

## PERSONALITY-ENVIRONMENT CONGRUENCE AND ITS RELATION TO JOB SATISFACTION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS\*

Ting See How & Abdul Halim Othman

*Department of Psychology*

*Malaysian National University, Malaysia*

*The purpose of this study was to examine the personality-environment congruence and its relation to job satisfaction as hypothesized in the Holland's career choice model (1985). The results of this study showed that the social type of personality was dominant in the personality profile of teachers. Personality-environment congruence existed among the teachers in 12 major teaching fields. However, the degree of congruency did not relate significantly to the level of job satisfaction. As a whole the majority of the subjects experienced moderate level of job satisfaction (72.9%). They derived satisfaction from co-workers (68.0%), and supervision (57.4%); were moderately satisfied in work (61.0%); and least satisfied with pay (34.8%), and promotions (53.3%).*

Career choice is important to everyone because it affects both individual and society. A wise career choice will result in career stability, achievement and satisfaction, and increase the quality of work life of an individual (Holland, 1985). This will further enhance productivity and the development of a nation.

In career psychology, Holland's career choice model (1985) is believed to be the most suitable interactive model used to explain people's career behaviours (Spokane, 1985). Holland (1985) assumed that an individual will search for the type of work environment that matches his personality. This enables him to exercise his skills, express his values, and attitudes, and involve in agreeable problems and tasks. On the other hand, organizations will select workers who have the abilities, values and attitudes that comply with the needs of the organization. Therefore, a fit between the individual's needs and the demands of the work environment is vital.

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\* Correspondance regarding this article should be addressed to Abdul Halim Othman, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Malaysian National University, 43600 UKM Bengi, Selangor, Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

Ting See How is a post-graduate student in the Department of Psychology, Malaysian National University, Malaysia

Many studies have been carried out to investigate the causal effect of job satisfaction. Research suggests that satisfaction is a function of both the person and the environment (Lawler, 1973). Similarly, Holland (1985) believes that satisfaction is a function of the person's characteristics, such as, career interest and personality variables; and the environment characteristics, such as, situation or atmosphere that are formed by the people who are dominant in that environment.

Previous literature showed that the model of person-environment congruence had mostly obtained positive results (Holland, 1985; Spokane, 1985). Congruency was related positively to job satisfaction. Thus a high degree of congruency leads to a high level of job satisfaction (Smart, Elton, & McLaughlin, 1986). The intra-occupational studies using the model of congruency-satisfaction also showed positive results (Hener & Meir, 1981; Kelso & Taylor, 1980; Meir & Engel, 1986; Meir & Erez, 1981; Wiggins, Lederer, Salkowe, & Rys, 1983; Wiggins & Weslander, 1986). A need was felt to examine further the relationship of job satisfaction to personality-environment congruence among specific professions in Malaysia.

The present study was specifically designed to examine the personality-environment congruence and its relationship to job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in West Malaysia.

## METHOD

### Sample

The sample consisted of 469 teachers from 27 secondary schools in West Malaysia comprising of 12 major teaching fields. Teachers were selected as they comprised a broad range of the occupational spectrum as defined by Holland (1977b).

The 12 major teaching fields were classified by the following with Holland's environment code in parenthesis: Language teacher (ASE), Art/Music teacher (ASI), Account/Commerce teacher (CSE), Geography teacher (IRS), Mathematic/Science teacher (ISR), Industrial Art/Living Skill teacher (RIS), Agriculture teacher (RSI), Home-Economic/Economic teacher (SAE), Special Education teacher (SAI), Counselling teacher (SEA), History teacher (SEI), Physical Education teacher (SRE). These environment codes were represented in the Occupations Finders (Holland, 1977a).

## **Instruments**

The Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) used in conjunction with each respondent's occupation to determine the personality codes (R=Realistic, I=Investigative, A=Artistic, S=Social, E=Enterprising, C=Conventional). 20 items from VPI (7th revision) based on the Dictionary of Occupational Classification Malaysia (1969) were adapted to suit the local culture. A scoring stencil as shown in the VPI Manual (Holland, 1978) was used to calculate the total score of the personality codes from each respondent. The process of ranking was conducted for the scores of the personality codes. The highest score was given rank 6, the second high score ranked 5, the third ranked 4, the fourth ranked 3, the fifth ranked 2, and the lowest score ranked 1. These procedures determined the personality profile of the respondents.

Job satisfaction was determined through administering the Job Descriptive Index (JDI: Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969). JDI consisted of 72 items, which measures 5 dimensions of job satisfaction: work itself, salary, promotion opportunities, supervisor and supervision, and co-workers. For each dimension of job satisfaction, the scores between 37 to 54 were considered highly satisfied, 19 to 36 as moderately satisfied, and 18 or below as dissatisfied.

Congruence was calculated according to the revised Compatibility Index (CI) developed by Wiggins and Moody (1981). This is derived from the 'match' between any two Holland codes using simple position weighted order scale. The primary, secondary, and tertiary letters of the environment and personality codes were weighted in all comparisons, Therefore the CI used three-letter codes has 9-point scale (0-8). The CI is derived by assigning the numbers as designated:

- 8= Letters and order of both codes match exactly (CRI-CRI)
- 7= Primary letters match with secondary and tertiary letters of one code reversed in the other code (CRI-CRI); or only primary and secondary letters of both codes match in order (CRI-CRE).
- 6= All letters of both codes match but primary letters are not the same (RIC-CIR), (RIC-IRC), (RIC-ICR).

- 5= Primary letters match, with secondary or tertiary letters of one code matching tertiary letter of the other code (RIC-REC), (RIC-REI); or primary and secondary letters of one code reversed in other code (RIC-ICE).
- 4= Primary and secondary or tertiary letters of one code match any two letters of other code in any order (RIC-ERI), (RIC-EIR), (RIC-SRC), (RIC-ECR); or primary letter of one code matches primary letter of the other code (RIC-RES).
- 3= Secondary and tertiary letters of one code found in the other code in any order (IEC-SCE), (IEC-SEC); or primary letter of one code matches secondary letter of the other code (IEC-AIS).
- 2= Primary letter of one code matches tertiary letter of the other (SEC-AIS); or secondary letter of one code matches secondary or tertiary letter of other code (SEC-AEI), (SEC-AIE).
- 1= Tertiary letters of both codes match (AIS-ECS).
- 0= No letters match in either code (AIR-ECS).

## Procedure

With the permission of Ministry of Education and the States Education Department, the questionnaires (consisted of VPI and JDI) were posted by mail to the principals of the schools. The principals after administering them on their teachers, sent back the questionnaires to the researchers within one month.

## RESULTS

The data collected were analysed by percentages, *t*-tests, *ANOVA* and Kendall's coefficient of Concordance (*w*). The Compatibility Index (Wiggins & Moody, 1981) was used to measure the degree of congruency between the personality code and the environment code.

Table 1

*t*-test analyses for social type personality with R, I, A, E, C types

Personality Type	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Social (S)	5.2580	3.015	20.03*
Realistic (R)	2.5309	2.814	
Social (S)	5.2580	3.015	6.75*
Investigative (I)	4.2473	3.668	
Social (S)	5.2580	3.015	12.74*
Artistic (A)	3.4158	3.162	
Social (S)	5.2580	3.015	16.96*
Enterprising (E)	3.1301	2.639	
Social (S)	5.2580	3.015	17.63*
Conventional (C)	2.8785	2.826	

*N*= 469, *d.f.*= 468, \**p*< .05

In Table 1, the *t*-test comparisons showed that there is a significant difference in *t*-values (*p*< .05) between social trait and other traits, for example, Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Enterprising (E), Conventional (C). The social orientation has emerged as one of the three-letter codes of personality according to Holland's classification among the

subjects. This means that the social personality exists as the dominant type in the personality profile of the teachers.

Table 2

*Test of coefficient of concordance and chi-square for personality patterns as related to environment codes*

Holland's Environment Codes	Personality Patterns	<i>N</i>	<i>W</i>	Chi-square	<i>p</i>
ASE	SAERIC	79	.3467	136.96	.0000*
ASI	SAIECR	52	.4331	112.61	.0000*
CSE	CESARI	21	.5706	59.91	.0000*
IRS	ISREAC	30	.3702	55.53	.0000*
ISR	ISRCEA	132	.3350	221.07	.0000*
RIS	SIRCEA	19	.5430	51.58	.0000*
RSI	SIRCEA	17	.5564	47.28	.0000*
SAE	SEACIR	46	.4706	108.25	.0000*
SAI	SIEACR	9	.5419	24.39	.0002*
SEA	SAIECR	5	.6055	15.14	.0098*
SEI	SIECRA	50	.3854	96.34	.0000*
SRE	SREACI	9	.5682	25.57	.0001*

*N* = 469, *d.f.* = 5, \**p* < .05

In Table 2, the Kendall's coefficient of Concordance (*w*) and *chi-square* analyses showed that all the *w*-values are significant between the

environment codes and personality codes for all twelve major fields of teaching ( $p < .05$ ).

Table 3

*Average rank, Holland's environment code, and personality profile as related to major teaching fields*

Major Teaching Fields	VPI Scale						Personality Profile	VPI Code	CI
	R	I	A	S	E	C			
Language	ASE 3.3228	2.8038	4.4304	4.8608	3.9873	2.5945	SAERIC	SAE	6
Art/Music	ASI 2.2789	4.2596	4.4135	5.0192	2.6539	2.3750	SAIECR	SAI	6
Account/ Commerce	CSE 2.2619	1.9762	2.5476	4.6429	4.6429	4.9286	CESARI	CRS	7
Geography	IRS 3.6333	4.8500	2.6833	4.7333	2.7833	2.3167	ISREAC	ISR	7
Mathematics/ Science	ISR 3.2197	4.8939	2.5492	4.7311	2.5947	2.9886	ISRCEA	ISR	8
Industrial Art/Living Skill	RIS 4.5263	4.7632	1.8421	4.8158	2.4737	2.5789	SIRCEA	SIR	6
Agriculture	RSI 3.8529	5.0000	1.7647	5.0294	2.5882	2.7647	SIRCEA	SIR	6
Economics/Home Economics	SAE 1.7935	2.5435	4.0544	5.2717	4.0978	3.2391	SEACIR	SEA	7
Special Education	SAI 2.2778	4.2778	2.8889	5.8889	2.9444	2.7222	SIEACR	SIE	5
Counselling	SEA 2.4000	3.6000	3.6000	6.0000	2.8000	2.6000	SAIECR	SAI	5
History	SEI 2.3100	4.1000	2.2800	5.1700	2.3850	3.2900	SIECRA	SIE	7
Physical Education	SRE 4.4444	1.7222	3.5000	5.3333	3.7778	2.2222	SREACI	SEE	8

CI denotes compatibility index.

The Compatibility Index (CI) further shows a high degree of congruence, that is CI value is between 5 to 8, for these codes among the subjects (Table 3). The results show that the teachers have chosen the work environment that fits their personality orientation. Thus, the model of personality-environment congruence is supported.

Table 4

*Percentage of subjects and levels of job satisfaction (N=469)*

Factors of Satisfaction	Levels of Job Satisfaction		
	High	Moderate	Low
Work	31.3 (147)	61.0 (286)	7.7 (36)
Co-workers	68.0 (319)	28.4 (133)	3.6 (17)
Pay	19.2 (90)	46.1 (216)	34.8 (163)
Promotions	9.0 (42)	37.7 (177)	53.3 (250)
Supervision	57.4 (269)	39.0 (183)	3.6 (17)
Overall Satisfaction	24.1 (113)	72.9 (342)	3.0 (14)

*Figures in parenthesis show the number of subjects*

Table 4 shows that the majority of the subjects (72.9%) experienced a moderate level of job satisfaction. The subjects were most satisfied in co-workers (68.0%), and supervision (57.4%) but least satisfied in promotions (53.3%), and variable of pay (34.8%).

Table 5

*Degree of congruency and job satisfaction*

Factors of Satisfaction	SS	MS	F	p
CI+Work	363.33	51.91	0.68	.689
CI+Co-workers	1308.75	186.96	1.81	.083
CI+Pay	268.21	38.32	0.26	.970
CI+Promotions	636.13	90.88	0.58	.773
CI+Supervision	686.64	98.09	1.00	.433
CI+Overall Satisfaction	5116.36	730.91	0.60	.758

*N= 469, d.f= 7*

The two-way ANOVA tested the relationship of the degree of congruency on every factor of job satisfaction and overall job satisfaction (Table 5). The *F*-values for all the analyses did not show significant relationships ( $p > .05$ ). This means that the relative degree of congruency



(high or low) shows no relation with the level of job satisfaction taken as a whole or separately.

## DISCUSSION

The social personality has emerged as dominant in the personality profile of the secondary school teachers. This finding is similar to the other studies related to Holland's (1985) theory of career choice (see, for example, Ooi, 1987; Wiggins, 1982; Wiggins et al., 1983).

The social personality carries the characteristics such as helpfulness, sociable, humanistic, and persuasive. A social person has good oral and interpersonal skills. Therefore, the teaching profession is a typical social environment. An effective and dedicated teacher not only possesses good knowledge and skills in the process of teaching and learning but also to have social type of personality.

People seek work environments which are similar to their personality orientation (Holland, 1985; Roe, 1956). A high degree of congruency between personality and environment for the teachers in 12 major teaching fields shows that the personality characteristics match the demands of the environment. The congruency is conducive to achieving career stability, success and satisfaction because one is able to implement one's self concept.

The high degree of congruency in the teaching profession may be attributed to two processes: the selection process acts as an early process of evaluation in employment, and the socialization in the organization begins after the membership (Chatman, 1991). Thus, people create their environments and then the environment influences the people (Holland, 1985).

A high degree of congruency is expected to result in a high level of job satisfaction. This is because one is able to work with people who have similar tastes, talents, and values. The results of this study did not support Holland's hypothesis (1985). However, they tend to support the results of some other studies (e.g., Marcic, Aiuppa, & Watson, 1989; Spokane & Derby, 1979).

Holland's theory of career choice (1985) is an interactive model. A person's abilities, values, and attitudes seek to match with the organizational requirements. On the other hand, the organization provides

the facilities to fulfil a person's needs. The present study shows that the majority of the teachers (72.9%) only experienced a moderate level of job satisfaction, and they are least satisfied in promotions (53.3%), and pay (34.8%). Therefore, the congruency-satisfaction model is not supported. This may probably be due to the reason that the needs of the teachers are often not fully met.

A congruence situation exists when a person's needs are met. Learning theory (Meir & Yaari, 1988) states that one will receive positive reinforcement if his behaviour is congruent with the environment. This will enhance satisfaction. If one is forced to receive negative reinforcement, then his behaviour will change adversely or he may leave the environment. Thus, job dissatisfaction may result in turnovers, absenteeism, low productivity, burnout or other negative career behaviours.

Personality-environment congruence and job satisfaction are, thus important in the teaching profession. These problems should be addressed by the relevant authorities more seriously, because the satisfied teachers would be able to serve the teaching profession better (Awang, 1993).

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