

Correlations between Gallup Clifton Strengths and Personality in Doctor of Pharmacy Students

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Abstract

Objectives. To determine whether there is a correlation between Gallup Clifton Strengths Signature Themes and personality traits in Samford University McWhorter School of Pharmacy students, and if there is a relationship between Clifton Strengths and age or gender.

Methods. An online survey was sent to current full-time first- through third-year Doctor of Pharmacy students at the McWhorter School of Pharmacy to assess each student's personality traits and collect his or her Gallup Clifton Strengths results. The collected data was analyzed using IBM SPSS version 26 and Microsoft Excel.

Results. The top five strengths among the 92 responses were Achiever (41.3%), Empathy (27.2%), Harmony (40.2%), Learner (33.7%), and Restorative (30.4%). Females most commonly reported strengths in the Executing and Relationship Building leadership domains, while males most commonly reported strengths in the Influencing and Strategic Thinking leadership domains. The most commonly reported personality traits were Introversion (I), Sensing (S), Thinking (T), and Judging (J).

Conclusion. Patterns were observed between student pharmacists' Clifton Strengths results and personality traits. There were differences observed in gender and age range.

Keywords: Strengths, personality, traits, talents, pharmacy

1. Introduction

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is an assessment that categorizes individuals' personality traits into psychological types as described by C.G. Jung⁶. The assessment consists of 130 questions, takes 10-15 minutes to complete, and places individuals into four dichotomous personality categories based on the way they use their perception and judgement⁶. The traits that are assigned are Introversion (I) or Extroversion (E), Sensing (S) or Intuition (N), Thinking (T) or Feeling (F), and Judging (J) or Perceiving (P)⁶. Once assigned a trait from each category, inferences can be made about the individual's temperaments and how they interact with the world around them. The test does not measure skill, ability, or character, but can be used to facilitate analysis of how people communicate and understand each other⁶.

Invented by Don Clifton, the Gallup Clifton Strengths test is an assessment that discovers an individual's talents by assessing his or her "naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling or behavior"³. Clifton believed in the formula Talent x Investment = Strength, meaning that people could turn their talents into strengths by adding knowledge and skill to them³. The online assessment consists of 177 paired statements, and the test taker chooses which statement best describes him or her. After completing the assessment, the test taker is given his or her top five of 34 possible Clifton Strengths themes.

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Each theme comes with a description that highlights that person's strengths and how to utilize those strengths to achieve success. These themes are also organized into overarching leadership domains.

The four possible domains are Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building and Strategic Thinking³. The test also points out gaps in strengths and talents in order for users to build upon them. Test takers can use their results to take advantage of their strengths in any aspect of their life, whether personal, social, or professional. This test, as well as personality assessments, can be used by individuals and teams to focus on each individual's strengths and to learn how to better collaborate within the group.

Few studies have been done to evaluate trends and relationships in these two test results in Doctor of Pharmacy students and none have been conducted at Samford University. This study was conducted to identify patterns in these assessment results in Doctor of Pharmacy students and to determine if there is a significance in these results and the current culture of pharmacy practice. This study will also observe any differences in these assessment results between gender and age of pharmacy students at Samford University. These findings can then be used to make inferences about Doctor of Pharmacy students and how they will navigate their journey in their academic and professional careers.

2. Methods

A cross-sectional survey was designed to collect data and analyze personality traits in Doctor of Pharmacy students. The survey and study were approved by the Institutional Review Board at Samford University. The survey was sent via Qualtrics to full-time students in the graduating classes of 2021, 2022 and 2023 at Samford University's McWhorter School of Pharmacy. The survey consisted of 43 questions and was divided into four different sections: a demographics portion, a section to assess the student's personality type, section to assess other traits in pharmacy students (for the co-authors), and a section to collect the results of the student's Clifton Strengths assessment. The section that was used to assess personality was comprised of questions that were drafted with the assistance of the co-authors. These questions were used to determine the student's four personality traits and temperament, similar to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment. The next three sections of the survey were used to assess anxiety/depression, persistence, and wellness/time management, and were studied by fellow colleagues. The final section prompted the student to input his or her top five Clifton Strengths results, which the student obtained during his or her second year of pharmacy school at Samford University.

All current full-time first- through third-year full-time students at Samford University received the survey. There was an introduction in the email that prompted the student to locate his or her Clifton Strengths results prior to beginning the survey. Those excluded from this portion of the study were first-year students – because they had not yet taken the Clifton Strengths assessment – and upperclassmen who did not enter their results on the survey.

The results of the survey were analyzed using IBM SPSS v. 26 statistics software and Microsoft Excel. Survey responses that did not meet inclusion criteria were eliminated before analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to identify any similarities or patterns between the two personality assessments in the group of surveyed pharmacy students.

3. Results

Out of 179 total responses to the survey, only 92 responses included the Clifton Strengths data and therefore could be used in this study. As stated previously, the excluded individuals were those who either had not taken Strengths Finder yet or who did not enter their results. Fifty-six females (60.9%) and 36 males (39.1%) were included in this study. There were 66 students ages 22-25 (71.7%), 20 students ages 26-29 (21.7%), and six students 30 years and older (6.5%).

Out of the 92 responses, all 34 Clifton Strengths were reported by at least one student. The top five strengths among responding students at the McWhorter School of Pharmacy were Achiever (41.3%), Harmony (40.2%), Learner (33.7%), Restorative (30.4%), and Empathy (27.2%). The frequency and percentage for each Clifton Strength are listed in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Frequency and Percent of Reported Strengths in Samford University PharmD Students (Sorted by Strength)

Strength	Count	Percent
Achiever	38	41.3
Activator	3	3.3
Adaptability	11	12.0
Analytical	20	21.7
Arranger	4	4.3
Belief	16	17.4
Command	4	4.3
Communication	8	8.7
Competition	15	16.3
Connectedness	6	6.5
Context	2	2.2
Deliberative	14	15.2
Developer	18	19.6
Discipline	18	19.6
Empathy	25	27.2
Fairness	17	18.5
Focus	15	16.3
Futuristic	10	10.9
Harmony	37	40.2
Ideation	6	6.5
Inclusiveness	6	6.5
Individualization	11	12.0
Input	13	14.1
Intellection	14	15.2
Learner	31	33.7
Maximizer	5	5.4
Positivity	6	6.5
Relator	15	16.3
Responsibility	18	19.6
Restorative	28	30.4
Self-Assurance	6	6.5
Significance	6	6.5
Strategic	11	12.0
Woo	3	3.3

Table 2: Frequency and Percent of Reported Strengths in Samford University PharmD Students (Sorted by Frequency)

Strength	Count	Percent
Achiever	38	41.3
Harmony	37	40.2
Learner	31	33.7
Restorative	28	30.4
Empathy	25	27.2
Analytical	20	21.7
Developer	18	19.6
Discipline	18	19.6
Responsibility	18	19.6
Fairness	17	18.5
Belief	16	17.4
Competition	15	16.3
Focus	15	16.3
Relator	15	16.3

Deliberative	14	15.2
Intellection	14	15.2
Input	13	14.1
Adaptability	11	12.0
Individualization	11	12.0
Strategic	11	12.0
Futuristic	10	10.9
Communication	8	8.7
Connectedness	6	6.5
Ideation	6	6.5
Inclusiveness	6	6.5
Positivity	6	6.5
Self-Assurance	6	6.5
Significance	6	6.5
Maximizer	5	5.4
Arranger	4	4.3
Command	4	4.3
Activator	3	3.3
Woo	3	3.3
Context	2	2.2

The most reported strengths in males were Achiever, Analytical, Harmony and Learner. The most reported strengths in females were Achiever, Developer, Harmony, Learner and Restorative. The one strength that was not listed by any females was Command, while Inclusiveness and Developer were not listed by any males. Males most commonly reported results in the Influencing and Strategic Thinking domains, while females most commonly reported in the Executing and Relationship Building domains. The two most common strengths in students ages 22-25 and ages 26-29 were Achiever and Harmony while the most common strength is those aged 30 years and older was Learner.

Out of the 92 responses, the majority of students were indicated as Introversion (83.7%), Sensing (53.3%), Thinking (56.5%) and Judging (76.1%). The frequency and percentages for each personality trait are listed in Table 3. Males more frequently reported Introversion, Intuition, Thinking, and Judgment. Females more frequently reported Introversion, Sensing, Feeling, and Judgment.

Table 3: Percentage and Frequency of Dichotomous Personality Trait in Doctor of Pharmacy Students at Samford University

Trait		Percentage (n)	Percentage (n)	Trait	
E	Extrovert	16.3 (15)	83.7 (77)	I	Introvert
S	Sensing	53.3 (49)	46.7 (43)	N	Intuition
T	Thinking	56.5 (52)	43.5 (40)	F	Feeling
J	Judging	76.1 (70)	23.9 (22)	P	Perceiving

The most common strength for the Introversion, Sensing, Thinking, and Judging traits was Harmony. The most common strength for the Intuition and Perceiving traits was Competition. The most common strength for the Extroversion trait was Achiever, and for the Feeling trait it was Developer. The most common strength for each personality trait is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Most Frequently Reported Strength for Each Dichotomous Personality Trait in Doctor of Pharmacy Students at Samford University

Trait		Strength	Strength	Trait	
E	Extrovert	Achiever	Harmony	I	Introvert
S	Sensing	Harmony	Competition	N	Intuition
T	Thinking	Harmony	Developer	F	Feeling
J	Judging	Harmony	Competition	P	Perceiving

4. Discussion

Pharmacy has evolved over time from a primarily dispensing business to a more involved patient care profession.⁸ In the current environment, employers seek pharmacy graduates that are good communicators, knowledgeable, and professional.⁷ In order to excel in today's industry, pharmacy students must possess certain personality and character traits that will allow them to be successful at these challenges and interactions. Schools of pharmacy also cultivate these qualities in students by upholding the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education's standards of accreditation which emphasize self-awareness, leadership, innovation, entrepreneurship, and professionalism¹.

Self-analyzing one's strengths can allow students to build a strong foundation for their pharmacy education and career. A student's strengths are based on his or her knowledge, talents, and skills⁴. Identifying these strengths can help students enhance them³. The top five strengths in responding students were Achiever, Harmony, Learner, Restorative and Empathy. This illustrates that current student pharmacists are problem solvers, have a desire to learn, and invest in those around them³. This is consistent with the current culture of pharmacy and the patient-centered care model for healthcare⁵. Possessing these strengths will not only allow students to succeed in their academic careers, but will allow them to connect to and impact their patients even more.

Although almost all strengths were listed at least once by both genders, no females listed Command in their top five strengths. This demonstrates a lack of the ability to take charge of people and situations without discomfort of imposing one's views on others³. In contrast, no males listed the Developer or Inclusiveness strengths which represent the ability to recognize and cultivate potential in others and to include those people that feel left out³. One of the top strengths in male responders was Analytical while females had Developer and Restorative in the top results. This demonstrates that male student pharmacists are more strategic and fact-seeking when approaching situations, while female student pharmacists are more apt to invest in others and take pride in problem solving³.

It is important to note that most students' survey results indicated Introversion, with less than 20% indicating in Extroversion. With the majority of pharmacy careers now relying heavily on patient interaction, this is a very interesting result. Also, males and females scored differently in two of the personality trait categories. Males more commonly reported Intuition and Thinking and females more commonly reported Sensing and Feeling. This illustrates a contrast in how the genders interpret information and make decisions. For instance, males are more likely to come to decisions faster and pay close attention to patterns and future possibilities, while females are more likely to take time gathering more information and pay close attention to details⁶.

There is a noticeable pattern in the most frequently reported strength for each dichotomous personality trait. The most recurring strength for Introversion, Sensing, Thinking, and Judging was Harmony. This illustrates that pharmacy students who prefer inward reflection, logic, and details also avoid conflict and strive for situations with mutual agreement^{3,6}. Students who had results for the Intuition and Perceiving traits most frequently reported Competition in their top five strengths. This finding shows that students who like to gather all of the data and reflect on patterns and future possibilities also thrive in areas of competition and measure their success against the performance of others^{3,6}.

One weakness to this study is response bias. The data is skewed towards females and students between the ages of 22-25 because that was representative of the school's population. Therefore, it may not be generalizable to some male students or students of a different age range. It is also important to note that since 2018, Gallup Clifton Strengths has changed the "Fairness" strength title to "Consistency". This, however, should not affect the validity of the study because the underlying description remains the same.³ Another weakness to this study is that the results may not be generalizable to other schools of pharmacy because the traits of Samford University's student population may be different than those of other schools' populations. Regarding the large proportion of introversion results, the extrovert/introvert survey questions may need more extensive testing to ensure their accuracy.

5. Conclusion

Strengths evaluations and personality inventories are useful tools for students to maximize their academic and professional careers. It is a great asset for schools of pharmacies to require their students to complete these assessments to further aid personal development. In Doctor of Pharmacy students at Samford University, the top five strengths included Achiever, Empathy, Harmony, Learner, and Restorative. These results suggest that student pharmacists value education, success, relationship-building, and problem solving. Differences were found between genders in leadership domains, showing males as more skilled at Executing and Strategic Thinking, while females were more skilled at Influencing and Relationship Building.

The majority of responding students most commonly reported Introversive, Sensing, Thinking, and Judging, with males and females reporting oppositely in two of the trait categories. As the pharmacy profession continues to evolve to be more directly involved in patient care, it is vital for student pharmacists and practicing pharmacists to continue to build on their strengths while simultaneously expanding their communication and relationship talents.

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