

## Relationship Between Primary Guardians Marital Status and MBTI Results

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The goal of this research was to explore the potential relationship between a primary guardian's marital status and the child resulting from that relationship's MBTI personality type. Given that personality types are often linked to environmental factors, these two factors appeared to be linked psychologically. The relationship between the five main marital statuses, married, divorced, separated, widowed, and single mother/father, and the results of MBTI tests was explored in this study. To explore the possible relationship, a mixed method approach was employed to high school students ranging from grades nine to twelve. The participants were asked to participate in an MBTI personality test which was followed by a survey asking questions about the participant's primary guardians. The marital status was found to have no impact on the personality types of the participants; all groups were found to tend to be more introverted than extroverted.

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Every year thousands of students take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to evaluate their personality and assist in the improvement of their coursework. This test analyzes the four main characteristics of a personality type: Extroverted-Introverted, Sensing-Intuitive, Thinking-Feeling, Judging-Perceiving. These characteristics assess the way in which one makes decisions, interacts with others, analyzes information, and organizes their daily life. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator results are applicable to daily life including in professions and relationships, and the results of this test can be used to help in personal growth (The Myers-Briggs Foundation, 2018). The differentiation between Extroverted and Introverted refers to the person's interactions with others; those that are extroverted tend to have a more outgoing orientation while introverts have a more inward orientation focusing more on oneself, (Carlyn, 1977). In a social situation, extroverts seek attention and recognition while introverts avoid the spotlight. The Sensing and Intuitive differentiation focuses on the way one perceives and analyzes information they receive; a person with the sensing trait base their perception on information gathered from the sense organs while those with the intuitive traits base their perceptions on inferred meanings and personal beliefs, (Carlyn, 1977). When one is faced with information, those with the sensing trait mainly perceive sensory gathered information; those with the intuitive trait mainly perceive information from their own mental set. The Thinking and Feeling differentiation refer to the way one makes decisions, using logic to make decisions versus making decisions based on personal beliefs, (Cummings III, 1995). When one is faced with a decision they must make, those with the thinking characteristic decide based on their "head" and those with the feeling characteristic with their "heart". Finally, the Judging and Perceiving differentiation focuses on the way one organizes their daily life, the use of an organizational system versus going through life in a spontaneous, flexible way, (Carlyn, 1977). Those with the perceiving characteristic tend to search for alternative options when solving issues; whereas, those with the judging characteristic tend to solve problems in a strict, one solution manner. These differences in personality demonstrate differing way of life applicable to the real world.

Like the differing traits found in the results of a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, of MBTI, there are a multitude of differing marital statuses that have been used in previous studies. Mainly, research has been done on five main marital statuses: married, single mother/father, widowed, divorced, separated. These marital statuses resulting in extremely different lifestyles that each have their own effect on those around them; additionally, the introduction of these relationships to a child with a brain in a developmental stage could shape the way they perceive the world and the personality type they develop. The characterization of personality types and the influential nature of marital statuses on a child's development bring the idea of a semi-causal relationship that will be explored in this study through the question: are high school students' Myers-Briggs personality types affected by their guardian's marital status?

Considering the differences between varying personality types and different marital statuses, this study hypothesizes that those with a primary guardian that is divorced are more likely to exhibit extroverted and judging tendencies. As children with divorced parents often must have an increased amount of leadership skills due to often having to travel between houses. Additionally, these children would need more organizational skills due to this increased amount of travel between homes, if applicable.

### Literature Review

This literature review will explore the works of those who have examined the use and causes of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality types. As no research has been done on the relation between marital status of a primary guardian and the MBTI personality type of the child resulting from that relationship, this study should help reach a better understanding of the relationship between a primary guardian's marital status and a child's personality type.

### Influences on Personality

The idea of outside influences affecting a child's personality type is not a new concept. A variety of studies have been done relating outward influences to the MBTI personality types of children into their adulthood. In an article called "Differences in Myers-Briggs Personality Types Among High School Band, Orchestra, and Choir Members" it is discussed that personality types can be a result of learned behaviors, (MacLellan, 2011). Being exposed to certain behaviors at a young age can influence the way young brain develop, which can lead to an influenced personality type. By understanding that personality types can be influenced by outward influences at a young age, an understanding of the causes of personality can be understood. In "Personality

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Characteristics of South Korean Students with Visual Impairments Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator” it is further elaborated on that outward influences affect the personality types of students. Through a discussion of an outside influence, visual impairment, it is made clear that personality types can be affected by outside influences if introduced at a young developmental age, (Bak, 2012). These results demonstrating the impact of an outside influence on personality development further implies the presence of other outside influences such as a primary guardian’s marital status. In “Developmental Personality Types From Childhood to Adolescence: Associations With Parenting and Adjustment”, the influences on a personality type are discussed in relation to parenting and the discipline the children face at a young age. This study looked at the personality types of young children into adolescence and the impact a parenting style and disciplinary measure has on their development, (Haan et al, 2013). This study demonstrated the pliability of personality type within the developmental stage of young children.

Additionally, research has been conducted on the future impact of personality types and daily life and the use of personality types in the workplace. In an article titled “Relationship between Personality Traits and Performance among School Principals”, the impact of personality traits within the workforce is elaborated on. Through a personality test, the traits of a variety of schools principals were collected to determine the relationship between performance as a school principal and personality type, (Ali, 2011). In the same vein, Mark Holloway, Jonathan Passmore, and Margaret Rawle-Cope conducted a study to determine the relationship between an MBTI personality type and the implications on performance as a coach or therapist. Through the use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the team collected the personality types of the adults and determined how these personality types could not only be used in the workplace, but how they impact one’s performance, (Passmore et al, 2010). These studies demonstrate the current body of knowledge surrounding the implications and uses for personality types in daily life.

Although academic works regarding the related causes of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality types exist, this field currently lacks research on the relationship between a primary guardian’s marital status and the personality type of the child resulting from that relationship. The most prominent study appears to be research on the relationship between high school students personality types and their chosen music class elective; however, the study did not evaluate the relationship between marital status and personality types. Overall, past research tends to focus on the adults and the use of personality types in the workplace to boost productivity and work ethic.

## Method

This research question is approached with a mixed research approach, since data for two differing variables had to be collected. This mixed research method involved a survey and an MBTI personality test. The two variables that are tested MBTI personality tests and the participants’ primary guardian’s marital status. The method is qualitative, and the means of data collection were nonexperimental. A survey and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator were implemented in order to obtain data.

A mixed research method is the best approach for this specific study due to the variables being studied. The research question examined by this study is “Are high school students’ Myers-Briggs personality types affected by their guardian’s marital status?” This research question is focused on a specific personality type indicator: the MBTI. In order to effectively answer the question, the MBTI must be used to ensure an accurate depiction of the actual personality types of the participants. In addition, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is often used for research conducted in this discipline. When determining the relationship between personality types and causes or effects, Myers-Briggs Type Indicators are often used in the studies as it is a reliable personality test. For example, Leslie Francis and Susan Jones, from the University of Wales and St. Michael’s Theological College respectively, conducted research on adult churchgoers in which their personality types were measured. In this study, the MBTI was used in order to view a complex, three-dimensional model of the human personality, (Francis and Jones, 2000). The method utilized in this study demonstrates the positives of testing using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator as well as the complexity of the results provided by the test.

Additionally, this research question needs information from high school students. A survey allows for accurate qualitative data that can be easily collected from high school students. Using a survey, the data can be collected using closed-ended questions; the use of these responses ensures that no extraneous responses are collected. Surveys are often used to collect data from participants when reliable, accurate qualitative is needed to conduct a study. For example, Alan Tait and Terri Voepel-Lewis, both University of Michigan Department of Anesthesiology, summarized the positive aspects of survey research in the medical field. Within their paper, Tait and Voepel-Lewis discuss the good elements of survey research and the positives of using surveys within the field, (Tait and Voepel-Lewis, 2015). This article demonstrates the positives of survey usage and how to use them correctly within the scientific field.

Once the data was collected from both the MBTI and survey, the information was sent to a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet listed each participant’s responses to the agree and disagree questions; additionally, the spreadsheet listed the date the response was submitted as well as the participant’s answers to each of the survey questions. Once copied to another spreadsheet, the responses were altered to the characteristic each response corresponds with. For example, if the participant was prompted with the statement “I am a relatively reserved and shy person.” and responded disagree, their response would be changed to extroverted as that is the characteristic corresponding with the response given. After all responses had been changed to their corresponding characteristic, the number of each characteristic were counted and then the personality type was determined. After the personality type was determined, the personality type was listed within a column of the spreadsheet next to the responses.

## Participant Characteristics

Given that personality is a universal trait possessed by all, the limitations for participant requirements were limited. Although the study focuses on a universal part of human nature with all participant demographics applying, the participants ranged from

students in grades ninth through twelfth at a high school. Due to the nature of the research question, participants of a high school age were required. The data sample groups used ensured the correct participant population and allowed for alignment with the research question.

### Sampling Procedures

The most accessible survey sampling was a local high school's students. Within the school, the survey and personality test were distributed during students' free class periods and lunches. Additionally, the materials were distributed by teachers to any students willing to participate. In combination, the two sources of distribution provided an adequate amount of responses in order to complete the study and contributed to the intentional sample of high school students ranging from ninth grade to twelfth grade.

After reading an introduction to the study as well as acquiring student assent, the participants were allotted time to respond to the MBTI. The MBTI test consisted of 28 personality-based questions. The test consisted of seven questions each specifically targeting each of the four main characteristics of a personality type. By assigning seven questions to each of the characteristics, the possibility of being between two personality types was eliminated. Each question asked the participant to agree or disagree with a statement detailing an example of a personality trait in the real world. The polar nature of the agreeing and disagreeing statements allowed for the participants to demonstrate the opposing sides of a personality trait.

After taking the version of the MBTI, the participants were asked to take a survey. The survey began by explaining the purpose and results of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator; additionally, the 16 possible personality types, or results of the MBTI, were listed for the participants. The survey asked questions about the marital status of the participant's guardians and how long the marital status has been applicable. Additionally, for secondary data, the gender of the participant was asked.

### Results

Administration of the personality test and survey yielded a total of 152 responses with interpretable data. The culmination of responses totaled 54% introverted and 46% extroverted, 29% sensing and 71% intuitive, 63% thinking and 37% feeling, and 47% judging and 53% perceiving. Table 1 shows the breakdown of personality types gathered from the participants in regard to the introverted-extroverted aspect of personality.

Of the total participants, 112 indicated their parental marital status as "married", 27 indicated "divorced", 5 indicated "separated", 3 indicated "widowed", and 1 indicated "single mother/father". Within the marital statuses, each group was broken down into the four main characteristics of a personality: extroverted-introverted, sensing-intuitive, thinking-feeling, and judging-perceiving. Table 2 represents the breakdown of personalities for the sensing-intuitive characteristic. Table 3 represents the breakdown of personalities for the thinking-feeling characteristic. As shown in the table, only one participant responded that their primary guardian has the marital status of single mother/father. Table 4 represents the breakdown of personalities for the judging-perceiving characteristic. As shown in the table, all four participants with widowed primary guardians scored for the perceiving characteristic which impacted the test analysis.

For secondary data, of the total participants, 99 participants indicated that their birth sex is female, and 58 participants indicated male. Of the female participants, the culmination of responses totaled 56% introverted and 44% extroverted, 26% sensing and 74% intuitive, 53% thinking and 47% feeling, and 53% judging and 47% perceiving. Of the male participants, the culmination of responses totaled 52% introverted and 48% extroverted, 35% sensing and 65% intuitive, 85% thinking and 15% feeling, and 35% judging and 65% perceiving.

**Table 1**

|             | Married | Divorced | Separated | Widowed | Single Mother/Father |
|-------------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|----------------------|
| Introverted | 56      | 17       | 3         | 3       | 1                    |
| Extroverted | 54      | 10       | 2         | 1       | 0                    |

**Table 2**

|           | Married | Divorced | Separated | Widowed | Single Mother/Father |
|-----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|----------------------|
| Sensing   | 30      | 10       | 2         | 1       | 0                    |
| Intuitive | 80      | 17       | 3         | 3       | 1                    |

**Table 3**

|          | Married | Divorced | Separated | Widowed | Single Mother/Father |
|----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|----------------------|
| Thinking | 69      | 18       | 4         | 2       | 0                    |
| Feeling  | 41      | 9        | 1         | 2       | 1                    |

**Table 4**

|            | Married | Divorced | Separated | Widowed | Single Mother/Father |
|------------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|----------------------|
| Judging    | 52      | 13       | 4         | 0       | 0                    |
| Perceiving | 58      | 14       | 1         | 4       | 1                    |

**Analysis**

Statistical significance was not found, contradicting the hypothesis that children of divorced or separated parents demonstrate more judging and extroverted tendencies. The relationship between a primary guardian's marital status and a child's MBTI personality type was determined using a 2x4 Chi-square test analysis. This method of statistical analysis was conducted four times in order to test the relationship between the primary guardian's marital status and each of the four defining characteristics of a personality type. The first Chi-square test, or Test 1, analyzed the relationship regarding the Introverted-Extroverted aspect of personality. Test 1 provided a p-value of 0.556, making the data not statistically significant for a value of  $p=0.05$ . The second Chi-square test, or Test 2, analyzed the relationship regarding the Sensing-Intuitive aspect of personality. Test 2 provided a p-value of 0.727, making the data not statistically significant for a value of  $p=0.05$ . The third Chi-square test, or Test 3, analyzed the relationship regarding the Thinking-Feeling aspect of personality. Test 3 provided a p-value of 0.789, making the data not statistically significant for a value of  $p=0.05$ . The fourth Chi-square test, or Test 4, analyzed the relationship regarding the Judging-Perceiving aspect of personality. Test 4 provided a p-value of 0.358, making the data not statistically significant for a value of  $p=0.05$ .

Additionally, four additional Chi-Square tests were run on the secondary data collected to determine the relationship between birth sex and MBTI personality type. Although there were fewer male participants than female, both datasets were able to be tested. These tests found only one of the four personality traits to have a relationship with birth sex. This trait, Thinking-Feeling, deals with how one makes decision when faced with an issue. This analysis implies that one's birth sex could potential affect the way in which they use the information around them to make decisions.

Due to a lack of data, the participant who responded their primary guardian has a marital status of single mother/father, or Participant A, was excluded from all four of the Chi-square tests that were conducted. It is worth noting that Participant A tested a personality type of "INFP", meaning the participant has the characteristics Introverted, Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceiving. In addition to Participant A, the four participants who responded their primary guardian has a marital status of widowed were excluded from Test 4. Due to all four of these participants scoring for the perceiving characteristic, there was a lack of data for the judging characteristic and test was unable to be conducted on the marital status.

As shown by the data analysis, the expected trend of an increase in extroverted and judging tendencies for participants with divorced or separated guardians was contradicted based on the data set collected. Through the analysis, it was found that for Test 1, those with divorced guardians were more likely to be introverted than extroverted, contrary to the initial hypothesis of the study. Additionally, the tests revealed two of the characteristic pairs, Extroverted-Introverted and Judging-Perceiving, had either side of the pair as likely to be scored.

**Conclusion**

A person's Myers-Briggs personality type can be used to help explain how one interacts with others as well as their environment and how they analyze information in the world around them. The results from this research show that there is no apparent relationship between a primary guardian's marital status and the child resulting from that relationships' Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality type. In relation to the initial hypothesis of the study, this data contradicts the initial thought. Marital status does not significantly influence one's Myers-Briggs personality type. These results develop a deeper understanding of the connection between environmental factors and a child's development of a personality at a young age.

This research not only has a relationship to other factors of influence on personality type as discussed previously in Influences on Personality, but also has a contribution to the field of psychology. As discussed in Influences on Personality, previous studies have been conducted on the influences on the development of a Myers-Briggs Personality Type such as a visual impairment, (Bak, 2012); however, no reputable studies have been conducted combining both a primary guardian's marital status and the Myers-Briggs personality type of the child resulting from that relationship.

### Limitations

Although the analysis of data contradicts the initial hypothesis and denies the influence of a marital status on personality, many factors could be explored which could affect the research results. While the 28-question version of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator allowed for the personality type to be determined, the test is not as comprehensive as the original "Type M" Myers-Briggs Type Indicator the test is based on. The original MBTI consists of 93 questions to allow for a comprehensive evaluation of personality; however, a version of the MBTI consisting of 28 questions was used in this study.

Limitations also arise regarding the data sample that was able to be collected. Due to limited access to a greater population, the participants all attended the same local high school. The consequence of this was a limited number of responses for a few of the marital statuses as the population at the local high school is generally similar. For the "Single Mother/Father" category, only one participant was able to be collected which eliminated the marital status from all four tests run on the data. Additionally, only four participants were able to be collected for the "Widowed" marital status which eliminated the marital status from Test 4. The lack of data for these marital statuses may not be representative of other high schools across the country and therefore may not be representative of a greater population. An addition of multiple high schools to the sample size would have allowed for a more comprehensive representation of the general population of high school students but was unable to be collected due to a lack of access to other high schools.

### Future Implications

Upon concluding that there is no apparent relationship between a primary guardian's marital status and the Myers-Briggs personality type of the child, the field of psychology sees potential to be affected by these results. The exploration of a primary guardian's marital status is representative of an environmental factor impacting development after birth. Within the field of psychology, there is a debate over whether nature, one's genetics, or nurture, one's environment after birth, has a greater impact on personality development of a young child. The marital status of a primary guardian would be an environmental factor impacting a child's development after birth. The results of this research could be used to support the nature side of the debate on development of a personality.

The relationship between the Thinking-Feeling characteristic and the birth sex of the participant sees potential to affect decision making in the future. The Thinking-Feeling characteristic deals with the decision-making process and how one comes to make a decision. The apparent relationship between birth sex and decision-making skills could impact future studies on the difference between genders. Future studies could be performed to determine further personality-based difference between the two birth sexes.

Additionally, the results of this research show potential to affect the way parents make decisions in the future. Many parents take into consideration the impact a change in marital will have on the children resulting from the relationship. The results of this study demonstrate no apparent relationship between the development of an MBTI personality type within a child and a primary guardian's marital status. Due to this, parents will be able to make their decision based on the revelation of no specific marital status being more beneficial for the fostering of extraversion of judging tendencies within their children. With more knowledge of the impact of a change in marital status has on the personality development of a child, a shift is possible in the amount of those altering their marital statuses after having children.

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**Appendix A**

Administered Personality Test

**Directions:** Please answer the following questions honestly, all responses will remain anonymous

I tend to look towards the future.

Agree  Disagree

I am a relatively reserved and shy person.

Agree  Disagree

The feelings of those involved in an argument are more important to me than winning.

Agree  Disagree

I am good at goal setting and following said goals.

Agree  Disagree

My work environment is always kept orderly and tidy.

Agree  Disagree

I find it difficult to introduce myself to new people.

Agree  Disagree

When receiving an assignment, I tend to hold off starting it till closer to the due date.

Agree  Disagree

When at a social gathering, I gravitate towards the center of the room.

Agree  Disagree

I make decisions with my head rather than my heart.

Agree  Disagree

I consider myself very emotionally stable.

Agree  Disagree

I tend to notice little details.

Agree  Disagree

I prefer spending time alone than with a large group.

Agree  Disagree

I often misplace my things.

Agree  Disagree

I tend to make decisions based on logic.

Agree  Disagree

I see the positive possibilities in a bad situation.

Agree  Disagree

When encountering an issue, I think logically through the problem for a solution.

Agree  Disagree

I prefer planning ahead to going with the flow.

Agree  Disagree

I enjoy working with others during group projects.

Agree  Disagree

I am more of an improviser, not a planner.

Agree  Disagree

I often do things out of curiosity.

Agree  Disagree

I enjoy being the center of attention.

Agree  Disagree

If a friend is upset, I am more likely to offer logical solutions than to provide emotional support.

Agree  Disagree

I often find myself daydreaming.

Agree  Disagree

I often take initiative in a social situation.

Agree  Disagree

I think I am more practical than creative.

Agree  Disagree

My dreams tend to consist of real world situations rather than imaginary scenarios.

Agree  Disagree

My feelings are easily hurt.

Agree  Disagree

My travel plans are typically well thought out.

Agree  Disagree

**Appendix B**

Administered Survey

**Instructions:** Please read the excerpt below and complete the questions that follow it.

**An MBTI, or Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, is a personality test testing for the 4 main characteristics or personality types: Extroverted-Introverted, Sensing-Intuitive, Thinking-Feeling, Judging-Perceiving. The results of this test give you one of 16 different personality types: INTJ, INTP, ENTJ, ENTP, INFJ, INFP, ENFJ, ENFP, ISTJ, ISFJ, ESTJ, ESFJ, ISTP, ISFP, ESTP, ESFP.**

Have you previously taken an MBTI test? (Circle) **Yes** **No**

If so, what was your result? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your birth sex? (Circle) **Male** **Female**

What is your primary parent's ,or primary caretaker's, marital status? (Select one)

- Married
- Single mother/father
- Widowed
- Divorced



Separated

How long has this marital status been applicable?

0-2 years

2-4 years

4-6 years

6+ years