

# Psychoagilical - Behavioural theory based Agile Squads in middle schools

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**Abstract** - Many Agile practitioners would agree when we say, “Agile is not a methodology, but a mindset”[1]some also believe it is a behavior, culture and a way of life. This paper dwells upon the belief of Agile being a culture and tries to address the cultural change which is the need of the hour in our education system. This paper also brings in the combination of the Ego States and Personalities for squad formation based on parameters measured using Psychometric tests and the marks obtained by the students. These squads are expected to become self-organized teams by enabling each other. This paper aims to be a guideline for educational institutions to visualize how agile squads could help a transformation for engaging students to help their peers to succeed along with them, thereby Enabling their leadership Skills, make them to co-create and improve the overall results of the educational institutions

**Key words** :Agile, Squads, Transaction analysis, Ego states, Personality Adaptations

## I. INTRODUCTION

Agile is based on the fundamental concept of responding to dynamic change, people and learning, in the education sector these are the three crucial things (change, people and learning) that we struggle at the moment. The education system constantly undergoes change in all aspects like the curriculum, grading system, environmental pressure, like now in the COVID 19 situation where in we need to respond to the changing need of the education sector from a face to face, traditional school teaching methodology to an online one. Agile methodologies could be a perennial solution to the prevailing challenges we are trying to address here. Agile has not only the potential of a dynamic project management, but also the value system which when clubbed with a psychological model can be robust in achieving the desired results at a Scalable level.

Agile is widely used framework which was originally designed for Software development with a set of 4 values, 12 Principles and unlimited number of Practices. Its predominantly used for greenfield markets where there are no reference points to lookup, multiple and dynamic requirement change to cope up and be the pioneers in the market. Specifically, where we need to give a prototype to the customer and keep it dynamic for course correction to give a viable product which could be tested and the requirements could be reiterated by the customer Its a methodology where co-creation and team participation plays a major role.

The key values of agile are as stated below : [2]

- Individuals and interactions over Processes and tools
- Working software over Comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over Contract negotiation
- Responding to change over Following a plan

The first value outlines the key factor of having the right team in place. Emphasis is on people and the interactions rather than on processes. Specially in Education sector the focus is on students and on improving their interactions and enhancing their capabilities Improve their collaborative efforts hence that would be the key focus discussed throughout this research paper.

A. **Squads[3]-** are small, flexible teams that are responsible for the end-to-end delivery of each product. Each squad has no more than 8 members, is cross-functional, plans together, and Preferably co-allocated. While “squad” is just a name for the way we organize our team, in practice it offers many advantages. Each squad works in a collaborative, transparent environment and uses the strengths of each team member to get the highest quality product to market in the least amount of time. When combined, multiple squads make up a tribe.

B. **TRIBE** is considered a collection of squads within the same business area. For example, there can be a tribe could be an all involved Technologies required for an Account in IT context.

C. **Transactional Analysis [4]:** An idea fundamental to Transactional analysis is that of Ego States. Berne suggested that human personality is made up of three elements, which he referred to as Parent, Adult and Child. These familiar words were used by him to describe states of ‘self ’or states of mind, which he believed gave rise to their own individual patterns of behavior.

a) **Ego States** : Ego states are, of course, common to all of us and govern our Thoughts, Feelings and Behavior. In any given situation an individual will exhibit a certain pattern of behaviour that corresponds to the way that person is actually feeling at the time. As feelings change, so also do the patterns of behaviour the person displays. As a result of his experience with groups, Berne observed that these patterns included noticeable changes in voice, posture, vocabulary and all other aspects of behaviour (Berne, 1964: 23).

i. **Parent Ego State** : The Parent ego state represents a set of thoughts, feelings and behaviour, which are derived from parental figures. According to Berne (1964) the Parent ego state is exhibited in both indirect and direct form. A person may, for example, respond as one of his parents actually responded in a given situation. When this occurs, the ego state is directly shown. When the parental influence is an indirect one, then the person is likely to respond as his parents would have wished him to respond.

ii. **Child Ego State:** While information is being recorded in the Parent ego state, another recording is taking place simultaneously. This second recording also derives from the past and represents a young child’s actual reactions to what is going on in the environment. Later

on, in adult life, the Child ego state is evident when the emotions that the original situation produced are felt once again. Harris (1973) refers to this response, making the point that a child has no vocabulary in the very early years, so experiences are recorded as feelings. These feelings can be evoked at any time in adult life, and often the individual concerned is unaware that the response is an archaic one.

iii. **Adult Ego State** : The Adult ego state denotes the feelings, attitudes and behaviour patterns which belong exclusively to the individual, and which are in touch with current reality and relationships in the present. since the Adult ego state appears to have much in common with the Freudian concept of the 'Ego'. Like the Ego, the Adult ego state represents reason and common sense. It is that part of the personality which can truly be described as autonomous and free from parental influence, or strong feelings emanating from the Child ego state. The Adult ego state is characterized by objective, logical thinking, and an ability to make independent judgments and decisions in any situation. Experiences gained throughout life are examined and used by the individual when in Adult, so that realistic choices can be freely made. Every so often the material stored in the Adult ego state is reassessed and updated, in order to keep in touch with changing circumstances and needs. Children, too, have an Adult ego state, which represents that part of personality which has absorbed and tested information passed to them from parents and other significant people. The central concern for the Adult ego state is the development of individual autonomy and the ability to make informed and realistic decisions on one's own.

D. **Personality Adaptations**[5] :Personality Adaptation term is originated by Paul Ware MD and elaborated by Vann Joines, Ph.D. refers to one of six basic adaptations individuals make in childhood in terms of how to best survive and meet the expectations in one's family of origin. The six adaptations that form the basic building blocks of personality are: schizoid, paranoid, antisocial, passive-aggressive, obsessive-compulsive, and hysteric. One can have any of these and be anywhere on the mental health spectrum from healthy to psychotic. Theories of personality seek to organize and make sense out of patterns of thinking, feeling, and behavior. These patterns describe who we are over time. Personality profiles, like labels, have benefits and drawbacks. And here in this context, we try to seek the positive aspects of each of the adaptation to categorize them into Enablers and Doers and formulate the SQUADS, with a Survey Questionnaire. There are two types of adaptations Survival , which are responses to the first psychosocial issue during the Oral stages, identified as " Basic Trust Vs Basic Mis Trust" whereas the Performing represents the way of the Child meeting him/her most basic needs adapting to the Parental demands.

a) **Survival Adaptations**

i. **Creative Day Dreamer** : The Creative Day Dreamer or the Schizoid adaptation is developed during the Oral Stage of Development (0-18 Months) and is a second type of response to the problem of how to survive when trust breaks down. Since their parents seemed overwhelmed or pre-occupied, creative day dreamers learn to be supportive, by not making any further demands on them. They decide to take care of themselves, by withdrawing into fantasy. They were praised for being " Good" babies who didn't cry a lot. Thus, they put a lot of energy into not causing problems for others. When we model their personality structure, we diagram their adult as being contaminated by both their parent and child Ego states. They tend to be critical of themselves from their Parent, feel upset in their child and then withdraw to get away from the bad feelings. The more they withdraw, the more they criticize themselves. The more they criticize themselves, the more they withdraw. Thus, they feel bad and feel stuck in those bad feelings. They feel bad and stuck in their bad feelings by believing that there's something wrong with themselves for feeling bad. They are upset and don't know what to do, since they are suppose to ignore what they feel.

ii. **Brilliant Skeptic** : The Brilliant Skeptic or Paranoid Adaptation is developed during the Oral Stage of Development (Age0-18 months), where the major issue for the infant is How to survive when Trust breaks down. I, when the Child can no longer rely on the environment, to meet his or her needs. The Individual who develops a Brilliant Skeptic Adaptation, learnt to pay close attention to everything that was going in Order to try to Avoid any surprises. Their parents or others in the environment were Often unpredictable and they often felt caught Off-guard. They are now on the lookout for similar Behaviour. They believe that if they can just control their own behaviour and everyone else then they will be OK. There fore they put a lot of energy in to being Careful. In Modelling their personality structure for Brilliant Skeptic, we show their adult as contaminated by their Parent Ego state and their Child as Excluded. Their Parent tends to be, rigid in its expectations for proper Behaviour. Brilliant Skeptics attempt to do, everything in such a way that no one could find any fault. Since Child like behaviour and feelings are spontaneous and unpredictable, they are excluded. Given how careful they have to be as a child, in order to survive Behaviour is the trap area for Brilliant Skeptics. Again they were suppose to be perfect and Strong. They certainly were not supposed to be Childlike or Playful. As a result they equate criticism with Shame and Humiliation, since their behaviour is supposed to be above reproach.

iii. **Charming manipulator** : The charming manipulator or antisocial adaptation is developed during the Oral Stage of Development ( 0-18 Months ) and is a third type of response to the problem of how to survive when the trust breaks down. The basic issue is abandonment. They feel as though a cruel trick was played on them. They were brought into the world under the guise of being loved and cared about and then left to survive on their own. They decided to survive inspite of the abandonment and to get revenge by making others look foolish. They do this by intimidating or seducing others. They get lots of attention for the drama they create. Charming manipulators put a lot of energy into outsmarting others. In Modelling the personality structure of charming manipulators, we show their adult as being contaminated by their child ego-state and their parent as being excluded. They think from the intuitive, creative adult in their child (little professor) . rather than their grownup Adult ego state. They use their thinking to outsmart and make fool of others, in the immediate situation, rather than to problem solve and look at the long-range consequences. Since Parent rules and values often get in the way of getting what they want, they simply exclude them. The behaviour they use is active aggression, to try to intimidate others and get the upper hand. Since Charming manipulators try to outsmart everyone else, thinking is the trap area for them. They try to get their needs met by being clever, tricking and manipulating others. Many times, this trickery doesn't get them what they want, in the short term. But in the long run, others come to resent their manipulation and end up going away from them. They experience being abandoned all over again, which further justifies their belief that they can't trust anyone to be there for them.

## Survival Adaptations

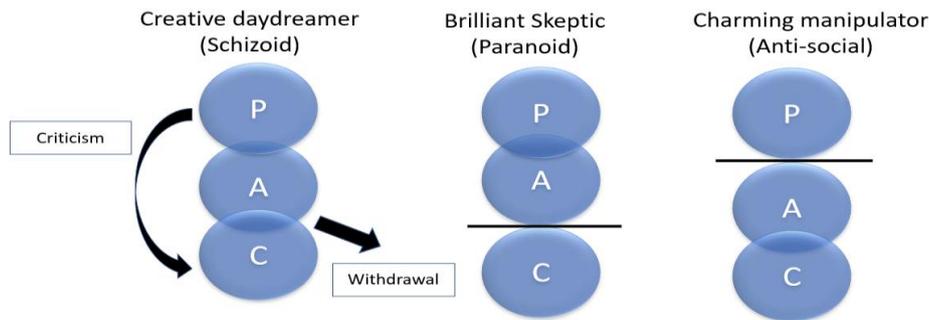


Figure 1

P- Parent , A- Adult, C- Child

### b) Performing Adaptations

i. **Enthusiastic -Overreactor or Histrionic** adaptation is developed in the Oedipal stage of Development (Age-4-6) and involves unresolved issues from that time. Male with this adaptation are supposed to be Mothers Confidant and companion and while Females were supposed to be daughter's little princess. Both of them get most of their strokes as children for being cute, delightful and loving. But keeping others happy is a behaviour that they can engage in without a great deal of thought and still get the maximum number of strokes from others. They learned to be emotionally attentive to others. In that process they spend a lot of energy pleasing others. When we model the personality structure for the enthusiastic over reactor, we portray the adult ego state as being contaminated by child Ego state. Enthusiastic over reactors in the way they learned to do as Children – deal with the world Primarily through feeling. Feeling is the area in which they invest. They often confuse what they feel with Reality. Their adult is frequently used in Service of their Child – to looks for evidence for what they feel to be True. As children their thinking was often discounted. Since they were suppose to please others, in order to be OK, enthusiastic over reactors have their greatest defences in the area of their behaviour. And that is why Behaviour is the trap area for them. And They confirm to what is expected from the environment And could be potential Doers.

ii. **Responsible Workaholic** : The Responsible workaholic are obsessive compulsive adaptation is developed at the end of the Anal Stage of Development and the Beginning of Oedipal Stage when the major emphasis was not on whether the child was going to do something but doing it right. With this adaptation, there was often an emphasis on perfection. Individuals who developed this adaptation, were suppose to be "Good Boys" and "Good Girls". They were praised for being the Model Child. They learned to equate worth and value with having, mother and fathers approval. As a result they put a lot of energy into being Model Citizens and doing things well. When we Diagram the Personality Structure for Responsible workaholics, we show their adult Ego state as being contaminated by their Parent Ego State. They are Driven by Parental "Should and Shouldn't". Since they were suppose to be Perfect, in order to be OK , Responsible Workaholics will have the greatest defences in the area of their Behaviour.

iii. **Playful-Resister ( Passive-Aggressive )** : The Playful-Resister or Passive-Aggressive adaptation is developed during the Anal Stage of Development (2-3Years) and is an attempt to maintain once autonomy in response to over controlling behaviour, on the part of one's parents. The parents often, parent from the position of "Its my way or the Highway!". The child response is "No Way". The result is a power struggle in which no one wins. The child concludes, "You have to struggle to Survive." Most of the attention the child receives is through conflict with the Parents. Thus, Playful resisters put a lot of effort into struggling. When we picture the personality structure of playful resisters, we show their adult as being contaminated both by parent and by child Ego states. They are critical of their behaviour from their Parent and fight back from their child. The power struggle that once occurred between them and their parents now goes on internally between their parent and child Ego state. Since the power struggles involve a lot of "Yes – But" responses and Arguments and seeing things as either-or , all or nothing, thinking is the trap door for playful resisters. They try hard to figure out what to do but end up feeling "damned if they do, damned if they don't"

## Performing Adaptations

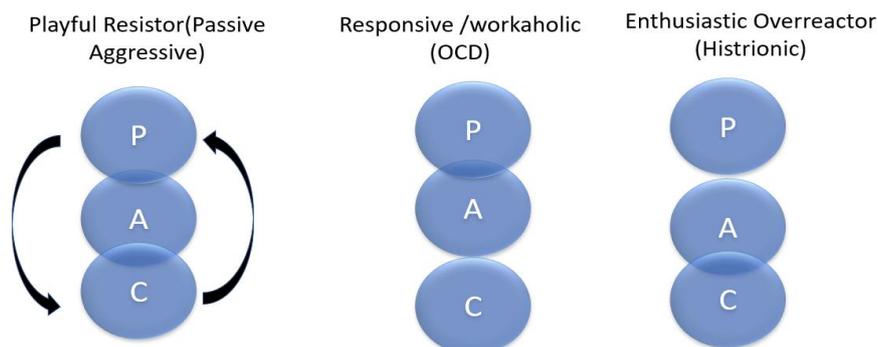


Figure 2: P – Parent, A- Adult, C- Child

**E. Enablers**

An Enabler supports the activities needed to extend the Architectural Runway to provide future business functionality. These include exploration, architecture, infrastructure, and compliance. Enablers are captured in the various backlogs and occur throughout the Framework. Enablers support efficient development and delivery of future business requirements bringing visibility to all the work necessary. Enablers bring visibility to all the work necessary to support efficient development and delivery of future business requirements. Primarily, enablers are used for exploration, evolving the architecture, improving infrastructure and compliance activities. Since enablers reflect real work they cannot remain invisible. Instead, they're treated like all other value-added development activities—subject to estimating, visibility and tracking, Work in Process (WIP) limits, feedback, and presentation of results.

**F. Doers**

They are not a part of line management. There will be very few members from the management ranks but the majority of the team will be "doers." The people that actually design, build, create, and test the code. This will add to the credibility as the methodology is rolled out to the company. It is not a management initiative being forced upon everyone; it is coming from real people who will be a part of the project teams. Since the team is composed of doers they actually know the ins and outs of developing in your environment. This is different than when consultants come in suggesting standard practices and disregarding the realities of a specific company. The Agile Core Team has experience with your company and they will use that experience to develop a methodology that knows what to keep and what to discard within the existing practices.

**II. THE NEW MATRIX & EXPERIMENT**

**G. Matrix :**

Combining the personality adaptations along with the agile aspect of enabler and doer, a Matrix was developed which is stated in Table 1

*Table 1: Matrix split for Adaptation flowing into Agile*

| Adaptation                                     | Characteristics  | Enablers / Doers |
|--|--|------------------|
| Enthusiastic Over Reactor (Histrionic)         | Excitable, Over-reactive, Dramatic, attention getting, high energy, Concerend about others feelings, imaginative                   | Doer             |
| Responsible Workoholic (Obsessive- Compulsive) | Conforming, Concientious, Responsbile, Reliable, Focused on the Task   | Doer             |
| Playful Resister (Passive- Aggressive )        | Aggressive passivity, Demonstrates Resentment, Overly Dependent, determinded to think for themselves, Weighs bothsides of an issue | Doer             |
| Brilliant Skeptic (Paranoid )                  | Strong thoughts, Grandiosity, Projection, Brilliant Thinkers, Very Alert, Keep ontop of the things, pay attention to details       | Enabler          |
| Creative Day Dreamer (Schizoid)                | Withdrawn Passivity, Day Dreaming, Avoidance, detachment, artistic, creative Thinking, Concerend about others.                     | Enabler          |
| Charming Manipulator ( AntiSocial )            | High Energy, Goal Oriented, Thinkwell on their feet. Seek Excitement and Switch gears with respect to environment,                 | Enabler          |

The matrix is a combination of personality adaptations, enablers and doers as per agile framework. The questionnaire developed has appropriate questions which covered all aspects mentioned in the Matrix.

The concept of Doers and enablers are interchangeable as per situation. As situational leadership emerges newer individuals assume roles of leader. The doers may have to take the co- ordinator and leading roles. Many a time in most organisations in a project we may see this role changes during the process of evolution. The planners may not foresee all contingencies and at those instances the emerging leader takes on the role as doers. More over when one joins a new group one might be a doer where as one would have been an enabler in the previous assignment. Therefore there is a balanced need to groom children to learn both roles and seamlessly transit from one to other if they have to grow in multicultural & multiple roles.

**H. Experiment :**

School was identified and the intent to experiment this was explained to the Head of the School. Confidentiality to maintain the name of the school and marks of the students anonymous was agreed upon. It was also agreed that only the overall results will be published in the whitepaper and no other personal information about the students or the school will be revealed. Post the agreement, the questionnaire ("Joines Personality Adaptation Questionnaire- was used) was shared to schools to be rolled out among Middle school students.

**I. Orientation for Teachers and Students :**

The Teachers and students were met virtually on a particular day and were explained about the questionnaire and the way the experiment would be conducted. Expectations about the experiment, its scope and out of scope were explained. Social contract of being transparent, treating everyone with respect and co-creating was agreed upon. Daily stand up's between the squad members were set, and weekly

cadence with the teachers were also set. Bi-weekly meeting with the experimenters was set to ensure that we were on track. The questionnaire was rolled out by the experimenters to 7 sections which had 40 students each.

**J. Squad formation :**

Once the answers for the questionnaire were received based on the reply, the students were grouped. The overall average marks of the students were also taken into consideration. Based on the above 8 member squads were formed, each class had around 5 squads and each squad had a minimum of 1 enablers and rest were doers and also were a mix of Top, Average and Below Average performers.

**K. Execution :**

The experiment was conducted with a controlled group of 80 students which is 20% of the population of middle school students across 2 schools of the same group. The students who were part of the controlled group were formed as squads and all other factors remaining the same as other group of students.

The marks obtained before the squad formation was noted and once squads were formed and they were encouraged to perform as a group rather than as individuals. The daily standups were conducted by the team leads, and the weekly reviews were conducted by the Teachers to check the improvement and to remove any impediments if any. Bi-weekly checks were done by the Researchers to keep a check on the progress. The Marks of the squads post implementation were analyzed and the results and observations are shared below.

**L. Feedback :**

Senior Management from the school stated " This experimental study has given ample opportunities to increase interaction with in the students, and has brought in overall good results in the mid-term exams. The enthusiasm among the students was very contagious. We need to see how we could extend this concept to other classes as well."

One of the Teacher stated " This experiment made the student own their responsibilities and also made them take responsibility of the fellow student, share their knowledge and do well together"

Student responded " It was fun, to do activities and learn together. It was a little easier to ask my classmates many times in friendly way and study. Also the competition was not to win over other, but everyone to do better together. "

**III. RESULTS**

The initial average marks of the students before forming the squad formation was noted and the same was taken after the squad was formed and there was significant increase in their performance. The initial split of the toppers, average performers, below average performers were around 23%, 48% and 30% respectively, we saw a 7.03% increase in the overall score of the teams. The Below average performers moved as Average and Average moved as Toppers, though from a percentage point of view number of Average performers remained the same the improvement was seen in Toppers and Below average performers.

This result was statistically validated. The null hypothesis was that "No significant improvement in scores due to squad formation". If the p value is >0.05 we accept the null hypothesis else, we reject it. The results below show that the p value for every class was much lesser than 0.05 and hence the null hypothesis was rejected. The p value statistically signifies that there has been an improvement in the scores due to squad formation.

Table : 2 – Summary output for a sample population of 40 students.

SUMMARY OUTPUT

| Regression Statistics |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Multiple R            | 0.989377844 |
| R Square              | 0.978868518 |
| Adjusted R Square     | 0.978312426 |
| Standard Error        | 2.509451686 |
| Observations          | 40          |

| ANOVA      |    |             |             |           |                |
|------------|----|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|
|            | df | SS          | MS          | F         | Significance F |
| Regression | 1  | 11084.99941 | 11084.99941 | 1760.2648 | 1.9376E-33     |
| Residual   | 38 | 239.299215  | 6.297347762 |           |                |
| Total      | 39 | 11324.29862 |             |           |                |

|              | Coefficients | Standard Error | t Stat      | P-value   | Lower 95%   | Upper 95%   | Lower 95.0% | Upper 95.0% |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Intercept    | 5.474355359  | 1.637540066    | 3.343035981 | 0.0018712 | 2.159328807 | 8.789381911 | 2.159328807 | 8.789381911 |
| X Variable 1 | 1.06056507   | 0.025278327    | 41.9555094  | 1.938E-33 | 1.009391773 | 1.111738367 | 1.009391773 | 1.111738367 |

The spread of personality adaptation in the entire school is represented in the Figure 3. We could see Playful resistors top the chart and Charming Manipulators are the least. The existing characteristics might change when they grow up and these students might display few different characteristics all together.

The chart below is the distribution of 6 personality adaptations in the controlled group. And it was interesting to see that a major chunk i.e more than 50% were playful resistor and enthusiastic overreactor – who were doers.

The concept of Doers and enablers are interchangeable as per situation. As situational leadership emerges newer individuals assume roles of leader. The doers may have to take the co-ordinator and leading roles.

Many a time in most organizations in a project we may see this role changes during the process of evolution. The planners may not foresee all contingencies and at those instances the emerging leader takes on the role as doers.

Taking an example of cricket- at time it may not be the captain but one of the player who does the enabler role. He may be the wicket keeper motivating the bowler and guiding him to take wickets or the man at mid-on position guiding the bowler to bowl the correct delivery. They all become enablers.

Moreover when you join a new group you may be a doer where as you would have been an enabler in the previous assignment. There fore there is a balanced need to groom children to learn both roles and seamlessly transit from one to other if they have to grow in multicultural & multiple roles. This example further reconfirms that the concept of shifting in ego state based on the situation also takes place.

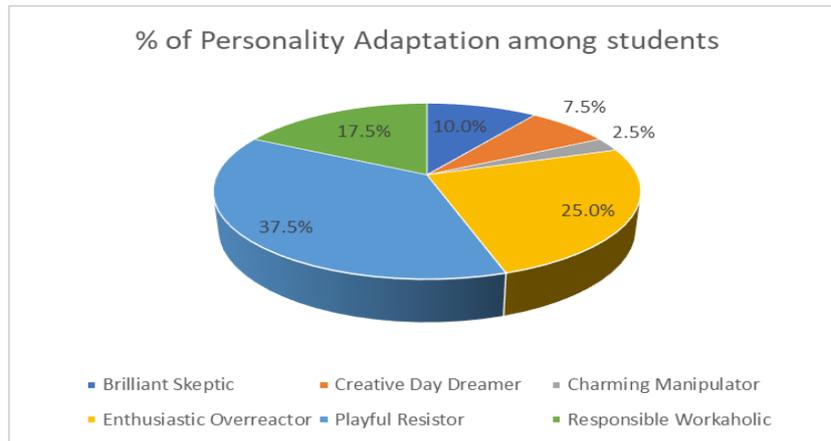


Figure 3: Split of the personality adaptation in the population

The Spread of enablers and doers Vs PA is in Figure 4. Though some state that the enablers should be around 15% in an organization, here we do see a little more enablers, which are based on the Personality adaptation which they fall under. It is around 19.23% percent. The mix of this has worked well in our experiment enabling an improvement in the scores.

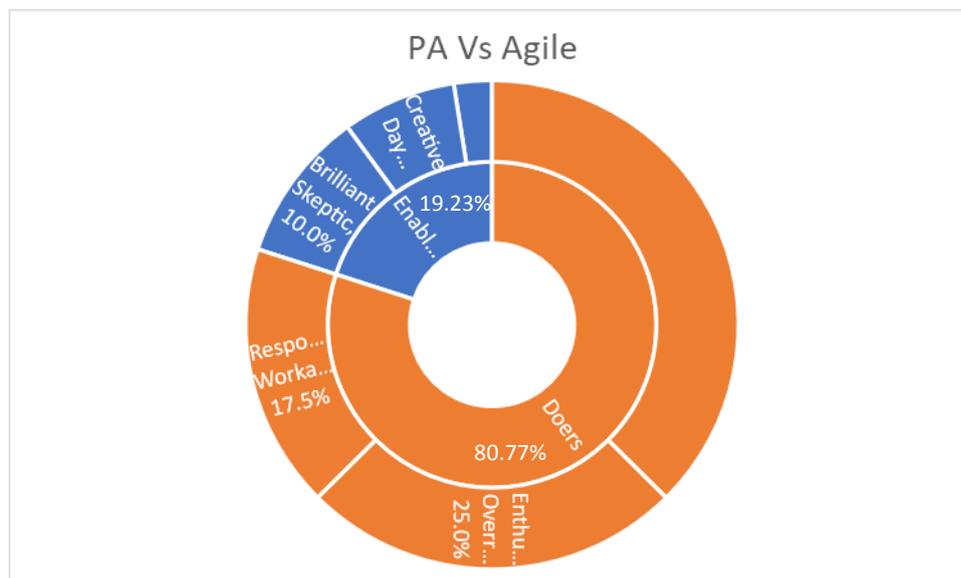


Figure 4 : Personality Adaptation vs Agile split in the Population.

#### IV. CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS

While we were researching for this paper, we found that **Psychoagilical** involving psychological aspects coupled with Agile was first of its kind and we need to pave our way through this. And Personality Adaptation is a huge ocean on its own and bringing down few aspects to the scope of this paper was challenging. Developing a matrix combining Personality adaptation and agile aspects towards the Squad formation was a great learning experience. And it gives more scope to bring about other aspects of these adaptations to various arena of Education. Identifying school and talking them into it was a task as they were initially worried about the results, Since for the past decade schools have become a business model where they play a number game of Marks and pass percentage. Talking the parents into agreeing for their wards to be part of the research was also a huge task. Keeping the children motivated and bringing them back to the mindset of sharing and helping the team was a challenge as they have been only focusing on self for the many years (rather from birth)

## CONCLUSION

The experimental research was based on the Agile culture and dealt with the cultural change which was required to bring about a change in our education system. This paper dwelt with the concepts of Agile along with the psychological aspect.

To further prove that the squads had significant impact on the results of the students, a small challenge was conducted, by giving similar tasks to the controlled group and the regular group of students. It was observed that in the controlled group conflict of interest was managed better, enablers were able to motivate themselves as well as influence the doers, as the group had developed mutual trust, confidence and respect for each other. This was not found in the case of the normal group, where the focus was more on the individuals.

An in-depth look at the data concludes that though the squads had a combination of all the Personality adaptations, two major personalities played a crucial role: Charming Manipulator and Playful Resistor. Charming manipulators become enablers for the factor that they have the quick ability to assess the situation, take the best out of even a futile situation and come up with a creative solution when nurtured positively, giving them the assurance and care, against being manipulative otherwise. We identified such personalities from the population and were made Squad leaders that reassured the positivity in them and effectively resulted in improvement in the performance.

Playful resistors have a natural inclination to do and perform as per the Parental instruction with in them and equally a rebellious child which resist against the parent. And when they were mentored to handle their resistance in a playful way giving a bigger picture what they are capable of, they understand truly supportive and give their best.

The result of the experimental research is a comprehensive model called “**Psychological**”. This term is unique as it is a combination of Psychology in the form of Personality adaptations and ego states, and Agile in the form of Enablers, doers and squads. This model would be beneficial for Parents, Students and Educational Institutions where the students nurture each other, coexist, co-create and emerge as future leaders. An addition to this may be that the students could be awarded extra points for coaching their peers from enablers perspective and for doers for improving their performance. This would be a motivating factor and could be a cadence mechanism. The wider aspect of personality adaptation which can be coupled with Agile Framework is vast and deep dive could lead to further research.

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