientiousness can compensate for lower cognitive ability. This trait has been shown to predict college grades independently of an individual's high school results and SAT scores (Noftle & Robins, 2007). Its self-discipline facet out-does IQ in predicting the academic performance of adolescents (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). One rationale for these types of result is that cognitive ability predicts what a person

can do, whereas personality usually reflects what they *will do* (Furham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2004).

Successful study at all levels is enhanced by self-regulated learning which, in practice, involves individuals taking charge of their own learning agenda; monitoring, evaluating and adapting approaches as necessary (Zimmerman,1986). In education, self-regulated learning is usually converted into the more popular concepts of "independent learning" or "self-directed study". A survey Cambridge Assessment conducted of 633 university lecturers found that most think self-directed study poses a challenge for new undergraduates (Suto, 2012). Conscientiousness traits influence attitudes and habits that facilitate self-directed study, for instance, motivation to achieve, goal-setting, regular study sessions, time management, self-testing, review of material, etc. (Credé & Kuncel, 2008). Study habits are specific behavioural patterns that are possible to develop, even though personality traits tend to be stable. These habits can be acquired through increased self-awareness which in turn, enhances self-control over what we do and motivates readiness for personal change (Zimmerman, 2001). Personality assessment can identify those that need help because we know from prior research that low scorers on conscientiousness are naturally less likely to develop productive study habits and therefore, could benefit from study skill interventions.

The power of conscientiousness to help students transition from education to work readiness can be clearly seen in vocational courses. A study of medical school students found that the validity of conscientiousness as a predictor of grade point averages increased with each course year. By year seven, its capacity to predict attainment was on a par with that of cognitive ability measures (Lievens et al., 2009). One hypothesis is that as medical training and assessment methods (e.g. OSCEs[1], ward reports) become more aligned with workplace requirements, the importance of this trait to professional performance increases.

Unpublished research using CPSQ as the assessment of personality shows that undergraduate nurses with higher scores for conscientiousness on its scales of Self-Discipline and Organisation (a preference for order and planning) typically performed better academically (Cheung, 2016). Also, achievement-focused (striving) nursing students dedicated more hours to hospital placements than their less aspirational peers (Baron & Dale, 2015). Conversely, lower conscientiousness scores were linked to a risk of dropout; nursing students who left their course after a year were less achievement-focused and organised in their approach to their studies, and they were also less resilient (Cheung, 2016).

Work outcomes

Conscientiousness is recognised as a significant predictor of job performance for a wide range of professions (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Dudley et al., 2006). Conscientious employees are typically industrious, reliable, careful, punctual and orderly in their approach to work (Roberts et al., 2004). They also appear to make more effective leaders (DeRue et al., 2011; Judge et al., 2002). A study of US Army officers revealed that conscientiousness had a direct positive

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[1] Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (practical tests)

effect on leader performance assessed by situational judgement testing ("real-world" scenario tests) and interviews. It was also associated with a stronger motivation to lead others. (Van Iddekinge et al., 2009).

The success of conscientious individuals appears in part due to their enhanced performance motivation. Conscientious individuals set more goals, tend to be confident in their competence to perform and expect that effort will lead to success (Judge & Ilies, 2002). Taken together, these performance motivators represent a positive pattern of behaviours and beliefs that have been found to initiate and sustain superior performance.

Conscience is a facet of conscientiousness and, at work, a sense of duty is demonstrated through conscientious actions sometimes called Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). OCB is about taking on extra responsibility and doing the right thing without necessarily expecting a reward e.g. volunteering, following rules and procedures, supporting others, endorsing or defending the organisation and going the "extra mile" to get things done (e.g. Borman et al., 2001; Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Organ & Ryan, 1995).

Conversely, counterproductive work behaviours such as theft, disciplinary problems and rule-breaking are associated with low scores on conscientiousness (Salgado, 2002), as is absenteeism (Judge et al., 1997). In education, self-reported scholastic cheating correlated with low conscientiousness (Williams et al., 2010).

Emotional Stability

Emotional stability refers to a capacity to cope with stress and to respond with resilience and optimism when faced with challenges, change, and uncertainty (e.g. Eschleman et al., 2010; Avey et al., 2008, 2011). People low on emotional resources tend to perceive events as threatening or negative (Larsen & Ketelaar, 1991; Hemenover & Dienstbier, 1996) and are more sensitive to stressors (Moyle, 1995). They tend to use less effective coping strategies, experience self-blame, and react quickly with hostility (McCrae & Costa, 1986).

Academic outcomes

A Cambridge Assessment research study into the influence on academic achievement of Emotional Intelligence (EI) traits found that being tuned into emotions had a negative impact on GCSE Maths attainment for pupils. The researchers hypothesised that emotions might be interfering with logical reasoning ability (Vidal Rodeiro et al., 2009). Notably, a nursing study reported a similar result: emotional appraisal reduced healthcare quality (Quoidbach & Hansenne, 2009). Both studies suggest that a hypersensitivity to emotion might hinder task performance. In the Cambridge Assessment study with schools, individuals with greater emotional self-control (emotional regulation, stress management and low impulsivity) performed better in most science subjects. Emotionally perceptive and receptive people have been shown to respond worse to stress than others (Ciarrochi et al., 2002), indicating that it is emotional stability rather than sensitivity that has a

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positive impact. Alternatively, while emotional openness is likely to be helpful especially in interpersonal relations, after a certain point, emotional input could become overwhelming.

Anxieties about tests are one way in which unhelpful emotions can impair academic performance. In a sample of 388 US and UK students attending university, researchers demonstrated that test anxiety was largely a product of stress and general anxiety, rather than negative self-evaluations of ability (Charmorro-Premuzic et al., 2008). The practical implication here is that it may be helpful to focus interventions on students who have a predisposition towards anxiety and are less able to cope with stressors.

According to Martin (2002, p. 34) "Although motivation is critical to academic success, academic gains that students make can be lost if they are not resilient to setback, study pressure, and stress in the school setting." Those more likely to be academically resilient can be predicted using a combination of conscientious characteristics such as persistence and planning, but also emotional resources of self-control and low anxiety, along with academic self-belief. To date, research findings show that academic resilience promotes school enjoyment, class participation and self-esteem (Martin & Marsh, 2006). On a similar theme, a small pilot study using CPSQ as the personality assessment, found that nursing students who dropped out after the first year, stating academic difficulties as the reason, tended to have low scores on CPSQ's Resilience dimension (Cheung, 2016).

Resilience can be buffered through mechanisms such as social support and help-seeking. However, students' mindsets can also promote resilience. Yeager and Dweck (2012) found that adolescents who believed, or had been taught, that personal characteristics can change showed increased resilience and less aggressive/stressed reactions to social adversity, e.g. bullying, conflict, social exclusion. Developing a change or "growth mindset" boosted this groups' resilience because they believed they could adapt their behaviour to cope with challenging situations, and this raised their expectations about future success.

Work outcomes

The opposite of emotional stability is sometimes termed "neuroticism" in the research literature, and it is often implicated in occupational stress and burnout. On entrance to medical school, a large cohort of students was assessed on the Big Five and followed over five to twelve years. It was found that high student neuroticism scores could predict their later stress, burnout and career dissatisfaction as doctors, while it was judged that the work environment for both satisfied and dissatisfied doctors was roughly equal in terms of challenge and pressure (McManus et al., 2004).

Due to the unique interpersonal stressors experienced by health and social care professionals, prolonged stress exposure can result in burnout, e.g. emotional, cognitive or physical exhaustion, which can result in a loss of concern, sympathy or respect for patients and clients (Maslach & Pines, 1977). Neuroticism is a risk factor for three burnout phenomena: emotional exhaustion, de-personalisation of others and feelings of incompetence and lack of achievement (Swider & Zimmerman,

2010). Previously good carers could struggle and disengage when their internal resources are low, and burnout is a consequence of unremitting work pressure.

Emotional stability itself is an inner resource that protects one's commitment to the job, team and task performance, particularly in emotionally demanding professions. A large study with over a thousand Taiwanese nurses reported that emotional stability was the best personality predictor of intent to stay with their current hospital (Chen et al., 2016). A study of 23 nursing teams found that a factor of emotional regulation (optimism and mood regulation) increased team cohesion and quality of care. The higher the score of the most emotionally regulated member of a team, the greater the rated quality of healthcare for the whole unit. The result implies that there may be individuals who can act as "an 'emotion manager' who pulls the team up" by creating a positive work atmosphere (Quoidbach & Hansenne, 2009, p. 27).

In some professions being able to maintain your composure, and control anger and frustration is an essential job competency. People who are prone to negative emotional states are also likely to experience others, including hostility and anger (Costa and McCrae, 1992b). Those who tend by disposition to react with anger are more easily provoked because they perceive situations as frustrating (Martin & Dahlen, 2004; Szasz et al., 2011) and, depending on events, may express their anger in the workplace (Hershcovis et al., 2007).

A cross-industry study reported that emotional stability protected performance in professions benefiting from patience and emotional control, e.g. dentistry, air-traffic control and teaching (Smithikrai, 2007). Controlling emotional reactions when provoked is a policing competency, and higher levels of emotional stability are associated with professional effectiveness (Barrick & Mount, 1991). A similar result has been found in military occupations (Salgado, 1998).

Openness to Experience

Open individuals are typically curious, imaginative, creative and willing to consider novel ideas. It is sometimes called "Intellect" or "Openness to Ideas", the tendency to seek out and explore complex cognitive material (Ostendorf and Angleitner, 1994); a behavioural pattern which implies intelligence to the observer. Indeed, measures of Openness show small to modest correlations with tests of cognitive ability, in particular with those of divergent thinking, e.g. creative, fluid and flexible thinking (McCrae, 1987). However, this personality trait, which is often self-reported, is best used as a guide to likely engagement with learning and thinking style preference.

Academic outcomes

Encouraging a willingness to investigate and explore the environment is arguably what a good education is about — and it works; open styles of thinking and behaving have been found to promote academic performance. Poropat's (2009) analysis of multiple research studies, in which the total sample consisted of more than 70,000 students in secondary and post-secondary education, established that academic performance correlated significantly with openness to experience. However, in the

same study, conscientiousness had the strongest relationship with achievement. These two traits appear to work in a complementary partnership. Openness engages interest, and conscientiousness delivers the willingness to perform. Together they encourage what is called a "deep learning style", a highly engaged and intrinsically motivated (learning for its own sake) approach to learning. This style facilitates a deeper understanding of subjects and as a consequence, predicts excellent academic performance (e.g. Duff et al., 2004; Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2008).

Educational progression is assisted by an open mindset. For a sample of candidates who took the BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) for entrance to undergraduate medicine, higher test scores were related to higher self-reported Active Enquiry scores (McElwee, 2013). Active Enquiry is the CPSQ equivalent of intellectual curiosity: a need to seek out and explore complex stimuli, which is arguably an essential mindset for studying biomedical science.

Once in higher education, open individuals appear to be comfortable with and even thrive academically when reflective learning is part of a course (Komarraju et al., 2011). Many courses incorporate reflective learning practices in coursework or e-portfolio requirements. A study with a small group of speech and language therapists found that CPSQ measured openness to experience was associated with higher coursework marks (Baron & Dale, 2015). A study of over a thousand university students across four faculties found a similar result with a positive connection between openness and superior coursework marks (Furnham et al., 2013).

Work outcomes

Openness to experience is not always a good predictor of overall job performance as its benefits depend on the activity and role (Furnham, 2008). Open employees are more likely to benefit from training programmes (Dollinger & Orf, 1991). Doctors strong on this trait receive better patient satisfaction ratings (Duberstein et al., 2007). It can be hypothesized that medical personnel with high levels of openness show a keenness to investigate and solve causes of illnesses, and it is their scientific curiosity that results in appraisals of superior care.

Openness is linked to imagination and fantasy, thought processes that can lead to creative output. Advertising and design creatives score higher on this trait than non-creative professionals (Gelade, 1997). An interesting meta-analysis (analysis of many research results) performed by Feist (1998) found that openness to experience was a shared characteristic of creative scientists and artists, compared to non-creative scientists and non-artists.

Creative individuals are open to interesting ideas, but inventors take the next step and "*see the relevance of interconnected ideas*" (Furhnam, 2008, p. 266). There may be creative-oriented personalities, but anyone has the potential to contribute to innovation as it involves a range of activities. In this regard, a study of service innovation in the hotel industry reported the importance of a proactive personality, cooperativeness, risk-taking and commitment to product development, but notably, in the context of this trait, an enjoyment of thinking up new ideas (Chen, 2011).

At management level, openness as a personality trait contributes to effective leadership and company performance. Open managers generate ideas and are willing to consider the ideas of others: an approach to business problem-solving that is viewed as assisting group success (Colbert et al., 2012). A ground-breaking study by Peterson et al. (2003) suggests that CEO personality influences board level dynamics and financial performance. CEOs described as open to experience from archival sources were perceived to be strong leaders, who encouraged top management team intellectual flexibility and responsible risk-taking. These two traits, along with optimism and collaboration among team members were associated with income growth, at least for large US companies. The sample size of 17 CEOs is small but, intriguingly, this study indicates a possible link between leader personality and organisational performance.

Agreeableness

Agreeableness is the quintessential "getting along with people" trait being associated with a range of positive social attitudes and behaviours such as altruism, cooperation, trust, modesty, tender-mindedness and straightforwardness (Costa & McCrae, 1992a). However, there are virtues of scoring towards the opposite end of the Agreeableness scale as tough-minded individuals are less likely to be swayed by their feelings and influenced by others (Lord, 2007).

Academic outcomes

Agreeableness facilitates interpersonal relations, whereas study behaviours that boost academic achievement are better categorised under conscientiousness. However, some researchers have found a positive link between agreeableness and academic performance, albeit mainly with undergraduate samples (e.g. Furnham et al., 2013; Poropat, 2009), while others have not established a consistent relationship (e.g. Noftle & Robins, 2007; O'Connor & Paunonen, 2007).

Higher education courses that specifically train students in, and reward them for, excellent interpersonal skills and caring values typically demonstrate a relationship between academic outcomes and agreeable styles of behaviour. Lievens et al., (2009) established that the dimensions of altruism, trust and straightforwardness predicted grade point averages for medical students in their fifth and final year. A small pilot study with midwives found that higher scores on CPSQ's agreeableness-themed scales of Helping and Cooperation were associated with higher course module scores (Baron & Dale, 2015). Agreeable behaviours are the outward manifestation of prosocial values such as "Benevolence", or concern for the welfare of others (Parks-Leduc et al., 2015). A study with college students found that individuals who scored highly on agreeableness tended to report stronger prosocial values. Together, high agreeableness scores and strong prosocial values predicted these individuals' degree of motivation to engage in volunteering work (Carlo et al., 2005).

A Cambridge Assessment study into Emotional Intelligence traits reported that empathy and a relationship focus both contributed to the prediction of achievement

in science subjects at school – but only for less able students (Vidal Rodeiro et al., 2009). It is possible that personal qualities that cultivate good relations enable agreeable individuals to elicit more help with their studies, and through this assistance they obtain better marks than disagreeable peers (Furnham et al., 2013). Getting along with people to access social support has another advantage: it builds personal resources to protect students from academic stress when demands are high (Wilks, 2008).

Work outcomes

Cooperative, considerate and helpful individuals maintain good working relations with colleagues and obtain higher supervisor performance ratings (Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). Agreeableness can sometimes out-perform conscientiousness as a success factor. For instance, individuals with high conscientiousness but low agreeableness were rated as less effective in jobs requiring frequent interaction with others (Witt et al., 2002).

When people work in teams, agreeableness facilitates group cohesion. Teams with more agreeable members perform better and experience lower levels of team conflict (Barrick et al., 1998). An analysis of numerous research studies by Peeters et al. (2006) concluded that teams whose members score both highly and similarly on agreeableness perform the best. Agreeable individuals tend to think of their teammates as helpful. Doctors who described their colleagues as receptive and supportive scored more highly on agreeableness ((McManus et al., 2004). In interpersonal conflict situations, agreeable individuals are more willing to seek a compromise through mutual problem solving, and are mindful that others need a payoff or "win", too (Antonioni, 1998).

At times, difficult decisions need to be made and in such situations, those who value getting along with others are less likely to emerge as leaders. Highly agreeable individuals try to avoid potential conflict situations; they shy away from difficult conversations and typically show deference to others (Antonioni, 1998). Judge et al. (2002) found little correlation between agreeableness and being considered "leader like".

However, the evolving role of leadership away from a single individual in charge towards shared leadership (shared across team members) and transformational leadership (promoting personal and team empowerment), means that agreeableness predisposes managers towards considerate behaviours that contribute to new styles of leadership (e.g. Chen & Zaccaro, 2013; DeRue et al., 2011). Ethical leaders, who model and promote high standards of conduct and fairness, display a pattern of agreeableness and conscientiousness (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009; Xu et al., 2011). Top management teams led by a CEO rated high in Agreeableness were more likely to demonstrate ethical behaviour (Peterson et al., 2003). Given recent management trends, it is proposed that leaders who are neither too agreeable nor disagreeable are most likely to improve group performance.

Overall, agreeableness best predicts interpersonal effectiveness for roles which require collaboration, cooperation and good relations with others (e.g. Neuman & Wright, 1999; Barrick et al., 2001).

Extraversion

Extraversion is one of the best known personality descriptors. People with this tendency are usually sociable, talkative, lively, assertive and excitement-seeking. The opposite end of this dimension is characterised as introversion. Individuals with this propensity tend to live more internally and may sometimes be described as quiet, reserved, self-reliant and even-paced (Costa & McCrae, 1992a).

Academic outcomes

Introverts may have an advantage over extraverts in academic performance. Sanchez-Marin et al. (2001) discovered that extraverts tended to fail courses more frequently than introverts, possibly due to their distractibility, sociability and impulsiveness. However, Furnham and Medhurst (1995) found academic tutors rated extraverts more positively in seminar classes than introverts. Research results are mixed with some studies reporting small negative correlations, and others finding either no relationship or only small positive associations.

The connection between this character trait and academic performance seems to be mediated or changed by the type of course. Extraversion appears to increase the likelihood of good examination results if assessment includes an interpersonal component. Vocational courses often administer practical tests and assessments across most years of study. Extraversion improved final-year medical school grades (Lievens et al., 2009) and first-year module results for undergraduate nurses, and speech and language therapists (Baron & Dale, 2015).

Extravert tendencies enhance student-course-fit when a social orientation is important to career choice, course satisfaction and subsequent commitment. A twelve-year longitudinal study of UK medical graduates found that extravert doctors were more satisfied with their career choice and reported more personal accomplishment than less socially assertive colleagues (McManus et al., 2004). Nursing students who are less extraverted with lower scores on this personality trait as measured by CPSQ were more likely to drop out of training (Cheung, 2016).

Work outcomes

Barrick and Mount (1991) undertook a large-scale occupational meta-analysis (analysis of many research results) of the Big Five. Extraversion was observed to be a valid predictor of positive outcomes for two occupational roles, management and sales. Extraversion is the Big Five trait most associated with effective leadership, willingness to lead and appearing "leader like" (Bono & Judge, 2004; Judge et al., 2002). Its advantage appears to be mainly conferred through agency (e.g. social boldness, dominance, assertiveness) rather than sociability (Do & Minbashian, 2014). There are similar findings for sales staff, with assertiveness boosting sales

effectiveness (Hough, 1992). In the workplace, assertive extravert behaviours are frequently rewarded, literally, as socially potent managers tend to earn more than their reserved counterparts (Zhang & Arvey, 2009).

The warmth and friendliness of extraverts are useful attributes in customer service roles. Extraverts receive larger customer tips. Their natural expressiveness enables them to act in ways customers like, e.g. friendly, warm and talkative, and this translates into positive customer appraisals of performance (Chi et al., 2011). Willingness to communicate is the essence of extraversion. Probably because they seek out social interaction, extraverted second language learners are more verbally fluent, even in stressful interpersonal situations (Dewaele and Furnham, 2000). In team situations they are eager and willing to share information (De Vries & Van den Hooff, 2006). Extravert and agreeable individuals are able to effectively build caring relationships using an empathetic and socially supportive communication style (Zellars & Perrewè, 2001).

Given that extraverts come across as more "leader like", it is understandable that their "presentation skills" are often mistaken for effective leadership and, in recruitment contexts, for prospective job performance. Therefore, the power of quiet individuals should not be ignored (Cain, 2013). People towards the other end of the extravert spectrum are less needy for attention. Introvert leaders tend to listen, gather information and reflect rather than assertively charge ahead, which is possibly why studies have found that these individuals do better on problem-solving tasks (Kumar & Kapila, 1987). Leaders who are tough-minded extraverts may not be the best negotiators in conflict situations as their desire to dominate can lead to trying to force an outcome rather than identify the best for both parties (Antonioni, 1998). So given the advantages of introverts perhaps it is no coincidence that the ranks of top leaders and CEOs include the quiet, such as: former President Obama, Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), Marissa Mayer (Yahoo), Bill Gates (Microsoft), Darwin Smith (Kimberly-Clark) and Warren Buffett (financier).

There are benefits and drawbacks to all personality traits, and an example of this is an inclination for some extraverts to seek out excitement; a tendency that gives rise to thrill-seeking and, occasionally, inappropriate risk-taking. Excitement-seeking is one instigator of counterproductive workplace behaviours such as misconduct, theft, absence and hazardous working (Hastings & O'Neill, 2009). At its extreme, risk-taking defined as a liking for danger was found to be a strong predictor of workplace deviance (O'Neill & Hastings, 2011).

CPSQ's use of the Big Five

CPSQ is based on prevailing Big Five research conducted by Cambridge Assessment and many others, as evidenced by this document. The pedigree of the model, and its ability to predict academic and workplace performance, makes it an ideal theoretical base upon which to develop our assessment. Indeed, even in our preliminary studies we have found it a powerful predictor of "real world" outcomes. For a deeper understanding of the Big Five and its influence on behaviour it is recommended that the reader consult individual papers given in the following references.

Key Findings

- After 80 years or more of active research there is a near consensus that five factors or the "Big Five" can efficiently and accurately describe important individual differences in personality characteristics or traits.

- The Big Five are as follows: Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Extraversion.

- Conscientiousness is consistently the best predictor of academic and workplace performance when goal achievement is fast tracked by aspiration, planning and perseverance.

- Conscientiousness is related to conscience or a sense of duty that can be observed through conscientious Organisational Citizenship Behaviours.

- Emotional Stability protects wellbeing and performance when times are stressful, frustrating or tough.

- Openness to Experience fosters thinking styles and intelligent behaviours that promote academic success and creative and flexible thinking in business.

- Agreeableness is associated with caring values and interpersonal effectiveness. It facilitates team working and new styles of transformational and ethical leadership.

- Extraversion enhances person-career fit when social confidence and a willingness to communicate contribute to performance.

- Introversion is associated with a considered approach to decision-making and problem-solving.

- There are benefits and drawbacks to all human personality traits.

- Assessments designed to the Big Five specification have a greater potential to predict academic and workplace performance.

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