Association Rule Mining Technique for Psychometric Personality Testing and Behaviour Prediction

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Abstract— At the heart of personality psychology lies one single fundamental motive and that is to be able to anticipate how an individual will think, behave and feel at any future instant. Quite unfortunately this field has not been very successful in achieving this. Though this field has given us great insights about the working of the mind, cognitive processes and emotions, it has failed to accomplish its central objective i.e., to predict human behaviour. We propose in this paper a novel technique of predicting human behaviour without the need of any abstraction about the mind or its internal workings. We propose the use of simple and straightforward statistics for this purpose. Applying simple association rule mining on behaviours of thousands of people, association rules having high confidence values can be identified. And based on these rules, strong conclusions can be made in anticipating the behaviour of an individual. An analytical study was conducted on answers provided by 1414 candidates to a 163-question personality survey. The survey was based on the famous questionnaire prepared by Raymond Cattell. This survey was chosen to first try and prove the ambiguity in the current psychological concepts. Following that simple association rule mining was applied on the data to obtain associations between variables. The strongest association obtained with 97.2% confidence was an inter-class association rather than an intra- class association as would be expected from traditional psychology point-of-view.

Keyword- Personality Psychology; Personality Theories; Raymond Cattell's personality factor; Data Mining; Association Rule Mining

I. INTRODUCTION

As our understanding of this universe grows amidst the swelling breadths and depths of our knowledgebase, we are increasingly made aware of the fact that nothing in this universe is compartmentalized. The universe has proved that it cannot be classified or divided into parts rather there is a gradient everywhere and an unclassifiable diversity is present everywhere we look. Earlier we used to divide the heavenly bodies into stars, the sun and the moon. Now we have discovered a variety of heavenly objects of varying sizes and shapes. Life on earth was either plants or animals; the animals were classified into insects, mammals, birds and fishes. One of the first attempts at classifying the living beings by Carl Linnaeus gives a hint of this fact. And now as time passes our classification systems have begun to increase in complexity, now there are amphibians, flightless birds, etc. Today, even the division into flora and fauna is considered artificial. Now this earth is not even classified into the living and the non-living, because we have such things as viruses that blur the border between the living and the non-living.

Man has been on the search for an answer to what personality is from the start of time, but apart from a few useful insights we have not been able to provide a conclusive answer to what a personality is and how it works. No doubt we have spent more than two thousand years already in the hunt for a convincing answer. Yet in this paper we argue that the real motive behind the search for a satisfying answer to what personality actually is, is not greater understanding of this world through a better understanding of how our minds work. The objective is not just to be able to comprehend the complete nature of a mind by understanding various individual personalities; we argue that most likely the real motive behind the urge to make complete sense of human psych stems from the desire to predict. Humans crave for prediction and they try to predict whenever they are able to perceive any sort of patterns. This craving for prediction enforces us to look for the underlying thread of abstract ideas that can explain everything we perceive about an individual's thoughts,

behaviours and feelings.

Yet for the most part in the field of psychology, and in general; people, their personalities and their behaviours are divided into types. The concept of trait theories also suffers from this abstract conceptualization of this diversity in personality into dimensions

Personality psychology is a branch of psychology that studies personality and its individual differences. Its areas of focus include:

- Construction of a coherent picture of the individual and his or her major psychological processes
- Investigation of individual differences
- investigating human nature and human's similarities

"Personality" is defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person who uniquely influences his or her cognitions, emotions, motivations, and behaviors in various situations. The word "personality" originates from the Latin *persona*, which means mask. In the theatre of the ancient Latin-speaking world, the mask was not used as a plot device to *disguise* the identity of a character, but instead was a convention employed to represent or *typify* that character. Allport argues [17] that the psychology of personality can make the following contributions,

- predict a person's behavior on the basis of his/her individual characteristics
- discover common traits
- develop general laws as to how an individual's uniqueness comes about
- discover the individual person's own point of view of who she or he is
- codify knowledge as to the nature of human nature
- turn interpersonal impressions into more reliable knowledge
- adequately represent the individual in science, and provide that individual with respect

No doubt predicting what another person is going to think and feel, and how the other person is going to behave has been on our minds since for the first time we started to think as humans. And since that time the field of personality psychology has grown so much that we have different models and a variety of theories that contribute in their own way in understanding the human psych. Yet one thing that we haven't been able to achieve even today is to able to foretell with a certain amount of confidence as to how a human being is going to behave or think in future[3].

II. RELATED WORK

A. Personality Theories

The study of personality is based on the essential insight that all people are similar in some ways, yet different in others [4][5]. There have been many different definitions of personality proposed. However, many contemporary psychologists agree on the following definition:

Personality is that pattern of characteristic thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that distinguishes one person from another and that persists over time and situations [4].

1. Trait Theories:-

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association, personality traits are "enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself that are exhibited in a wide range of social and personal contexts." Theorists generally assume that a) traits are relatively stable over time, b) traits differ among individuals, and c) traits influence behaviour. They consistently are used in order to help define people as a whole. Traits are relatively constant; they do not usually change. Traits are also bipolar; they vary along a continuum between one extreme and the other (e.g. friendly vs. unfriendly) [5][22].

The most common models of traits incorporate three to five broad dimensions or factors. All trait theories incorporate at least two dimensions, extraversion and neuroticism, which historically featured in Hippocrates' humoral theory [6]. Gordon Allport delineated different kinds of traits, which he also called dispositions. Central traits are basic to an individual's personality, while secondary traits are more peripheral. Common traits are those recognized within a culture and thus may vary from culture to culture. Cardinal traits are those by which an individual may be strongly recognized. In his book, Personality: A Psychological Interpretation, Gordon Allport (1937) both established personality psychology as a legitimate intellectual discipline and introduced the first of the modern trait theories [7][20].

Raymond Cattell's research [1][2] propagated a two-tiered personality structure with sixteen "primary factors" (16 Personality Factors) and five "secondary factors." In Cattell's lengthy career, he had written 50 books, 500 journals, and 30 different types of standardized tests. For Cattell, personality itself was defined in terms of behavioral prediction. He defined personality as *that which permits a prediction of what a person will*

do in a given situation.

2. Type Theories:-

Personality type refers to the psychological classification of different types of people. Personality types are distinguished from personality traits, which come in different levels or degrees. For example, according to type theories, there are two types of people, introverts and extroverts. According to trait theories, introversion and extroversion are part of a continuous dimension, with many people in the middle. The idea of psychological types originated in the theoretical work of Carl Jung [8] and William Marston, whose work is reviewed in Dr. Travis Bradberry's *Self-Awareness*. Jung's seminal 1921 book on the subject is available in English as *Psychological Types*.[19]

3. Psychoanalytical Theories:-

Psychoanalytic theories explain human behaviour in terms of the interaction of various components of personality. Sigmund Freud was the founder of this school of thought. Freud drew on the physics of his day (thermodynamics) to coin the term psychodynamics. Based on the idea of converting heat into mechanical energy, he proposed psychic energy could be converted into behaviour. Freud's theory places central importance on dynamic, unconscious psychological conflicts [9].

4. Behaviourist Theories:-

Behaviourists explain personality in terms of the effects external stimuli have on behavior. The approaches used to analyse the behavioural aspect of personality are known as behavioural theories or learning-conditioning theories. These approaches were a radical shift away from Freudian philosophy. One of the major tenets of this concentration of personality psychology is a strong emphasis on scientific thinking and experimentation. This school of thought was developed by B. F. Skinner who put forth a model which emphasized the mutual interaction of the person or "the organism" with its environment. Ivan Pavlov is another notable influence. He is well known for his classical conditioning experiments involving dogs. These physiological studies led him to discover the foundation of behaviourism as well as classical conditioning [10][21].

5. Social Cognitive Theories:-

In cognitive theory, behaviour is explained as guided by cognitions (e.g. Expectations) about the world, especially those about other people. Cognitive theories are theories of personality that emphasize cognitive processes, such as thinking and judging.[24].

6. Humanistic Theories:-

Humanistic psychology emphasizes that people have free will and that this plays an active role in determining how they behave. Accordingly, humanistic psychology focuses on subjective experiences of persons as opposed to forced, definitive factors that determine behaviour. Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers were proponents of this view, which is based on the "phenomenal field" theory of Combs and Snygg [11]. Rogers and Maslow were among a group of psychologists that worked together for a decade to produce the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. This journal was primarily focused on viewing individuals as a whole, rather than focusing solely on separate traits and processes within the individual.

7. Biopsychological Theories:-

Biology plays a very important role in the development of personality. The study of the biological level in personality psychology focuses primarily on identifying the role of genetic determinants and how they mold individual personalities [12][23][25].

B. Raymond Catell's 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire

The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (or 16PF) given in Table 1 in supplementary data, is a multiple-choice personality questionnaire which was developed over several decades of research by Raymond B. Cattell, Maurice Tatsuoka and Herbert Eber. Beginning in the 1940s, Cattell used the new techniques of factor analysis (based on the correlation coefficient) in an attempt to try to discover and measure the fundamental traits of human personality [1]. The questionnaire measures the 16 primary traits shown in Table 2 in supplementary data, which have become popularized by other authors in recent years. From early in his research, Cattell found that the structure of personality was multi-level and hierarchical, with a structure of interdependent primary and secondary level traits [2]. The sixteen primary factors were a result of factor-analysing hundreds of measures of everyday behaviours to find the fundamental traits behind them. Then, they discovered the five global (or second-order) factors by factor-analysing the sixteen primary traits themselves, to find the basic, organizing forces among the sixteen basic traits. Thus, the 16 PF test gives scores on both the five second-order global traits which provide an overview of personality at a broader, conceptual level, as well as on the more-numerous and precise primary traits, which give a picture of the richness and complexity of each unique personality. A listing of these traits can be found in

the article on the 16 Personality Factor Model. Given below is a precise model of the sixteen factors and how they are used [3].

III. METHODOLOGY

Data fo this research was collected from 'http://personality-testing.info/_rawdata/', which stores data on personality surveys for the purposes of academic research and personal use. The questionnaire is based on the famous model of personality created by Raymond Cattell. This particular questionnaire used 163 questions divided in 16 categories. The answers to the questions are in a gradient form, ranging from 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Neither Agree nor Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree'. The data from web was obtained in the 'csv' format. The file had data stored in numerical form where Strongly Agree is equal to 5 and Strongly Disagree is equal to 1

Preliminary Analysis

The questions used for the survey that generated this dataset are given in table 2 additional sheet. The questions were provided with the codebook available with the dataset. The questions highlighted in pink are negative intent questions, where their scores mean opposite of the category they represent. The questions were classified into 16 categories as seen above; these categories are derived from the system developed by Raymond Cattell. The data also had four more variables apart from questions for storing variables like age, gender, accuracy and time taken to fill the form. Of the total 1414 candidates 878 were female, 535 were male and one was recorded as 'other'. The ages of the candidates under study varied from 14 to 80. The mean age of all the candidates was found to be 25.4. Most of the candidates were in the ages between 16 and 26 -a total of 925 people out of 1414. The highest number i.e. 209 people were aged 17.

For the purpose of this research the numerical ranges were converted into binary data of True and False denoted by 1 and 0 respectively. Answers ranging from 1 to 3 were converted to 0 and answers 4 and 5 were turned into 1. This conversion reduced the gradient into binary information which could be dealt with easily. It was also assumed at this point that people who possess the trait in question are normally confident about that and answer the question with high ranks, i.e. 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree'. The moderate answer therefore was converted into a 0 i.e. False.

Another important thing to be considered, while analysing the data set was that not all the questions had the same tone in asking i.e. in each of the sixteen categories there were a few, mostly at the end, whose intent was negative. So for each of these questions the polarity was reversed, i.e. the answers 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree' were converted to '1' and the rest to zero. The size of the data set at this point was 1414×163 , 1414 rows and 163 columns. Each column denotes the variable that we were dealing with. A sum of all the variables was generated. These values would be used in the future to calculate the confidence of associations. Given below is a graph showing the number of times 'True' occurs for each of the 163 questions (figure 1). The categories are indicated by their respective colours.

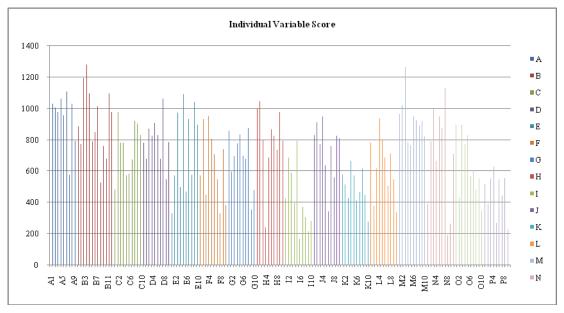


Figure 1: Score for 163 Questions

IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1) Association Rule Mining

A simple association rule mining algorithm was applied which is a basic variant of Apriori algorithm [13][14][15]. To begin with, associations between only two variables were calculated. The total number of associations possible between any two variables is shown in equation (1),

$$^{163}C_2 = 13203 \tag{1}$$

As mentioned above, R a free and open source integrated development environment was used for association rule mining. The code used for mining associations between all the possible combinations of two variables is given in the appendix A. The code generates half-a-matrix of the order 163×163 that stores the score of the association between two of each of the 163 variables. Each column represents an association of a variable with all the other variables. A segment of the matrix is shown in figure 2.

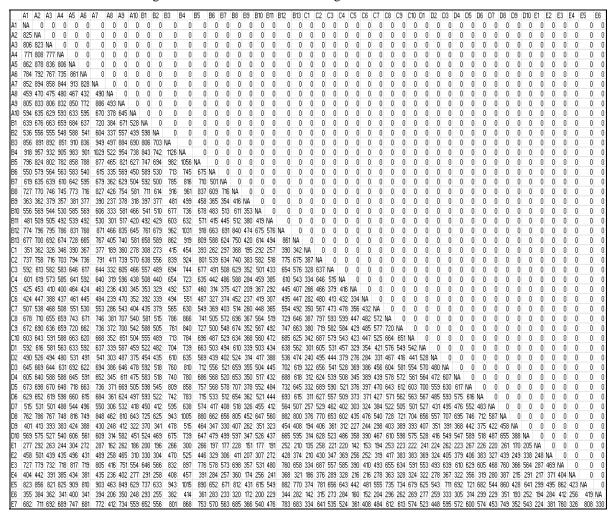


Figure 2: Association Matrix

The combinations obtained above were recorded on a linear scale and the values obtained were plotted on a graph to obtain the following figure 3.

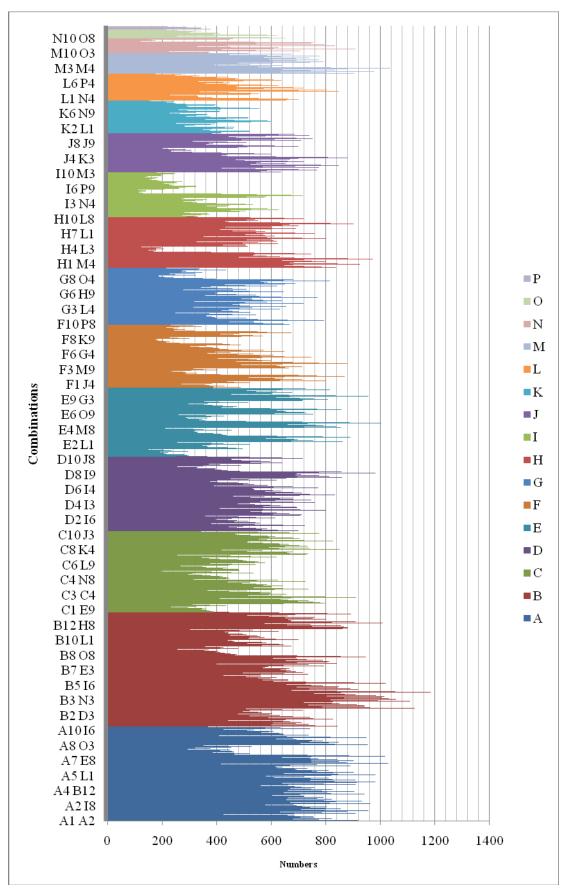


Figure 3: Associations (13,203) of 163 Variables

For the sake of ease and simplicity in using the above matrix in the algorithms that follow, its dual was created, i.e. the lower triangle of the matrix was duplicated into the upper triangle to obtain a symmetric matrix. The code for creating a symmetric matrix is given in the appendix. A section of the duplicate matrix is shown in figure 4.

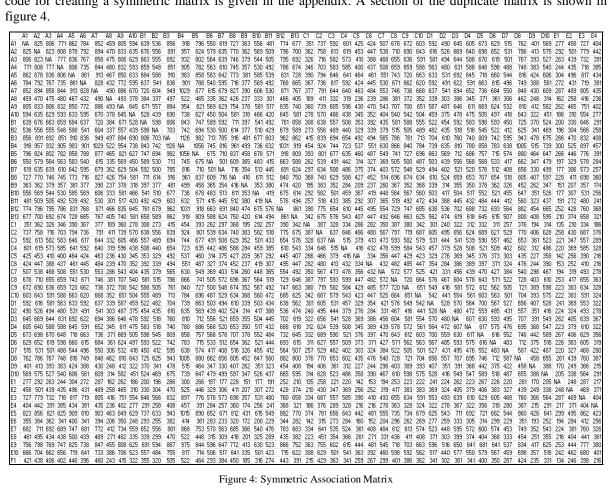


Figure 4: Symmetric Association Matrix

The nature of association between any two variables is depicted in the figure below. A careful examination of the association had revealed that the relation between any two given variables is not reciprocal as would be natural to expect in such a situation rather it has a direction. It was understood early on in the analysis that support values for the associations did not hold any physical or statistical significance in this particular survey. The focus here therefore was on confidence values. And as is evident, for the bi-directional associations two different confidence values were calculated for each of the association, as shown below in equations (2) and (3).

$$Confidence(A_1 \Rightarrow A_2) = \frac{Support(A_1 \cap A_2)}{Support(A_1)}$$

$$Confidence(A_2 \Rightarrow A_1) = \frac{Support(A_1 \cap A_2)}{Support(A_2)}$$
(3)

$$Confidence(A_2 \Rightarrow A_1) = \frac{Support(A_1 \cap A_2)}{Support(A_2)}$$
 (3)

Therefore the total number of confidence values is twice the number of associations as shown in equation (4) i.e.

$$13203 \times 2 = 26406 \tag{4}$$

These confidence values were stored in another matrix; portion of it is shown in figure below. The confidence values are stored in the form (Figure 5) which is calculated by using equation (5),

$$Confidence(A'i' \Rightarrow A'j') = \frac{Support(i \cap j)}{Support(i)}$$
 (5)

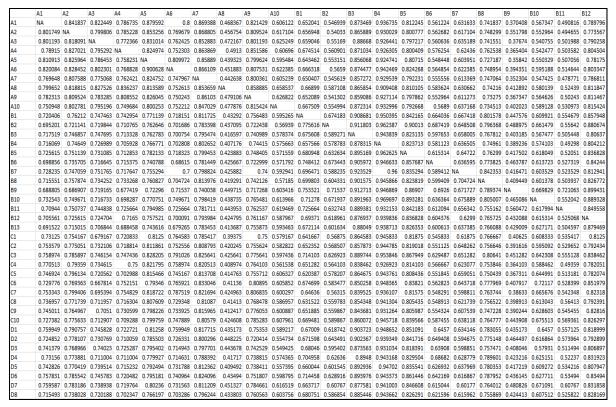


Figure 5: Confidence Value Matrix

2) R [16] Snippet for 2D Matrix Calculation

3) Results and Discussions:

The proposal in this paper was accomplished in two parts. Firstly, the most prevalent existing viewpoint in personality psychology was looked at critically and refuted. The arguments for the above are summarized in the following passages. Secondly, a new and altogether different approach was also proposed which was argued as the more favourable one, for the objectives at hand i.e. prediction of human behaviour.

4) Critique

- 1. In figure 1, there is great amount of variability in scores among variables of the same category.
- 2. From figures 7-17 it is clear that among all the groups of variable associations, the associations among the same category do not stand out to the point that the categorization might have any relevance.
- 3. Few variables picked at random were sorted based on their confidence values and plotted, there graphs are shown below(Figure 18-22). The highlighted variables again show the associations among the same category and it is clear from the graphs that the categorization is not able to group them in any manner. An ideal graph would have
 - A. all the highlighted variables slightly skewed towards the left,
 - B. most of them bunched together, and
 - C. few of them would be the first, representing the highest values.

The confidence values for associations with A1, C1, C9, P8 and O6 selectively are shown in the figure 6 to figure 10

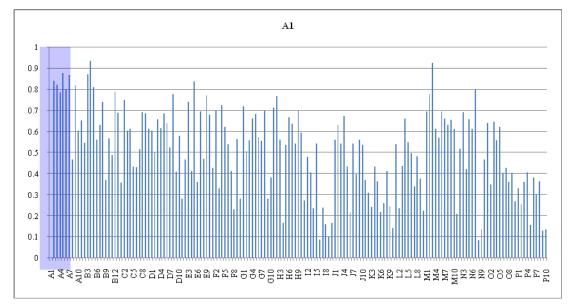


Figure 6: Confidence Values for Association with A1

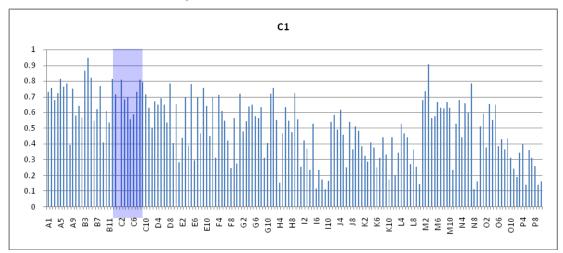


Figure 7: Confidence Values for Association with C1

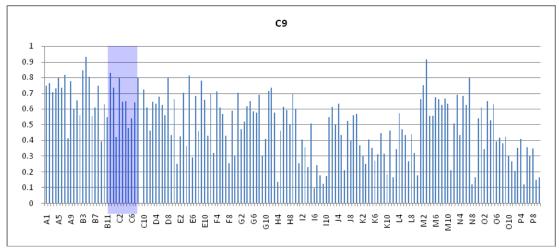


Figure 8: Confidence Values for Association with C9

So remaining figures from 12 to 17 are given as supplementary figures.

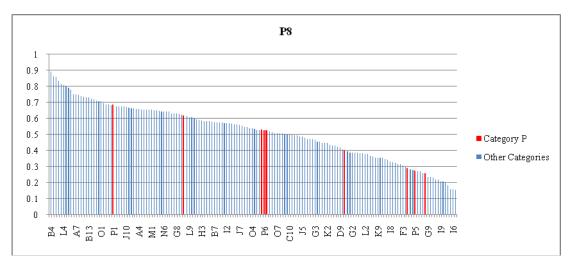


Figure 9: Confidence Values for Association with P8 Sorted

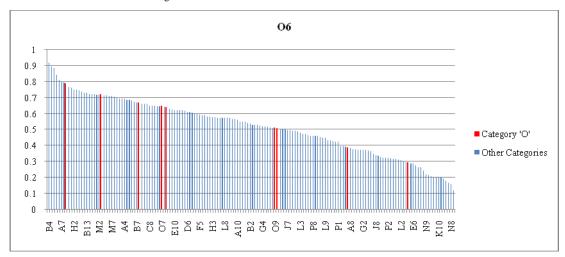


Figure 10: Confidence Values for Association with O6 Sorted

Similarly, remaining figures from 20 to 22 are given as supplementary figures.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

We proposed a new technique to predict human behaviour, which is the use of simple statistics. As we demonstrate through our paper, words or phrases can be studied using a survey to discover their correlations in populations. In this paper we demonstrate the correlations between phrases of the Raymond Cattell's 16 personality factors.

This process led to the discovery of quite a few unexpected associations. The list of 26,569 is reduced to 26,406 by subtracting 163 associations of the variables by themselves (i.e. A1 with A1, etc.). Out of these 26,406 associations there were many which were obvious, for e.g., H3 with H1, 'Read a lot' and 'like to read', B4 given B2, 'Use my brain' given 'Learn quickly' and many more of the like. Although such relations do form a part of this analysis and help us proving the effectiveness and applicability of this method, since all such relations which are obvious and expected formed the major bulk of the top five hundred strongest correlations. Of all the 26,406 associations that we obtained, 299 of them exceeded 90% in their confidence values. Also there were 1326 association rules that had confidence values of 80% and above. That makes up 5% of all the associations. Yet in what follows, we focus on some unexpected and interesting results that we obtained (Figure 23). The percentage values given in the arrows indicate the confidence values and hence are directional.

Also as one would expect 'get angry easily' would have strong association with 'get irritated easily', it seems, that is not the case. There is a stronger relationship with a variable of a different category. The Figure 11 is such type of strong relations we were able to form.

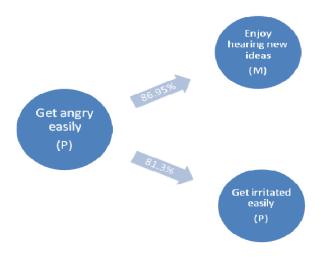


Figure 11: Strong relations discovered

Interesting or not, the usefulness of this approach has been proved quite extensively. Yet this approach in this context suffers certain drawbacks which are listed below.

- i. Associations have been established using a method that was proven less reliable in this paper itself.
- ii. The phrases of behaviour and thought process have been taken from a well-developed system whose foundations we claim to be flawed. And therefore all techniques employing this system are bound to be misleading. Also, like every other psychometric test or questionnaire that involves objective testing of personality, the questionnaire.

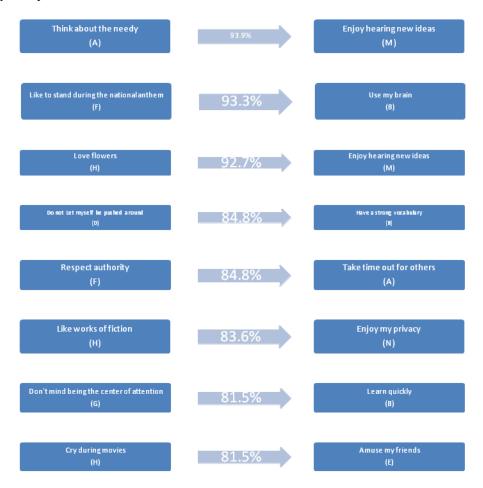


Figure 12: Important Associations discovered

used in this paper is also bound to have misrepresentation of self-image, i.e. wrong self-perception. This can be proved by looking at the correlations, where an astounding 61 of the top 100 association contain some instance of the question index 'B4' that represent 'using of brain'. Smart or not every person assumes continuous usage of brain for active thinking. Similar were the instances involving 'Enjoy hearing new ideas' as well 'Tend to analyse things', all associated with 'reasoning' or 'openness to change'. So to be able to apply this technique in the real world the first step would be to do away with the drawbacks, by using data obtained through surveys that are not based on any system rather are simple questionnaires concerning individual preferences. Yet a better approach would be to collect behavioural information of an individual from his/her friends, family and the network of colleagues. This, in today's world of connectedness through social networking sites, would be a trivial task. The data would contain simple words or phrases that demonstrate the behaviour of an individual. For e.g., 'gets angry fast', 'enthusiastic', 'approachable', 'friendly', etc. Once such a data is obtained simple association rule mining would produce associations that are not only useful but reliable as well. A system of behaviour prediction developed on the foundations of simple statistics has great potential in times to come. Once such a database of thousands of words and phrases is developed, which we call, 'reflection database', it can be used to fine grain over certain important characteristics. For e.g., different databases can be developed for different age groups, and likewise for different regions or countries, cultures, religion, ethnicities, financial background, gender and all such factors which have been proven to contribute to personality.

Also, such databases could be developed for different purposes and the scope of this method could be diversified. Consider for e.g. how behaviour is related to facial features, or how behaviour is associated with where a person is brought up, i.e. rural vs. urban. Moreover certain psychological puzzles concerning career choices can be resolved like 'are introverts better at science or vice versa?' Also how behaviour in childhood is associated with behaviour in adulthood as well as how behaviour can be used to enhance recruitment process in the corporate sector.

"What an increase in mental power mankind would achieve if the basic mental conditions which determine the different aptitudes for being a poet, a scientist, or a man of practical ability could be fully ascertained beyond any doubt by means of psychological analysis! If this were possible, we could recognize the tree, not from its fruit, but from its very first budding leaves, and could transplant it immediately to a place suited to its nature." – Franz Brentano.

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