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Personality Assessment and Ethnicity:

A New Zealand Study

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Abstract

Ethnic status is one of the most protected demographic groups in terms of test bias and discrimination in personnel selection, as such bias breaches many laws, morals, and ethical procedures. To date there has only been two published studies that have used New Zealand relevant ethnic groups when analysing whether personality measures used in pre-employment settings exhibit different mean scores. The present thesis performed a systematic evaluation on the impact of ethnicity on personality traits. The study examined the impact of ethnicity on NZ Army Officer applicant personality assessment scores measured by the EPQ-R and GPP-I. Four ethnic groups (NZ Europeans, Māori, Pasifika, and Asian) were analysed for mean trait score differences among ethnic groups, the stability of these differences across different personality inventories and models, the variance of personality traits, the impact of ethnicity on age and gender relationships with personality traits, and how these differences were related to employment selection outcomes.

The analyses revealed that ethnicity did have some impact on mean personality assessment scores used in the study. However, these were mostly small differences among ethnic groups. In addition, most of these differences found on the EPQ-R and the GPP-I were not consistent across inventories and models. There were no significant variance differences found on personality traits among ethnic groups. While initial analysis suggested that ethnicity did not influence the relationship between age and gender on personality assessment, further examination suggested that the relationship between gender and personality was impacted on by ethnicity. There were reassuring results found for New Zealand psychologists and HR specialists, as only two of the twelve traits analysed showed moderate differences on traits that were related to selection outcomes. However, for the NZ Army OSB selection process the findings in the present study indicate that the Lie scale on the EPQ-R and the Vigor trait on the GPP-I may need to be interpreted with caution for Asian and Pasifika groups. These results are discussed in terms of implications for personality theory, measurement, and the direction of future research.

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