

Review

A Review of the Application of MBTI Personality Theory in the Field of Personnel Recruitment

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CITATION

Liu XY. A Review of the Application of MBTI Personality Theory in the Field of Personnel Recruitment. *Cognitive and Behavioral Science Digest*. 2026; Vol 2 (No. 1): 249.

<https://doi.org/10.63808/cbsd.v2i1.249>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 27 October 2025

Accepted: 31 December 2025

Available online: 21 January 2026

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Abstract: With the standard of person-job matching transferring from “skill fit” to “deep trait alignment”, using MBTI as a personality assessment tool in company recruitment has become more and more popular. This paper takes an overall review on the application of MBTI personality theory in personnel recruitment. The paper reviews related literature in past 20 years and finds out practical value of MBTI in recruitment (such as career interest matching and team configuration) and its limitations (including controversies on reliability and validity and subjectivity of results).

With the standard of person-job matching transferring from “skill fit” to “deep trait alignment”, using MBTI as a personality assessment tool in company recruitment has become more and more popular. This paper takes an overall review on the application of MBTI personality theory in personnel recruitment. The paper reviews related literature in past 20 years and finds out practical value of MBTI in career interest matching, incentive mechanism optimization and team configuration and its limitations (including controversies on reliability and validity and subjectivity of results). Based on the new economy situation and current application issues like interpretation bias of results, applicant faking and the risk of labeling, this paper constructs an integrated model including three stages, screening, assessment and configuration and proposes “Multi-stage Recruitment Screening Model Assisted by MBTI”, clarifying the role and weight of MBTI in different recruitment stages.

This paper reviews the application of MBTI in recruitment objectively and comments on its



limitations objectively (including controversies on reliability and validity and subjectivity of results). Based on current application issues like interpretation bias of results, applicant faking and the risk of labeling, this paper constructs an integrated model including three stages, screening, assessment and configuration and proposes “Multi-stage Recruitment Screening Model Assisted by MBTI”, clarifying the role and weight of MBTI in different recruitment stages. This paper provides theoretical reference for corporate practice. For job seekers, this paper reviews objectively the limitations of MBTI and guides job seekers to view the results of assessment rationally and not to have restricted career choice because of “labeling”. This paper provides theoretical reference for career planning.

Keywords: MBTI; personnel recruitment; personality assessment; validity controversy; application model

In the past 10 or 20 years, application research on MBTI in the fields of organizational behavior and personnel recruitment have shown the characteristic of “popular application with academic controversy”. The scientific of MBTI has always been highly controversial. Typological orientation of MBTI fundamentally conflicts with dimensional view of contemporary personality psychology (Bao, 2019). The cross-cultural applicability of MBTI is also worthy of doubt. A dialectical development trend has been especially obvious in the past 5 years. This paper aims at reviewing the application of MBTI in recruitment in a critical way. It values instrumental value of MBTI and objectifies to comment on theoretical defects of MBTI and explores the scientific development path of its application.

The use of MBTI personality type theory in personnel recruitment is an embodiment of the pursuit of more “person-job matching” in modern human resource management. Facing the upgrade of the quality requirement of talents induced by the development of digital economy, the corporate recruitment model is also changing from “matching skills” to “matching traits”. From the theoretical point of view, the psychometric validity of MBTI is highly controversial (Liu et al., 2006). As a typology theory, MBTI is fundamentally incompatible with the dimensional theory of modern personality psychology. The dichotomy classification method of MBTI is also unable to adequately reflect the continuous distribution characteristics of personality traits (Farhan et al., 2014).

2023 “White Paper on Human Resource Management in Chinese Enterprises” showed that the traditional recruitment will ignore the deep matching between



personality traits and jobs... While in this case, based on Jung's theory of psychological types, MBTI, as a theoretical basis, can use the systematic classification of personality types to virtue that people can discover others' decision-making pattern and behavioral preference. However, the MBTI assessment tool, which is widely used in recruitment practice, has been challenged by scholars for a long time (Hu and Huang, 2016). This contradiction constitutes the research starting point of the paper.

I believe that the synergy between personality, job and organization is the key to the effectiveness of recruitment. Simple judgment such as “‘I’ type is not good at management” and “‘P’ type is lack of planning” will unintentionally ignore the dynamic construction characteristics of personality, and may also constitute the implicit employment discrimination. The California court ruling against the company's preference for “NT” types in 205 is a real example of this risk. In the initial screening stage, the weight of MBTI should be controlled within 15%, mainly used to exclude the obviously contradictory type of traits, and should focus on the cross-verification with the analysis of resume (Huang and Wang, 2013).

The essence is that the application of MBTI should not be stuck in the simple “type-job” correspondence, but should be used in the whole recruitment process, and try to achieve the transfer from the static label to the dynamic adaptation tool (McCrae, R. R., & Costa, 1989).

The cultural loading of this tool is very obvious in the cross-national application. At the level of recruitment practice, the application of MBTI also faces many challenges. The strategic response of applicants will cause the distortion of measurement. Experimental study showed that... Designed a structured interview based on the MBTI dimension scenario, and set up the contradictory scenario questions to test the response faking. In the goal-directed response situation, the type result of more than sixty percent of the subject changed. At the same time, the cognitive simplification tendency induced by type labels easily lead to recruitment decision in. Moreover, with the emergence of trends such as “remote work” and “cross-cultural teams”, the application of MBTI in “virtual team configuration” and “cross-cultural candidate adaptation” will also become new research hotspots.

Future work could continue in the following three directions: First, further research could focus on creating localized versions of MBTI applicable in collectivist cultures to improve the explanatory power of the model in the Chinese organizational context; second, further research could focus on the possibility of applying AI



technology in response faking, for example, through linguistic features and reaction time analysis to improve authenticity of results; third, further research could focus on expanding the applicable range of MBTI in non-traditional industries (for example, health care, education) and new work scenarios (for example, various work arrangements) to improve the cross-scenario recruitment theory system (Ryan & Ployhart, 2014).

In summary, the application of MBTI in recruitment should have sufficient theoretical awareness. On the one hand, we should recognize the reference value of MBTI in the recruitment of behavioral preferences, and on the other hand, we should be aware of the inherent defects in the method of MBTI. Future practice should focus on creating localized

versions, exploring effective methods of response distortion identification, and expanding the applicable range of MBTI in new work scenarios (Zhu and Sun, 2021). We should further explore the correlation mechanism of personality traits and remote collaboration efficiency and cultural differences to promote the development of personality assessment in recruitment and enhance the scientific development of personality assessment in recruitment (Miller, 1992). Provide developable and sustainable theoretical support for globalized recruitment.

Conflict of interest: The author declare no conflict of interest.

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