

Course Name: Organizational Behaviour: Individual Dynamics in Organization

Professor Name: Prof. Dr. Abraham Cyril Issac

Department Name: School of Business

Institute Name: Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

Week – 05

Lecture – 03

Lecture 23: Measuring personality

Namaskar. Welcome back to the course on Organizational Behavior, Individual Dynamics in Organization. Today we move to the third lecture of module five, where we are looking into personality in detail. Today we look into measuring personality. Now, the scope of this course is not to go to each item and each inventory specifically, but I'll try to introduce you to some of the measures that are quite famous when it comes to measuring personality. And please remember, anything which you cannot measure, you cannot improve. So, on that note.

I'm Dr. Abraham Cyril Issac. I'm a faculty here at the School of Business Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati.

Welcome to this lecture.

So today's theme is “Personality is a complex and multidimensional aspect of an individual that encompasses various traits, characteristics, behaviors, patterns of thinking, feeling, and even acting”. So, when I try to emphasize in the previous lectures, if you remember that personality is a multi-faceted, multidimensional aspect, please understand it as different combinations of different characteristics, different behaviors, different patterns of thinking, feeling, and even acting to a certain extent.

So, let's look into how you measure personality. Personality is complex, so it is difficult to measure it with a simple questionnaire. We have to have different mechanisms to measure that. So there are several methods used to measure each personality or the personality of every individual, each with its own strengths and limitations, because we do not have a very foolproof system where this is the finality or this is the methodology to measure personality. We cannot essentially establish something like that. Some common approaches we will discuss.

The first one is self-report inventory. The second one is projective tests, which are very common, which are very popular. The third are behavioral observations and the fourth are interviews.

So, all these approaches mainly run in the background of trait theory. So, this is the understanding with which we should approach different methodologies. I'll take the most common ones, which are the self-report inventories.

Now when we look into self-report inventories, these are essentially the most widely used tools in psychology. There is no denying the fact and it is essentially designed to measure various aspects of an individual's personality in detail. So, these inventories typically consist of a series of questions. Basically, these are questionnaires or statements that individuals generally respond to based on their own perceptions, feelings and behaviors. So basically, the way they are actually bringing out the perceptions, the feelings and the behaviors and how individuals respond to that in certain questions that are being asked or based on some statements that are being distributed, that essentially comes under self-report. In self-report inventory, the most important word should be self-report in itself.

In the field of personality psychology, asking people to respond specifically to questions or statements about generally what they are or how they behave seems to be the most preferred method because that gives you some important idea of what essentially you are or what you are thinking of or what you are feeling or what would be your behavior in such cases. One of the most well-known self-report inventories is the BFI, the big five inventories.

So, when you look into self-reports, as the keyword, as the functional word suggests, it's asking yourself, you are being inquired on a certain behavior or certain feeling or certain perception you had. Based on that, some analysis is done and you get to a conclusion that your personality or the test taker gets a result that his or her personality is X or Y. So, this is mainly self-report where your perception, your feeling and moreover your behavior is important and the assumption is that you are the best judge of what you perceive, what you feel and generally what you behave. So this is what self-report inventories are.

Now there are certain critical advantages of self-report inventories, so you cannot deny the fact. According to an analysis conducted by Vizard 2006, 98% of the studies assessing personality traits published in the Journal of Research and Personality use self-report measures. So, you can understand the monopoly these self-report measures are playing when it comes to measuring the personality in general. In accordance with the basic foundations of all such models as five factor theory of personality, people can convey a large amount of information about themselves through the expression, say relatively enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings and actions.

It is basically coming down to one simple fact that self-report is the best report about yourself. If you ask person X or Y, he may give or she may give a certain idea about your personality dimension or personality disposition, but it won't be accurate because you know what you are and based on that understanding, based on that critical understanding, you are making a bold claim that your personality is this after analysis of course, but this is what self-report is and the advantage is that you are the first person. There is no second person who has to come in your shoes and feel and think or perceive what you are. You are the best judge of what you are. So self-reported questionnaires are also advantages in that case that respondents are likely to be more motivated to talk about themselves, to discuss about themselves rather than you know, general feeling is that I don't want to discuss about that particular individual, but more critically if questions are asked on yourself and you want to have a positive disclosure, you want to have a satisfaction that is coming out of analyzing yourself in a very positive way, they identify with the questions in way that others do not.

So this is what is most critical about self-report. Self-report becomes essentially a clear report because you are reporting it yourself. Administering personality inventories directly in person is advantageous because scoring the results is very straightforward. So, you are the judge, you are making a claim that this for a particular question Q1, this is the answer and fundamentally there is no better person qualified to talk about rather than you. This fundamental assumption, this fundamental premise is what guides you or what qualifies you as the best contender to talk about yourself. That said, it is not all positive.

There are some disadvantages associated with self-reports and the first one is that though there are many strengths, if you look into having said all the possibilities of looking into yourself, you are the best person to think of your thinking mechanisms, your perceptions, your emotions to measure the psychological constructs, there are a lot of weaknesses like the structure of the questions affect whether the reported information accurately measures the construct under consideration. So, your validity is questioned somewhere. The structure of the questions, are they actually confirming or answering or asking or seeking the exact thing what they are supposed to? Reported information, is it accurately measuring the construct which it is supposed to?

Similarly, Moskowitz (1986) recognized that self-reports leave a lot of room for response biases. When you look into response biases, there is a social desirability angle associated with this. You take the case of any latent variable. Latent variables are those variables which are not directly visible to you. When you look into some variables like learning, like personality, like the knowledge hiding, these are latent variables which you cannot measure directly. You have to make use of certain self-reports, some inventories which are self-reports. So, when you are using self-reports, there is always a threat of response

bias.

I would want to look good in my assessment. This is a primary premise on which the response bias is breeding. So, when I would try to answer a question which has a social desirability problem, which in itself is a negative question, I either try to block it or I tend to give a positive response or inaccurate response instead of the right one. So, there is a possibility of this response bias being creeping in.

Now there is also a case of 'acquiescent responding' in which individuals agree with responses without considering what the question is supposedly asking or they may also tend to extreme responding. Sometimes you are very careless, you don't have the time. You feel that, they are asking about personality, so they might be checking how good my personality is, everything perfect, totally agree or strongly agree. So, all these extreme possibilities if it's a Likert scale or they are looking into the negativities of your personality, extremely disagree or strongly disagree. So, there is a possibility of this extreme responding being creeping in in your survey or in your inventory in general because you are the person, the assessment is happening of you and you want to look good in the assessment. So, you tend to make it a point that your assessment looks good and your responses aid to that perception of looking good.

An intriguing query here is that potential limitation is whether people know enough about themselves to be able to accurately portray them what the self-report is actually trying to determine. This is also a serious problem because many a time we have claimed vociferously, we have been very vocal about the fact that the best judge about me is me. Every single organization, every single individual will tend to say this, but the fact of the matter is, are you? Are you actually a good judge of your behavior? Sometimes there are situations where your personality can be easily or would be easily understood by your co-employer or coworker or maybe your boss or your subordinate for that matter. It might not be you; it might be somebody else who will be pointing out that no, your personality is not this, your personality is that. You are not this person; you are thinking it in a wrong way. You are the other guy. So, there could be a possibility that somebody is pointing out you are not type A personality, rather you are type B. But you are in your mind, you are thinking that you are type A personality. So, this is something which you should think about that self-report could be dangerous in that sense. You may think that self-report gives a clear idea because you are the person who is actually doing it or actually telling it but please remember that there is always a rider, there is always a condition that is existing. You might not be the right person to judge your own personality. So, in that case, there is a clear disadvantage what self-report is having and that is that you might not be answering the question in the right manner, maybe because of the social desirability factor or maybe because of the fact that you don't know enough about yourself. So, this is yet another disadvantage of self-report.

Now we look into another improvement in testing of personality which is projective test because we have seen that though there are certain advantages, though there are certain clear advantages of self-reports, there are certain disadvantages also associated with that. So that will lead us to projective test. Now projective tests are psychological assessments that critically aim to uncover, unravel hidden thoughts, feelings, attitudes and personality traits by presenting ambiguous stimuli and analyzing an individual's response towards them. So, you are being given some stimuli. I will detail it when I come to specific tests like Rorschach Inkblot Test or let us say Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) or Sentence Completion Test.

In some cases, in some situations or in some phase or some way, there are some stimuli that is presented to you. How you are going to complete that stimuli, how you are going to respond to that stimuli, that response is being understood and analyzed to establish your personality. This is in nutshell what is projective test.

Please remember ladies and gentlemen, there are different types of tests. We have seen the pros and cons of the self-report test, but there is yet another important test which is projective test. Let's look into some of the examples.

Rorschach Inkblot Test. What happens here is that there are some random inkblots that is being presented to the person who is being studied. So based on that, you are supposed to make certain pattern or certain observations based on how you perceive things. Based on your observation, your personality is judged accordingly.

Thematic Apperception Test is again presenting some stimuli like this where you are actually given some abstract situations, abstract context and how you actually respond. So, in general, you will see that in interviews, in selection programs, etc. You come across such mechanisms in its crude or refined form that you are being given some context and you are being tried to complete that. It gives an understanding of what you are as a human being. What is your personality disposition? What are your values? What are your ethics? What you are made of? So, all these things generally come out of Thematic Apperception Test.

And then again, there is another test which is Sentence Completion Test, which is again presenting a stimuli and seeking the response. They are giving you some sentence, how you are going to complete, how you are going to take it further. That is becoming critical. And this is Sentence Completion Test.

So, there are certain projective tests like these three, which have taken transit over what self-reports are. But please remember, self-reports are still considered to be very superior because they give a real time understanding and it is easy to administer. You have a standard questionnaire, a very validated and reliable questionnaire, a certain inventory.

You just have to circulate that. And you are going under the premise that you are the best person to judge it, but we have seen the other cases, other situations also. But again, I'm just introducing you to different types of tests. One was self-report and other is projective test. And when you look into projective tests, there are certain disadvantages. One is obviously the reliability and validity because you cannot have a consistency being observed in this test because now you are presenting a stimuli, the response.

Let's look into first person. You can think on your own way. You are responding to a certain stimuli is based on certain parameters. One is it could be based on; we have discussed this detail in the perception module. You can go back and refer to that, but I'm just refreshing here. When you are looking into a particular or when you're coming across a particular stimuli, you see that the way you respond depends on your disposition, how you are as an individual in that particular time, even the temperature of the building, even the weather conditions of that particular place, even the way you slept yesterday, even the way you had a meeting just before that, even the way your career is progressing in the last six months, every single thing can have an influence on how you respond to particular stimuli.

So when you come to projective test, which is essentially your response being calculated or analyzed to a particular stimuli, reliability is at stake. Your reliability suffers because there is lack of consistency. You might not respond in a way which you're responding now, maybe two weeks later for the same stimuli. So please remember that time and again in the previous modules, I mentioned the same person behaving in two different contexts and two different people behaving in the same context might be different. So, this is more pertain to what the stimuli is and what the context is.

Similarly, whether it is actually measuring that, whether an inkblot pattern or let's say a sentence completion is actually measuring that will also be coming under the radar and that's where the validity is questioned. Subjectivity is also questioned because you might have a cultural context in place. You might not be aware of such a pattern. You might not be thinking of, let's say the test administrator might not be our test person who is trying to analyze the results might not be aware of what he might be thinking because he has a different altogether child rearing practice.

He belongs to a different culture altogether. So, there might be some level of mismatch that's happening, some level of subjectivity that can creep in. So, the objective nature of projective test is always questioned. Again, as I mentioned, there are cultural and individual differences, something which I might tell might not be easily, you know,

comprehensible or easily translated to you because projective test is subjective on that way because it has certain cultural and individual differences orientation.

So, when you look into the behavioral measures, behavioral measures are one of the most clear approaches used in personality assessment focusing in observing and analyzing an individual's actions, reactions, behavioral patterns in different situations. So, some of the ways which we generally see in behavioral measures are direct observation.

This is one of the fundamental ways in which you can have a behavioral measure. This is most used and most suited in organization for various reasons, including that this is very much cheaper in terms of administration or it is based on certain bias. It could be, but still, it reduces a lot of the cognitive load. Behavioral assessment interviews are made again, very specific to the organizational context. You are making a selection of incoming cohort and you want a certain set of people who are specific or are having certain key values or key personality dimensions.

So, you want to make a check. You want to make an analysis on that. Also, you do some behavioral assessment interviews. You have seen that if you have gone through some of the stages of interview in organization. There are behavioral coding systems. There are role playing or simulation exercises, which gives you a real time idea of how the individual is going to perform in such environment.

Also please remember that in situations where things are very expensive, like flight simulation, flight behavioral patterns, etc. You tend to use simulations because you cannot recreate such situations every now and then because it is very expensive. There could be also situations of behavioral assessment in controlled experiments. There might be situations where some controlled experiments is undertaken. There might be some situational developments that is being done and you are deliberately be put into that and then from that you might be able to bring out something or trying to elicit some behavioral or personality level information from that particular individual. So behavioral measures also happen to be one of the most important critical aspects.

Now let us look into the advantages and disadvantages of behavioral measures quickly. The importance of behavior is the main reason why these observational methods should be used in studying personality. So, when there are number of cause and considerations in conducting the type of research as I already mentioned this becomes or comes relatively in the cheaper side. The fact that there is an option to conduct behavioral observations in either an artificial or natural setting is one core strength of the method.

So when we can conduct it, let us say as an experimental setup, we can conduct it in a

practical setup, it is one core strength of the method. For instance, in a lab setting the researcher could actually simulate as I have already mentioned a particular situation and observe that how the particular person is responding to that. Now this is very difficult in a real time scenario. So, lab simulations do two things. One, they tend to give you a reasonable clarity into the consequence of the results. Also, they are much cheaper in execution. So, this has a clear advantage over the informant reports. So then again, this laboratory approach has many, many weaknesses which we cannot undermine and this includes artificiality because the moment you are talking about lab conditions, the moment you are talking about artificial conditions, artificiality is about to come in lack of representativeness of how the individual generally acts because the context is not exhaustive. There might be stimuli which are otherwise present in the real world which are absent in those context of lab settings, so which cannot give you a full representativeness. The potential for social desirability to be exhibited, social desirability to be exhibited by the target as a result of being watched. You are always under a constant monitoring. So that social desirability or the very fact that you are always being watched or somebody is breathing behind your neck every time will make you inevitably perform in a better way or a desirable way.

Susceptibility to demand characteristics, you are sometimes, you know the outcome, what is the clear outcome or better outcome. So, you tend to confirm to that. There could be some confirmation bias associated with that as well. Attempting to appease the observer because it's the observer who is the researcher.

There are some social concerns that are related to that particular project. You might be termed as a negative person; you might be termed as a non-desirable person or there might be a case that you are not invited for the next experiment altogether because of the way you are actually responding. So, all these things, there are possibility of artificiality coming into the entire scheme of things. So please be aware of these situations when you are looking into behavioural measures as such. In order to get around these limitations, we generally use naturalistic settings.

So this would likely involve something along the lines of let's say participant observation or setting up an equipment like cameras or microphones rather than just always monitoring them on a real-time basis. Some technology given monitoring like cameras or microphones would be a better way and it would be better if it is non-invasive. These approaches could nevertheless be considered unattractive because they are often expensive and time-consuming. So, the very fact that we started for lab settings to be realistic and to do that within a realistic set of time frame and also that being less expensive, that creates or defeats the entire purpose. The final consideration related to behavioural measures is that it might be conceptually difficult to capture a particular construct by observing behaviour because the link between a specific behaviour and a

specific personality character may not be that direct. So, this is where the elephant in the room comes into picture. So, there might not be a relative causation that you can actually assign to or ascribe to. So, this is again another disadvantage of the test.

So, when you are looking into personality, we are going through the thick of the discussions in personality, you have to understand that there are a lot of methods that have emerged to measure your personality and every single organisation nowadays is equipped with these methods or methodologies or it's just few phone calls and a few dollars away. So please understand it is more systematic to be a person with clear understanding of what your personality is.

So there are different methods as discussed in this session. We look into different methods like one from self-report. Self-report we had looked into the person as the best researcher of himself, the person as the best relatively aware person about himself. So, all these factors are taken into consideration but still there could be some subjectivity that can come in. There could be some problems associated with social desirability. There could be some issues with respect to how you want to perceive yourself within the lens or within the camera of the particular inventory. That led way to projective test. Projective test gives a better understanding of what your personality is but again certain subjectivity can creep in. Stimuli might be inferred in a different way if you are from a different context altogether. There might be situation where behavioural tests or behavioural approaches are being done by organisation but again there could be bias. So, there is no one way, right way to measure personality but organisations tend to use different types of methods. The attempt here was to introduce you to certain methods that are available in industry nowadays. To look into, understand what you are, what your personality is.

On that note, we will end today's lecture. Take care.

We will see you in the next class. Till then, take care. Bye-bye.