



A STUDY ON THE APPLICATION OF WUXING TRAITS TO HUMAN RESOURCES

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Abstract

Ever since the embark of Chinese culture, WuXing (i.e. five elements) conceptual system has long existed in Confucian and Taoist ideologies. WuXing concepts have

been extensively applied to several dimensions, including medical field, management, education, geomancy and numerology, and its earliest records can be found in Shang Shu (Chapter: Hong Fan). In recent years, WuXing concepts have been widely used for human resource planning (HRP) in enterprises. In pace with the shift of social values and the advent of the knowledge economy era, human resources management has become an essential part for enterprises to facilitate employees to take full advantage of their personal traits and thus enhance their values in workplaces. For today's enterprises, WuXing personal traits can be used to assess employees and adequate arrangements and serve as one of the key factors to evaluate employees' working performances. The current research adopt mathematical methods and match nine-star traits derived from people's birth to its corresponding WuXing traits. Chinese WuXing concepts can be applied to human resources management and provide insights for industries with WuXing characteristics. In nowadays management system, WuXing concepts will definitely open a new chapter for Chinese management field.

Keywords: personal traits, culture, WuXing, human resource planning, human resource management

Introduction

Along with the shifts of social environments and social values, people's working values change as well. Regarding business management, enterprises consider employees' working values as one of the key factors to evaluate their working performances (Zhang & Fang, 2003). If an enterprise can cultivate outstanding talents, it facilitates better endurance and creativity. In competitive circumstances, enterprises can optimize their operation performance by identifying talents' critical personalities and investing in talent cul-

tivation. Hoolland (1985) came up with the personality- job fit theory and suggested that talents with personal traits consistent to their working traits can show better working performance. As indicated by this theory, there are no "good" or "bad" personal traits, it is more important that a person's personality is consistent with the traits required by his job position. Consequently, the research aims to provide industries with business insights from the WuXing perspective: While recruiting new staff, enterprises can assign them to proper positions based on employees' personal traits and skills. Hence, it can enhance employees'

satisfaction towards their jobs, significantly increase operation performance, and further create higher operation efficiency. This research intends to explore WuXing traits reside in people and industries and further apply these concepts to business management, so enterprises can put WuXing concepts into management practice to achieve their performance objectives and boost their competitiveness.

Literature Review

Back in China's Qin and Han Dynasties, there already existed a complete ideology for personality types. For example, in *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* (Chapter: *Twenty five kinds of yin-yang persons*), i.e. *Huangdi Neijing*, people are divided into five different types – metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. The pivotal factor of Chinese management research begins from "people" and mainly focuses on "people-based" issues, such as exploring personal traits, applying these traits to education and management to attain "the oneness of heaven and man" described in I-Ching (i.e. *The Book of Changes*), and further achieving the harmony between human and human, human and everything, as well as human and environment. Guo

(2008) illustrated the overall perspective of social communities and cultures construct an essential part of business management. Gong (2010) divided business management theories into Cultural Management, Behavior Management, and Scientific Management. As revealed by its name, the focus of Cultural Management lies in cultural aspects. From the viewpoint of Wang et al. (2015), they proposed that management is a twofold field that is composed both of explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge, and they considered tacit knowledge and cultural values are the impetus behind people's behaviors. In the research of Xie et al. (2019), it is required to understand the cultural values and essences before one can apply management theory to practice. As Wang (2007) mentioned, the statement for *WuXing* (i.e. five elements including wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) was firstly recorded in *Shang Shu* (Chapter: *Hong Fan*); The dominant traits for each element is shown below: wood-type people tend to be thriving and resilient, fire-type are lively and warm, earth-type are solid and steady, metal-type are transformation and determination, and water-type are considered to soft and adaptable. These characteristics can both apply to physical phenom-

ena and cultural essences. Beyond natural phenomena, Yang (2016) pointed out WuXing elements can also reflect people's personal traits.

Nine Star Numerology

Nine Star Numerology and Nine Halls Diagram were originated from Hetu and Luoshu written by Chinese ancients. Xu (2014) demonstrated that natural phenomena can reflect human destinies, and their corresponding relationships were shown in Fig. 1 (its structure can be described as "with 9 on the top and 1 at the bottom, with 3 on the left and 7 on the right, with 2 and 4 on shoulders, and with 6 and 8 at feet").

Each of the nine stars stands for different colors: the 1st star is white, the 2nd star is black, the 3rd star is bluish green, the 4th star is green, the 5th star is yellow, the 6th is white, the 7th star is red, the 8th star is white, and the 9th star is purple. Also, each of the nine stars stands for different Wu-xing elements: the 1st white star is water, the 2nd black star is earth, the 3rd bluish-green star is woods, the 4th green star is woods, the 5th yellow star is earth, the 6th white star is metal, the 7th red star is metal, the 8th white star is earth, the 9th purple star is fire.

The order in the following nine-

star numerological chart is fixed (with the only difference lies at the central hall), and the fate of each person will vary based on the birth chart derived from his birthdate. To further illustrate, if one's central hall is "6 white Venus" (i.e. "5 yellow Saturn" plus 1), the other halls and its WuXing elements should be adjusted by adding 1. Take another case for example, if one's central hall is "8 white Saturn" (which means each hall should plus 3 by corresponding to its original central hall), the hall of "1 white Mercury" will transform to "4 green Jupiter". Correspond people's nine-star numerological chart of birthdate to WuXing personal traits and provide insights for human resource management.

WuXing Personal Traits

According to Guan (2008), people with wood personal traits are talented and hard-working; those with fire personal traits tend to be passionate yet impatient; those with earth personal traits are responsible, open-hearted and agreeable; those with metal personal traits are active and adventurous and suitable for being executors; those with water personal traits tend to be fearless and

Figure 1. Nine Halls Diagram

4 Green Jupiter	9 Purple Mars	2 Black Saturn
3 Bluish Green Jupiter	5 Yellow Saturn	7 Red Venus
6 White Venus	1 White Mercury	8 White Saturn

resourceful. As shown by Lu (2009), wood-type people are gentle and determined, fire-type people are charismatic and enthusiastic; earth-type people are supportive and sympathetic; metal-type people are scrupulous and precise; water-type people are candid and introspective. Yi's (2017) study primarily investigated people with wood personal traits. Wood-type people and growing trees are much alike in various aspects: these people work energetically and persistently with the will of striding forward, and they often lead others navigate through difficult situations. Boa (2019) provided insights for people with five elements: wood-type people are good-hearted, sympathetic, fast learners, responsive, and quick-witted; fire-type people are kind, willing to help, gentle, thoughtful; earth-type people are responsible,

genuine, inclusive, and good executors; metal-type people are independent, observant, righteous, sophisticated, and unyielding; water-type people are smart, assertive, and visionary ones.

*WuXing Elements and Industry
 Characteristics*

Industries can be categorized as the following five types based on WuXing attributes (Wu, 2016):

1. Green represents Woods (thriving and resilient)

Wood-type industries:

Cultural undertaking, publication industry, writing, wood industry, decoration business, furniture industry, crop farming, plantation, gardening, music, tea, paper, bookstores, literature and art,

official business, education, Chinese medication, and religion industry, etc.

Suitable occupations:

Writer, educator, intellectual, civil servant, education supplies provider, cram school teacher, flora plantation, woods, furniture, decoration designer, farmer, medical field, cloth trader, selling vegetarian food, religious supplies trader, religionist, and talent cultivation, etc.

2. Red represents fire (lively and warm)

Fire-type industries:

Oil, alcohol, light, handicraft, refinery, food, cafeteria, haircut, clothing, gold jewelry, chemistry, plating, Western medication, etc.

Suitable occupations:

Singer and dancer, makeup artist, handicraftsman, sculptor, translator and interpreter, repairman, body decorations creator, optics, lighting, food industry, craftsman, manufacturer, hair stylist, psychologist, speaker, management consultant, critic, etc.

3. Yellow represents earth (solid and steady)

Earth-type industries:

Referral offices, intermediary agencies, real estates, sale of land, agricultural

industry, distributors, construction, machinery sales, design, management, secretary, agency, agent, consultant, slate stoneware, cement industry, waterproof industry, etc.

Suitable occupations:

Farming, leadership, crop planting, ore trader, constructor, real estate broker, appraiser, antique, judge, lawyer, escrow officer, secretary, manager, agent, consultant, nursing staff, trader, designer, accountant, recorder, etc.

4. White represents metal (transformation and determination)

Metal-type industries:

Metal building materials, steel industry, automobile industry, security industry, insurance industry, securities investment adviser, e-commerce, computer, communication connector, monitors, electronic components, electric motors, motors, metal medical equipment, metal goods, electrical appliances, optoelectronic products, etc.

Suitable occupations:

Financial industry, science field, military, mining, jewelry, appraisers, sword making, coarse iron, hardware store, metalware, representatives of the people, judges, transportation, electrical appliances, logging, machinery, engineering, etc.

5. Black represents water (soft and adaptable)

Water-type industries:

Aviation industry, show business, advertising design, advertising industry, doctors, international business operations, import and export trade, department store industry, cosmetics, transportation, tourism, product design, housing agency, architectural design, hotel industry, entertainment industry, Internet programs, etc.

Suitable occupations:

Journalist, scholar, travel agent, tour guide, travelling, toys, sportsman, magician, circus staff, audio equipment, and water-related undertaking (such as aquatic industry, ice industry, swimming pool industry, bathhouse, fish industry, fishing equipment, shipping industry), etc.

Correspond Nine-star Astrology to
WuXing Numerology

*Astrological And Numerological Natal
Horoscope*

Traditionally, Chinese numerology books employ Nine Halls Diagram to illustrate Dun Jia (i.e. the art of becoming invisible) cycle, yet the numerous variations of this diagram are hard to understand and memorized by people.

Consequently, this research designed the following formulae to provide an easier approach to interpret this obscure numerology:

$$n/9 = k...x, y=11-x \quad (\text{Equation 3.1})$$

where n uses Common Era, k denotes the quotient, x is the remainder (When the remainder equals 0, it will be counted as 9), and y stands for the dominant hall of the Nine Halls Diagram (see section 2.1).

The natal chart of a specific year can be inferred from dividing the common era of a given year by 9.

For example, the calculation formula for *Taiwanese Year 51* (which is 1962 in common era) is as follows:

$$1962/9=218...0.$$

According to the equation $y=11-x$, we know $y=2$ and the nine-star horoscope and dominant hall for the person born on this year is "2 black Saturn". For more cases, if $y=1$, his dominant hall is "1 White Mercury"; if $y=2$, his dominant hall is "2 black Saturn"; if $y=3$, his dominant hall is "3 Bluish Green Jupiter"; if $y=4$, his dominant hall is "4 Green Jupiter"; if $y=5$, his dominant hall is "5 Yellow Saturn"; if $y=6$, his dominant hall is "6 White Venus";...if $y=9$, his dominant hall is "9

Purple Mars".

Example

Mr. Wang was born on *Taiwanese Year 36* (which is 1947 in common era), and his natal horoscope can be calculated from Equation 3-1:

$$1947 = 9 * 216 + 3,$$

where the remainder is $x=3$, $y=11-3 = 8$.

Thus, Mr. Wang's dominant hall lies in "8 White Saturn".

Nine-star Astrology is based on the Chinese lunar calendar, with each lunar year begins from *Lichun* (i.e. the beginning of spring), and each month shifts from Solar Terms (i.e. Chinese season dates). While using Equation 3.1, please note that the birthdate of the person in question should be accurate. For further elaboration, *Lichun* in the Chinese lunar calendar may range from December 16th of the previous year to January 15th of the current year. For those who were born during this period, their birth year may cause confusion, and it is recommended to check the permanent calendar to avoid any mistake. For example, if a person was born on December 23rd, 1946 based on the Chinese lunar calendar, his birthdate was before *Lichun* of the year (which is January 13rd, 1947 in Gregorian calendar). In this case, the equation will be $1947 = 9 * 216 + 2$, $y = 11 - 2 = 9$. From this,

we can tell that his dominant hall is "9 Purple Mars".

*It would be easier if you compare Gregorian calendar with the Chinese lunar calendar when determining the date for the aforementioned *Lichun*, which is between February 3rd and February 5th in the Gregorian calendar.

Conclusion

Chinese WuXing concepts (i.e. five elements including wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) have several proven cases in medical, management, and education fields, and it is believed to be effective for business management as well. Management ideology is representative of the whole social organizations and cultural essences; therefore, the management ideology in each environment may differ and has its own characteristics. Xu et al. (2006) examined dynamic management decision-making models and they held the opinion that decision-makers can obtain some insights for management decision-making via numerology. The current research aims to explore the trade-off relationships of Chinese WuXing elements (which means, the five WuXing elements can generate each other, whereas they prevail over each other) to put into business management by investigating the meaning and values of

WuXing elements and taking full advantage of WuXing essences. Moreover, the authors of the current research also seek to formulate a complete set of Chinese management ideology to unveil Chinese cultural essences, apply to management practices, achieve enterprises' business objectives, and exhibit the values of management theories and then further encourage economic development and maintain stable societies.

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