

Personality & Emotional Intelligence

Two Different Aspects Of A Person

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Introduction

With the internet becoming accessible to people all over the world, therein followed a worldwide explosion of online selection and development tests now readily available.

The internet makes it possible to quickly collect large databases and develop norms that used to take test developers many years to do so. With flashy graphics, it is also possible to design tests that have high face validity, meaning that they can “look” very good.

While test development used to be a very costly and research-intensive undertaking that could only be done by serious, committed and resourceful test developers based on solid theoretical foundations, today anybody with some basic computer knowledge can design his own tests and market them with high face validity, making them seemingly “look good”.

But what is beneath the surface? How can organizations and companies choose from the 30 million or so hits that you get when you Google for personality tests? How do you know if a test lives up to its promises and that it indeed can select the best person for a particular position or that it can play a significant role as a tool for developing people?

The short answer is: **Only use modern and evidence-based tests.**

A modern test should be based on a theoretical model that is in tune with our times (many tests are founded on theoretical models that are close to 100 years old) and have been developed during the last 20 years with the aid of computers.

An evidence-based test means that research can **prove** that they add value.

In other words, the test should be reliable and valid and proven through extensive research that it can be used to assess and predict who the best person for the job will be, and that by using the test for people development, it can actually improve people’s performance.

The most frequently used psychometric tests for selection and development are:

1. Intelligence tests (IQ)
2. Personality tests
3. Emotional Intelligence tests (EQ)

Let’s try to sort out what these three different concepts mean and how they can be differentiated from each other.

1. Intelligence Tests

What is Intelligence (IQ)?

A very general mental capability that, among other things, involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from

experience. It is not merely book learning, a narrow academic skill, or test-taking smarts. Rather, it reflects a broader and deeper capability for comprehending our surroundings - "catching on," "making sense" of things, or "figuring out" what to do.

Can IQ be used to predict performance in work life?

IQ is a reliable and very useful measure that can predict future performance. Jobs vary significantly in mental complexity. Placing people in jobs that are either under- or over-challenging frequently results in unhappy employees, reduced productivity and increased turnover. Individuals who are cognitively under qualified for the job are less likely to be able to handle fully their job requirement, and for high complexity jobs the results are consistent with the idea that individuals at either extreme on cognitive ability are more likely to turnover.

Conclusion

The practical implications from many studies reveal that organizations can benefit from utilizing assessment of cognitive ability as part of their selection battery.

2. Personality Tests

What is Personality?

Enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself. Personality traits are prominent aspects of character that are exhibited in a wide range of important social and personal contexts. Personality is seen as the essence of character. It is part of an individual's genetic makeup and is stable over time.

It is a rather diffuse concept that becomes more diffuse because different tests use different theories and are based on different theoretical models, many of which are close to 100 years old.

Can personality be used to predict performance in work life?

- "Yes, of course", say some consultants, people in general and the developers and sales people of personality tests.
- "No, not really", say academics based on research that shows that validity for personality tests is quite low.
- "Perhaps, but not to the same extent as IQ can predict performance", say some researchers
- "Hardly", say sociologists who point to the importance of environmental factors.
- "Not for leaders and leadership development", say many of the leading leadership development books.

Conclusion

The evidence is, at best, sketchy.

3. Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

What is EQ?

This concept refers to capabilities, competencies, and skills required to cope with environmental demands and pressures. It involves the ability to monitor and discriminate feelings and emotions of self and others, and use this information to guide thinking and actions.

Can we use EQ to predict performance in work life?

Yes, the concept is valid and has a profound effect on how people manage themselves and others.

There are several EQ tests on the market and the most scientifically robust and widely used on a worldwide basis is the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), which is designed to assess the construct of emotional intelligence.

The reliability of the EQ-i has been examined by a number of researchers over the past 25 years. A consensus of findings reveals that the EQ-i is consistent, stable and reliable. There are many evidence-based studies showing that the EQ-i can be used to assess, predict and develop people in the workplace.

Conclusion

The Emotional Quotient Inventory appears to be an excellent measure of the emotional intelligence concept and can be used to improve assessment, selection and development of people.

Emotional Intelligence – Personality Same or Different?

What the research says:

1. EI is a distinct construct from personality. Can predict performance above and beyond measures of personality (Petrides, Furnham, 2001)
2. Some overlap (Leary, et al., 2009)
3. Meta-analysis: Some overlap but “EI does add incremental validity over personality, yet personality does not add incremental validity over EI.” (Van Rooy, Viswesvaran, 2004)

EI’s advantage over personality measures is that it is dynamic and can be improved through coaching, training and development, whereas people tend to feel “stuck” with the personalities they are dealt. (Stein, Book, 2006)

This text is based on information from the articles mentioned in the text, the Buros of Mental Measurement, communication with Professor Lennart Sjöberg at Stockholm School of Economics, and my own experience as an organizational psychologist.