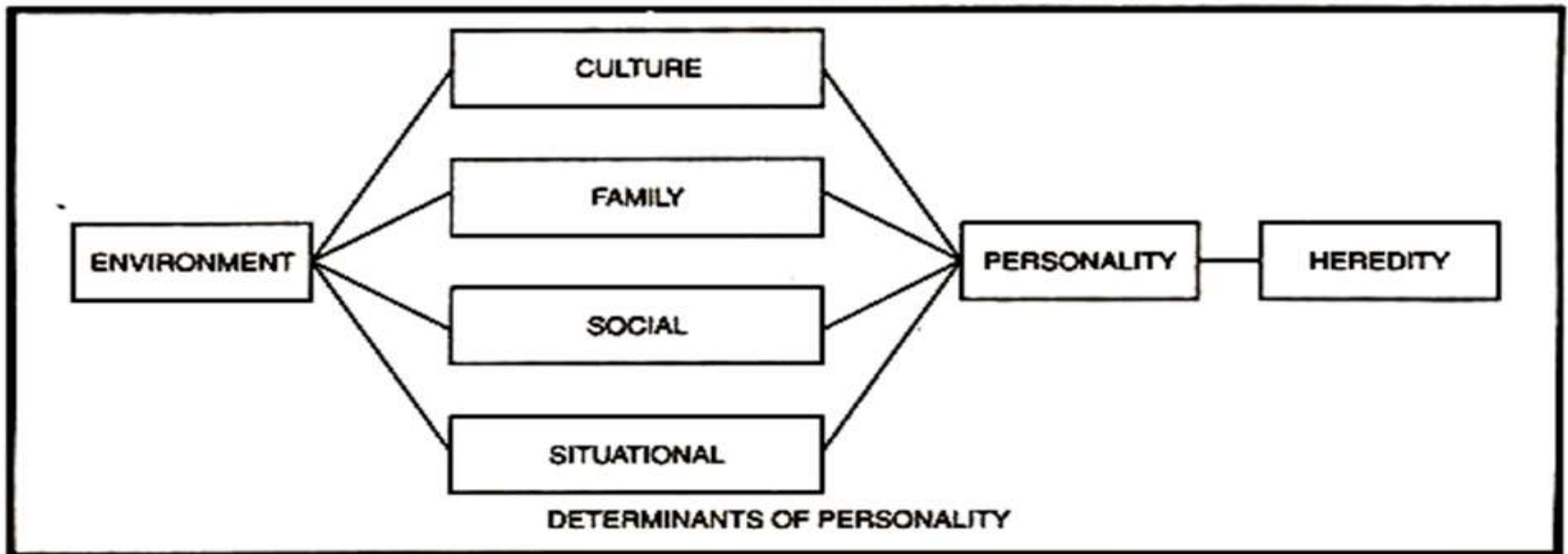


Personality continued...

# Determinants of Personality

Now that we have understood the meaning of personality, the next question is what determinants go into the development of personality? Was the individual born with that personality or was it developed afterwards as a result of his interaction with his environment? Generally the consensus is that heredity and environment jointly affect the individual's personality development.

The factors affecting personality development are illustrated as follows:



The impact of these factors is explained in detail as follows:

(A) Heredity:

The concept that heredity is a determinant of personality is embedded in our minds. In our day to day life, so many times we use the term “Like father like son” as “Like mother like daughter.” When we use these terms we generally refer to the traits like physique, eye colour, hair colour, height, temperament, energy level, intelligence, reflexes etc. However, the importance of heredity varies from one personality trait to another. For example, heredity is generally more important in determining a person’s temperament than his values and ideals.

According to S.P. Robbins, the heredity approach argues that the ultimate explanation of an individual's personality is the molecular structure of the genes, located in the chromosomes. Three different streams of research lend some credibility to the argument that heredity plays an important part in determining an individual's personality. The first looks at the genetic underpinnings of human behaviour and temperament among young children. The second addresses the study of twins who were separated at birth and the third examines the consistency in job satisfaction over time and across situations.

## (B) Environment:

If all personality traits are determined by heredity, they would be fixed at birth and would not be changed throughout the life. But this is not so. The personality traits are not completely dictated by heredity, environment also plays a very important role in the development of personality of a person.

Environment comprises of culture, family, social and situational factors:

1. Culture:

According to Hoebel, “Culture is the sum total of learned behaviour traits which are manifested and shared by the members of the society.”

“It is a unique system of perceptions, beliefs, values, norms, patterns of behaviour and a code of conduct that influences the behaviour of individuals in a given society.”

Culture establishes norms, attitudes and values that are passed along from generation to generation and create consistencies over time. Every culture expects and trains its members to behave in the ways that are acceptable to the group. Persons belonging to different cultural groups generally have different attitudes towards independence, aggression, competition, cooperation, artistic talent etc. While growing, the child learns to behave in ways expected by the culture of the family in which he was born. Most cultures expect different roles from males than from females. Similarly, every culture has its own sub cultures with different views about such qualities as moral values, style of dress, etc.

Although culture has significant influence on personality development, a linear relationship cannot be established between culture and personality due to the following reasons:

(i) Individuals within the same culture can differ in their behaviour and personality formats because of the existence of several sub systems within the same culture.

(ii) The workers are not influenced by the same culture as managers are. Moreover, skilled workers have different behaviour patterns than unskilled workers. Management must recognize and understand these differences while dealing with the people in the organisation.

## 2. Family:

One of the very important determinants of the personality of a person is his immediate family. Families influence the behaviour of a person especially in the early stages.

The nature of such influence will depend upon the following factors:

### ADVERTISEMENTS:

- (i) Socio-Economic level of the family
- (ii) Family size
- (iii) Birth order
- (iv) Race
- (v) Religion
- (vi) Parent's educational level
- (vii) Geographic location.

To elaborate, a person brought up in a rich and prestigious family has a different personality as compared to the people who belong to a poor family. The family size will also affect the behaviour of a child. The personality of a single child is different from the personality of a person who is brought up in a family of more than two siblings.

Similarly, the personality of a person brought up in a nuclear family will be different from that of a person brought up in a joint family. Studies have also shown that first born children are more responsible, rational, independent, ambitious and more sensitive to social acceptance. Empirical evidence also suggests that the home and family environment, created by the mother and the father as well as their own behaviour is highly influential on personality development of the child. Every child tries to identify himself with some person whom he feels ideal in the family. Generally a child in the family tries to behave like his father or mother.

This process can be examined from three different perspectives:

(i) Firstly, identification can be viewed as the similarity of behaviour (including feelings and attitudes) between child and model.

(ii) Secondly, identification can be looked upon as the child's motives or desires to be like the model.

(iii) Lastly, identification can be viewed as the process through which the child actually takes on the attributes of the model.

This identification process is fundamental to the understanding of personality development.

### 3. Social:

Socialization is a process by which an infant acquires from the enormously wide range of behavioural potentialities that are open to him at birth, those behaviour patterns that are customary and acceptable to the family and social groups. Initially socialization starts with the contact of the infant with the mother when he grows up.

Contacts with the other members of the family and social groups influence his socialization process. These social groups include school mates, friends, then friends or colleagues at work place, groups to which an individual belongs. Because “A man is known by the company he keeps,” all these social groups influence the behaviour of the individuals.

A lot of evidence has been accumulated which suggests that socialization may be one of the best explanations of why employees behave the way they do in today's organisations. There are some norms and laws of every society in which the individual exists. Much of the behaviour arises out of the respect for these norms and laws. Thus, we can say that social life has a considerable impact on the individual's behaviour.

#### 4. Situational:

Apart from the above factors, situational factors also play a very important role in determining the personality of a person. Migram's research study indicates very powerful role the situation may play in human personality. On the basis of his research study he states that "A situation exerts an important press on the individual. It exercises constraints and may provide push. In certain circumstances, it is not so much the kind of person a man is, as the kind of situation in which he is placed that determines his actions."

That is why it is often said that life is a collection of experiences. Every individual goes through different type of experiences and events in his life. Some of the events and experiences can serve as important determinants of his personality.

A trauma suffered by a person in the childhood can sometime change the structure of his own personality. In addition to this, certain incidents or situations reveal a specific aspect of the personality of a person that was so far hidden. For example, a very weak and coward person may spontaneously perform heroic action in saving some one's life without regard to his own safety.

The role of psychiatrists in personality shaping and changing is wide known. From the preceding discussion of the determinants of personality, it is clear that personality is a complex concept that reflects many influences both from within and outside the individual.