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Insights in Health Administration Education: Understanding the Role of Personality in Teamwork

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ABSTRACT

Background: Developing a health promotion program plan requires attention to the links between objectives, activities, and overall program goals. Instructors developed the “Connecting the Dots” worksheet to help students establish these linkages.

Methods: The “Connecting the Dots” worksheet included six questions pertinent to the students’ health promotion program plans. The worksheet was given to the students in a flipped classroom setting. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the tool was based upon group presentations at the end of the semester.

Results: Students developed more viable program plans that included stronger links between objectives and corresponding program activities.

Conclusions: The “Connecting the Dots” worksheet is a promising tool for engaging public health students in the process of developing health promotion program plans.

Key words: Teamwork, personality, leadership

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INTRODUCTION

Many organizations have recently begun to utilize self-assessment personality tests upon hire to determine if specific positions are a good fit for potential employees. Most would assume that extroverts make better leaders because they are presumably more assertive and take greater risks than introverts. Some believe that in order to master administrative duties, one must be a quick thinker, assertive, and willing to take risks (Nobel, 2010). This common perception sometimes even deters introverts from seeking administrative positions. However, both types of leaders, extroverts and introverts, can be equally successful or ineffectual (Nobel, 2010). Companies around the world, such as Google, have used personality self-assessments during the hiring process to form effective teams based on personality types (Bock, 2015). Administrators at Google have stated that their goal in using personality assessments is to predict how candidates will perform once they join the team, and that they achieve that goal by combining behavioral and situational structured interviews with assessments of cognitive ability, conscientiousness, and leadership (Bock, 2015). This new method of team formation has shown success and is slowly becoming a new norm (Cohen, Ornoy, & Keren, 2013).

In healthcare, administrators are often viewed as superior and intimidating individuals at the top of the hierarchy, which can hinder communication and give the impression that the individual is unapproachable (Hughes, 2008). Administrators

at all levels in health care organizations place high value on communication, problem solving, and decision making (Purnell, 1999). This is where the common perception that extroverts make the best healthcare leaders comes into play, and although it would be safe to assume this, it is not always true. Extroverts may be more assertive and better at taking risks, however, evidence has shown that introverts can be better listeners and help process ideas of an eager team (Nobel, 2010). Leaders may often end up doing more talking, and not listening to any of the ideas provided by others (Nobel, 2010). Another common perception is that extroverts and introverts cannot work effectively together. Prior studies have shown that there is a definite need for introverted leaders (Nobel, 2010). The fact that the personalities are so different gives people the impression that there will be a constant push-and-pull when tasked with a project. The problem is that the introverted leaders tend to have a harder time than extroverted colleagues when rising through the corporate ranks to a leadership role (Nobel, 2010). However, on the contrary, teams that are blended with a mixture of personalities have produced better outcomes (Myers, 1998).

The purpose of this study was to test the perceptions regarding extroverts and introverts as leaders, and to better understand the importance of having a balance of personalities within teams. This study involved administering personality tests to graduate health administration students to develop teams with a balance of personalities to test the perceptions.

METHODS

Background on the course and project

This study was conducted during a graduate Organizational Theory and Behavior in Health Care course, which included both first- and second-year graduate students. There were 10 Master of Health Services Administration students enrolled in the course. The class met once per week for 3 hours over a 16-week period. The project entailed a team of 3 students working together to create an organizational profile of a health services organization chosen by the team. The project requirements included the team conducting interviews of leaders at the health services organization in order to create an organizational profile, and the team had to present their report to the class.

Assessments

Two personality assessments were utilized, the DiSC Classic 2.0 and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The Myers-Briggs personality type indicator is one of the most widely used methods for classifying personality traits as part of job fitting (Cohen et al., 2013). Nearly 2 million people take the MBTI assessment annually (Cunningham, 2012). Katherine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, introduced the MBTI after World War II based on the theories of personality types created by Carl Jung in the early 20th century (Myers, 1998). The assessment is based on individual responses to a series of questions which identifies a person's natural way of doing things, known as psychological preferences. There are four sets of opposite preferences which include: extraversion vs. introversion, sensing vs. intuition, thinking vs. feeling, and judging vs. perceiving (Myers, 1998). The personality categories can be useful for matching a person to a job or a task. A study by Aranda and Tilton found that 85.3 percent of executives have a combined preference for both Thinking and Judging, and that the personality types ISTJ (32.1% prevalence) and ESTJ (28% prevalence) outnumbered the personality types of all other executives (Aranda and Tilton, 2013). Organizations that choose to use this instrument may base important business decisions on the assessment's outcomes. It is important that an organization introduce the MBTI instrument early on in working in a team along with a specific goal, rather than introducing it after conflicts have developed (Myers, 1998). An individual's results can also affect how team members interact with one another or can help identify sources of job satisfaction. Diverse teams make for better efficiency and higher productivity (Myers, 1998). This is especially true when it comes to making decisions in the workplace. It is rare for employees to be taught the processes for making decisions as a group. By mixing personalities, employees can create ideas and make decisions to their advantage (Myers, 1998).

The DiSC model of behavior was first proposed by William Moulton Marston in 1928, and the actual DiSC measurement began in the 1940's by an industrial psychologist named Walter V. Clarke (Scullard & Baum, 2015). Marston had theorized that the behavioral expression of emotions could be

categorized into four primary types, which included: Dominance (d), Inducement (I), Submission (S), and Compliance (C) (Scullard & Baum, 2015). From there, he created a model that integrated all four types of emotional expression into a two-dimensional, two-axis space. The modern version of DiSC maintains some of the core principles and incorporates many additions and changes. Clarke identified a list of adjectives that were commonly used to describe others and created a checklist. This checklist of adjectives was used to ask people to choose which word best described themselves. Clarke discovered that the four factors produced from the data (aggressive, sociable, stable, and avoidant) greatly resembled the DiSC (Scullard & Baum, 2015). In 1994, the items and norms were revisited, and an updated version of the assessment was created to what we today call the DiSC Classic. The primary emotions that were discovered by Marston in 1928 are now Dominance (D), Influence (i), Steadiness (S), and Contentiousness (C) (Scullard & Baum, 2015). The assessment is designed to support an individual's understanding of his or her work-related behaviors and how to apply them in work-related situations. Though not as popular as the MBTI, the DiSC Classic produces valid and useful information for putting teams together in work-related settings.

Procedures

Both assessments were taken online in the same room at the same time. Prior to taking the assessments, students were given pre-assessment of the MBTI assessment. Students first read what each type of personality means and chose the one they thought fit their personality best. Students then took the DiSC Classic 2.0 assessment, followed by the MBTI. The DiSC Classic 2.0 is a personal assessment tool that provides individuals with a better understanding of their preferences and strengths and relating those to others around them. The online assessment takes approximately 15 minutes to complete and produces a 23-page report for each student (DiSC Profile, n.d.). The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) provides individuals with their preference of each of the following pairs of personality traits: Extraversion/Introversion, Sensing/Intuition, thinking/Feeling, and Judging/Perceiving (The Myers & Briggs Foundation, n.d.). The assessment consists of 93 items and takes approximately 45-60 minutes to completion (CPP). Upon completion, students received individual personalized reports. Students then compared the results of their chosen personality type to their actual MBTI personality type.

Students were then placed in teams by the researchers based upon analysis of the individual results from both assessments. Prior research has suggested that the best teams are those with a good mix of different personalities (Young, 2001). First, researchers looked at each student's actual personality type from the MBTI. Next, each student's potential blind spots from the MBTI results were examined for individual weaknesses. Researchers also looked at how the students' MBTI personality types interacted with others. Using the DiSC Classic 2.0 results, researchers looked at student scores on the different dimensions and their classical pattern. This method was used in order to ensure the DiSC dimensions were also balanced. Teams were formed based on how each

team member could balance and complement each other within their team. For example, one team was comprised of an ENTJ personality, ISFP personality, and ESFJ personality. The ENTJ student personality had DiSC Classic 2.0 results of Dominance = 7, influence = 3, Steadiness = 1, and Conscientiousness = 2. The student's potential blind spots were: decisions tend to be inconsistent/always changing, making decisions too quickly, may not take others' values into account, and may not express appreciation to others. The student's interaction with others was described as: enjoys interacting with others, sets standards for themselves and others, challenges others' statements/behaviors, and admires people who stand up to them. Overall, the student had a Result-Oriented Pattern, which means verbalized ego/strength, dominance, independent, persistent, forceful/direct, and a quick-thinker. The ISFP student personality had DiSC Classic 2.0 results of Dominance = 1, influence = 5, Steadiness = 7, and Conscientiousness = 4. The student's potential blind spots were: avoid making decisions, allow others to decide for them, underrate/understate themselves, sensitive/vulnerable, and little confidence. The student's interaction with others was described as: loyal, committed, warmth, enthusiasm, little wish to dominate, and quite/unassuming. Overall, this student had an Agent Pattern, which means attentive to human relations and task aspects, empathetic/supportive, offer friendship, and low profile.

Finally, the ESFJ student personality had DiSC Classic 2.0 results of Dominance = 4, influence = 5, Steadiness = 3, and Conscientiousness = 3. The student's potential blind spots were: hard to face problems with people/things the care about, may jump to conclusions, tentative, and uncertain. The student's interaction with others was described as: interested in others, seeking pleasure from people around them, warmth/fellowship, and uncomfortable with conflict. Overall, this student had a Promoter Pattern, which means willingness to accept others, gregarious, socially adapt, verbally skilled, optimistic, and socializing.

A student response questionnaire was completed by students three times throughout the course, before formation of teams, at midterm, and after completion of the team project, in order to monitor certain preference changes (Table 1). The questionnaires were created based on research conducted to ensure the questions were appropriate in measuring the outcomes. The questionnaires utilized both Likert scale response questions and qualitative response questions. The data collected came from the students' responses from the questionnaires. The changes in preferences and opinions regarding extroverts vs. introverts, preference on teamwork, and assumed leadership personalities were monitored and documented throughout the course.

Table 1. Student Response Questionnaire

Question	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1. The DiSC 2.0 Self-Assessment produced accurate results about my personality.					
2. The MBTI Self-Assessment produced accurate results about my personality.					
3. I enjoy working in teams.					
4. Teamwork is an important element in being a Healthcare Administrator.					
5. I prefer to work on my own, with little interaction from others.					
6. There is a difference between a manager and a leader.					
7. I am usually the leader of the team.					
8. Extroverts make the best leaders.					
9. I would prefer to work with a group of extroverts.					
10. I would prefer to work with a group of extroverts.					
11. By taking these self-assessments, I have gained enhanced knowledge of my own personality type that I was previously unaware of.					
Qualitative Response Questions					
1. Which self-assessment result do you feel was most representative of your personality: DiSC 2.0 or MBTI? Explain.					
2. Were your results the same as the pre-test? Which do you feel is more reliable? Explain.					
3. Why do you feel that the results were different than what you thought your personality was initially?					
4. Do extroverts make better Healthcare Administrators?					

RESULTS

Table 2 illustrates the changes in the students' results from the questionnaires. The comparison of the results of the initial questionnaire and the results of the final questionnaire produced the most significant change. The results of the first questionnaire administered showed that 55% of students felt

extroverts make better health administrators. The second questionnaire showed minimal changes, if any. The results of the third questionnaire showed that 82% of students felt the assessments were a good method for creating their teams. The third questionnaire also concluded that 55% of students felt extroverts make better health administrators, reflecting no change in this domain.

Table 2. Mean scores for each administration of the Student Response Questionnaire

Question	Pre-Test Results	Mid-Term Results	Post-Test Results
1. The DiSC 2.0 Self-Assessment produced accurate results about my personality.	3.82	4.09	4.27
2. The MBTI Self-Assessment produced accurate results about my personality.	3.91	4.27	4
3. I enjoy working in teams.	3.46	3.55	3.64
4. Teamwork is an important element in being a Healthcare Administrator.	4.55	4.73	4.82
5. I prefer to work on my own, with little interaction from others.	2.89	2.55	3
6. There is a difference between a manager and a leader.	4.46	4.73	4.82
7. I am usually the leader of the team.	3.55	3.55	3.55
8. Extroverts make the best leaders.	3.18	3.09	3.18
9. I would prefer to work with a group of extroverts.	2.64	2.64	2.73
10. I would prefer to work with a group of extroverts.	3.09	3.36	3.18
11. By taking these self-assessments, I have gained enhanced knowledge of my own personality type that I was previously unaware of.	3.82	3.91	3.82

DISCUSSION

Based on the results that were obtained from the student response questionnaires, there is reason to believe that the common perception that extroverts make better health administrators does still exist to some extent. The number of students that felt this way in the beginning of the experiment felt the same way at the end. In the qualitative response section of the questionnaire, 55% of students expressed that they feel extroverts make better health administrators for a number of reasons: extroverts are assertive, they like to take risks, and they know how to lead a team. Though this perception does exist, 45% of students felt that introverts also made good health administrators.

Approximately 82% of students felt that the MBTI and DiSC Classic 2.0 self-assessments were a good method for creating their teams. The other 18% felt that their teams were not getting along and had poor communication, due to their lack of experience with teamwork. Overall, the self-assessments reflected positive effectiveness for team formation based on

their personality. A good mixture of personality types balances a team out and leads to better leadership.

There were several limitations of the study worth noting. One limitation was the impact of students missing class and having to complete the questionnaires at a later time, rather than in the same classroom setting at the same time as other students. It was also evident that some students did not want to verbally express their opinions on how effectively their teams were working together. For those students that did not have a good experience with their team members, they likely did not express that until the end of the project on the last questionnaire. A one-on-one, face-to-face evaluation would likely eliminate such subjection and elicit better responses. Finally, since students were aware they were being observed, the Hawthorne Effect could have also been a limitation.

CONCLUSIONS

Self-assessments are rapidly growing in screening processes, job placements, and project management. There is no denying that administering these self-assessments enables

potential employers to hire employees that best fit their organizations culture and norms. Self-assessments are equally important for team formations. In order for this method to be effective, one must create a team with a blended mix of personalities to ensure the team will have a balanced set of opinions and work styles. It is especially important for students to experience group work to prepare them for when they are released into the work field. It is a faculty responsibility to expose students to all types of personalities and require some type of engagement with each other. This method is by no means flawless; however, it does give students the ability to work with others in a team for purposes of completing a project. Introverts are typically not viewed as leaders; however, some introverts make great leaders. The common perception that extroverts make better health administrators still exists, even among the students that were a part of this study. In order to dispel this common belief, we must take it upon ourselves to encourage students that personality does not define an individual's work ability and outcomes.

The results of this study are valuable for educators in health administration. For one, educators can vary the type of assignments so that the strengths of both introverts and extroverts are considered. When forming teams for group projects, educators should consider both personality type and skill level of students in order to ensure teams are balanced and each student can make an equal contribution.

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