

Personality Patterns of Teacher Trainees from a Malaysian Training College

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini melaporkan profil personaliti bagi satu kumpulan guru pelatih dari sebuah maktab perguruan bagi jantina, kelulusan masuk ke maktab dan kumpulan etnik yang berlainan. Ujian 16 P.F. Cattell (Borang A) telah digunakan untuk mengukur trait personaliti guru pelatih tersebut. Hasil kajian menunjukkan perbezaan yang signifikan antara pelajar lelaki dan perempuan bagi sembilan dari 16 faktor; dan antara pelajar SPM dan STPM bagi tiga faktor. Perbandingan di kalangan tiga kumpulan etnik menunjukkan tujuh perbezaan. Profil personaliti secara keseluruhan adalah purata kecuali bagi empat faktor. Ini menandakan wujudnya gejala ketidakstabilan emosi, pesimisme, curiga dan kebimbangan.

ABSTRACT

This study reports on the personality profile of a group of teacher trainees from a Malaysian teachers' training college for the different sexes, entry qualifications and ethnic groups. Cattell's 16 P.F. Test (Form A) was used to measure personality traits of the trainees. Results showed significant differences between male and female students on nine out of the 16 factors; and between SPM and SPTM students on three factors. A comparison of the three ethnic groups revealed seven trait differences. The overall personality profile is "average" except for four factors, indicating the presence of emotional instability, pessimism, suspicion and worry.

INTRODUCTION

One important teacher quality that can either facilitate or hinder the teaching-learning process is teacher personality. This view is held by Murray who argues that "personality influences the behaviour of the teacher in diverse areas — interaction with students, methods selected and educational experiences chosen" (Murray 1972). The literature on teacher personality and its relationship with success in teaching goes as far back as 1910 when Ruediger and Strayer found that personality was among the most significant qualities of successful teachers (Montross 1954).

In general, educationists are in agreement that only people with certain desired personality traits should be selected into the teaching profession. This consensus arises from a universal

expectation that children should, while they are in school, be handled professionally by their teachers.

In selecting teacher trainees into the existing 28 training colleges in the country, the Teacher Education Division (TED) gives a high weightage to the personality component of applicants. This is evident from the fact that a weightage of 37 per cent is given to the personality component in the written aptitude test and another 27 percent during the interview, an exercise which purports to select students having the "desired" personality traits.

This study was undertaken for the purpose of exploring the differences in personality traits among teacher trainees of different sexes, entry qualifications and ethnic backgrounds.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Subjects

The sample consisted of 210 teacher trainees from a Kuala Lumpur teachers' college. They were in their fourth (July) semester of their teacher education programme during the 1986/87 academic year. The sample comprised 113 males and 97 females from the three major ethnic groups, viz., Malays, Chinese and Indians. They were either Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran (STPM) certificate holders.

Instrumentation

For the purpose of this study, Form A of Cattell's 16 Personality Factor (16 P.F.) Test was used to measure personality traits of the teacher trainees. The 16 P.F. was developed by Cattell *et al.* (1950) after extensive research over a period of three decades. Cattell *et al.* concluded that there were approximately 16 source traits on which people could be compared.

The Cattell instrument consists of 187 items which can be reduced to 16 "factors" (or personality traits) by following a scoring scheme devised by the inventors of the instrument. The 16 personality traits are given Table 1.

TABLE 1
List of Cattell's sixteen personality factors

Traits Low Score vs. High Score	
Factor A	- reserved vs. outgoing
Factor B	- less intelligent vs. more intelligent
Factor C	- affected by feelings vs. emotionally stable
Factor E	- humble vs. assertive
Factor F	- sober vs. happy-go-lucky
Factor G	- expedient vs. conscientious
Factor H	- shy vs. venturesome
Factor I	- tough-minded vs. tender-minded
Factor L	- trusting vs. suspicious
Factor M	- conventional vs. imaginative
Factor N	- simplicity vs. sophistication
Factor O	- placid vs. apprehensive
Factor Q1	- conservative vs. experimenting
Factor Q2	- group dependent vs. self-sufficient
Factor Q3	- casual vs. controlled
Factor Q4	- relaxed vs. tense

The test-retest reliability of the 16 P.F. ranges from 0.70 to 0.90 if the interval is just over a few days. However, the correlations between test and retest scores two months later range from 0.63 to 0.88 with a median of 0.78.

Procedure

The 16 P.F. was translated into the Malay language by the writer. The translated version was reviewed by a language expert specializing in English-Malay translation at the Universiti Utara Malaysia. This specialist checked the accuracy of the translation and helped to ensure that the cultural context was not lost. To ensure mutual translatability of the two language versions, the Malay language translated version was again retranslated into the English language, and the latter was then compared to the original. Any discrepancy was immediately rectified.

Pretesting of the Malay version of the 16 P.F. was done on a group of 114 students at the Universiti Utara Malaysia in July 1986. The purpose of the pretesting was to invite comments on the wordings of the questionnaire with a view to improving it and ensuring cross-cultural validity.

Students at the Training College were asked to fill out the questionnaire in a classroom type atmosphere. They were told that there was no time limit and that they could take as long as they liked. Respondents were required to indicate their answers on the same questionnaire by circling the relevant coded numbers provided after every item. Coded responses were 1, 2, and 3. The data were key-punched on diskettes using micro-computer word-processing software, and then processed and analyzed using both the SPSS package (Nie *et al.* 1970) on the IBM 4381 main-frame at the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Pulau Pinang, as well as the SPSS/PC+ (Norusis 1986) on a personal computer.

Responses were recoded based on the scoring stencils provided by the inventors of the instrument, and personality factors were computed using the SPSS programme. From the raw scores for each case, standard scores were derived based on the scheme provided by the developers of the instrument.

These standard scores (also known as "sten" in the literature) can range from 1 to 10. Thus, from a total of 187 items, only 16 standard scores (personality traits) were left for the final analysis.

RESULTS

Overall Personality Profile

The general profile of Malaysian teacher trainees, irrespective of sex is "average" in friendliness (FA), dominance (FE), conscientiousness (FG), venturesome (FH), sensitivity (FI), sophistication (FN), experimenting (FQ1), self-sufficiency (FQ2), self-control (FQ3) and tension (FQ4). However, these trainees are emotionally less stable (below average in factor C), less intelligent (below average in factor B), more serious and less talkative (below average in factor F). They show above average tendencies for factor L, indicating a suspicious and jealous nature. In addition, the group seems to lack confidence and tends to be worrying, anxious and apprehensive as indicated by the above average score in factor O.

Personality by Sex

A comparison between male and female student teachers reveal that they differ significantly at $p < .01$ on seven of the 16 factors and on two at $p < .05$ (Table 2). Included in the first group of factors are factors A (outgoingness), E (dominance), I (tender-minded), L (paranoid tendency), M (unconventionality), Q1 (experimenting) and Q3 (self-control). The latter two factors are factors G (conscientious) and H (venturesome).

According to the developers of the instrument, a standard score falling between approximately 4.6 and 6.2 is considered an "average" score — or perhaps, "normal". Anything outside this "band" is deemed below-average or above average, as the case may be.

Based on the above criterion, male student teachers appear to be "average" although they are more outgoing, warmer and friendlier, more tender-minded, and more imaginative than their female counterparts. This finding is similar to the one reported by Koay (1979). The male trainees also appear to be more conservative and more self-controlled than their female counterparts.

On the other hand, female student teachers appear to be "above average" in suspicion, a finding also reported by Koay (1979). They also tend to be more assertive as found by previous researchers (e.g. McClain 1968; Koay 1979). Female trainees seem to be more conscientious, a trait believed by Cattell to be high among people who achieve well in school work. They are

also found to be more venturesome as reported by Koay (1979), and more experimenting than the male student teachers (Table 2).

A summary of the personality profile of the male and female teacher trainees is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Summary of personality standard scores by sex

Personality Factor	Mean Sten		T-Test (Prob.)
	Male	Female	
Factor A	4.99	4.06	.000
Factor B	4.09	4.48	ns
Factor C	4.12	4.50	ns
Factor E	4.48	6.00	.000
Factor F	4.09	4.31	ns
Factor G	4.94	5.30	.039
Factor H	4.62	4.99	.028
Factor I	5.47	4.30	.000
Factor L	6.49	7.76	.000
Factor M	6.56	5.98	.005
Factor N	5.38	5.73	ns
Factor O	6.76	7.01	ns
Factor Q1	4.39	5.47	.000
Factor Q2	5.78	6.14	ns
Factor Q3	5.71	5.16	.004
Factor Q4	5.16	4.87	ns

Note: ns = not significant

Personality by Entry Qualification

When the t-test is conducted to compare between two entry qualifications (SPM and STPM), three factors show significant differences (Table 3). Specifically, STPM students seem to be more assertive or dominant (FE) and significant at $p < 0.5$, less shy (FH) and significant at $p < .05$, and more experimenting (FQ1) and significant at $p .05$, compared to SPM students. This finding differs markedly from the one reported by Koay, who found that the personality patterns of MCE and HSC students differ significantly in emotional stability, worry and apprehension. The results suggest that, on the whole, the STPM group appears to possess a slightly better adjusted personality than the SPM group (Table 3).

TABLE 3
Summary of personality factors by entry qualification

Personality Factor	Mean Sten		T-Test (Prob.)
	SPM	STPM	
Factor A	4.64	4.46	ns
Factor B	4.13	4.54	ns
Factor C	4.15	4.54	ns
Factor E	5.11	5.70	.028
Factor F	4.17	4.20	ns
Factor G	5.10	5.46	ns
Factor H	4.70	5.13	.024
Factor I	5.02	4.64	ns
Factor L	7.09	7.13	ns
Factor M	6.33	5.89	ns
Factor N	5.43	5.89	ns
Factor O	6.82	6.91	ns
Factor Q1	4.68	5.44	.017
Factor Q2	5.91	5.84	ns
Factor Q3	5.47	5.36	ns
Factor Q4	5.07	5.13	ns

Note: ns = not significant

Personality by Ethnicity

The personality profile of trainees based on the three major ethnic groups show that seven personality factors differ significantly by ethnicity (Table 4). Five factors, namely, friendliness, dominance, sensitivity, unconventionality and radicalism came significantly different among the three ethnic groups ($p < .000$); while two other factors, i.e., extraversion and self-sufficiency are significant at $p < .05$.

Malay students scored highest on Factor A, indicating friendliness and a warm personality, and on Factor M, indicating an imaginatively creative disposition. The Indians came in second on these two traits, followed by the Chinese. However, Malay trainees also seem to be most tender-minded compared to the Chinese and Indians respectively.

Chinese trainees scored highest on four factors, namely, factor E (dominance); Factor H (extraversion); Factor Q1 (an inclination to experiment in life generally); and Factor Q2 (a self-sufficient personality). The Indians scored second

highest on these four factors, followed by the Malays.

DISCUSSION

Findings from this study show that there is distinct personality differences among the various groups investigated.

A comparison of personality patterns between the trainees in this study and the general norm provided by the Manual of the 16 P.F., and reports from other studies using the 16 P.F. instrument reveal marked dissimilarities. For example, research carried out by Tarpey (1965) and Elmore and Ellett (1979/80) showed their student teachers to be emotionally stable, enthusiastic and cheerful. Tarpey further reported that her sample of four groups of student teachers in Ireland and England have low scores on Factor L, indicating adaptable, trustful and tolerant people. In contrast, findings of the present study showed that teacher trainees were emotionally less stable, and they tend to possess a suspicious and jealous nature (factor L). They

TABLE 4
Summary statistics of personality factors by ethnicity

Personality Factor	Mean Sten			ANOVA (Prob.)
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	
FA	4.93	4.11	4.21	.000
FB	4.09	4.36	4.43	ns
FC	4.07	4.19	4.50	ns
FE	4.79	5.83	5.65	.000
FF	4.18	4.36	4.05	ns
FG	5.08	5.22	5.27	ns
FH	4.60	5.30	4.88	.004
FI	5.33	4.61	4.41	.000
FL	6.91	7.58	7.05	ns
FM	6.57	5.69	5.86	.000
FN	5.45	5.28	5.79	ns
FO	6.81	6.86	6.90	ns
FQ1	4.24	5.86	5.34	.000
FQ2	5.68	6.47	6.02	.008
FQ3	5.49	5.25	5.37	ns
FQ4	5.24	5.00	4.87	ns

Note: ns = not significant

also seem to be worrying, anxious and apprehensive (factor O).

It is worthy to note that, in another study carried out in Malaysia, Koay (1979), using the same instrument to measure personality traits of student teachers, also reported high scores for Factors L and O. Furthermore, her group of student teachers were found to have low scores on Factor C, indicating less emotional stability. Accordingly to Koay, the presence of tension-generating elements such as the heavy emphasis on examinations in the Malaysian educational system, may have contributed to the anxiety and emotional instability of teacher trainees.

The findings of the present study and that of Koay both reveal that generally STPM students seem to possess a better adjusted personality than SPM students. Assuming there is indeed a positive effect of a longer formal education, a logical policy implication is that the TED should consider raising the entry qualification of teacher trainees into the colleges. Such a proposal had been voiced also by the director of the TED in mid-1988. By raising the entry qualification into the training colleges, the status of the teaching profession could be greatly enhanced.

While the profile of these trainees indicate that they possess some of the desired traits, there are still other traits which seem to be lacking. The results of the present study reveal that trainees lack emotional stability, a trait deemed desirable by Ryans (1967). Other undesirable personal qualities that seem to be prevalent among the sample in this study are suspicion and worry. According to Halpin *et al.* (1982), traits like emotional instability and worry are prevalent among teachers whose pupil control orientation is authoritarian in nature.

In the absence of other empirical work in this line of research in Malaysia, the conclusion drawn here is only tentative. It is the opinion of the present writer that the unique personality profile of teacher trainees in this sample could be a consequence of the different child-rearing practices among the different ethnic groups in the country. Theories of socialization have also indicated the presence of different child-rearing practices for male and female children, since different societies attach different values to the different sexes. Finally, another consequence of extra formal education

or schooling would undoubtedly bring about different personality patterns, as this study has shown. Further research is still needed in this area to furnish us with more knowledge on personality traits of people either within the teaching profession or outside it.

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