
Summary: Format matters when testing candidates

Conclusion: Internet and paper-and-pencil personality tests are generally comparable, but adverse impact effects should be considered when transitioning.

Reference: **Are Internet and Paper-and-Pencil Personality Tests Truly Comparable** by Adam W. Meade, North Carolina State University; Lawrence C. Michels, University of Georgia; and Gary J. Lautenschlager, University of Georgia. 2007. Organizational Research Methods. For more information, contact Chloe Tatney at ctatney@batrushollweg.com.

Why this Article is Important: Many organizations utilizing personnel selection measures have moved from traditional paper-and-pencil formats to more technological formats, such as internet-based testing. However, few companies have examined the psychometric differences between the two testing styles. When examining personality tests that are commonly used in organizations for employee selection, the authors found encouraging results for the equivalence of online and paper-and-pencil tests on most personality scales. However, some scales showed a lack of equivalence. While the article may be a bit abstruse and psychometrically dense, we are more than willing to discuss the implications of this article with you.

Major Findings: This article demonstrated that conscientiousness (which has been established as the strongest personality predictor of job performance) appears to have virtually identical psychometric properties for online and paper and pencil formats. However, other scales (specifically Outgoing and Optimism scales) have not established this sort of equivalence. These are important findings, because selection decisions are often based off these tests, so it is imperative to establish equivalence between the different formats before drawing conclusions. This paper also highlights the fact that adverse impact can arise from switching to online testing, which can potentially result in litigation. Due to the fact that not everyone has access to a computer, using testing that is solely online can adversely affect members of protected classes.

What does it mean to you?

- a. Implications about adverse impact resulting from transitioning from paper-and-pencil to online formats should be carefully considered to avoid litigation.
- b. You cannot assume that tests are psychometrically equivalent if they are in two different formats (i.e., online and paper-and-pencil). Therefore, selection decisions based off tests that are not psychometrically equivalent can be inaccurate.
- c. Professional assistance and advice should be sought to help with this process.