

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) - Applications in the medical field for choice of specialty

Nosheen Zehra¹ Sana Jafrani²

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a personality assessment test that measures the psychological preferences of different people and helps them identify their strengths and limitations, interests and satisfaction to make right choices.¹ The history of MBTI is unique and interesting, it was inspired by the work of Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist who proposed psychological types theories which described how people are innately different both in terms of how they perceive and take in information and how they make decisions. The MBTI instrument was initially designed by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Mayers after their research on their work on different personality types theories.²

MBTI uses are wide, ranging from education, career counseling, self-awareness, personal development, problem solving, decision making, to relationship management. According to MBTI theory, an individual's personality can be classified into 16 personality types.³ These personality types were obtained from four major dimensions. The four dimensions measured MBTI are Extroversion or Introversion, Sensing or Intuition, Thinking or Feeling and Judgment or Perception. Each MBTI personality type is associated with different types of characteristics. It helps in determining various aspects of personality by identifying differences in behavior, attitude, preferred choices, strengths and weakness of an individual. It is believed that every person owns a preferred style which reflects a person's personality. Understanding of personal attributes and self-awareness is one of the essential key factors in making lifetime career decisions. Whether it is selecting a career, switching career or career development, the decision has to be taken wisely. The knowledge about different preferences and application of this information can result in better decision making.

Choosing a career is one of the most crucial and thoughtful of all the decisions for any individual, as it molds their entire life path. Today' modern medicine provides a world of career choices depending on the opportunities and resources. There are various factors (achievement, financial considerations, and lifestyle preferences) which have influence on selecting the specialty however along with them interpersonal aspects (interests, values, and personality characteristics) may also have impact on specialty choice by medical graduate. Various researches conducted internationally highlighted that there is an association between personality type and specialty choice¹

Medicine is a very challenging profession; people invest lots of time, money, effort and hard work to turn into medical specialists. Therefore it is important for every individual to understand and appreciate his/her natural talents and interests and then to make suitable career choice based on personality preferences.³ Out of many options available the career that a person selects portrays his personality and if the career choice is corresponding to the personality then a person feels happy and contented about his work. On the other hand, if the career is not meaningful then people not only take their work as a burden but they are less likely to progress

¹ **Nosheen Zehra**

Assistant Professor, Department of Community & Health Sciences, Ziauddin University and Hospitals Karachi

² **Sara Jafrani**

Student, MBA Health Management, IoBM Karachi

in their career about which they do not feel passionate about.⁴ A career for which a person does not feel happy also disturbs their physical and mental health which makes a person feels frustrated and burned out.

Every individual has a preferred working style, sometimes that is known to us and sometimes we do not realize it. Sometimes work style ascertained from personality preferences conflict with the career choice. Therefore it is essential to identify and work on your preferred choices to balance your work life which will give value to work in future. Choosing a right career in which one can excel depends on various factors like personal interest, academic achievement and intellect, financial considerations, personality and values, opportunities, inspirations and guidance. However personality characteristics are one of the important foundations in deciding one's career.⁵

Internationally especially in developed word extensive literature is available showing the association between different personality types assessed by MBTI scale and specialty choice. One study conducted among first year medical students for predictive future choices showed that family practice was selected by students who had sensing, feeling and judging type of personality while those who had sensing, thinking and judging type selected obstetrics & gynecology.³ Psychiatry was selected by students with intuitive, feeling and perceiving personality type. Similarly another study suggested that primary care like medicine was selected by introverts while non primary care like surgery was preferred by extroverts.¹

In a developing country like Pakistan; MBTI instrument is being used as a tool for career development however literature in our setting is scarce revealing the utilization of MBTI scale on evaluating personality type of medical students. Consequently application of MBTI tool among medical students in assessing personality types may help them in deciding specialty choice according to their personality type which will benefit them in making right career choice.⁷ Awareness can be created by promoting workshops in medical institutes regarding MBTI instrument and research should be carried out in our setup to emphasize the importance of MBTI tool and its utilization in making suitable career decisions.

REFERENCES

References

¹ Nancy S, Mollie W, Sara T, Joseph B. Myers-Briggs Type and Medical Specialty Choice: A New Look at an Old Question. Teaching Learning Med 2000; 12: 14-20

² Brian F. The ultimate guide of choosing medical Specialty. 3rd ed. Washington DC: Mc Graw Hill, 2013.

³ Freeman B. Personality type and medical specialty. University of Chicago Hospital, Chicago; Illinois

⁴ Dr. Qamar ul Hassan. MBTI Personality Types. [online] 2013 [cited 2013 Dec 13]. Available from: URL: www.ctd.org.pk

⁵ Melinda S, Robert S. Identify the sources of stress in your life. [online] [cited 2013 Dec 13]. Available from: URL: www.helpguide.org

⁶ Allen H, Charles M. Personality and careers. [online] [cited 2013 Dec 13]. Available from: URL: <http://www.myersbriggs.org/type-use-for-everyday-life/personality-and-careers/>

⁷ Ross R. Exploring Personality types and its applications. [online] [cited 2013 Dec 13]. Available from: URL:http://www.personalitypathways.com/MBTI_intro.html