

# ***The Application of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to Human Resource Management System in China***

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**Abstract:** The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator has long been an important personality assessment instrument in human resource management. It helps managers to recruit employees, assign tasks, build employee relations and measure performance. With the economic reform and opening-up policy that accelerated worldwide coordination, it was introduced in China. The study, taking a literature review approach and comparative approach, aims to explore how the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is used in China's human resource management system. And through the analysis of the development and status of China's human resource management, and the comparison with Self-directed Search and Big Five Personality Theory, to see if there is room for improvement in its use in the future. The result shows that most of the research and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in China is about recruiting. It can be developed in team building and performance evaluation in the future, like The Big Five Personality Theory. And also in assigning tasks.

**Keywords:** The Myers-Briggs type indicator, human resource management, self-directed search, big five personality theory.

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, with the development of globalization, many psychological knowledge and personality assessment theories from other countries have become well-known and have been applied in China. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is getting more and more popular these days. Not only has it developed many subcultures, becoming a topic that people talk about with great relish, but it also plays an important role in the career field, becoming a reference standard for people to seek or change their jobs and for human resources to recruit and manage employees in many enterprises.

This study, taking a comparative approach, introduces what the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is and its application in the human resource management system, combined with the development and status of China's human resource management. And its comparison with other personality assessment models (Self-directed Search and the Big Five Personality Theory), which are often used by human resources. The significance of this study is that the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is suitable for China's human resource management system, making it better reflect the personality and diversity of its employees. And through the comparison to see if there is room for improvement to make the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator more compatible with China's human resource management system. If yes, then how to develop and use it in the future.

## **2. The Use of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in Human Resource Management**

The history of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator dates back to the early 20th century. Swiss psychologist Carl Jung conducted a research on personal types and preferences, confirming that individuals have mental or psychological preferences for performing tasks. Through long-term observation and summarization, Carl divided human personality types into two basic mindsets, “Introverted (I)-Extroverted (E)” and four functions “Sensing (S)-Intuitive (N)” and “Thinking (T)-Feeling (F)” in his book *Psychological Types* (1912). Within these three sets of opposing dimensions, human personality biases can be combined into eight types. The outbreak of World War II resulted in a large number of male laborers joining the war and the need for women to come out of the home and join the workforce. However, these women had neither work experience nor resumes, and employers could not determine who was more suitable for the job. In 1942, Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers of Philadelphia, USA, based on Jung's eight-dimensional theory of psychological types, added one more dimension: Judging (J)-Perceiving (P), and thus classified personality into 16 types and invented the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator [1].

Applications of this model include employee recruiting, team building, organizational development, and preferred communication styles. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator can help people understand the underlying values hidden in their behavior, it reflects people's habitual patterns of thinking and behavior, and speculates about employee performance. When used in interviews, it can be used to place the right person in the right job. In addition, it can be used for team building by analyzing the personality of the team to help members understand their own nature while appreciating the contributions of others. This will directly affect the behavioral patterns and relationship coordination of team members, which in turn affects team performance. It also improves communication and training efficiency and reduces the waste of time and money [2].

## **3. Human Resource Management System in China**

Now many Chinese scholars and enterprises are also researching and applying Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, how to make it more effectively utilized in China has to be combined with the development and current situation of China's human resource management system.

### **3.1. The Development of Human Resource Management Systems in China**

China's human resource management system can be dated to 1949. Its development can be divided into five stages.

The first stage is the pre-culture revolution (1949-1965). In this period, China implemented land reform and made a great leap forward. Although the word “human resource management” was not invented at that time, China's unique background formed a prototype of its policy. It was about the unbridled power of the Chinese Communist Party to mobilize national resources and manage the country. Killings brought about by class struggles and persecution with ideological roots not only established a highly centralized planning economy, but also laid the groundwork for the Communist Party to dominate the country's human capital [3].

The second stage is the cultural revolution (1966-1976). At this stage, the destruction of old customs, culture and habits and the rebellion movement in education denounced knowledge and learning. The Down-to-the-countryside policy and colleges resumed focused on practical experience and hands-on production activities. It was a decade that suffered a significant destruction of human resources [3].

The third stage is concept introduction (1980-1990). China was at the “labor and personnel management” stage of the typical planned economic system before the 1980s. Labor was simply considered as production at the time, rather than the fundamental component of productive forces.

People's idea of human resource management remained rooted in the cost paradigm, which held that employees are only tools for management and control. Wang Chongming, Zhang De, and Shi Kanwere the first scholars to introduce psychological theory into the field of human resource management in China, and their research achievements enriched the theoretical basis for the development of human resource management in China [4].

The fourth stage is practical exploration (1990-2000). China began to explore the application of human resource management in practice, and the practice of human resource management has begun to be applied to the personnel management work of enterprises and governments. In China, more and more enterprises were trying to improve the functions of human resource management practice from the aspects of recruitment, training, performance appraisal and compensation. However, at this stage, the reform of the enterprise salary system mainly stayed at the level of the reform of the distribution mode, and the real salary management system has not been fully established. The system of job analysis and performance appraisal has not been established systematically [4].

The last stage is system deepening (2000-2019). The reform of human resource management has been systematically deepened, and the country has paid more and more attention to human resource management. The idea of people-oriented has been widely recognized. Thus, the human resource management model with talent and performance evaluation and a salary incentive system as the core has been established [4]. In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization. It indicated that China's human resource management system was more international, more value-based, and more focused on talent resource adjustment [5].

### **3.2. Status of Human Resources Management in China**

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed human resource management in China. The pandemic associated with uncertainties, has brought not only challenges but also opportunities. Additionally, the pandemic has triggered environmental dynamics. It promoted organization learning and strategic flexibility. Innovation strategy enhanced at this time. During the pandemic, the government played a critical role. It provided coordination and support for the firm's performance, developing a sound organizational climate and culture. Also, the employees in certain occupations, such as those at hospitals, were drawn more attention and given welfare. Further more, China's human resource management system focused on employees' moral identity to build trust and encouragement. As it could improve the employee-oriented human resource practices, affecting their behavior further. For example, work satisfaction and intention to stay. These factors have made China's human resource management system more people-oriented. However, the involvement of the government has led to a more centralized and cohesive management [6].

The problem now is a severely damaged labor force, a scarcity of talent, a rapidly growing digital economy, and a changing external environment. Therefore, in the post-epidemic era, traditional human resource management training should be shifted to organizational capacity planning and personnel empowerment management, and performance evaluation based on job performance should be shifted to value creation to adapt to the digital economy. Organizations shifted from pyramidal, centralized management to networked, platform-based management to adapt to telecommute and sudden circumstances. Employee management has shifted from a focus on employee loyalty to a greater focus on satisfaction, happiness and work-life balance [7].

## **4. Comparison of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Other Personality Assessment Models**

### **4.1. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Self-Directed Search**

John Holland's theory was developed in 1966. It provided a comprehensible and easy to apply conceptual framework, which clients entering social and work life understand how personal and environmental factors interact, and ultimately how this process facilitates decision making. The central idea of Holland's and his colleagues' theoretical development was that choosing a career is "an extension of the personality" of each individual, who discovers the path to self-assertion through values and interests in the distinctive elements of career growth. Thus, the direction of career guidance was shaped by the distinctive way that each individual structures a system of preferences and attitudes within their personality. The degree of congruence between a person's interests and a certain career choice determined how satisfied they are with their personal profession's tasks.

After then, the hypothesis was used as a method to find out people's work-preference personalities. Holland distinguished six personality types based on their preferences for work. Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E) and Conventional (C). Each type represents the personality and work preferences of a class of people. After taking the test, each subject will be given "The Hollander code", consisting of the three highest scoring letters from the categories described above [8].

Compared to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the advantages of the Self-directed search are, first, that it is a professional, mainstream psychological assessment. Second, it can quickly identify occupations using the codes. Thirdly, its results are stable and not subject to large variations due to personal emotions and environmental influences.

However, Self-directed search is more often used by college students and job seekers for career planning, and less often applied to human resource management. It should be noted that the predictive potential of this model is limited because some customers who followed the personal code's "suggestions" in choosing a career did not end up being considerably happier in their chosen field than others who did not follow such suggestions [8]. Also, the Self-directed search focuses more on people's suitable career inclinations than on personality traits, which means it doesn't circulate widely as a social topic. So it doesn't help build good relationships and improve communication.

### **4.2. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Big Five Personality Theory**

The Big Five Personality Theory was derived in this way. First, all the words describing human characteristics in a certain language were selected, compared and matched, and then the words were classified into different category groups according to their semantics and made into a word list. Using this word list, the subjects were asked to describe themselves or others, and finally correlations were found for each category to form a matrix, and then a factor analysis was done as the basic factors of personality. Many studies have shown that whether English or Chinese vocabulary was used, subjects are asked to describe themselves or others, and regardless of the method of factor analysis used, the results have yielded five main factors describing personality. E: Extroverted; A: agreeable; C: conscious; N: neuroticism; and O: openness. The five personality traits in the Big Five model are Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to Experience (O), Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C). The combination of the initials of these five factors implies a broad representation of The Big Five Personality Theory [9].

The Big Five Personality Theory is utilized more in human resource management than the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. It is widely used in employee recruitment, team development, task

assignment, performance evaluation and employee relations. The study by Barry and Stewart specifically revealed an inverted U-shaped association between extraversion and team performance. The performance of teams with a medium proportion of extraverted members was superior than that of teams with a low or high proportion of extraverted members. Neuman and Wright confirmed that interpersonal skill and team agreeableness are positively correlated, and that personality has additional predictive power for team performance. Their experiment showed that conscientiousness and agreeableness are effective indicators of team success after controlling for the impacts of job skills and general cognitive capacity. LePine's 1997 study showed that leadership factors are one of the important moderating variables of team personality traits and team performance. When the leader's conscientiousness is low, subordinates' performance does not affect the rate of correct decision-making, while when the leader's conscientiousness is high, the higher the subordinates' competence or responsibility, the higher the rate of correct team decision-making. What's more, conscientiousness is also related to contextual performance. The higher conscientiousness the team members have, the better contextual performance the team has [10]. However, Big Five personality is far less social than the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

## 5. Discussion

In China, most of the research and articles on the use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator are about recruiting employees. And the social nature of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is unique compared to other personality assessment models. It can be developed by assigning tasks and forming groups. For example, ENFP is not suitable for tasks that are repetitive and require a high degree of concentration; they are more suited to tasks that require dealing with people. So ENFP is more suitable to be a salesperson or customer service. Furthermore, the functions reveal the differences in people's minds and behaviors. When building a team, human resources can consider which personalities are more prone to conflict due to different ways of thinking. Or use the social nature to allow team members to have a preliminary understanding of each other, and quickly target the social patterns that suit them, saving communication costs and developing work efficiency.

There are some similarities between the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Big Five Personality Theory. Extroverted corresponds to extraversion; intuitive and feeling corresponds to agreeableness and neuroticism because these traits can make it easier to empathize with others and build relationships with them, and relatively speaking, likely be more emotional as well; sensing, thinking and judging which need to be investigated carefully and logically in practice, corresponds with conscientiousness. Perceiving, which means more possibility, corresponds with openness to experience. So it can also be used in performance evaluation to find out which personality is suitable to be the leader to lead employees to perform well or makes the greatest contribution to contextual performance.

## 6. Conclusion

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator divided human personality types into eight dimensions, thus classified personality into 16 types. It is commonly used to recruit employees, build teams, develop organizations, assign tasks and evaluate performances. It can help people find the right job, understand the difference between each personality type to build a harmonious relationship in the workplace, improve communication and training efficiency and reduce the costs and waste.

However, in China, most of the use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is about recruiting employees. That is because in the early days of China's planned economy, there were four main features: full employment, centralized distribution of labor, life tenure, and low mobility of the workforce. And cultural revolution resulted in significant human resource destruction. In 1980,



following the economic reform and opening-up policy, the concept of human resources was introduced in China and then developed rapidly [6]. But the COVID-19 pandemic changed the human resource management system in China. Now, the management should focus on personnel empowerment, based on network and platform; the performance evaluation should be shifted to value creation; employee management should focus on satisfaction, work-life balance and work atmosphere.

Through comparison with other models. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is uniquely in social nature. By analyzing about the development and current situation of human resources management in China, there are lots of room for The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to develop. It can be mainly developed in team building and performance evaluation in the future like The Big Five Personality Theory, focusing on leadership affects and contextual performance. It is also can be developed by using it in assigning tasks.

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