CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

1.0   Introduction

The term 'personality' tends to be associated with 'appearance' or is based on one's exuberance of character. Therefore, the tendency arises for us to label people as an "interesting person" or "a dull personality". When referring to a person as a "strong personality", assumptions are made that he or she is someone who is domineering and assertive, with bold or daring ideas. On the other hand, a boring unimaginative, submissive, docile character is described as a weak or even dull personality. Thus, these prototype stigma of a person is often viewed by many of us.

However, psychologists use the term 'personality' within the scientific psychology that studies individuals. Pervin (1970) says that personality theorists define personality as "those structural and dynamic properties of an individual as they reflect themselves in characteristics responses to situations" (p.2). In addition to it, Allport (1961) views personality as "a dynamic organization within the individual of those psychological systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought".

Personality is a complex study as the making of man is subjected and determined by many factors such as his genes, socio-economic environment, culture, education, religion, beliefs. Therefore one's personality is constantly moulded and developed through transformations of age, era and time.

Thus, this project will deal with how the personality of teachers could be adapted or adjusted to the socio-environment. How could the personal skills of one

help in the inter/intra personal relationship? How does an understanding of one's own personality and others further create a harmonious and lively environment?

Being in the teaching profession for almost 9 years, I decided to work on something close to my heart, teachers in the school. Schools are institutions which produce and shape/mould pupils/students. It encompasses teachers, students, the school administration, its co-workers and the parents.

Teachers with students and teachers with co-teachers have to work as a team in order for teaching-learning to take place. Thus, communication together with inter/intra personal skills would help in enhancing a better relationship with students and other teachers. The understanding of one's personality and others would enable teachers to understand students and fellow teachers. It would help one to make adaptations and to create a peaceful, harmonious work environment.

1.2 Problem Statement

A teacher in the 60's or even the 70's, is seen as a person serving in a noble profession. Then, a teacher was revered and looked upon as beacon of society. The Sun (30 Jun 2001) reports that the 280,000 strong profession has nursed gnawing grievances over many years and morale has kept sinking. Also, the article by Vimala Nair in The Sunday Star, dated 26 November 2000 dwells on how "*school life makes teachers prone to mental illness*" and depicts the grievances of the teachers (Appendix L). Herein, teachers encounter various pressures from students, administrators, parents, society and the education system.

All these tend to cause dissatisfactions among teachers. In an article in The Star (21 January 2001), Mallika Vasugi, shares her observation of teachers and reports, "Beware! Teachers at war" (Appendix M). This also indicates that relationships among teachers have been strained. There is so much of grievances/ misunderstandings/ stress/tensions tantamounting in their little hearts. They often lament that there is "too much to be done", little understanding among teachers, staff, parents and students. Teachers find it a 'chore' to impart knowledge. Enter a school today, and talk to any one of the teachers. During the conversation, they might say that students these days are "not appreciative, spoilt, uncooperative, egoistic, unruly, indisciplined" and the list can go on

The main problem at this juncture is, teachers have failed to explore into their own personality strengths and weaknesses. Teachers have in the years made a general assumption and come-up with a layman's understanding that students are constantly challenging them. They find teaching in the classroom is like encountering a battalion in a war. Besides the students, teachers among teachers find it difficult to work in teams. This is caused by a lack of understanding of one's own personality and what is amiss is the interpersonal skills among teachers. As a result of this, statements like 'she's too fussy', 'perkara kecil macam itu pun, nak hantar memo' (a small matter like that, ... sending a memo), 'alah, biarlah kerja itu' (ah... don't bother) have become a common scenario in schools these days. The main cause of bickering and lamenting among teachers is because teachers have failed to realise the hidden potentials of each personality which is unique.

Florence Litthauer (1999) claims that "each one of us is born with our own temperament traits, our raw material, our own kind of rock. Some of us are granite, some marble, some alabaster, some sandstone. Our type of rock doesn't change, but our shapes can be altered. So it is with our personalities" (pg. 11). Therefore the understanding of personality can help us to examine ourselves, show us how to polish our strengths and to chip away our weaknesses. Litthauer (1999) stresses that by knowing one's personality we can begin to understand our inner selves, improve our personalities, and learn to get along with others.

The core matter to be researched is how each and every one of us is unique and has "unique" traits and how these traits could build a better inter/intra personal relationship in the school environment.

The Purpose

The purpose of this study is to profile the personality of teachers, in the domains of Openness, Neutral, Analytical, Relational and Decisive. The Leonard Personality Inventory, Yong (1999) is used to find out the domains of the teachers, which would highlight main strengths and weaknesses in the teacher.

Currently teaching in SMK La Salle, Petaling Jaya, teachers from this school are used as samples for the study as it would facilitate my observational study of them. A protocol interview will be carried out to confirm the profiles of the teachers that are taken.

The objective of this study is: (i) to find out the predominant domains of teachers based on the Leonard Personality Inventory which focuses on the five

behavioral orientations namely; Openness, Neutral, Analytical, Relational and Decisive and (ii) to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of teachers in these domains and how an understanding of this would help in building better relationships among teachers, students, school administrators and others.

1.3   Conceptual Framework

The study of personality in this research is based on the theory of personality of types and traits.   The type approach can be traced from the Greek Physician, Hippocrates.   The four Greek temperaments, phlegmatic, melancholic, sanguine and choleric.

The study of personality is within the discipline of psychology.   As Mischel (1999) cites Wiggins (1979, p. 395); "personality is the branch of psychology which is concerned with providing a systematic account of ways in which individuals differ from one another".   Walter Mischel (1999) says that personality psychology must also study how people's (thought and action) ... interact with — and shape reciprocally — the conditions of their lives (p. 5).

Thus, we can say that the personality psychology gives us an understanding of the individuals behavior.   The study of personality further helps us to be more sensitive and aware of the way one portrays himself and herself.

Mischel (1999), further elaborates this aspect by stating that the field of personality is at the crossroads of most areas of psychology; it is the meeting point among the study of human development and change, of abnormality and deviance, of

competence and fulfillment, of emotions and thought, of learning, of social relations, and even of the biological foundations that underlie human qualities (p. 5).

The concept of personality can be defined in several different ways. From Mischel's elaboration, we can say that personality is an individual characteristic reflected by behavior or traits. These are shaped by biological organisms and environments. The study on theories of personality have been reviewed into these categories: (i) the psychodynamic theory, (ii) the trait and biological theory, (iii) phenomenological theory, (iv) the behavioral approach and (v) the cognitive social.

1.3.1   The Psychodynamic Approach

The psychodynamic theory is vastly influenced by Sigmund Freud. Freud's view on id, ego and superego form the structure of personality. The personality dynamics dwell into the conflicts between id, ego and superego. Freudian's psychoanalysis approach studies the determinants of behavior, where his theory talks of the personality development using psychosexual stages; oral, anal, phalic and genital. This eventually brings about to the personality trait development according to the individual's experience in the stages of maturation. Other psychoanalytic followers of Freud, like Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Erich Fromm, Eric Erikson, have further explored the psychodynamic theory.

1.3.2 The Trait and Biological Approaches

Early descriptions of Hippocrates Theory, (Greek Physician), traits and temperaments have been highlighted as: (i) choleric (irritable), (ii) melancholic (depressed), (iii) sanguine (optimistic), and (v) phlegmatic (calm). William Sheldon's (1963) classification of the human physique and the temperamental attributes to view traits. He states that the; (i) *endomorphic* are described as soft and round, overdeveloped, digestive, and viscera are considered as people who are *viscerotonic*. These people like to relax, love to eat and socialize; (ii) *mesomorphic* described as muscular, rectangular and strong. They are known as *somatotonic*. They are energetic, assertive, courageous and finally (iii) the *ectomorphic* described as long, fragile, large brain and sensitive nervous system, are also known as *cerebrotonic*. They are seen as restrained fearful, introvertive and artistic.

Another typology devised by Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, was to group people into introverts (stressful, withdrawn and emotional) and the extroverts (conventional, sociable and outgoing).

It was, Gordon Allport's conceptions of traits that gave a new dimension to the traits dispositions. His study dealt with the cardinal traits, central traits and secondary dispositions.

In line with the study, another exponent in the "Multivariate Experimental Psychology" engineered the study on factor analysis which investigates the factors and dimensions that appear in an individual's behavior. Cattell's, 16 traits of personality appear as source traits in a person which also discusses the temperament traits.

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With this, the Psycholexical approach brought in a new wave. The "Big Five" Trait Dimensions which describes personality. Goldberg's (1990), Mc Crae and Costa (1998) explores into the 5 traits of dimensions; neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness in the study of personality.

1.3.3   The Phenomenological Approach

The emphasis in this approach focuses on perceived experience and concepts of individuals, and how their experience and concept helps in their growth and development into self actualization. The researches in this field are Allport, Lewin and Carl Rogers. The approach focuses on humanistic values such as needs and self-actualization (Maslow).

1.3.4   The Behavioral Approach

In this approach, the study of personality is based on psychoanalytic approach and it incorporates theories explored by behavioral psychologist like B. F. Skinner, Pablov, Dollard and Miller. Herein, an intensive discussion on how the human behavior is developed are based on the theories in classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning.

1.3.5 The Cognitive Social Approach

Herein, Cognitive Affective Personality System (APS) theory explores affect and emotion. This theory is influenced by the behavioral theory and cognitive aspect in psychology and reveals another perspective to the study of personality.

My research will be based on the traits and personality type approach. The core research will encompass the theories based on the Big Five Factor. The Leonard Personality Instrument (LPI) is used to profile the dominant traits of the teachers. From the domains, we can analyze and describe the building blocks of a person's personality. The strengths and weaknesses in each domain can be discovered, and how these identification of personality help in building a better understanding in the relationship of teachers.

1.4   Research Questions

1. What are the personality traits of teachers according to their behavioral orientation based on the five behavioral dimensions that is Openness, Neutral, Analytical, Relational and Decisive dimensions?

2. How are these personality dimensions related to interactional predispositions?

1.5   Definitions

The following is a list of terms used in this research. These definitions are arranged in alphabetical order for ease of the readership.

Agreeableness

Factor of personality, typified by a friendly, compliant personality.

(Cloninger, 2000)

Behavior

Modes of adjustments and outreach elicited by the environmental situation we are in, always selected and directed by the physical systems that comprise our personality.

(Allport, 1961)

Behavioral Theories (approaches)

Approach to psychology emphasizing observable, objectively measurable behaviors and the relationships between these behaviors and specific events or stimuli in the environment.

(Mischel, 1999)

Big Five Structure

A popular taxonomy for characterizing individuals in terms of five major traits based on factor analysis of bipolar trait ratings questionnaires.

(Mischel, 1999)

Cardinal Trait

A pervasive personality trait that dominates nearly everything a person does.

(Cloninger, 2000)

Central Trait

One of the half dozen or so traits that best describes a particular person

(Cloninger, 2000)

Choleric

One of Hippocrates' temperaments referring to an individual who tends to be irascible and violent.

(Engler, 1991)

Conscientiousness

Refers to being planful, organized, responsible, engaged, hardworking and persevering.

(Okun & Finch, 1998)

Ego

The function of the ego is to express and satisfy the desires of the id in accordance with reality and the demands of the superego.

(Pervin, 1970)

Extraversion

An attitude of a expansion in which the psyche is oriented toward the external world.

(Engler, 1991)

Extraversion or Surgency

Sociable, fun-loving, affectionate, friendly and talkative are the highest loading variables on extraversion factor.

(Mc Crae & Costa, 1998)

Extroversion

The superfactor of type in Eysenck's theory that includes the traits of sociability, activity, assertiveness, and sensation-seeking, to name a few.

(Hergenhahn & Olson, 1999)

Introversion

An attitude of withdrawal in which personality is oriented inward toward the subjective world.

(Engler, 1991)

Melancholic

One of Hippocrates' temperaments, referring to an individual characterized by depression.

(Engler, 1991)

Neuroticism

The superfactor or type in Eysenck's theory that includes traits of anxiety, depression, guilt, low self-esteem and shyness to name a few.

(Hergenhahn & Olson, 1999)

Phlegmatic

One of Hippocrates temperaments referring to an individual who is slow, solid and apathetic.

(Engler, 1999)

Psycholexical Approach

...... its basic data are words in the natural language used to describe human

qualities.

(Mischel, 1999)

Sanguine

One of Hippocrates' temperaments referring to a personality marked by

sturdiness, high color, and cheerfulness.

(Engler, 1991)

1.6   Significance of the Study

The main significance of this study is to identify the personality profiles of

teachers in a secondary school, Petaling Jaya. The study will help teachers in

approaches of self-understanding and interpersonal relations in their total effect upon

the personalities involved.

The study basically will reveal personality descriptions based on the five

behavioral domains, Openness, Neutral, Analytical and Decisive. From the

personality profiles, it will reveal the characteristics of a particular domain. It would

reveal the strengths and weaknesses. The identification of the strengths and

weaknesses may help an individual to understand the unique behavior patterns one

has. The understanding of each personality domain based on the Leonard Personality

Inventory would help build a better relationship among teachers, students and the

administrators.

Teachers can also begin to understand the nature of their fellow teachers. They could now comprehend better the personality of their workmates. In knowing the personality profiles based on the Leonard Personality Inventory, there is a need to make adaptations and adjustments in the environment. The study will create a sensitive awareness towards others' behavior and an understanding of one's behavior patterns. Herein, a lot of grievances and misunderstandings could be avoided.

The case-studies in this study will enrich our understanding of the various types of behavioral orientations that exist among teachers. Besides that, it would help teachers analyze how the traits contribute to the behavioral orientation of a personality. As Allport says, each individual is unique and has unique behavior patterns. Thus, teachers can now realize their own potential and this can help in creating a more amicable relationship in one's personal skills.