



## Sheldon's Personality Theory in Modern ERA

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### ABSTRACT

*Personality has been defined and explained by different psychologists in various ways. William Herbert Sheldon had his own idea about personality. He gave a theory, that a body type could be linked with the personality of that person; a fat person with a large bone structure tends to have an outgoing and more relaxed personality while a more muscular body-typed person is more active and aggressive. A slim or scrawny person with thin muscles is usually characterized as quiet or fragile. In order to find out its existence in today's modern world the research has been done. 300 individuals of age group between 19 to 25 years of three different body types were selected and given a self-constructed questionnaire to check whether they are falling according to Sheldon's theory of Personality. It was found that the theory still require lot of research in order to prove that the body type affects the personality of individual because the result of research showed that the theory is less applicable in modern era.*

**Keywords: Sheldon, Personality theory, Applicability, Modern Era**

The word "Personality" is originally a Latin word which means personae, which means the mask which the ancient Greek actors used to wear in their play. There are many famous psychologists who have contributed a lot of research work in the field of personality. Engler (2009) Some of them are the Psychoanalytical Approach by Sigmund Freud, Neopsychoanalytical Approach by Carl Jung and Alfred Adler, Ego Analytic Psychology by Anna Freud and Erick Erickson, Social Learning Theories by Albert Bandura and Julian Rotter, Biological Trait by Hans Eysenck and the last Traits and Personality by Gordon Allport and Henry Murray. Similarly, a very famous psychologist who contributed in the field on personality theory in 1940s was an American psychologist William Herbert Sheldon, associating body types with human temperament types. As a result he found 3 body types with their distinct personality. Haracz (2013) First one is Endomorph whose body structure should be soft and flabby body and their personality should be like one of the laziness and pleasure-seeking. Second is Mesomorph, who should have a body shape that should be firm and muscular body and personality should be assertive and ambitious. Third is ectomorph, whose body type should be thin and frail and personality to be shy and nervous. He did not think that people were purely one type or another, and as a result, he rated people on these 3 body types and gave them a somatotype. He later used this classification system to explain delinquent behavior, finding that delinquents were likely to be high in mesomorphs and low in ectomorphs and arguing that mesomorphs associated temperaments (active and aggressive but lack sensitivity and inhibition) tended to cause delinquency and criminal behaviors.

Cohen (2010) According to Ayurvedic medicine, there were three main metabolic body types called "doshas" - Vata, Pita, & Kapha. The characters and the body shape of the doshas were similar to the 3 body types of Sheldon's Personality Theory. Where, Vata was for ectomorph and Pita was for mesomorph and Kapha was for endomorph. Although his study has been strongly criticized on methodological grounds (Sheldon himself made both the physical and psychological ratings), more methodologically sound studies—in which investigator bias was minimized by having one investigator rate the somatotypes and having the study participants independently rate

their own personality traits—have also produced supportive evidence for Sheldon's position (Child, 1950; Cortes & Gatti, 1965; Yates & Taylor, 1978).

Wadsworth (1979), in contrast to Sheldon's finding that large and muscular convicts predominate, found that British delinquents who committed serious crimes tended to be smaller than average and were late in reaching puberty. West and Farrington (1973) in their longitudinal study of London working-class boys, found no association between delinquency and body shape or size. Thornton (1936) showed 20 photographs of criminals to people who were asked to choose one of four crimes each of the criminals might have committed. He found that people could match faces to crimes more reliably than would have been predicted by chance (Brewer, 2000). Reading his theory made the researchers interested to find out whether his theory is applicable or not. There were many researches done on Sheldon's Personality Theory. They were interested in finding whether the body types really exist or not.

The three body type descriptions could be modulated by body composition, which can be altered by specific diets and training techniques. In a famine, a person who was once considered an endomorph may begin to resemble an ectomorph, while an athletic mesomorph may begin to look like an endomorph as he or she ages and loses muscle mass. However, some aspects of the somatotype cannot be changed: muscle and adipose mass may change but the bone structure is a fixed characteristic. A study was conducted in (1969) by Lerner to explore preferences among the 3 temperaments characteristics. The results indicate that male and female college students would prefer to be more somatotonic and less cerebrotonic, a choice to preference mesomorphic body build. Another study was done by Lester, Kamnisky and McGovern (1993) to examine whether ectomorph was related to personality of young children, on 9 traits related to Sheldon's personality theory (dependent, placid, affectionate, enthusiastic, outgoing, active, self-conscious, shy and sensitive). Over all result of the study provides no support among young children for Sheldon's Personality Theory. An attempt to relate somatotypes to delinquency was proposed as a definitive approach to the study to eliminate the problems involved in the

research done by Sheldon. The method of somatotyping was based on comparative measurements of skin folds, bone structure, muscle development, body weight and height rather than by observing photographs. Assessments were based on self-report inventories. Using these measurements and definitions, they found that over half of the 100 delinquents possessed a mesomorphic body type compared with the 19% of the 100 non-delinquents. Whereas, 14% of the delinquents were endomorphic, and 30% of the non-delinquents were endomorphic.

Bohm, Vogel (2010) The major criticism of the body type theories is that differences in behavior reflect the social selection process and not biological inferiority, which means, delinquents are more likely to be mesomorphic than non-delinquents because mesomorphs are more likely to be selected for gang membership. As an alternative to Sheldon's genetic position, social learning proposed by Richard Ryckman (2008) that the relation between the body and traits are because of the result of learning, that is, people have certain stereotypes about the kind of traits that are associated with specific physiques- stereotypes that are perpetuated through books, films, magazines and television also through contact with other people.

Sheldon came up with 50 personality dimensions which he used to rate test subjects. He found high correlation between the three body types and clusters of personality types. His correlations between body types and personalities remain questionable. The questions which comes in our mind is how can we rate ourselves according to his body types and how will we come to know that an ideal body type exists, also, a question that do body types differ for men and women.

So to find answers to the question whether Sheldon's Personality theory really exist or not and also to fill up the large gap between the researches done on Sheldon's Personality Theory the researcher have done a research work .

#### Methodology:-

Sample- 300 individuals were selected. Out of which 150 were males and 150 were females. The sampling was done on the basis of following criteria:

- Inclusion Criteria :- (1) Age between 19 to 25 yrs.  
 (2) Height as per three body types  
 (3) Weight as per three body types
- Exclusion Criteria:- (1) Age below 19 and above 25  
 (2) Physically Challenged

**Diagnostic Tool:** For the research a questionnaire was developed and validated by experts. The subjects were asked to write their name, height, weight, age and gender. There were 3 columns in the test which had personality characteristics of

endomorphs, mesomorphs and ectomorphs respectively on it and there were 7 questions were the subject has to write in the blank given next to every characteristic which they think best suits them. They were supposed to write ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) with 3 as (neutral). Later numbers in every column were counted and each subject was divided into 3 categories of normal, under-weight and over-weight according to the subject's height and weight using BMI chart (Body Mass Index)

**Procedure:** The purpose of the research was to find whether Sheldon's Personality Theory is applicable in today's modern world. Review of Literature was done first to see researches done on his theory and to get proper knowledge about Sheldon's Theory so as it helps to prepare a questionnaire and was validated by experts. For the research 300 individuals were selected using stratified sampling; 150 were male and 150 were female. The subjects were college students from age between 19 to 25 yrs. Subjects were given a brief idea about what the research is about than they were given questionnaire. They were explained how to fill the questionnaire, writing numbers in the blank ranging from 1 to 5. Were 1-strongly agree and 5-strongly disagree and 3- neutral. Any difficulty during conduction was been cleared by the researcher. Later numbers in every column of the questionnaire were counted and each subject was divided into 3 categories- normal, under-weight and over-weight according to the subject's height and weight using BMI chart (Body Mass Index) Later data was analyzed.

**Discussion:** The purpose of this research was to find Sheldon's Personality Theory in today's modern world. For that 150 male and 150 female samples were taken. From the research it was found that in case of boys who have endomorphic body types do not have the same personality type described by Sheldon but rather showed Ectomorphic personality characteristics. Similarly, in case of boys who have Ectomorphic body type do not show the same personality characteristics but rather showed Endomorphic personality. In case of Mesomorphic body type, the boys showed same personality characteristics. In case of girls we came to know that none of the 3 body types, according to Sheldon personality theory are accepted. All the 3 body types showed Mesomorphic personality traits.

**Conclusion:** The research shows that the characteristics shown by individuals are not matching with their physical structure as it was discussed by Sheldon in his personality theory. So it can be said that the physical characteristics are not the only personality affecting factors. Hence, Sheldon's theory is not acceptable in modern era and required further elaborated research.

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