# PERSONALITY

## Introduction

Personality is a major psychological factor affecting behaviour of an individual. The word 'personality' is used very commonly in our daily lives to describe a person's job prospects, achievements, smartness, dressing sense, popularity, physical attraction, way of speaking etc. But, this view of personality is very narrow and this narrow view is not enough to understand and predict the behaviour of an individual in organisational context. In a broader sense, personality can be viewed as a dynamic concept which describes the growth and development of an individual's whole psychological system. Rather than looking at parts of the person, personality looks at some aggregate whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. A thorough study of personality will help us in understanding the differences between various individuals and examining why behaviour of individuals vary from each other in an organisation.

## Meaning and Definitions of Personality

The word 'personality' has been derived from the Latin word 'persona' which means to 'speak through'. This Latin word means the mask worn by the actors. Therefore, the personality refers to role which an individual displays to the public. Personality does not only mean the charm, beauty, smiling face and attitude of a person towards life. But, it is a dynamic concept which describes the growth and development of a person's whole psychological system. The concept of personality traditionally refers to how people-influence others through their external appearances and actions. But for the psychologists personality includes: I. Eternal appearances and behaviour ii. The inner awareness of self as a permanent organizing force, and iii. The particular organization of measureable traits, both inner and outer. Personality is an individual difference that lends consistency to a person's behaviour; Personality is a relatively stable set of characteristics that influence an individual's behaviour and can be described as the sum total of ways in which an individual reacts and interacts with others. The concept of personality can be better understood through the following mentioned definitions:

According to Gordon Allport, *"Personality is the dynamic organisation within the individual of those psychological systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment."*

According to Fred Luthans, *"Personality means how a person affects others and how he understands and views himself as well as pattern of inner and outer measurable traits and the person-situation interaction."*

Different psychologists interpreted personality in different ways. The above mentioned definitions of personality clearly explain that meaning of personality is much more than just the role which an individual displays to the public. Combining all these definitions together it can be said that personality represents the sum total of several attributes which are noticeable in an individual and which determine his pattern of behaviour.

## Determinants of Personality

After understanding the meaning of personality, the next question is what makes the personality of an individual or how the personality of an individual is developed. Major determinants of personality are discussed are as below:

*a) Heredity:* Heredity is referred to those attributes of personality which are determined at the time of conception of an individual. The characteristics such as body type, build, facial attractiveness, eye colour, hair colour, height, temperament, sex, energy level and reflexes are generally inherited from the parents either completely or partially. This approach argues that the basis of human personality lies in the molecular structure of the genes.

*b) Environment:* No doubt that heredity is an important determinant of the personality, but, if all traits of personality were determined by heredity, they would be fixed at the time of the birth and would never change in the life span of an individual. Sadly, it is not true. This means that personality of an individual is determined as much by the environment as it does by the heredity. Environment of a person which affects his personality is comprised of culture, family, society and situation. Influence of all these factors on personality of an individual can be explained as below:

*Culture:* Culture defines the norms, values, attitudes and beliefs which are passed from one generation to another generation. Every individual learns different values and the way he should behave in different situations from the culture to which he belongs. The way people

develop their attitude towards independence, competition, aggression, task assigned, risk taking, and cooperation is determined by the culture. Every culture has its own sub-cultures, which further establish moral values, style of dress, standards of cleanliness, definition of success etc. These cultural sub groups have great influence on personality development of an individual. For example: A girl who is born and brought up in a rich family of an urban area will behave differently from a girl who is born and brought up in a poor family of slum area.

*Family:* Family is one of very important determinants of personality. It affects the personality development of an individual specifically in the early phases of the life. Influence of family on a person's personality is determined by the following factors:

• Socio-economic level of the family

• Family size

• Birth order of the child

 • Race

• Religion

• Education level of parents

Every child identifies a role model in the family and tries to behave like the role model which he chooses. The process of identification can be viewed from three different perspectives given as below:

• It can be viewed as similarity of behaviour.

• It can be viewed as child's motives and desires to become like role model.

• It is viewed as the process through which it acquires the traits of role model.

*Society:* Various groups and relevant people of society as well as the organisation exert a great influence on the personality development of an individual. This phenomenon is called socialisation. In other words, it can be said that socialisation involves the process by which a person learns and acquires from the society, the behaviour patterns that are customary and acceptable to the family, society and organisations.

*Situation:* Situational factors also play a very important role in determining the personality of an individual. It is often said that life is a collection of experiences. Every individual faces different experiences in his life which exert a great deal of influence on his personality development. It sometimes offers constraints and sometimes provides push to a person's behaviour. For example:  A physically weak and coward person sometimes performs heroically in saving life of his close one.

# PERSONALITY THEORIES

# Psychoanalytic Theory

Definition: The Psychoanalytic Theory is the personality theory, which is based on the notion that an individual gets motivated more by unseen forces that are controlled by the conscious and the rational thought. Sigmund Freud is closely related to the psychoanalytic theory. According to him, the human behavior is formed through an interaction between three components of the mind, i.e. *Id, Ego and Super Ego*.
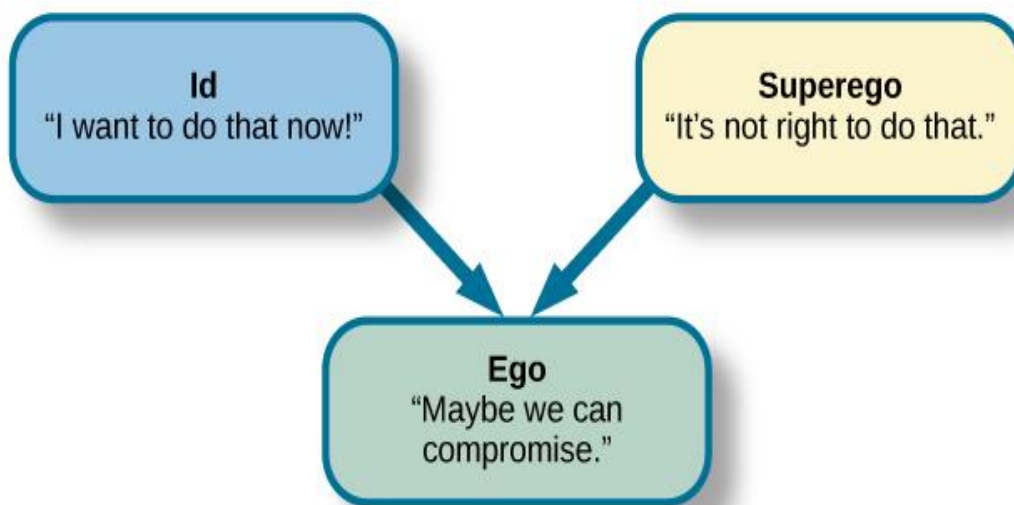


**1) Id:** Id is the primitive part of the mind that seeks immediate gratification of biological or instinctual needs. The biological needs are the basic physical needs and while the instinctual needs are the natural or unlearned needs, such as hunger, thirst, etc. Id is the unconscious part of the mind; that act instantaneously without giving much thought to what is right and what is wrong.

Example: If your Id passed through a boy playing with a ball, the immediate urge to get that ball will drive you to snatch it by any means, this is irrational and may lead to the conflict between the boys. Thus, Id is the source of psychic energy, a force that is behind all the mental forces.

**2) Super-Ego:** The Super-Ego is related to the social or the moral values that an individual inculcates as he matures. It acts as an ethical constraint on behavior and helps an individual to develop his conscience. As the individual grows in the society, he learns the cultural values and the norms of the society which help him to differentiate between right and wrong.

Example: If the super-ego passed that boy playing with a ball, it would not snatch it, as it would know that snatching is bad and may lead to a quarrel. Thus, super ego act as a

constraint on your behavior and guides you to follow the right path. But if the Id is stronger than super-ego, you will definitely snatch the ball by any means.

**3) Ego:** Ego is the logical and the conscious part of the mind which is associated with the reality principle. This means it balances the demands of Id and super-ego in the context of real life situations. Ego is conscious and hence keeps a check on Id through a proper reasoning of an external environment.

Example: If you pass through the same boy playing with the ball, your ego will mediate the conflict between the Id and super-ego and will decide to buy a new ball for yourself. This may hurt you Id, but the ego would take this decision to reach to a compromise situation between the Id and super-ego by satisfying the desire of getting a ball without committing any unpleasant social behavior.

## Structure of Personality Summary

### Comparison of Freud's Three Systems of Personality

|  | Id | Ego | Superego |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Nature** | Represents biological aspect | Represents psychological aspect | Represents societal and parental aspect |
| **Level** | Unconscious | Conscious, preconscious, and unconscious | Conscious, preconscious, and unconscious |
| **Principle** | Pleasure | Reality | Moralistic and idealistic |
| **Purpose** | Seek pleasure and avoid pain | Adapt to reality while controlling the id and superego | Represent right and wrong |
| **Aim** | Immediate gratification | Safety, compromise, and delayed gratification | Perfection |

# Socio-Psychological Theory

Definition: The Socio-Psychological Theory asserts that individual and society are interlinked.

- This means, an individual strives to meet the needs of the society and the society helps him to attain his goals. Through this interaction, the personality of an individual is determined.
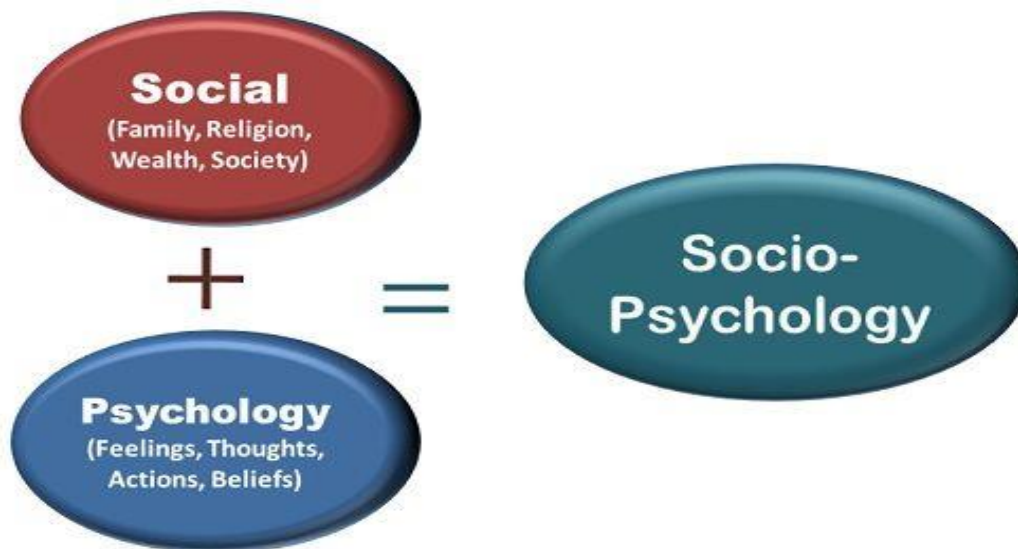
- The Socio-Psychological theory is the contribution of Adler, Horney, Forman and Sullivan. This theory is also called as Neo-Freudian Theory because it differs from the Freud's psychoanalytic theory in the following respects:

- According to this theory, the social variables and not the biological instincts are the important determinants in shaping the individual's personality.

- Here, the motivation is conscious, i.e. an individual knows what are his needs and wants and what kind of behavior is required to meet these needs.

- Thus, the theorists believe that socio-psychological factors, i.e. the combination of both the social (family, society, wealth, religion) and the psychological factors (feelings, thoughts, beliefs) play an important role in shaping the personality of an individual.

# Trait Theory

Definition: The Trait Theory asserts that an individual is composed of a set of definite predisposition attributes called as traits. These traits are distinguishable and often long lasting quality or a characteristic of a person that makes him different from the others.

The two most common trait theories are:
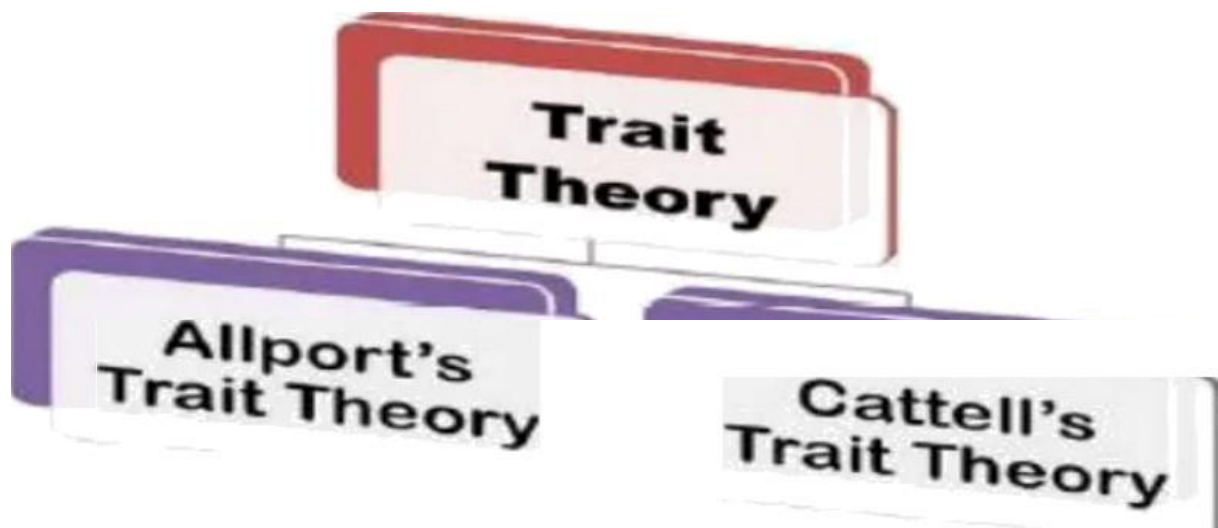
## Allport's Trait Theory:-

- This theory is given by Gordon Allport. According to him, the personality of an individual can be studied through a distinction between the common traits and the personal dispositions.

- The common traits are used to compare the people on the grounds of six values, such as religious, social, economic, political, aesthetic and theoretical.

- Besides the common traits, there are personal dispositions which are unique and are classified as follows:

- Cardinal Traits: The cardinal traits are powerful, and few people possess personality dominated by a single trait. Such as Mother Teresa's altruism (selfless concern for others).

- Central Traits: These traits are the general characteristics possessed by many individuals in the varying degrees. Such as loyalty, friendliness, agreeableness, kindness, etc.

- Secondary Trait: The secondary traits show why at times, a person behaves differently than his usual behavior. Such as a jolly person may get miserable when people try to tease him.

## Cattell's Trait Theory

This trait theory is given by Raymond Cattell. According to him, the sample of a large number of variables should be studied to have a proper understanding of the individual personality.

He collected the life data (everyday life behaviors of individuals), experimental data (standardizing experiments by measuring actions), questionnaire data (responses gathered from the introspection of an individual's behavior) and done the factor analysis to identify the traits that are related to one another.

# Self-Theory:-

- The Self Theory emphasizes on the set of perceptions an individual has for himself and the perceptions of the relationships he has with others and the other aspects of life. **Carl Rogers** has contributed significantly towards the self-theory.

- The self-theory comprises of four factors that are explained below:

**1) Self-Image:** Self-image means what an individual thinks about himself. Everybody has certain beliefs about themselves, such as whom or what they are, these beliefs form the self-image and identity of a person.

According to Erikson, identity is formed through a lifelong development usually unconscious to the individual and his society, i.e. an individual forms perception about himself unconsciously, according to the social circumstances.

**2) Ideal-Self:** The ideal-self means, the way an individual would like to be. It is very much different from the self-image, as it shows the ideal position perceived by an individual, whereas the self-image is the reality that an individual perceives. Thus, there could be a gap between these two.

The ideal-self-acts as a stimulus to motivate an individual to undertake those activities that is in compliance with the characteristics of his ideal self.

**3) Looking-Glass-Self:** The looking-glass self means an individual's perception of how others are perceiving his qualities or feeling about him. Simply, it is the perception of other's perception, i.e. perceiving what others perceive about yourself and not see what actually you are.

**4) Real-Self:** The real-self is what others show you with respect to your self-image. An individual's self-image is confirmed when others responses to him and shares their beliefs or perception, about what they actually feel about him.

# The Big Five Personality Model

The Big Five Personality Model is a framework which provides five basic dimensions of personality viz. Extraversion, Agreeableness, Emotional stability, Conscientiousness and Openness to experience. These five traits are so important and describe most of the significant variations of personality that they are named as 'The Big Five Model of Personality'. These traits are discussed as follows:

**Extraversion:**

This dimension of personality describes the comfort level of an individual in terms of their relationships with others. Extroverts are more talkative, social, gregarious, friendly and confident. In opposite to this introverts are reserved, less social and calm.

**Agreeableness:**

This trait refers to an individual's ability to get along with others. Highly agreeable personalities are cooperative and caring. Whereas, people who score low on this dimension tend to be uncooperative, disagreeable and self-centred.

**Emotional Stability:**

This trait reflects a person's ability to withstand stress. People who are highly emotionally stable tend to be calm, secure and self-confident. On the other hand, people who are emotionally weak tend to be depressed, nervous and insecure.

**Conscientiousness:**

This dimension assesses the reliability score of an individual. Highly conscientious people are more dependable, reliable, systematic and well organised. Whereas, people who have low conscientiousness are irresponsible, less dependable, negligent and unorganised.

**Openness to Experience:**

This dimension measures a person's interests and creativity. Extremely open people are highly creative and are always open to new ideas. Whereas, people who score low on this dimension are less interested or don't respond to new ideas. They generally stick to the conventional ways of doing things.

Various researchers have found strong relationship between these five dimensions of personality and individual's performance on the job. The employees who score high on conscientiousness tend to acquire higher job knowledge and perform better on the job. Individuals who are emotionally stable tend to be happier and satisfied from the job as compared to those who are emotionally weak. This is because emotionally stable people generally think positively and experience less negative emotions. In addition to this, extraverts also stay happier on their jobs, express their feelings freely and experience positive emotions as compared to introverts. Extraverts also tend to perform better in the jobs that involve frequent interpersonal interactions and require more social skills. The table given below summarizes the effect of big five traits on the performance of individuals on the job.

| Big Five Traits | Why it is Relevant | What does it Affect |
|---|---|---|
| **Emotional stability** | Less negative thinking and few negative emotions. | Higher levels of job satisfaction |
| | Less hyper-vigilant | Low level of stress |
| **Extraversion** | Better interpersonal skills | Higher performance |
| | Social dominance | Enhanced leadership |
| | Emotionally expressive | Higher job satisfaction |
| **Openness** | Increased learning | Training performance |
| | More creative | Enhanced leadership |
| | More flexible and autonomous | More adaptable to change |
| **Agreeableness** | Better liked | Higher performance |
| | More confirming | Lower levels of deviant behavior |
| **Conscientiousness** | Great effort and persistence | Higher performance |
| | More drive and discipline | Enhanced leadership |
| | Better organised and planning | Greater longevity |

# Other Personality Traits Relevant to Organisational Behaviour

Other personality traits influencing personality of a person are discussed as follows:

**1) Authoritarianism:**

This concept was developed by a psychologist Adorno during World War II to measure susceptibility to autocratic, fascistic and anti-democratic appeals. Since then, this concept has been used to describe human personality which strongly believes in the legitimacy of formal authority, set rules and regulations. Authoritarian people generally treat obedience to authority as necessary, view people negatively, stick to the conventional value systems towards people and work, very rigid and against decision making based on the feelings and emotions. Such type of people generally prefer organised and structured work environment governed by rules and regulations. They prefer autocratic style of leadership, respect the people who are on the higher positions of organisational hierarchy and expect respect from those who are working under them.

**2) Locus of control:**

Locus of control refers to an individual's belief that events happening around are either in one's own control or determined by some forces out of one's control. The former types of individuals are called internals and have internal locus of control. The latter types of people are externals and have external locus of control. It is an individual's generalised belief regarding Internal vs. External control over the situation surrounding him.

• Internals: Internals believe that they are masters of their fate and whatever is happening in their lives is due to their own hard work. Internals believe that they have control over their behaviour and therefore, they are more active in seeking information and performing better on the jobs. Internals usually enjoy higher levels of job satisfaction than others.

• Externals: Externals are those who believe that whatever is happening in their lives is determined by their luck or fate or some other outside forces which are beyond their control. It has been seen that externals tend to be frequently absent from their jobs, less satisfied and less involved in the jobs than the internals.

**3) Machiavellianism:**

The term Machiavellianism was derived from the works of Nicolo Machiavelli. Machiavellianism is referred to the tendency of an individual to manipulate others in order to acquire and gain power. Such people are more likely to be involved into organisational politics. The people who display this trait with higher intensity are called High Machs. Prominent characteristics of high Machs are discussed as follows: • High Machs are more pragmatic, emotionally stable and tend to adopt any type of means to achieve desired ends.

• They are more manipulative and persuasive. They usually win more.

• They generally flourish when they interact with others directly than indirectly.

• These people are more likely to be successful in the environment where minimum rules and regulations prevail.

• They are more self-confident and have high self-esteem. In an organisational setting, whether High Machs will prove to be good employees or not will depend upon the nature of the job assigned to them. They are more likely to perform better in the jobs that require bargaining skills or in the jobs that are more rewarding.

**4) Achievement orientation:**

It is another personality trait which is very useful to predict the behaviour of individuals at work. People with high need to achieve tend to put continuous efforts to do things in better way. Such people strongly believe that their success or failure is due to their own strengths or weaknesses and their actions. These people neither like to perform very easy task as they don't seem to be challenging nor they like to perform very difficult tasks as chances of failure are high in case of difficult tasks. Therefore, they prefer the tasks that involve moderate level of difficulty. High achievers generally perform better when continuous performance feedback is given to them and the job has direct relationship between efforts and rewards.

**5) Self-Esteem:**

Self-esteem refers to the feeling of one's liking or disliking for oneself or it can be denoted as degree of self-respect a person has for himself. This trait is directly related to an individual's desire for success. People who have high self-esteem have full confidence in their abilities and tend to undertake challenging and unconventional tasks. Such people are more satisfied with their jobs, friendlier, more affectionate and establish sound interpersonal relationships on the jobs. On contrary to this, people with low self-esteem are more prone to be influenced by external forces and tend to seek approvals of their behaviours from others than those with high self-esteem. Such people when posted on higher managerial positions tend to please others and therefore, less likely to choose unconventional methods of doing the things. They are generally depressed and blame others for their failures.

**6) Self-Monitoring:**

Self-Monitoring is a personality trait which describes a person's ability to adjust his or her behaviour to external factors. Individuals with high self-monitoring trait pay considerable attention to external cues, what is appropriate in particular situations and behaviour differently in different situations. Low self-monitors, in contrast, are not as vigilant to situational cues, and act from internal states rather than paying attention to the situation. As a result, the behaviour of low self-monitors is consistent across situations. High self-monitors, because their behaviour varies with the situation, appears to be more unpredictable and less consistent. High self-monitors are capable of presenting striking, contradictions between their public persona and their private self. Low self-monitors can't disguise themselves this way**.**

**7) Risk Taking:**

Every individual is different from another individual in their willingness to take risks and chances. This trait exhibits an individual's propensity to assume or avoid risk. The degree to which managers are willing to take risks influence their decision making and how much information they require before making their choice. High-risk-taking managers make more rapid decisions and use less information in making their choices than low-risk-taking managers. Generally, managers in organizations tend to be risk aversive; there are still individual differences on this dimension. As a result it makes sense to recognize these differences and even to consider aligning risk-taking propensity with specific job demands. **8) Type A Personality and type B personality:** Individuals can also be categorised into Type A personality and type B personality on the basis of their general behaviour pattern. Type A personality describes a person who displays the characteristics like competitiveness, time urgency, social status, insecurity, aggression, hostility and a quest for achievements. Characteristics of Type A personalities are discussed as follows:

**Type A personalities:**

(i) Hurried moving, eating and walking.

(ii) Tend to undertake two or more tasks simultaneously;

(iii) Cannot be relaxed and don't believe in having leisure time

(iv) Believe in evaluating their success in terms of how much they gain from everything. The alternative to the Type A personality is the Type B personality. People with Type B personalities are usually relaxed, incompetent and easy going.

**Type B Personality:**

(i)     Never become impatient and never face hurriedness.
(ii)    Never discuss achievements with others unless or until situation demands so.
(iii)   More relaxed and Play for fun and relaxation than to win.

**9) Self Efficacy:**

It can be described as an individual's belief in his own capability of performing a task. The people who have higher self-efficacy are generally more confident that they will succeed in a task. Whereas, the people with low self-efficacy are more likely to slacken their effort or give up altogether in difficult situations. In addition, individuals high in self-efficacy seem to respond to negative feedback with increased effort and motivation and those who score low in self-efficacy are likely to reduce their effort when given negative feedback. Believing in one's own capability to get something done is an important facilitator of success. There is strong evidence that self-efficacy leads to high performance on a wide variety of physical and mental tasks. Managers can help employees develop their self-efficacy. This can be done by providing avenues for showing performance, and rewarding an employee's achievements. 6. Summary Personality is a major psychological factor affecting behaviour of an individual. Personality can be viewed as a dynamic concept which describes the growth and development of an individual's whole psychological system. Rather than looking at parts of the person, personality looks at some aggregate whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. Personality does not mean the charm, beauty, smiling face, attitude of a person towards life. But, it is a dynamic concept which describes the growth and development of a person's whole psychological system. In order to understand how the personality of an individual is developed, four major determinants of personality viz. Heredity, environment, society and situation have been discussed. Personality traits can be defined as enduring characteristics that describe an individual's behaviour. A trait can be better described as tendency of an individual to respond in an equivalent manner to various stimuli he is facing in daily life. In past, various researches have been performed to identify the primary traits determining individual behaviour predominantly. These all researches resulted into a long list of traits which were very difficult to generalize. But, two studies namely: The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and The Big Five Personality Model provided a useful framework for classifying traits of human personality. Among these also, the big five model of personality is most popular in understanding and predicting human personality. In addition to this, other personality traits influencing human behaviour at work are: Authoritarianism, locus of

control, Machiavellianism, self-monitoring, self-efficacy, risk taking, type A and type B personality, achievement- orientation and self-esteem.