

An Investigation of the Filipino Dental Students' Personality Types

Junhel Dalanon^{1,2,3*}, Yoshizo Matsuka³

*Corresponding author's email address: c301751018@tokushima-u.ac.jp

¹College of Dentistry, Southwestern University PHINMA

²Philippine Dental Association – Cebu Chapter

³Department of Stomatognathic Function and Occlusal Reconstruction, Tokushima University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

Background: The Dentist Licensure Examination (DLE) is one of the most difficult pre-professional practice examinations in the Philippines. The personality type of a dental student can be a determining factor or a test-for-fit of the chosen college program, the DLE, and the eventual profession.

Objectives: This study aimed to document the personality dichotomies and MBTI personality categories of the respondents.

Methods: Through the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), this cross-sectional investigation examined the Filipino students' personality type in a dental school in the Philippines and presented it through descriptive statistics.

Results: In retrospect to the personality dichotomies, majority or 44 (17.19%) of the students were of the introverted feeling with intuition variety or the Introversion Intuition Feeling Perceiving (INFP) type. This personality type does not coincide with that of a dentist or dental student in other studies.

Conclusion: The mainstream dental students' personality types were inclined to traits that are indicative of the INFP professions (e.g. artists, counselors, social workers, etc.) and not of a prospective dentist. These findings will add to the database of dental education in the Philippines, and will enable the dental educators and schools to improve their educational strategies.

Keywords: dental education, dental students, personality types, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Philippines

Introduction

The success of the Filipino student in the realm of learning dentistry is multifactorial. From a subject-directed educational process, most higher education institutions are now delving into a student-centered learning experience. The struggle starts and develops early with schools hiring basic education teachers with subpar credentials, rather than having actual academic qualifications [1].

There is less to be desired with the results of the recent Dentist Licensure Examination (DLE) in the Philippines [2]. The DLE in the Philippines is one of the most difficult pre-professional practice examinations given by the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC). The failure rate of the DLE is high, as the national passing percentage is only 51.35%. A rigorous three-day written examination is given to test the theoretical cognitive ability of a dental student in the foreseen clinical application. Subsequent to the written examination is a practical phase were

the skill-based proficiency of an examinee is tested in the various hands-on tests. These are Class II cavity preparation and filling, complete denture pre-fabrication, removable partial denture design, and jacket crown preparation [3,4,5].

Due to the economic status and history of foreign oppression, the culture of the Filipinos is typically patriarchal, matriarchal, or both [6]. The Filipinos have great respect for their parents in particular, and the elderly in general. This could be an issue in the choice of a potential profession, since choosing a profession in college could be swayed towards the influence of the mother or the father. Culture affects how a child grows up, develops, and contributes to building his/her personality type.

The perceptions or outlooks of students and how they make decisions about their career preference can be influenced by their personality type. As a standard tool to measure personality-type, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is used widely in occupation counselling [7-8]. This has also been used

in many studies to assess the personality types of dentists, dental students, as well as dental hygienists [8-25]. It is a research questionnaire that gauges the respondents' predilection in four contrasting pairs that are termed as dichotomies. These are pairs of extreme personality dichotomies categorized according to the focus of attention: extraversion (E) and introversion (I), way of taking in information: sensing (S) and intuition (N), manner of making decisions: thinking (T) and feeling (F), and the mode of dealing with the outside world: judging (J) and perceiving (P). In terms of focusing their attention, the E dichotomy focuses outward on people and things, they enjoy communicating freely, can endure disturbances, yet they may be impatient and will need recurrent variation of work area. On the other hand, the I dichotomy focuses inward, they can be unforthcoming, and prefer to work alone. Corresponding to information assimilation, the S dichotomy thrives in routine work and established procedures. In contrast, the N dichotomy flourishes in solving new cases and acquiring new skills. With how decisions are made, the T dichotomy uses logic through cause-and-effect to arrive at a conclusion. This is unlike the F dichotomy that makes decisions based solely on subjective evaluation of individual concerns. In dealing with the outer domain, the J dichotomy prefers to make a plan and executes it. The P dichotomy on the other hand, is more attuned to spontaneity and prefers to have options open. According to a combination of these arrays or of the four dichotomies, the MBTI classifies an individual into one of the sixteen personality classifications [26].

A study done in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on dentists with varying specializations yielded ISTJ as the most common personality type. This personality type resulted high across the board for dentists specializing as pediatric dentists, periodontists, endodontists, prosthodontists, orthodontists, restorative

dentists, and surgeons [30]. Taking into account the other health-related professions, anesthesiologists yielded ISTP and ISFP, pediatricians ESFJ, and nurses ESTJ [31,32,33]. A simple review would reveal that there is no unanimity in the personality types in all of the health-related professions [30-40].

This cross-sectional investigation examined the Filipino students' personality type and combination of personality dichotomies in a dental school in the Philippines.

Methodology

This study was approved and found exempt by the Institutional Review Board of the College of Dentistry of Southwestern University PHINMA according to the ethical guidelines set forth by the Declaration of Helsinki. The researchers utilized a stratified sampling technique with a confidence level of 95% from the population of 763 dental students. With a total of 256 dental students from the 1st year to the 4th year, 64 dental students per year level of a dental school in the Philippines were the respondents of this quantitative study.

Along with the informed consent and a cover letter, the MBTI questionnaires were distributed to implement the study. The respondents were oriented on the objectives of the study, but were not informed as to which combinations of dichotomies are more inclined to the dental profession. The questionnaires were collected and data were tabulated as descriptive statistics.

Results

In Figure 1, the demographic profile of the respondents was recorded and analyzed. It shows that 134 (52.35%) of the dental students were aged 18-20 years old, 111 (43.36%) were

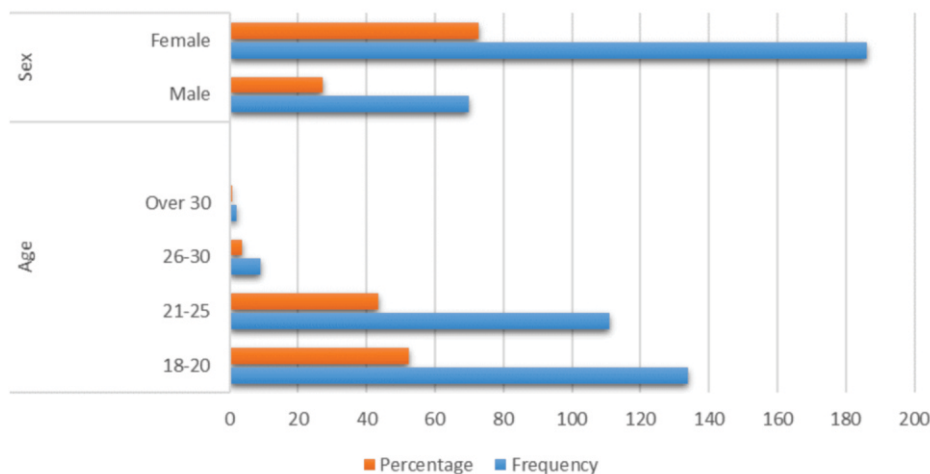


Figure 1. Demographic Profile of the Dental Students (n=256)

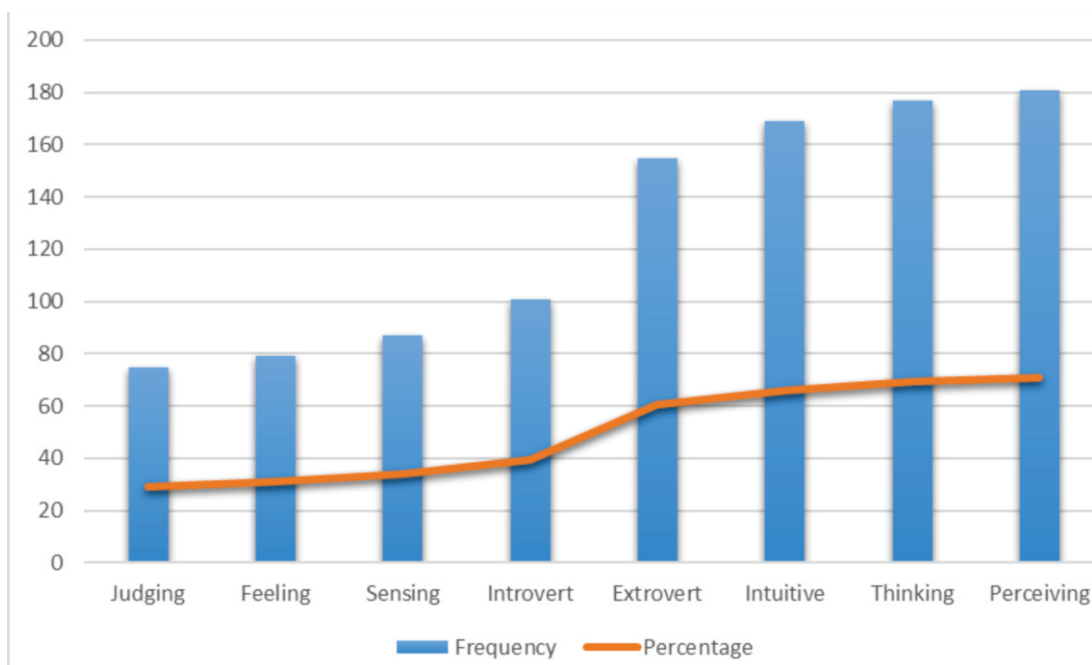


Figure 2. Dispersal of Personality Dichotomies (n=256)

21-25 years old, 9 (3.51%) were 26-30 years old, and 2 (0.78%) were over 30 years old. The age range of the majority of the respondents correspond to that of their year levels according to the Philippine educational system. The 1st year pre-dental students usually start from 16-17 years old. In terms of sex, there were 70 (27.34%) males and 186 (72.66%) females.

Figure 2 shows, that of the 256 dental students, 181 (70.70%) perceiving, 177 (69.14%) thinking, 169 (66.02%)

intuitive, 155 (60.55%) extroverts, 101 (39.55%) introverts, 87 (33.98%) sensing, 79 (30.86%) feeling, and 75 (29.30%) judging.

From the data gathered, Figure 3 shows that majority of the respondents were of the INFP variety at 44 (17.19%). This was followed by the ENFP 37 (14.45%), ESFP 31 (12.11%), ENTP where there were 25 (9.77%), ENFJ 17 (6.64%), ISFP 17 (6.64%), INTJ 15 (5.86%), ESFJ 14 (5.47%), INFJ 12 (4.69%), ESTP 10

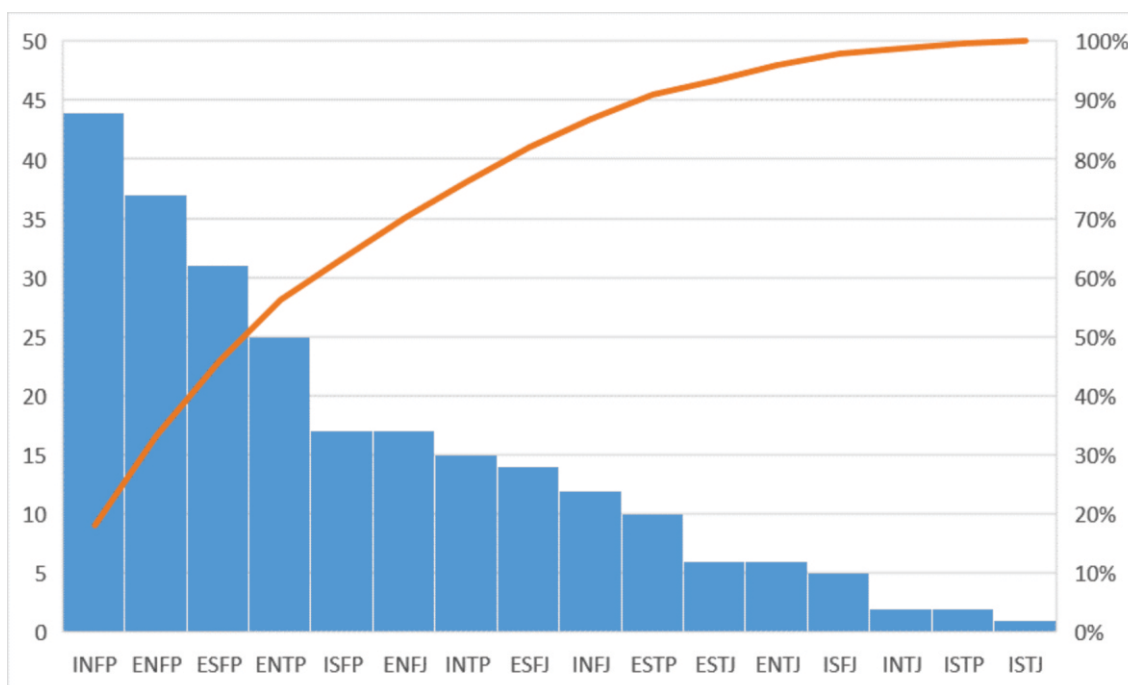


Figure 3. Distribution of MBTI Personality Types (n=256)

(3.91%), ENTJ 6 (2.34%), ESTJ 6 (2.34%), ISFJ 5 (1.95%), ISTP 2 (0.78%), INTJ 2 (0.78%), and ISTJ with only 1 (0.39%).

Discussion

Extroversion vs. Introversion

There has never been a published study on the personality types of Filipino dental students. According to the findings of this investigation and basing on where they focus their attention, these dental students are extroverts rather than introverts. They focus their attention on the outer world, they enjoy socializing, free-communication, they can tolerate interruptions, seek action-oriented tasks, dislike complicated procedures, impatient with tedious jobs, and need variation of tasks in the workplace [9,10,27,28]. Dealing with patients and clinical activities are only some of the facets of dental education. A dental student or a dentist needs to be sociable in order to relate to patients. One study found out that extroverts have reduced difficulty in their clinical activities and another showed that they are more satisfied with their professional career [34,35]. On the other hand, introverted dental students at the University of Florida College of Dentistry significantly improved their performance in the national board exam [36].

Sensing vs. Intuition

In the realm of processing information, the respondents are more intuitive rather than sensing. It means that they take information from repetitions and forthcoming opportunities. They want to take a look at the bigger picture. They also enjoy solving problems, learn new skills, and perseveres with complicated situations. On the downside, this type of learners does not like routine tasks and is prone to factual errors, because the learners prefer to innovate rather than do practical tasks [9,10]. In most studies, sensing dominated intuition as dentistry requires repetition of tasks to render the different dental treatments. Although, deviating from the norms to discover new treatment modalities would also help explore other solutions [32,35,37-40].

Thinking vs. Feeling

Basing on the way they make decisions, these learners are thinkers rather than feelers. They make decisions based primarily on logic and on an objective analysis of cause and effect. They prefer to be treated fairly and favor rational analysis. But these students often withhold emotional reactions, lack empathy, are fault-finding, and can survive

without harmony [9,10,27,28]. There is a big variation of results in most of the studies on personality types of dental students and dentists. On one aspect, dentistry needs logic since it is a science but sensing is also important to relate to how patients feel about their conditions [30-40].

Judging vs. Perceiving

In terms of dealing with the outer world, the dental students are precipitous or impulsive rather than critical. They like a flexible and spur-of-the-moment take on life, while preferring to hang on to other options. These learners are able to adapt to change easily and optimistic in learning new things. They don't come without any shortcomings. Frequent changing of decisions, getting bored easily, and complete disregard of the current tasks are common occurrences with students of this personality type [9,10]. All of the related studies point to Judging as the common denominator of dental students and dentists in dealing with the outside world. Dentistry is a healthcare discipline that demands practitioners who are exact and definite [30-40]. A mistake could cost a life.

Personality Type of the Filipino Dental Students

In considering the personality types, a preponderance or 44 (17.19%) of the students were of the INFP type. This personality type exhibits idealism, loyalty, and commitment. The learners have a core value that leads their choices and behavior. These learners focus more on creating plans to aid others in achieving their best. Because of these characteristics, the suggested careers for these people are religious educators, journalists, counselors, social workers, artists, scientists, psychiatrists, and political activists. They are propelled and grounded by an intense sense of values. This makes them perfect as a support professional from behind the scenes. The INFP variety is least represented in studies that acquire the personality type of dentists, dental students,[30,34-40] and other health allied professionals.[31-33] Rather, INFP is a common personality of students in design and design-related disciplines.[41] It is also interesting to note that this personality type is one of four types that has a high prevalence of suicide tendencies [42].

On the other hand, the MBTI-indicated types for dentists yielded only INFJ (4.69%), INTJ (0.78%), and ISTJ (0.39%).

The INFJ personality leans toward people who are visionaries. The learners focus on the common good, they are good at creating longstanding stratagems, and have a

firm stand on values. As such, they are perfect to be dentists, medical doctors, teachers, psychologists, psychiatrists, education consultants, and marketers. They are at their best when they materialize their visions to be realities, as they are blessed with an idealistic vision [7,8,26].

The INTJ can easily turn-around the tide in learning difficult and complex concepts or lessons. For that reason, the learners are suggested to be dentists, medical doctors, organization founders, scientists, professors, engineers, and computer specialists, among others. Furthermore, they are ideal as leaders because of their long-range perspective and vision for societies. They have high standards of competence, they are independent, determined, and they have conviction when they feel they are right [7,8,26].

Lastly, the ISTJ are also indicated to be dentists because they are practical, logical, realistic, thorough, and dependable. They are organized in terms of making plans and following them to the last detail. They have the predisposition to work on their own and assume accountability for their results. This is particularly helpful in the maintenance of responsibility in infection control in the short-term dental missions. Aside from being dentists, they are also archetypes for business executives, medical doctors, computer programmers, mechanical engineers, system analysts, police detectives, administrators, and managers, among others [7,8,26].

Conclusion

This quantitative survey found that dental students in a dental school in the Philippines are more extroverts rather than introverts, intuitive rather than sensing, thinking rather than feeling, and perceiving rather than judging.

However, the MBTI as a measure of gauging appropriateness of the prospective profession with the personality type of the dental students is not without limitations. Although the literature shows that MBTI has been comprehensively used in the health and paramedical sciences, an extensive variation of personality types has been observed [43]. As the Philippines is rich and diverse with culture owing to its archipelagic structure, the appropriateness of the MBTI in various Filipino cultures or regions should be further studied [44]. As the dental school where the study was done does not have an existing admission exam for placement purposes, this could be proposed in the institution as well as other schools with the same situation. Moreover, career guidance should be extended to those students whose personality type and corresponding academic

performance do not fit those of a dental student. This research suggests that the results of the study be used, not as a measure of the present capacity of Filipino dental students, but as a means to improve the dental education strategies of the professors teaching dentistry and of the dental schools. Problem-based learning and other student-centered educational methods should also be explored by this school.

References

1. Dalanon J, Matsuka Y. (2017) Filipino Teachers Sense of Efficacy in Inclusion Classes. *Asia Pacific Journal of Research* 339-343.
2. News: January 2018 Dentist Licensure Examination Results Released in Two (2) Working Days.
3. Ramirez F L. (1959) Dental Education in the Philippines. *The Journal of Nihon University School of Dentistry* 2(1), 7-10. doi:https://doi.org/10.2334/josnusd1959.2.7
4. Ramirez F L. (1960) Dentistry in the Philippines Today. *The Journal of Nihon University School of Dentistry* 2(4), 173-177. doi:https://doi.org/10.2334/josnusd1959.2.173
5. Republic Act No. 9484. (2018)
6. History of Philippine Dentistry - Philippine Dental Association. (2018)
7. Myers IB, *et al.* (1998) *MBTI Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*. 3rd ed. Palo Alto, Calif: consulting Psychologists Press
8. McCaulley MJ. (1981) *The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in Career Planning*. Gainesville, Fla: Center for Applications of Psychological Type, Inc.
9. Westerman GH, *et al.* (1991) Personality types of dentists. *Am J Dent* 4:298-302.
10. Grandy TG, *et al.* (1996) Predicting dentists' career choices using the Meyer-Briggs Type Indicator. *J Am Dent Assoc* 127:253-8.
11. McDaniel SP, *et al.* (1988) Comparison of personality variables and values among dental students, practitioners, and faculty. *J Dent Educ* 52:156-9.
12. Sandow PL, *et al.* (2000) Psychological type and dentistry. *J Psych Type* 55:26-34.
13. Baran RB. (2005) Myers Briggs Type Indicator, burnout, and satisfaction in Illinois dentists. *Gen Dent* 53:228-34
14. Silberman SL, *et al.* (1982) Dental students' personality: A Jungian perspective. *J Dent Educ* 46: 646-51.
15. Grandy TG, *et al.* (1984) Stress among first-year dental students. *J Dent Educ* 48:560-2.
16. Erskine DB, *et al.* (1986) Personality styles of first-year dental students. *J Dent Educ* 50: 221-4.
17. Westerman GH, *et al.* (1994) A comparison of personality types of first-year female and male

- dental students. *J Dent Educ* 58:693-6.
18. Jones AC, *et al.* (1997) Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and dental school performance. *J Dent Educ* 61:928-933.
 19. Watts TL, Millard L. (1997) A study of personality factors and interaction in 4th-year dental students and their teachers. *Eur J Dent Educ* 1:6-12.
 20. Morris DO. (2000) Personality types of dental school applicants. *Eur J Dent Educ* 4:100-7.
 21. Wu S, *et al.* (2007) Personality types of Chinese dental school applicants. *J Dent Educ* 71:1593-8.
 22. O'Neill PN, *et al.* (2007) Personality traits of endodontic residents indicate potential for becoming endodontic faculty. *J Endod* 33: 427-31.
 23. Wu S, *et al.* (2007) The personality types of Chinese dental postgraduate students. *J Soc Behav Pers* 35:1077-86.
 24. Saline LM. (1991) Personality characteristics and career choice among dental hygiene students enrolled in non-baccalaureate programs. *J Dent Hyg* 65:130-7.
 25. Paige BE. (2000) Psychological types of dental hygiene students. *J Psych Type* 52:32-5.
 26. King, S, Mason, B. (2017) Myers Briggs Type Indicator. In B. J. Carducci, Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences. John Wiley & Sons
 27. Keirsey D, Bates, M. (1978) Please Understand Me: Character and Temperament Types. 3rd ed. Del Mar, Calif: Prometheus Nemesis Books; 167-207.
 28. Hirst S, Kummerow J. (1989) *Lifetypes*. New York, NY: Warner Books, Inc.
 29. Dalanon J, *et al.* Infection Control Methods and Infection Control Practices of Short-term Dental Missions in Cebu, Philippines. 8th Conference of The Asian International Association of Dental Traumatology p. 48. Bangkok: Asian International Association of Dental Traumatology.
 30. Al-Dlaigan YH, Alahmari AS, Almubarak SH, Alateeq SA, Anil S. (2017) Study on Personality Types of Dentists in different Disciplines of Dentistry. *J Contemp Dent Pract* 18(7):554-558.
 31. Katz J, Lamperti A, Gaughan JP. (2007) MBTI types, gender and residency selection. *Journal of Psychological Type*. 67, 51-58.
 32. Borges NJ, Savickas M L. (2002) Personality and medical specialty choice: A literature review and integration. *Journal of Career Assessment*. 10(3), 362-380.
 33. Moore K. (1998) Personality Traits of Nurses in Anesthesia and Family Nurse Practitioner Masters Degree Programs, Thesis, Department Of Defense, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.
 34. von Bergmann H, Dalrymple KR, Shuler CF. (2014) Personality preference distribution of dental students admitted to one dental school using different selection methods. *J Dent Educ*. 78(4):580-8.
 35. Needleman HL, Bang S, Zhou J, Johnson JR, McPeck B, Graham D. (2011) Personality types of pediatric dentists: comparative analysis and associated factors. *Pediatr Dent*. 33(1):37-45
 36. Jones AC, Courts FJ, Sandow PL, Watson RE. (1997) Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and dental school performance. *J Dent Educ* 61:928-933.
 37. Silberman SL, Cain MJ and Mahan JM. (1982) Dental students' personality: a Jungian perspective. *Journal of Dental Education*. 46(11):646-51
 38. Silberman SL, Freeman I, Lester GR. (1992) A longitudinal study of dental students' personality type preferences; *J Dent Educ*. 56:384-8.
 39. Erskine CG, Westerman GH, Grandy TG. (1986) Personality styles of first-year dental students. *J Dent Educ*. 50:221-4.
 40. Baran RB. (2005) Myers Briggs Type Indicator, burnout, and satisfaction in Illinois dentists. *Gen Dent*. 53(3):228-34; quiz 235.
 41. Durling D, Cross N, Johnson J. (1996) Personality and learning preferences of students in design and design-related disciplines. IDATER. Conference, Loughborough: Loughborough University
 42. Cross T, Cassady J, Miller K. (2006) Suicide Ideation and Personality Characteristics Among Gifted Adolescents. *Gifted Child Quarterly*. 50(4):295-306
 43. Prasad M. (2016) A Test of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in Health Professions: A Literature Review. *Asian Journal of Management*. 7(4):297-306
 44. Wu S, Miao D, Zhu X, Luo Z, Liu X. (2007) Personality Types of Chinese Dental School Applicants. *Journal of Dental Education*. 71(12):1593-1598