Proceedings of ICEMGD 2025 Symposium: Innovating in Management and Economic Development
DOI: 10.54254/2754-1169/2025.LH27673

The Mechanism of How MBTI Influences Policy Implementation

Biqi Ren

Southwest Jiaotong University, Chengdu, China
2533293118@qq.com

Abstract. This passage examines how the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) influences policy implementation, focusing on the mediating role of cognitive styles and adaptive strategies. In recent years, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) has attained unprecedented global popularity, transcending the boundaries of professional fields and social contexts. It is developed by Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother Katharine Cook Briggs based on Jung's theory of psychological types. Building on Jung's foundational framework, their work transformed it into a practical, accessible tool—one designed to systematically categorize and explain the nuanced variations in individual personalities. Its widespread adoption is evident across diverse domains. Through formal studies, it can be concluded that S-type individuals, with detail-oriented cognitive styles, tend to enforce policies rigidly, while N-type individuals, favoring holistic thinking, are more innovative. Connected with the "ambiguity-conflict" model, further patterns emerge: J-type personalities excel more in low-ambiguity, structured policy environments, whereas P-type personalities perform better in flexible, experimental settings. These MBTI-related differences collectively give rise to biases in policy implementation. This research enriches policy implementation literature by integrating personality psychology, offering insights for aligning individual traits with policy demands to optimize execution.

Keywords: MBTI, Policy implementation, Cognitive styles, Policy modes

1. Introduction

Within organizational contexts, it has become a cornerstone of modern human resource management: recruiters often integrate MBTI results into hiring processes, aligning candidates' personality traits with job requirements. Beyond the workplace, it has permeated social interactions, emerging as a popular conversational tool to foster self-awareness and interpersonal understanding. Policy implementation, the critical phase bridging policy formulation and real-world impact, has long been a focal point for scholars and practitioners.Its significance lies in the axiom that policy effects cannot be validated without rigorous scrutiny of the implementation process. A policy, however well-designed, may fail to achieve its objectives if hindered by flawed execution—making the study of implementation dynamics indispensable. By establishing a link between the MBTI and policy implementation, this analysis illuminates how individual personality differences, mediated through cognitive styles and adaptive strategies, shape implementation processes. This integration

DOI: 10.54254/2754-1169/2025.LH27673

not only adds a novel dimension to existing policy implementation literature but also offers actionable insights for managers and administrators striving to align on-the-ground execution with overarching policy goals.

2. Literature review

2.1. A brief introduction and academic development of MBTI

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a personality type assessment tool developed on the basis of Carl Jung's theory of psychological types. This personality theory suggests that a person's cognitive patterns can be described by four core dimensions of the individual: the source of mental energy (extravert or introvert), the way of information acquisition(sensing or intuiting), how an individual processes information (thinking or feeling), and the style of how an individual interacts with the world around them (judging or perceiving). These four core dimensions divide people into 16 different personality types, thereby revealing the differences in personality traits among individuals.

Academic research on the theory and practice of MBTI mainly focuses on the following two opposing schools. One school is based on affirmative premises and focuses on the practical level. The theory is applied to a specific group of people and fields to analyze differentiated personality traits, especially the analysis of different occupational groups.These analysis aim to provide managers with a scientific basis for decision-making. Since different occupations require distinct traits and are associated with specific occupational preferences, there are obvious MBTI differences among employees in different occupations, while there are more concentrated MBTI tendencies within the same occupation. For example, Sari,et al. indicated that the dominant personality character is composed of openness, relationships, confidence and persistence because their management style is dominated by bureaucratic type [1]. Based on such findings, the results of the MBTI test provide a scientific basis for decision-making in management tasks such as enhancing self-awareness, corporate recruitment, and team building [2]. Additionally, the test can be applied to improve interpersonal relationships and support personalized education initiatives [3]. The second school is to criticize and revise the rationality and reliability of the theory from a theoretical perspective. It is argued by Bjork,et al. that the results of the MBTI test are not applicable to career planning and may lead to stereotypes and biases [4]. Although MBTI attempts to generalize the study of different personality traits, Pittenger claimed that its excessive labeling and classification may ignore the uniqueness of personal traits and possibilities [5]. Moreover,Coe believed that MBTI fails to measure an individual's ability to use preferred and non-preferred functions [6].

Even if earlier studies expressed doubts about the test-retest reliability of MBTI, recent cross-cultural studies have recognized its validity for trend analysis at the group level by modifying the scale, such as the version for collectivist culture held by Soler-Anguiano,et al. [7]. Scholars like Butt and Gelbukh have successfully broke away from the perspective of the traditional "either-or" analytical framework and introduced "intermediate personality" in order to avoid single-perspective discourse [8]. These contributions have laid a solid foundation for the rational development of subsequent MBTI-related studies.

2.2. Policy implementation

Policy implementation is widely regarded as a force that generates tensions within society. Thomas B. Smith proposed four components of the implementing process: idealized policy, implementing

DOI: 10.54254/2754-1169/2025.LH27673

organization, target group, and environmental factors [9]. In other words, the lack of the four factors may cause policy implementation bias, which are defined as the divergence between actual execution outcomes and intended policy goals, has been a central concern in public administration research. Scholars have identified a range of factors contributing to such bias, including the clarity of policy goals, the feasibility of policy content, and the complexity of the policy environment. However, the role of individual implementers' subjective traits—particularly their cognitive and behavioral tendencies—has often been overlooked in macro-level analyses. From a micro perspective, choices by executors may finally decide the policy effects and individuals can be influenced mostly by their personal personalities. Therefore, the following passage will analyze why policy implementation bias appear because of executors' MBTI differences.

3. MBTI and cognitive styles

3.1. Information processing differences between S-type and N-type

The division of personality dimensions according to the MBTI theory should not only be applied to describes personality traits. The results are significant for explaining individual behavioral differences through cognitive methods of information processing. This connection can be further elaborated using the theory of cognitive and personality complexes. As Carl Jung proposed in the "Psychological Types" book that there are two fundamental "perceptual ways" of human cognition: Sensing type and Intuition type,which are one of the core dimensions of personality differences [10]. Notably, these two perceptual modes serve as the primary basis for the "information acquisition" dimension in MBTI theory. Individuals with an S-type personality acquires specific, realistic information through the senses, valuing details and reality. It tends to adopt conservative strategies, be more accustomed to doing things according to rules, and dislike excessive uncertainty. In contrast, the N-type people prefer going beyond the senses, by gathering a variety of different information, solving problems through reasoning and assumption, forming a comprehensive, innovative understanding. N-type individuals are inclined to overlook minor details in favor of predicting and exploring possibilities; they are willing to embrace new things and novel situations, even if this means abandoning familiar practices. Multiple empirical studies have shown that S-type employees are more likely to strictly enforce rules and have a detailed analytical cognition, while N-type employees are more likely to have a holistic cognition and flexibly adjust policies in line with policy goals.

3.2. Cognitive styles reflected in MBTI

The cognitive theory offers a robust explanation for these differences in cognitive preferences. proponents of cognitive theory argue that human mental functions are regarded as information processing systems. The conception "cognitive style" refers to an individual's habitual way of processing information, also known as cognitive mode. Cognitive style is a stable psychological tendency formed by an individual over a long period of cognitive activity, which is manifested as a preference for certain ways of information processing. Meanwhile, Kirton proposed that cognitive style is a direct reflection of fundamental personality traits. The associative structure formed by specific personality dimensions and corresponding cognitive styles, namely the "cognitive-personality complexes" by Volkova et al, is an important component of an individual's behavioral pattern [11]. In a notable study, Richard Riding and Indra Cheema employed the MBTI as one of their measurement tools and categorized cognitive style labels into two primary dimensions:

DOI: 10.54254/2754-1169/2025.LH27673

Wholist-Analytic and Verbalizer-Image [12]. The Wholist-Analytic type prefers to process information from a global, relational perspective, and tends to integrate large amounts of data to find patterns and potential relationships. This characteristic aligns closely with the N-type (Intuition) personality in the MBTI frameworkWhile the Verbalizer-Imager type prefers to break down information into separate parts and focuses on the accuracy of details and local logic, which is highly consistent with the S-type personality in MBTI. In other words, MBTI dimensions determine an individual's tendency toward a particular cognitive style, and the stable combination of personality dimension and cognitive style determines individual behavior through the information processing process. Even if employees in the same department of the same enterprise face the same policy, different cognitive styles will affect the implementation of specific policies to a large extent. One nonnegligible reason is that different personality traits will result in different information cognition, interpretation and processing results.

4. MBTI and policy implementation bias

4.1. Life attitudes differences between P-type and J-type

In MBTI, the main difference between J-type personality and the P-type personality is reflected in personal life attitudes. The P-type tends to adapt flexibly to the environment, prefers to keep choices open. They dislike being bound by strict plans, and prefer to explore and create. The J-type tends to make detailed plans and execute them strictly, emphasizing planning and logic. While studies by Furnham have shown that J-type personalities are more responsible and self-disciplined because of their planning and goal-oriented nature, the P-type can be more open and flexible [13]. Furthermore, Edwards noted that two key factors—the degree of uncertainty in available information and the clarity of an individual's motivation—shape behavior differently through these two personality types, influencing how J-type and P-type individuals respond to external circumstances [14].

4.2. Policy modes preference for MBTI

The deviation between policy implementation and policy objectives has always been a key topic of research in the field of management. In 1995, American scholar Richard Matland innovatively proposed the "ambiguity-conflict" model to address policy implementation bias. He argued that the ambiguity of policy objective means and the conflict among multiple actors play a decisive role especially during the policy implementation process stage, ultimately leading to policy implementation bias. This model offers a pivotal analytical framework for understanding policy implementation bias, emphasizing how ambiguity in policy goals and conflicts among stakeholders shape execution outcomes. However, Matland's work primarily attention to the causes of the deviation in policy implementation results, ignoring the impact of the subjective responses of the performers at the micro level. They are at the end of the policy and react to different policy implementation environments. Therefore, the MBTI classification of the Judging types and the Perceiving type can well explain the internal logic of policy implementation bias. Therefore, when the policy enforcement process is in "an 'Administrative implementation' mode" of low ambiguity and low conflict, the J-type who prefers for clear rules and order maintenance is more likely to guarantee the enforcement effect. When the policy implementation process is in "an 'Experimental implementation mode' of high ambiguity and low conflict", the implementation effect requires more flexible adaptation to the environment and exploration of innovation.Undoubtedly,the P-type can play to its advantage. The J-type is better at clear policies, while the P-type is better at flexible pilot

DOI: 10.54254/2754-1169/2025.LH27673

policies. This divergence in mode preference contributes to implementation bias. Aligning J-P traits with policy ambiguity levels can reduce bias and improve the fit between individual tendencies and implementation demands. This understanding can help understand why different people result in different policy effects.

5. Suggestions to managers for positive policy effects

To minimize policy implementation bias and enhance the effectiveness of policy execution, the following targeted suggestions are proposed based on the aforementioned analysis of how MBTI personality types influence policy implementation through cognitive styles and adaptive strategies.

5.1. Matching executors' MBTI types with policy characteristics

When allocating personnel for policy implementation, managers should align team members' MBTI traits with the core characteristics of the policy to optimize execution effectiveness, and the specific allocation strategy varies by policy type: For policies with low ambiguity and clear structures (e.g., employee performance appraisal systems, tax collection policies), managers should prioritize J-type and S-type individuals. The two type staff will better plan orientation and details, strictly align with rules. In contrast, for policies requiring innovation and flexibility abilities (e.g., pilot reforms, innovation incentive policies), prioritize P-type and N-type individuals. Their adaptability and holistic thinking facilitate strategic adjustments and innovation.

5.2. Conducting MBTI-based targeted training

To address the potential limitations of different MBTI types in policy implementation and further optimize their role in execution, targeted capability development should be carried out for each type, with focuses adjusted according to their inherent traits: For S-types, strengthen holistic thinking and innovation capabilities to help them connect details with overarching goals.For N-types, emphasize the importance of rules and details to avoid deviations from neglecting specifics. Similarly, for J-types, enhance adaptability to uncertain environments and flexibility in adjusting plans. For P-types, improve planning and execution skills to ensure innovation aligns with policy objectives.

5.3. Building diverse implementation teams

A diverse implementation team, strategically composed of individuals with complementary MBTI types, can effectively mitigate the limitations of single-personality dominance and enhance the robustness of policy execution. Beyond functional role allocation, integrating the strengths of different MBTI types is critical to maximizing team synergy, as each type contributes uniquely to form functional complementarity: S-types take charge of detailed tasks like data statistics and compliance checks, N-types oversee overall planning including scheme design and goal coordination, J-types manage plans covering task allocation and progress supervision, and P-types address flexible scenarios such as responding to unexpected situations and exploring implementation paths.

DOI: 10.54254/2754-1169/2025.LH27673

6. Research limitations and future research directions

6.1. Research limitations

This study primarily focuses on the Sensing-Intuition (S-N) and Judging-Perceiving (J-P) dimensions of MBTI, while leaving the Extraversion-Introversion (E-I) and Thinking-Feeling (T-F) dimensions underexplored. This omission restricts a comprehensive understanding of how personality traits influence policy implementation—for instance, it fails to address potential differences between Extraverts (E) and Introverts (I) in policy communication or between Thinkers (T) and Feelers (F) in handling value-laden policy conflicts. Moreover, quantitative analyses of behavioral differences and implementation outcomes among executors with distinct MBTI types in specific policy contexts are absent, weakening the practical persuasiveness of the findings. Further, the classification of policy types in the study remains overly general: it does not account for variations across policy domains (e.g., economic, social, or environmental policies) nor does it distinguish between implementation stages (such as planning, execution, and optimization). Such oversimplification overlooks the possibility that the impact of MBTI traits may vary with policy attributes or implementation phases. Additionally, the influence of cultural factors (e.g., collectivist vs. individualist contexts) on the relationship between MBTI and policy implementation is not sufficiently examined, limiting the generalizability of the findings.

6.2. Future research directions

Future studies should integrate the E-I and T-F dimensions to investigate the interactive effects of all four dimensions on policy implementation. For instance, analyze how Extraverts excel in coordinating high-conflict policies and Introverts contribute to independent judgment in complex policy contexts. Compare the execution priorities of Thinking-type and Feeling-type in social welfare policies to refine the framework of aligning personality traits with policy demands. It is also necessary to select representative policies and collect behavioral data from executors with different MBTI types, quantifying the correlation between personality traits and implementation outcomes.

7. Conclusions

This study systematically explores the mechanism through which MBTI personality types influence policy implementation, shedding light on the micro-level psychological drivers behind implementation bias. First, the core dimensions of MBTI directly shape the cognitive styles and behavioral tendencies of policy executors. Specifically, the Sensing-Intuition (S-N) dimension determines information processing patterns: S-type individuals, who prioritize details and practical realities, tend to enforce policies strictly according to rules, while N-type individuals, inclined to holistic and innovative thinking, are more likely to adjust implementation strategies flexibly to align with overarching goals. Second, the Judging-Perceiving (J-P) dimension affects adaptive strategies in policy execution. J-type personalities, defined by their preference for planning, structure, and discipline, excel in “administrative implementation modes”—scenarios marked by low ambiguity and low conflict—where they ensure the consistent, rule-compliant execution of clear-cut policies. In contrast, P-type personalities, who favor flexibility, spontaneity, and exploration, perform more effectively in “experimental implementation modes”—such as pilot policies requiring iterative innovation—characterized by high ambiguity. Finally, this research can explain policy implementation bias through MBTI types. These findings bridge personality psychology and policy

DOI: 10.54254/2754-1169/2025.LH27673

implementation research, demonstrating that individual MBTI differences, mediated by cognitive styles and adaptive strategies, are key factors in implementation bias. For practitioners, this highlights the need to consider personality traits and build a diverse team to reduce bias and enhance effectiveness.

References

[1] Sari, E.Y. D., & Bashori, K. (2020). Predicting managerial styles: Is the myers-briggs type indicator still useful?. Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn), 14(4), 617-622.
[2] Jun Yu.(2024). Based on MBTI Theory Practice and Optimisation of Human Resource Management.Modern Economics & Management Forum, 5(5),
[3] Goby, V.P. (2006). Personality and online/offline choices: MBTI profiles and favored communication modes in a Singapore study. Cyberpsychology & behavior, 9(1), 5-13.
[4] Bjork, R. A., & Druckman, D. (Eds.). (1992). In the mind's eye: Enhancing human performance. National Academies Press.
[5] Pittenger, D. J. (1993). Measuring the MBTI… and coming up short. Journal of Career Planning and Employment, 54(1), 48-52.
[6] Coe, C. K.(1992). The MBTI: Potential uses and misuses in personnel administration. Public Personnel Management, 21(4), 511-522.
[7] Soler-Anguiano, F. L., Rivera-Aragón, S., & Díaz-Loving, R. (2023). Cross-cultural measurement invariance evidence of individualism and collectivism: From the idiosyncratic to universal. Frontiers in psychology, 14, 1150757.
[8] Butt, S., Sidorov, G., & Gelbukh, A. (2025). Interpretation of Myers–Briggs Type Indicator personality profiles based on ambivert continuum scale. Expert Systems with Applications, 264, 125689.
[9] Smith, T. B. (1973). The policy implementation process. Policy sciences, 4(2), 197-209.
[10] Myers, I. B. (1976). Introduction to type®. CPP.
[11] Volkova, E.V., & Rusalov, V. M. (2016). Cognitive styles and personality. Personality and individual differences, 99, 266-271.
[12] Richard Riding & Indra Cheema (1991): Cognitive Styles—an overview and integration, Educational Psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology, 11: 3-4, 193-215
[13] Furnham, A. (1996). The big five versus the big four: the relationship between the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and NEO-PI five factor model of personality. Personality and individual differences, 21(2), 303-307.
[14] Edwards, J. A. (2003). The interactive effects of processing preference and motivation on information processing: Causal uncertainty and the MBTI in a persuasion context. Journal of Research in Personality, 37(2), 89-99