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College Students' Personality Traits in Relation to Career Readiness

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College Students' Personality Traits in Relation to Career Readiness

The main purpose of attending a college or university is to prepare young adults for the real world. A lot of what students do during their time in college reflects how they will act once they graduate and start their job search. The ways in which students learn to balance their priorities in college are skills they will carry on throughout their careers and adult lives. This current study will examine the relationship between junior and senior college students' personality traits and their career readiness and goals. We will also explore whether gender impacts these measures. This study will give important evidence that college students' personalities, including academic motivation, and their career ambition will influence the type of employee an individual will become.

Career Readiness

Students' experiences throughout their college career impact their future in many different ways. Through college experiences, students will gain knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values that will impact career readiness and goals. Past research has explored college experiences to discover if there are specific aspects that relate to future managerial success. Howard (1986) shows that extracurricular activities, level of education, and college major impacted managerial performance significantly. It was clear throughout the study that attaining a college degree rather than not, and the higher degree a person had, positively related to job placement and status. This study further specified that the majors that lead to the best managerial performance were in the areas of humanities and social sciences. This pushes us to believe that since many of the majors at Gettysburg College are in these areas that many students attending Gettysburg would be fit and well prepared to take on managerial positions in whatever career they hope to have.

However, extracurricular activities seem to make a bigger impact. For example, Howard (1986)
demonstrates how although students who majored in engineering are expected to have lower
interpersonal skills (thus be less successful in managerial performance), if they are involved in
meaningful extracurricular activities this weakness should no longer be expected. It is pivotal to
relate specific college experiences to specific traits of a job because not every job calls for the
same traits. Analyzing college experiences becomes limited because of this factor; however a
well-rounded curriculum like a liberal arts education has been found to be related to producing
effective leaders and managers (Howard, 1986).

Howard (1986) relates to other past research such as Xu (2017), because Xu (2017)
conducted a study that tested how a student's major correlates to the occupation they choose and
how choosing an occupation in an individual's field of study can impact the benefits they
receive. Xu (2017) concluded that when an individual chooses an occupation in their field of
study, it leads to better earnings and greater job satisfaction. This information is important
because many college students do not end up in a career that is congruent to their field of study,
which may result in lower job satisfaction and income.

Not only did Howard (1986) research about how a student's major correlations to the job
they choose, but it also discussed how extracurricular activities can impact managerial
performance significantly. In college it is common to be involved in many organizations on
campus. Students develop their own ways to balance their academics with their extracurricular
activities. Nonis and Hudson (2010) takes a different perspective on how extracurricular
activities can impact a student's life and potentially their career. Nonis and Hudson (2010)
believe that because students live very busy lives, they are dedicating less time to studying. They

conducted a study to see if the amount of time students were studying affected their overall performance or GPA. Their results were very scattered because they received positive, negative, and no relationship between these two variables. They added a third variable, which was study habits, but this also had positive and negative relationships with performance. This information is useful because the study showed that there is no correlation between study time/habits and performance, therefore study habits will not be included in our study.

Fouche (2017) conducted similar research to the study done above, in which Fouche tested the relationship between study habits and academic performance. He measured study habits by homework completion, participation in class, amount of TV watched, how often students looked at their phones, and procrastination. **Fouche found that bad study habits (not doing homework, not participating in class, etc.) have a negative correlation with performance, and good study habits have a positive relationship with performance.** Having higher academic performance in college we believe would have an impact on career-readiness. Although this study found a correlation, we decided not to ask about study habits based on Nonis and Hudson (2010) findings because of the mixed results of negative and positive correlations. We believe that study habits will not be an important variable to measure in our current study.

Personality Traits & Career Readiness

Personality traits can be a predictor of human behavior, which can help predict a student's career readiness and goals. Previous research has examined how personality traits such as adaptability, time management, and social support and how they impact students success (Ghosh and Fouad, 2017). The study done emphasizes social support as the most significant finding. As the need for social support goes down, students become more adaptive. It is implied

that students who do not rely on social support become more adaptable because they are able to

confidently control and plan their lives themselves. Education not only pushes students towards a

specific career but also prepares them to cope with their jobs, which is also another important

variable to consider when discussing career readiness (Howard, 1986). Thus, students who

become more adaptable and do not need social support could be seen as more career ready.

In addition to adaptability, career readiness can also be aligned with personality traits

such as confidence, anxiety, and motivation. For example, anxiety is a common trait college

students may endure, and can be a predictor to career readiness (Pisarik, Rowell, & Thompson,

2017). This study done by Pisarik et al. (2017) about career anxiety among college students

demonstrates that students with anxiety may not have high levels of career readiness due to their

high level of career indecision. In more detail, this study shows how career anxiety is negatively

related to coping and perceived control, motivation to seek career options, and self-exploratory

behavior. It is important to note anxiety can come in different levels. Anxiety to the extent that

impacts physical changes to the body, such as increased blood pressure and heart rate, tension,

and trembling, is the type that negatively impacts career-readiness (Pisarik et al., 2017). This

pushes us to measure how anxious students tend to be, and if they are experiencing intense

anxiety we believe this will lead students to be lower in career readiness. However, this

relationship may be moderated by other variables such as students' ambition. An interesting

variable we want to use to measure how anxious students are is by Type D personality traits.

Type D personality is a trait that is made up of two constructs: negative affect and social

inhibition (Reid Yates, Wong, Strauser, & Heft Sears, 2017). Negative affect consists of having

feelings of worry and stress, while social inhibition relates to having a lack of self-assurance.

This study found a positive correlation between social inhibition and self-efficacy, and how this predicts poor career decision making. The study concluded that students with signs of Type D personality traits are likely to display levels of dysfunctional career thoughts. How a student feels toward seeking a career could establish if they have Type D personality traits. The students who show indications of Type D personality reflects this in their career readiness. For example, if they are stressed, anxious, or fearful about finding a career, then they may display Type D traits.

Another way to group the many different personality traits that an individual may have is to use the Big Five personality trait categories. These five categories of personality traits include openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Abele and Spurk (2011) measured whether these five personality traits indirectly has an influence on an individual's salary. They found that extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism all had an impact on an individual's salary; however, openness did not (Abele & Spurk, 2011). They also measured if career-advancement goals is a mediator of the relationship between the personality traits and an individual's salary and found that it only has a positive correlation with extraversion and conscientiousness. It is interesting that the research shows that certain personality traits affect career-advancement goals, and in turn career-advancement goals affect an individual's salary. We believe this will be true for college students in our study. Depending on which of the Big Five personality traits an individual college student has, we believe our study will find a similar correlation between personality traits and college students' career goals which will then in turn relate to expected annual salary for their post graduation job.

Another correlational study conducted similar research in which they measured the
relationship between the personality traits of individuals and the personality demands of jobs
(Bleidorn, Denissen, Hennecke, Luhmann, Specht, & Zimmermann, 2018). The researchers of
this study also used the Big Five personality traits to test this possible association. It was
concluded that 58% of participants could find a job that demanded the personality characteristic
of openness, 73% for extraversion, 44% for agreeableness, 46% for conscientiousness, and 36%
for emotional stability (Bleidorn et al., 2018). These results show that the likeliness for
individuals to find a job that demanded the personality trait of extraversion was the highest out of
the Big Five personality traits. This is important for our current study because we are interested
in measuring how personality traits can influence career-readiness and goals. According to this
study, being outgoing and social with others is a popular looked-for trait when hiring potential
employees, so it will be fascinating to learn if college students at Gettysburg College, who
possess this extraverted trait believe they are career-ready. Another result of this study is that this
correlation between these two variables is also found to be a predictor of income- those
individuals who have a match between actual personality traits and demanded personality from
their job earn a higher income. It demonstrates that the more similar these variables are to each
other, the more successful (higher income) an individual will be at their job. Measuring the
relationship between an individual's personality traits and their career-readiness, career goals,
and expected starting salary is at the core of our study. It will be interesting to see if our study
will have similar results in which the level of each of the Big Five personality traits that an
individual college student possess will have an influence on their expected starting salary.

Some of the Big Five personality traits are not the only predictors of career readiness. Motivation to be productive and to do well in school is another potential causal mechanism that is researched a lot in terms of resulting in career readiness. From a young age, children are constantly told to set goals for themselves because by doing so it gives them the motivation to reach them and grow as a person. As college students start approaching their junior and senior years, they are beginning to set goals for their futures, especially career-related. These goals are set to motivate an individual student to do well in school so that they can be prepared for their future career. A study done by Lee and Sohn (2017) examined whether deliberate practice, which they defined as setting long-term goals, and grit (defined as the Big Five personality traits) has an influence on college students' motivation to achieve academic success. The researchers also tested whether deliberate practice correlated with college students' preparation for a future career. The results of this study show that deliberate practice was a mediator between grit and academic achievement. Another finding of this study was that there was a positive correlation between grit and career readiness among college students. There has been a lot of evidence from these studies that suggest that the Big-Five personality traits (measured by grit in this particular one) has a correlation with career preparedness in young adults. Due to the strong evidence provided by these studies, we believe our own study will have results very similar to the ones we have researched, in which an individual college student's personality traits will have an influence on their career-readiness and setting ambitious career goals. One element that we are interested in exploring throughout our study is gender. It will be interesting to test whether gender impacts the ambitious career goals an individual sets for himself.

Gender

Because we are interested in exploring the effect that gender may have on the variables we measure, we believe it is important to review past research on its impact. Xu (2017) found important information on the comparison of men and women when preparing for their future careers. Studies show that an individual's characteristics and social structures both impact college graduates' decision in choosing an occupation that is related with their major. He focused his study on the differences between men and women majoring in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). He found that when it comes to educational and occupational decisions, women are more likely to base their judgment on goal-directed and cost-effective calculations. Women are not as likely as men to go into a STEM related field because of fear that they will be paid less and work in a male-dominated workplace. This is interesting to see how men and women differ in confidence levels when preparing to go into a career, and the differences in their ambition to follow their goals. This is an important decision for an individual because it is correlated to how satisfied he/she will be at their future job, and may impact their income.

The Present Study

This study will examine the influence that personality traits, including Type D and the Big Five, will have on college students' ambitious career goals and career-readiness. We will be testing ambition as a mediator between Type D personality traits and career readiness, and based on the research on this topic, we will form hypothesis two about this below. We are choosing to only measure these variables on junior and senior college students because they are the ones who have had the most college experience and are approaching the real world, encouraging them to make career goals and prepare for their career-related futures. The research discussed in the

previous section suggests that personality traits have a correlation with career-readiness, and that going into the same field as one's major has a strong relationship with managerial performance (assuming high levels of career preparedness). Additionally, one of our research questions is to see whether gender plays a large role in influencing the measures of our study. Although we are only making predictions about two of the Big-Five personality traits (based on the findings of past research), we are interested in exploring all five to see whether they impact career-readiness.

Hypothesis 1: Junior and senior college students that display personality traits of extraversion and conscientiousness of the Big Five will be more career-ready.

Hypothesis 2: Students with Type D personality traits will have less ambitious career goals, which will then in turn result in being less career-ready.

Exploratory Question 1: For students' career hopes and goals, males will say they want success and to make money, while women will say they want happiness in their career.

Method

Participants

The study consisted of at least 61 Gettysburg College Students who are juniors or seniors. There were 31 males and 30 females. There were 21 seniors and 40 juniors in our study.

Procedure

A printed copy of our survey was handed out to junior and senior students at Gettysburg College, either in the library or in classrooms to ensure we got enough participants.

Measures

The complete survey is in the appendix. Participants will answer questions about their personality traits that relate to Type D personality and the Big-Five, dreams and goals for the future, career-readiness, and demographic questions.

Personality trait questions. We ask multiple questions on a scale 1 to 5 to measure Type D personality, anxiety traits, and the Big 5 personality traits. These include: How stressed are you on a normal basis? How doubtful are you? How intrinsically motivated do you find yourself to be (by your own values)? How open do you find yourself to be? How agreeable do you find yourself to be? How conscientiousness do you find yourself to be? How anxious do you find yourself to be?

Career readiness and goals questions. To measure students' career readiness we ask them a question that will show whether or not they have aspects of career anxiety depending upon which answers they choose. The variables that relate to career anxiety include: nervous, unmotivated, uncertain, pervasive feelings of pressure, angst, and concern, frustration, and fear. We also ask an open-ended question to give us qualitative data about students hopes and goals for their future career. We also include a question about their expected salary to see if there will be difference caused by gender or career readiness.

Demographics. We ask demographic questions at the end so that factors such as gender do not influence participants' answers with the beginning questions. We only ask about gender, expected graduation year, and academic major to see if gender has any impact, to ensure we only take the data from upperclassmen, and to measure whether academic major influences career-readiness (depending if students go into the field of their major).

Statistical Analyses

In order to answer our first hypothesis, we will use multiple regression to examine whether extraversion and conscientiousness of the Big-Five personality traits predicts career-readiness (in SPSS). For our second hypothesis, we will use a mediation model to test whether ambition is a mediator between Type D personality and career readiness.
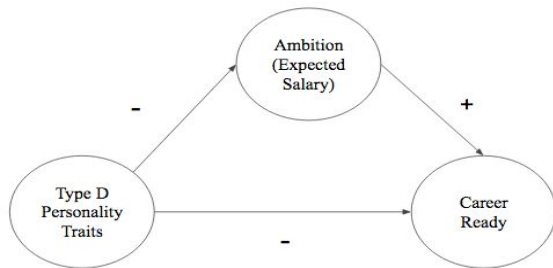
Results

A multiple regression was used to test our first hypothesis. There is a significant positive association between conscientiousness and career readiness, $B = .22$, $SE = .08$, $p = .01$. Scores on conscientiousness explain 13.5% of the variability on scores on career readiness, $F(2, 58) = 4.52$, $p = .01$. There is a moderate effect size, $R = .37$. There is no significant association between extraversion and career readiness, $B = -.17$, $SE = .10$, $p = .10$.

For our second hypothesis, a mediation model revealed that ambition is not a mediator between Type D personality characteristics and career readiness. There is no significant association between Type D personality traits and ambition, $B = 112.19$, $SE = 945.93$, $p = .91$. There is also no significant association between ambition and career readiness. $B < .001$, $SE < .001$, $p = .56$. However, there is a significant positive association between Type D personality traits and career readiness, $B = .22$, $SE = .07$, $p = .005$.

The results between males and females concluded that there is no significant difference in ambition responses regarding gender. Both men and women said they want happiness/enjoyment and success/money.

Hypothesis 2:

Results of Hypothesis 2:

Discussion

The results of this study are partly consistent with the previous research that was conducted on personality traits, ambition, and career readiness. The results of our study supported our first hypothesis that the conscientiousness personality trait predicts career-readiness. However, it also did not support our first hypothesis because our study concluded that the extraversion personality trait is not a significant predictor of career readiness.

We ran three regression analyses to test our second hypothesis, which was a mediation model. The first regression analysis concluded that Type D personality traits do not predict ambition, measured by an individual's expected starting salary. The second regression analysis also resulted in no significant conclusions with there being no association between ambition (expected starting salary and career hopes and goals) and career readiness. However, the third regression analysis did conclude that Type D personality traits is a predictor of career readiness. In our hypothesis, we predicted that Type D personality traits would have a negative association with career readiness, however, our results demonstrate that Type D personality traits actually

have a positive association with career readiness. Gender had little to no impact on students' ambitious goals and expected starting salaries.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to our study that may have influenced the results we obtained. One drawback of our study is that we have a small sample size, solely of Gettysburg College junior and senior students. In order to improve this part of our study, it would be beneficial to gather data from junior and senior students from other colleges going through similar experiences as those at Gettysburg College. This would allow us to obtain a larger sample that would be more representative of the population and achieve generalizability. Another limitation in our study is that we had an overwhelming amount of Organization and Management Studies majors in our sample, 36.1% to be exact. One of the past studies we researched concluded that when an individual chooses an occupation in their field of study, it leads to better earnings and greater job satisfaction (Xu 2017). If we obtained a sample with participants from a variety of majors, instead of a majority of one major, our results may have been different or more effective. Another limitation of our study is our survey length. Some participants of our study complained how our survey was too long, creating a participant burden. This violates the beneficence principle of ethical research because a participant burden can cause harm to individuals involved in our study.

Future Research

More research on this topic is necessary to reveal the best ways to make students career ready. Longitudinal studies would be more effective, valid, and reliable for determining the impacts that students' college experiences have on their careers. For example, a future study

could follow students from their college years throughout their first ten years in the workforce.

This study could reveal more reliable findings such as comparing participants career dreams in

college to their real career placement later in life. More research on a larger scale is necessary for

external validity. By conducting studies with larger samples, the findings could be generalized

for all college students. Higher education is supposed to prepare students to take on the real

world and learn skills they can use in their future careers. Researching career readiness is pivotal

for improving higher education and ensuring that students are career ready.

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Appendix

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. How adaptable do you find yourself to be?	1	2	3	4	5
2. How outgoing are you?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How stressed are you on a normal basis?	1	2	3	4	5
4. How shy are you?	1	2	3	4	5
5. How independent are you?	1	2	3	4	5
6.How open-minded do you find yourself to be?	1	2	3	4	5
7. How agreeable do you find yourself to be?	1	2	3	4	5
8. How conscientiousness do you find yourself to be?	1	2	3	4	5
9. How anxious do you find yourself to be?	1	2	3	4	5
10. How sure are you about yourself?	1	2	3	4	5
11. How willing are you to experience new things?	1	2	3	4	5
12. How closed off do you feel to others?	1	2	3	4	5
13. How cooperative are you with others?	1	2	3	4	5
14. How serious are you to fulfill your obligations?	1	2	3	4	5
15. How much do you value being organized?	1	2	3	4	5

16. How calm do you find yourself to be?	1	2	3	4	5
17. How doubtful are you?	1	2	3	4	5
18. How often do you feel moody?	1	2	3	4	5

Career Readiness

2. How do you feel while seeking for a career or your future career? Select all the apply:
   a. Excited
   b. Nervous
   c. Confident
   d. Unmotivated
   e. Certain
   f. Uncertain
   g. Pervasive feelings of pressure
   h. Pervasive feelings of angst
   i. Pervasive feelings of concern
   j. Frustration
   k. Fear
   l. Self-defeated

Ambition

3. Describe your career hopes and goals:

4. What is your expected annual salary for your **starting** job?

5. Which are you more motivated by:
   a. Personal values
   b. Outside factors (ex: money)

Demographics

6. What is your gender:

    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Prefer not to specify

7. What is your expected graduation year:
    a. 2021
    b. 2020
    c. 2019
    d. 2018

8. What is your major (and minors is applicable): _____