

Loud words or Loud Minds: A Qualitative Study about Introverts**Abstract:**

Extraversion is a preferred state to be widely accepted among social psychologists. In consequence, introverts are sometimes represented as withdrawn, isolated or lacking social competence, rather than as individuals who seek independence and autonomy. The researchers usually overlook states of mind enjoyed by introverts that do not involve a great deal of social interplay. This Qualitative study comprised of 28 in-depth interviews, and aimed to explore the difficulties in social and impersonal situations from stand point of introverts themselves. Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) which is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring the extraversion-introversion with 5-point Likert scale was utilized. Exact half 14 (50%) of the participants were female introverts while 14 (50%) were male introverts and were selected by non-probability convenience sampling. The questionnaires were field edited after each interview to check for legibility, missing fields and any illogical responses. Common themes were identified and a loose coding framework was developed. NVivo and Concordance software were used to conduct content and discourse analysis, with simple counting methods. Introverts reported that they were forced to be interactive and socialize themselves for society's sack. The workplace experiences of introverts were positive as they were considered focused in their work, despite of the fact that they face difficulty in getting hired. The marriage experience bisected the male and female introverts into two groups with opposite experiences where males were appreciated, supported and well accepted for their nature while on the other hand female introverts are criticized and judged after marriage. The findings of the present study cannot be generalized due to the limited sample and volunteer bias. Future research is needed for the confirmation of these dimensions of this personality type.

KEYWORDS: Loud Minds, Introverts, Introversion, Top of Form.

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INTRODUCTION

A higher-order factor corresponding to Jung's introversion-extraversion has been identified in most multidimensional personality inventories developed over the past 75 years. In consequence, much research has been devoted to identifying the individual traits and behaviours that form its component parts. From a consideration of the principal existing models of extraversion, Watson and Clark (1997)¹ have presented a schematic model of extraversion that comprises six independent traits and twelve associated sub-traits. Inevitably, later formulations contain many features that were not present in the original concept and successive formulations have not always been mutually consistent. Eysenck and Eysenck (1975)² identified risk taking and a tendency towards unreliability as aspects of extraverted behaviour. These aspects do not feature in later models^{3,4} which instead emphasize social facility and influence, ambition and an orientation towards hard work and achievement. Nevertheless, all models include the traits of sociability, gregariousness and affiliative tendency. Eysenck (1967)⁵ has explained the difference between introverts and extraverts in terms of cortical arousal. The extravert is not easily aroused and, in compensation, seeks stimulation in the company of many people. The extravert needs to have people to talk to, craves excitement and opportunities for physical activity, likes to laugh and be merry, and engages in many social interactions, which are a major source of happiness. In contrast, the introvert has a low arousal threshold and can function without the need for high levels of external stimulation. The introvert is usually represented as a quiet individual who is fond of books rather than people, does not like excitement and is distant except to intimate



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friends². The view that extraversion is a preferred state has come to be widely accepted among social psychologists. In consequence, introverts are sometimes represented as withdrawn, isolated or lacking social competence, rather than as individuals who seek independence and autonomy. Concentration on the link between extraversion and happiness could have led researchers to overlook states of happiness enjoyed by introverts that do not involve a great deal of social interplay.

This distinction relies on individual differences in the need for stimulation, but is stimulation the same as happiness? Introverts may not derive much satisfaction from gregarious situations because they do not need the external stimulation provided by the presence of many people, but they could be no less open to other kinds of happiness. Whereas extraverts need many people around them, introverts may be more selective and focus on establishing individual affiliative relationships with a few special friends and experience higher levels of empathy with them.

Introverts may have highly satisfying leisure activities that can be carried out in relative isolation. They may also enjoy an intense inner life, based on intellectual, musical or religious activities which give them much to think about without the need to rely on other people⁶. The present study was, undertaken to explore the difficulties in social and impersonal situations from stand point of introverts themselves.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study participants were chosen by nonprobability convenience sampling. Participation into the study was solely on a voluntary basis and whoever volunteered was reassured that all information obtained will be kept confidential and secure.

Identification of introverts was accomplished by using Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) which is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring the extraversion-introversion. Hans Eysenck described extraversion-introversion as the degree to which a person is outgoing and interactive with other people. These behavioural differences are presumed to be the result of underlying differences in brain physiology.⁵ It consisted of 10 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from **Inaccurate (=1), Moderately Inaccurate(=2), Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate(=3), Moderately Accurate(= 4), and Very Accurate (= 5)**. The EPQ has a possible range of scores from 10 to 50.

We conducted in-depth interviews to provide respondents the freedom and opportunity to discuss their experiences and perceptions in greater depth. A discussion guideline was developed and pre-tested on three participants identified as Introvert through Eysenck Personality Questionnaire.

Extensive revisions were made in the content of the guidelines as well as in the conduct of the interviews by deleting the questions that were not generating any meaningful responses and adding probing along with exploring questions. In addition, the guidelines were further modified during the actual interviews to enable more details to be elicited on the themes under study. The interviews were carried out over a period of six months (August 2015 to Jan 2016) in several locations of Gulshan-e-Iqbal town, Karachi, Pakistan. The population living in Gulshan-e-Iqbal town is very similar in socio-economic characteristics.

None of the respondents were interviewed more than once. The interviews were conducted either in separate rooms or in an enclosure as private as possible, generally without any other person present. The study objectives were explained to the respondents before the interviews took place and they were assured of the anonymity of their responses. A verbal consent was taken for conducting and taping the interviews. The initial section of the interview was based on eliciting socio-demographic information in an attempt to create a rapport with the respondent. The interviewer used the guideline questions to focus the discussions, but was not limited to merely these specific questions. In fact, respondents were frequently probed to elicit explanations and further details.

The study cohort consisted of 28 introverts and recruitment was stopped when saturation was reached for the key study themes. In total, 28 in depth interviews were conducted, out of which 14 with female introverts and 14 male introverts. Interviewer conducted face-to-face interviews and data was recorded on a pre-coded questionnaire. Each in-depth interview lasted about 60 to 90 minutes. All interviews were tape-recorded in the respondent's native vernacular and written notes were also made simultaneously. All these interviews yielded usable transcripts. The researcher transcribed the interviews directly into English to minimize data loss, keeping the original phrases and key words that the respondents used. The interviews were read several times and highlighted to identify the common major themes. A loose coding framework was developed and content analysis was performed. NVivo and Concordance software were used to conduct content and discourse analysis, with simple counting methods.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

After briefing the study purpose, an informed consent was obtained from all of the participants without coercion. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, and protection of data gathered was ensured.

RESULTS

Exact half 14 of the participants were female introverts while 14 were male introverts. Majority of participants were between ages 25 and 35 years. All of them 28 (100%) were married. All participants were educated with half (14) of the sample had postgraduate degree. (see table 1)

The interviews were conducted by principal investigator herself. A detailed summary of each interview was written and selected quotes were transcribed precisely in the respondents 'verbatim. Three main themes emerged: Forced Extroverted-Introverts, Work place Experiences, and Marriage and Introversion.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (n=28)			
Variable	Category	n=28	%
Gender	Male	14	50
	Female	14	50
Age (years)	18-24	09	32
	25-35	16	57
	> 35	03	11
Marital Status	Married	28	100
	Unmarried	00	00
Education level	Intermediate	04	14
	Graduate	10	36
	Post-Graduate	14	50
Employment	Employed	20	71%
	Unemployed	08	29%
Religion	Muslims	28	100
	Christian	0	0
	Others	0	0

Forced Extroverted-Introverts

Among 28, 17 introverts admitted that they either learnt or pretended to be extroverts because they felt there's something wrong with them, and tried to pass as extroverts. However, they confessed that whenever someone tries to pass as something he/she is not, he/she loses a part of his/her personality along the way. They said, it's a big pain for the introverts when they are forced to become an extrovert. It's like changing a lefty child into a right handed person. One 32 year old male explained it as:

"I'm very introverted, but have trained myself to function fairly well in large groups of people. I definitely need re-charge time after any interaction. I literally feel drained physically, mentally, and emotionally from forcing myself to be 'on'."

Same thought was shared by a 25 year old lady in the words:

"I just always called myself an "extroverted introvert." She summed it up quite nicely "I'm an introvert who exhibits many of the traits of a stereotypical extrovert in addition to the introvert ones. Definitely have to have alone time at the end of the day, though, or I wear out completely."

Workplace Experiences

Of the 28, all males while only 6 females were working. Interestingly enough their workplace experiences were similar. All of them were of the opinion that their focused attitude is appreciated at their workplace. A 30 year female stated:

"I think in successful organizations the approach to management and appraisal is to be able to get beyond the superficial impression, and to make sure people's contributions are identified and recognized - regardless of whether people are shouting from the rooftops."

When they were asked about their job appointment, a 35 year old male communicated:

"There is a place for selling yourself and making sure your achievements are recognized in most jobs, which might be easier for some personality types than others, because research shows there is no correlation between the most talkative person in the room and the best ideas".

However, 11 of them declared that initially they faced difficulty in getting jobs but then their work was appreciated with the course of time. According to a 27 year old male:

"I think it's at the job interview that introverts face the biggest challenge. Job interviews tend to require a person to "blow one's own trumpet" which is something that us introverts aren't inclined to do. Introverts tend to be the ones who keep their heads down and get on with the work; it would be nice if human resources managers would recognize this at the interview."

Marriage and Introversion

The experience of marriage divided the sample in two equal halves. The experience of male respondents of the study was entirely opposite to female introverts. All 28 respondents were married and they shared the impact of introversion on their married life. Among the 14 male introverts, 12 revealed that male introverts are given their space to revitalize. A 32 year old man said:

"I like family to come over and visit but I need a day to recover afterwards to 'process' it later, and it can keep me awake for hours, while my mind sorts through every single thing said or done! Thanks to my wife who gives me space and understand that I need some privacy more than often. The big difference which I noticed in my life after marriage is I'm easily excused from attending parties and social gatherings."

Male introverts are appreciated for their nature after their marriage. They are suddenly labeled rational and smart. Even though the female introverts are not always appreciated but after marriage the situation get worse for them. Not only husband but in-laws give them a real tough time. Misunderstandings increases in frequency after marriage. They are forced to attend all social gatherings and always judged by the in-laws around. A 28 year old female disclosed:

"I'm expected to keep the conversation going. Because they can't stand silence, they want to engage in conversations to fill up the void, and I being an introvert don't fulfil their need to do so. After chatting about non-sense to please them, I need to space out or think because I did what makes others happy, at times I feel like a clown, juggling to entertain small children. When you stop "entertaining" them, they will get upset".

The study shows males do face problems before marriage but after marriage they can easily enjoy their privacy but the case is reverse for the female introverts. A 30 year old female voiced her thought as: "I grew up introverted. Not lonely, just prefer to keep to myself. I can do extroverted things, like speak in front of people, but it drains all the life out of me. But since I'm married, the choice is not always mine. I often forced to get socialize. It's just exhausting to be in over-stimulating social situations. In multiple conversations round dinner tables, at parties, or even in crowded city centres I "zone out" and just feel knackered."

Another lady of 30 years who was also working narrated it as follows:

"Being woman in a society like Pakistan is not easy but if you are an introvert too then the problem multiplies two

fold. They think introversion is exclusively a male trait. On work place there is no prejudice against any introvert whether male or female but at home specially married females face problems due to their preferred quietness. If I don't comment on any issue discussed by my in-laws, they think I am shrewd, witty, or foxy. Sometimes they make me feel like I am unintelligent, lagging, and unfriendly". She further added, "Anyways, as I said, the problem is not the introversion; it goes much deeper than that."

A 40 year old woman expressed her feelings about her nature as:

"There's nothing wrong in being an introvert. Staying calm makes me feel secure, makes me independent, feel free, allows me to think more, and the list goes on and on. Cause everyone around wants to be a speaker and not a listener. I'd cherish this trait of mine; very few remain of your kind".

DISCUSSION

As originally described by Jung (1928)⁷, introverts and extraverts differ in their primary orientations. The introvert's main concern is to establish autonomy and independence of other people, whereas the extravert looks towards and seeks the company of others. Jung envisaged introversion and extraversion as two alternative orientations, and expressed no opinion about which was the more desirable. However, Jung's typology was adopted by other workers beginning with Freud, who considered extravert behaviour to be a sign of maturity and introvert behaviour a sign of arrested development⁸.

There can be little doubt that social interaction is enjoyable to extraverts and that social interaction can be a major source of pleasure and happiness. Contemporary life is highly interactive. It is increasingly necessary to rely on others for the needs of daily existence and people are often required to live and work in close proximity. One consequence of this is that happiness derived from largely solitary activities has either been overlooked or explained in 'Para social' terms.⁹

The findings of current study showed that there is a continuous societal pressure on introverts to change their nature. The reasons behind are extraverts outnumber introverts by about three to one⁹ and introverts are usually thought to be pessimists and sad. However, there is no relation between happiness and being extrovert. Peter Hills and Michael Argyle done a study in 2001¹⁰, they observed that when the effect of extraversion was controlled for by partial correlation, the association between happiness and life regard, self-esteem, life orientation and neuroticism hardly changed, which suggests that these variables are substantially independent of extraversion. However the association between happiness and affiliative tendency and preference for solitude became non-significant, which suggests that these variables are more closely associated with extraversion than with happiness. These results were substantiated by factor analysis, which showed that self-esteem, life regard, life orientation and neuroticism were most closely associated with happiness, whereas extraversion related more closely to affiliative and empathic tendencies and a preference for solitude (negatively). The conclusion from these analyses was that,

among participants, happiness was more closely associated with scale variables that reflect fulfilment and satisfaction with life rather than extra- version. This observation was in accord with findings of Hills & Argyle (1998)¹¹ which demonstrated that the most important component factors of the happiness were satisfaction with life and self-efficacy. This result is consistent with work reported by Arrindell, Heesink and Feij (1999)¹² who, in an appraisal of the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) of Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Grin (1985)¹³, reported that "the frequently reported substantial positive correlation (of the scale) with sociability was not confirmed". Similarly, in a factor analysis of the SWLS, variables associated with extraversion (sociability, dis-inhibition, impulsivity, and susceptibility to boredom) appeared in a secondary factor separate from that most characteristic of satisfaction with life and physical well-being. Perhaps the most important observation was that for each of these comparisons there was no evidence for significant relationships between happiness and the social variables, preference for solitude and empathy.⁹

The introversion and extroversion are two separate personality types as originally defined by Jung, introversion and extraversion distinguished two different modalities in the way individuals satisfied their inner drives. Introverts were considered to concentrate on their inner worlds at the expense of social interaction, whereas extraverts preferred to live out their internal drives in social interplay.⁹

CONCLUSION

The introverts are forced to be interactive and socialize themselves for society's sake. The workplace experience of introverts is very positive as they are considered focused in their work, despite of the fact that they face difficulty in job interviews. The marriage experience bisected the male and female introverts into two groups with entirely different experiences, where males are appreciated, supported and well accepted for their nature while on the other hand female introverts are criticized and judged. The findings of the present study cannot be generalized due to the limited sample and volunteer bias. Future research is needed for the confirmation of these dimensions of this personality type.

LIMITATION OF STUDY

The participation in the study was voluntary so the data gathered for this study may not be generalized.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I have no pecuniary or other personal interest, direct or indirect, in any matter that raises or may raise a conflict with my duties as researcher.

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