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2013-08-01
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Exploring industrial psychologists' perceptions of personality assessment in personnel selection and the issues associated with personality assessment in South Africa.

A research report by:

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Submitted in compliance with the requirements for:

Master of Arts in Organisational Psychology,

University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Supervisor: Professor Sumaya Laher

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work, except where due acknowledgement is made to others. It is submitted for the purpose of my Master of Arts Degree in Organisational Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination to any other university.

Sapna Fakir

Date

Abstract

This study explored industrial psychologists' perceptions of personality assessment in personnel selection and the issues associated with personality assessment in South African organisations. This was a qualitative study in which 11 industrial psychologists (2 male, 9 female) were interviewed to determine the reasons why personality assessment is or is not used for selection purposes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted which comprised of 11 questions related to the industrial psychologists context, understanding the place of personality assessment in personnel selection in organisational settings in South Africa and a view of common practice employed in organisational settings in South Africa. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data. The analysis resulted in five themes namely, person-environment fit; other purposes for which personality assessment are used; personality tests commonly employed; limitations of personality assessment; and ethical considerations with the use of personality assessment. Based on these themes it can be concluded that there is invaluable information gained from determining whether or not a person will fit into the organisation. Therefore, person-environment fit theory is a crucial theory that underpins the use of personality assessment in personnel selection. Further research is required in the field of psychometric assessments in organisational settings within the South African context in terms of addressing the various ethical issues the administrators are currently facing.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt gratitude to the following people:

Above all, I would like to thank God for His guidance and immeasurable blessings, as He has been my pillar of strength.

- My supervisor, Professor Sumaya Laher for her continuous guidance, support and patience throughout the compilation of this dissertation. Her encouragement, dedication and perseverance has led to the successful completion of this report.

- My parents for their unconditional love, support, encouragement and for always being there for me when I needed them most.

- My brother, sister and my brother-in-law for always encouraging and supporting me. Not forgetting my sweet, incredible niece Shriya who has always put a smile on my face. My family is my endless source of support and inspiration.

- My friends, for their motivation and support through the most difficult times and encouraging me every step of the way.

- And lastly, the industrial psychologists who sacrificed their time to participate in this study, without their input, this study would not have been possible.

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Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1. Introduction

"Industrial and organisational psychologists plan, develop and apply paradigms, theories, models, constructs and principles of psychology to issues related to the world of work in order to understand, modify, enhance individual, group and organisational behaviour effectiveness " (Professional Board for Psychology, 2008, p.13). With regard to psychological assessment in organisational settings, industrial psychologists are required to "design, develop, standardise and implement assessment tools and procedures related to the work environment" (Professional Board for Psychology, 2008, p.13). There are various reasons individuals are assessed within an organisational setting, however there are two main goals of individual assessments (Elkonin, Foxcroft, Roodt & Astbury, 2001). Firstly, individual differences are assessed for the purpose of selection and employment (Elkonin et al., 2001). Secondly, intra-individual differences are assessed for "placement, training, and development as well as compensation and reward purposes" (Elkonin et al., 2001, p.266). Personality tests seek to measure "emotional, motivational, interpersonal and attitudinal characteristics" (Barnard, 2010, p. 154) as well as "personality traits, dynamic motivation, personal adjustment, psychiatric symptomatology, and social skills" (Gregory, 2004, p. 485). There are several personality tests which aim to provide a valuable foundation for employee selection; however it is crucial that personality tests establish a link to job performance before they are used in personnel selection (Gregory, 2004). "Psychologists also use personality assessment to identify the individual's characteristic strengths and weaknesses and his or her way of interacting with the world and the self" (De Bruin, 2001, p.22). Given the important role that personality assessment plays in the selection process, it is essential to explore the concept and establish whether personality is a concept appropriate for measurement in the personnel selection process in practice as much as the theory suggests it is.

In the literature review that follows, the concept of personality is introduced. Following this, the history of personality assessment and testing is reviewed as well as briefly distinguishing the difference between personality assessment and personality testing. This is followed by the function of personality assessment in organisations as well as briefly describing the different types of personality tests and assessments used in organisational settings. Ethical

considerations regarding personality assessment are discussed. Person-environment fit theory is discussed to better contextualise personality assessment in personnel selection. The literature review concludes with an examination of literature detailing the possible limitations of personality assessments within an organisational context.

1.2. Personality

Gordon Allport created the definition of personality almost seventy years ago, which states that "personality is the dynamic organisation within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment" (1937, p. 48). Since then many definitions for personality have been proposed and the field of personality psychology developed. "Personality psychology" has been defined as "...the scientific study of the psychological forces that make people uniquely themselves" (Friedman & Schustack, 2006, p.2). These psychological forces consist of eight key aspects that build up this vague and complex construct known as personality, namely: unconscious aspects; ego forces; biological being; conditioned and shaped; cognitive dimensions; traits, skills and predispositions; spiritual dimensions; and an interactionist approach (Friedman & Schustack, 2006). These aspects form the major epistemological positions in personality psychology. The *unconscious aspect* refers to the forces which the individual is affected by, yet we are not aware of it. Secondly *ego forces* affect the individual as it provides a sense of identity. Individuals are *biological beings* that have a "unique genetic, physical, physiological, and temperamental nature" (Friedman & Schustack, 2006, p.3). Culture *conditions and shapes* individuals as our surroundings make us respond in a certain way. The *cognitive dimension* refers to how people interpret what is happening around them. Each individual has unique *traits, skills and dispositions* as each individual has certain abilities and specific inclinations. The *spiritual dimension* refers to individuals seeking a deeper meaning for their existence (Friedman & Schustack, 2006). Lastly, individuals are constantly *interacting* with a particular environment (Friedman & Schustack, 2006). However, personality has traditionally been located in the psychoanalytic and trait approach and to a lesser extent in the cognitive and biological approaches. However the field of testing has been broadened to include a greater variety of methods and personality assessment is now preferred to be utilised.

Consistent with the definition of personality, there are many dimensions that make individuals unique, thus personality tests and assessments have to extract the individuals' strengths from these various dimensions in order for organisations to acknowledge and work at optimising these strengths for the benefit of the individual as well as the organisation.

Psychological assessment can be defined as "...appraising or estimating the magnitude of one or more attributes in a person. The assessment of human characteristics involves observation, interviews, checklists, inventories, projectives, and other psychological tests" (Gregory, 2004, p. 33). It can also be defined as "a process-orientated activity aimed at gathering a wide array of information by using psychological assessment measures (tests) and information from many other sources" (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2009, p. 4). From these definitions it should be noted that there is a difference between psychological assessment and psychological testing. Assessment refers to the entire process of collecting information about a person and using it to make inferences about characteristics that can predict behaviour (Gregory, 2004). Psychological tests are "...a standardised procedure for sampling behaviour and describing it with categories or scores" (Gregory, 2004, p. 30).

At present psychological assessment is used to provide information in order to direct individuals, groups and organisations so that informed and appropriate decisions can be made. There are several functions of assessment, such as to "identify strengths and weaknesses, map development or progress, make decisions regarding suitability for a job or a field of study, identify training and education needs, or it can assist in making a diagnosis" (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2009, p. 3).Therefore this study will not only focus on personality testing but rather the broader context which is personality assessment.

1.3. Personality assessment in South Africa

Claassen (1997, as cited in Foxcroft & Davies, 2008, p. 162) has stated that, "testing in South Africa cannot be divorced from the country's political, economic and social history" therefore the historical development of a country is essential to understand the development of psychological assessment in South Africa. Previously, the apartheid policies had a

tremendous impact on the use and development of psychological assessments in South Africa as separate measures were developed for the different racial groups (Foxcroft, Roodt & Abrahams, 2001; Barnard, 2010).

> Not only were the early measures only standardised for whites, but, driven by political ideologies, measures of intellectual ability were used in research studies to draw distinctions between races in an attempt to show the superiority of one group over the other (Foxcroft, et al., 2001, p. 22).

According to Nzimande (1995) the history of testing in South Africa is strongly linked to the beginning and development of industrial psychology in South Africa. Following World War II, there was an increasing need for semi-skilled black workforce in the manufacturing sector and in the mining sector thus the need arose to identify occupational suitability (Nzimande, 1995; Foxcroft & Davies, 2008). The National Institute for Personnel Research (NIPR) saw the development of testing on a large scale in South African industry and mines especially for a large number of people who had received very little formal education (Nzimande, 1995; Foxcroft & Davies, 2008). Assessment was utilised in South Africa as a way of justifying the exploitation of black labour and to reject black people to access education and economic resources (Nzimande, 1995). Sehlapelo and Terre Blanche (1996) have highlighted a similar point in saying that psychological tests determined who gains access to economic and educational opportunities. Laher and Cockcroft (2013, p. 2) explain that "...tests that were developed and standardised on educated white South Africans were administered to illiterate, uneducated or poorly educated black South Africans, and the results were used as justification for job reservation and preference". The above mentioned practices among others resulted in a general mistrust of psychological testing amongst the black population in South Africa (Foxcroft & Davies, 2008; Nzimande, 1995; Sehlapelo & Terreblanche, 1996; Laher & Cockcroft, 2013).

Furthermore, prior to the political transformation in South Africa, psychological tests that were from overseas were utilised across the entire community (Meiring, Van de Vijver, Rothmann & Barrick, 2005). Cross cultural issues began to emerge as these psychological tests were not efficient due to the realisation of South Africa being a diverse country in terms

of language and cultural differences (Meiring et al., 2005). Sehlapelo and Terre Blanche (1996, p. 50) have stated that "…if psychology as a profession is truly interested in empowerment, the reform of testing practices should be one of its priorities".

After 1994, due to the political transformation in South Africa, there was an integration of different cultures therefore there had to be a way to eliminate discrimination and promote equality especially in the workplace. Within organisational settings, the aim is to build capacity for the previously disadvantaged groups as well as minority groups (women, disabled people, and black people). "A failure to understand cultural and other differences can lead to misguided assumptions, poor working relations, underperformance and discrimination" (Horwitz, Bowmaker-Falconer & Searll, 1996, p. 140). A multicultural society creates various challenges to the use, development and adaptation of psychological assessments in South Africa. The Employment Equity Act was therefore promulgated to ensure that psychological tests/instruments can be used by all cultures and language groups in South Africa. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, Section 8 states the following:

> Psychological testing and other similar assessments are prohibited unless the test or assessment being used (a) has been scientifically shown to be valid and reliable, (b) can be applied fairly to all employees; and (c) is not biased against any employee or group (Office of the President, 1998, p. 9).

Schools, universities, the workplace and society in general began using psychological measuring instruments that were compliant with the Employment Equity Act (Meiring et al., 2005). Psychological assessment had to be compliant with the new Constitution to protect individuals in a legal manner and against discrimination of any form (Foxcroft et al., 2001). The Employment Equity Act ensured that the critical issue of discrimination was addressed and ensures that all employees have equal rights (Foxcroft et al., 2001).

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) originated in 1928 in accordance with Act 13 of 1928 as the South African Medical and Dental Council (SAMDC). Act 56 of 1974 replaced Act 13 of 1928, in which the SAMDC, now renamed the HPCSA continues to exist as a separate legal entity (HPCSA, no date). The practices of psychological testing in the 1980's in South Africa led to the formation of the SAMDC with the board for Psychology which defined the various forms of 'psychological practitioner' and were classified with certain qualifications and training (Moerdyk, 2009). Therefore psychologists are trained and

are bound by the country's legal acts to conduct psychological assessments and tests. "People who are not registered in one of these categories with the HPCSA may not perform psychological acts, and those doing so are liable to criminal prosecution" (Moerdyk, 2009, p. 100).

Both the Employment Equity Act and the HPCSA documents emphasise that test-takers and administrators of personality assessments in organisations cannot merely assume the instrument is valid and reliable. Administrators of these tests should use a tool that is proven to be valid and reliable which is based on theoretical and empirical support, such that valuable decisions are made about people based on the results of these tests. The administrator should ensure that the assessment is appropriate. They should understand the instrument especially conducting these tests/assessments in the South African context where there is a diverse group. During personnel selection, the administrator is required to fulfil their role by ensuring confidentiality of these tests/assessments, checking the references of the applicant, thus a 360 degree approach is required in order to obtain a holistic view of the person (Christiansen, Burns & Montgomery, 2005).

This demonstrates the importance and seriousness of how psychological tests and assessments are conducted in the present day and these acts attempt to address the critiques of assessment for those who were discriminated against with these tests in the past.

It is important to contextualise personality assessment in organisational settings; however it is also important to contextualise personality tests which are used to make key decisions in personnel selection. There are two approaches to personality testing which are: projective techniques and self-report personality inventories (Schultz & Schultz, 2006; Gregory 2004; Barnard, 2010).

1.4. Types of personality assessments

There are two basic principles that underlie personality theory which makes personality assessment possible. The first basic principle is that people are consistent in their behavioural pattern and each person has a set of coherent traits (Barnard, 2010). The second principle is

that people are different from one another in terms of their behaviour (Barnard, 2010). Based on personality theories and the manner in which personality is defined in these theories, there are numerous personality inventories which have been developed over the years (Barnard, 2010). There are a variety of methods and procedures which can be utilised to assess personality. The choice of method depends on "... (a) the reason for the assessment, (b) the psychologist's theoretical orientation and (c) the psychologist's preference for particular methods and procedures" (De Bruin, 2001, p. 227). Within organisational settings, the selection process usually consists of application forms (open or structured), written tests (psychological tests; tests of knowledge and skill; tests of ability and personality), interviews (more or less structured), and various assessment centre exercises (Schultz & Schultz, 2006; Schenk, 2009; Bartram, 2004). Personality tests in particular consist of two types – projective and objective tests.

1.4.1. Projective personality testing

Projective techniques attempt to uncover an individual's unconscious needs, motives and conflicts (Barnard, 2010). "It is based on the assumption that there are aspects of a person that he or she is not aware of or does not want to declare, yet these impact on the person's particular personality and behaviour" (Barnard, 2010, p. 155). Test-takers in a projective technique are given ambiguous stimuli and are asked to provide the first intuitive response, which is believed to be a characteristic of the test-taker's personality (Barnard, 2010). Examples of this assessment include the 'Rorschach Inkblot Test' where test-takers are shown ten standardised inkblots and they are asked to describe the figures (Schultz & Schultz, 2006). Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) allows the test-taker to respond to thirty ambiguous pictures of situations and people (Schultz & Schultz, 2006). In the Draw-A-Person Test, test-takers are asked to draw a picture of a person, in addition they will be asked to draw a picture of a person of the opposite sex as the person in the first picture and they will be asked questions about what was drawn (De Bruin, 2001). Another assessment requires the test-taker to complete sentences of which only the stem is given (De Bruin, 2001). It is highly complex to interpret these tests as it is primarily intuitive and extensive training and supervision is required before conducting these types of personality assessments (Barnard, 2010). Projective techniques are not very useful in the industrial field as it is not appropriate for decision making in personnel selection due primarily to its subjective nature. Therefore a more structured approach is preferred (Barnard, 2010).

> The underlying assumption in structured personality assessment is that a person's score on various personality dimensions provides an indication of that person's personality structure, and that various personality dimensions relate to various behaviours that may or may not be required in a particular job (Barnard, 2010, p. 156).

1.4.2. Objective personality testing

In self-report personality inventories, test-takers are required to indicate the degree to which they agree with each item or how well each item describes themselves (Schultz & Schultz, 2006). The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) was originally developed to differentiate between normal behaviour and abnormal behaviour as well as identify pathological personality characteristics (Barnard, 2010; De Bruin, 2001; Friedman & Schustack, 2006; Schultz & Schultz, 2006;). Over five hundred questions were asked and test-takers had to respond "true", "false" or "cannot say" (Barnard, 2010; De Bruin, 2001; Friedman & Schustack, 2006; Schultz & Schultz, 2006;). This test was not only used in a clinical setting but in personnel selection which was not appropriate (Barnard, 2010), although it is most frequently used in personnel selection (Schultz & Schultz, 2006). There was a need for the MMPI to represent normal behaviour, thus a revised version was developed called MMPI-2. It was also adapted to South Africa and it was translated into Afrikaans and Xhosa (Barnard, 2010). It has been noted that the MMPI has been misused in assessing personality for selection purposes as there has been no correlation determined between job success and MMPI scales (Barnard, 2010).

Cattell was one of the most prominent trait psychologists as he identified twenty primary personality traits; sixteen traits which were included in the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) (De Bruin, 2001; Van Eeden, Taylor, & Prinsloo, 2013). These sixteen personality factors focus around five second-order factors which are Extraversion, Anxiety, Tough-mindedness, Independence, and Self-control (Barnard, 2010; Van Eeden et al., 2013). There are five versions of this test available in South Africa, namely Forms A, B, E, SA92 and the 16PF5 (De Bruin, 2001). Forms A and B have been developed for various different groups including personnel selection but they have been criticised for the low internal consistency (De Bruin, 2001). "The most recent version of the 16PF5 that has been

standardised for South African use and is intended to replace earlier forms of the test is the 16PF (Barnard, 2010, p. 156). The 16PF5 is the only version available at present as the previous versions have been discontinued (Van Eeden et al., 2013).

There are measures which are based on the 'Big 5' theory of personality. "The Big 5 model of personality is based on the premise that personality mainly structures around the following five factors Extraversion, Emotional stability (neuroticism), Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, and Conscientiousness" (Barnard, 2010, p. 156). These measures which are developed based on the 'Big 5' include the NEO-PI-R and the Hogan Personality Inventory (Barnard, 2010). There are studies and meta-analytical studies which have concluded that 'Conscientiousness' correlates most consistently with performance in any job and 'Extraversion' was demonstrated to correlate with job success in specific occupations that require social interaction (Barnard, 2010).

The Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ) is a common assessment in personnel selection as it distinguishes thirty-two personality factors that are particularly work- related (Barnard, 2010; Joubert & Venter, 2013). It includes three broad domains namely, relationships with people, thinking style and feelings and emotions (Barnard, 2010; Joubert & Venter, 2013). Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is another widely used personality instrument used in the work context, particularly in South Africa, but it is suggested that it should not be used in selection for three reasons (1) "weak differentiation in interpreting high versus low scores on a given dimension (2) the preference theory underlying the instrument (3) the broad clustering of types" (Barnard, 2010, p. 157). It is based on the principle that "people have particular preferences in the way that they direct their energy, process information from their environment, make decisions and organise their lives" (Barnard, 2010, p. 157). Although it is suggested that it should not be used in the work context, it is used to improve people's understanding of their behaviour and of others which is found valuable in the workplace in terms of team development, personal development and leadership development (Barnard, 2010).

Aside from testing, as indicated there are other techniques, like interviews and assessment centres that are used to assess personality in organisational settings for personnel selection.

1.4.3. Interviews

Interviews are a common tool used around the globe to distinguish potential employees (Schenk, 2009). Interviews are either categorised as structured or unstructured. Structured interviews consist of a clearly defined interview schedule which specifies the order of questions during the interview (Elkonin et al., 2001). "Using a standardised set of questions, providing interviewers with a uniform method of recording information, and standardising the rating of the applicant's qualifications reduce the variability of the results across applicants and enhance the validity of the interview" (Schenk, 2009, p.455). Unstructured interviews do not have a specific order of questions, the duration of an unstructured interview is short, it is casual and it is made up of random questions (Schenk, 2009). "Without structure, a number of biases can distort interview results. These biases include interviewers tending to favour applicants who share their attitudes, giving unduly high weight to negative information, and allowing the order in which applicants are interviewed to influence evaluations" (Schenk, 2009, p.454).

1.4.4. Assessment centres

Assessment centres refer to a procedure of using various different assessment techniques to obtain a holistic view of the applicants. "In these tests, line executives, supervisors, and/or trained psychologists evaluate candidates as they go through one to several days of exercises that simulate real problems they would confront on the job" (Schenk, 2009, p.454). Assessment centres consist of a combination of exercises which include role-plays, simulations, in-basket tests, group problem solving exercises and leaderless group exercises (Elkonin et al., 2001; Bartram, 2004). Simulations (role-play) attempt to recreate a realistic scenario of an everyday work situation, this will provide a valuable insight of the behavioural pattern of the candidate and how they will handle the situation (Elkonin et al., 2001; Bartram, 2004). The training and experience of observers will determine the reliability and validity of simulations as the observers are required to have the knowledge of the behaviours that need to be observed (Elkonin et al., 2001). Vignettes are similar to simulations, but they are presented on a video or film format. The candidate is requested to deal with a specific problem by playing a role of a particular person (Elkonin et al., 2001). The leaderless group

exercises comprise of a group of candidates dealing with a specific problem or performing a specific task in which the observers rate the leadership qualities the candidates display (Elkonin et al., 2001). "The in-basket test consists of a number of typical letters, memos, and reports that the average manager or supervisor confronts in his/her in-basket" (Elkonin et al., 2001, p.268) and the candidate is required to deal with the correspondence in an optimal way. Assessment centres have gained popularity because of their face validity and candidates can relate to the exercises because they are perceived as appropriate in the work context (Elkonin et al., 2001).

Consistent with the various methods used in personality assessment, it is vital for practitioners to adhere to ethical principles.

1.5. Ethical Considerations

In order to conduct psychological tests within an organisational setting, industrial/organisational psychologists have to be registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) in which they are bound to practice fair and ethical assessments as they are trained and registered professionals (Barnard, 2010). The Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa (SIOPSA) was established to improve the industrial and organisational psychology profession in South Africa (SIOPSA, 2012).

> Functioning as an interest group of the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology in South Africa (SIOPSA), the purpose of People Assessment in Industry (PAI) is to ensure testing exists in the South African context as a value adding and ethical practice. The group's activities include promoting fair assessments in the workplace, with the primary aim being to be generally recognised as the leading organisation in the continuing promotion of fair assessment in the workplace to which people will automatically refer for assessment expertise and knowledge (SIOPSA, 2012, p. 1).

There are several key issues that have to be addressed by industrial/organisational psychologists with regard to personnel assessment and selection namely: job analysis, tests and assessments, cut-off scores, cost effectiveness, test bias, legal guidelines, and validity

studies (Gregory, 2004). Industrial/organisational psychologists are required to know the specific criteria for effective job performance which is referred to as *job analysis* (Gregory, 2004). The *tests and assessments* have to consist of devices and procedures that demonstrate a relationship to effective job performance (Gregory, 2004). Industrial/organisational psychologists are expected to know the *cut-off scores* of the valid tests used, which allows for the selection of successful applicants (Gregory, 2004). *Cost effectiveness* in terms of the costs of testing and selection is an important concept to consider as the psychologist should know which assessment produces the greatest benefit to the organisation (Gregory, 2004). Industrial/organisational psychologists should be aware of any *biases* of the assessments and tests against one or more minority groups as well as tests and assessments should be following a *legal guideline* for fair employment testing (Gregory, 2004). Lastly, industrial/organisational psychologists have to be constantly aware of the validity of the personnel selection program (Gregory, 2004). People who do not wish to give their consent to take these tests/assessments will be discriminated against because they are eliminating themselves from important decisions that are made in the workplace based on the results of these tests/assessments.

Consistent with the personality tests and assessments it is important to understand the reasons behind conducting these tests and assessments. In organisational settings these tests and assessments aim to match an individual's characteristics to the organisations culture and values. Thus the person-environment fit theory is the foundation on which personality assessments and tests are conducted in personnel selection.

1.6. Person-Environment Fit Theory

Personality tests and assessments in an organisational setting are generally situated within the Person-environment fit theory which is broadly defined as how well-matched an individual is to the environment in which they operate (Caplan, 1987). The theoretical framework for the person-environment theory is shaped by five central theoretical approaches in an organisational setting namely: Barker's theory of behaviour setting; the sub-cultural approach; Holland's theory of personality types and model environments; Stern's need x press = culture theory; and Pervin's transactional approach.

Barker's theory of behaviour setting states that, "environments select and shape the behaviour of people who inhabit them" (Walsh, 1973, p. 9). According to this view, people are likely to behave in highly similar ways in particular environments, regardless of their individual differences. Therefore environments which humans operate in have an influence on human behaviour (Walsh, 1973). The sub-cultural approach is mainly concerned with recognising attitudinal or behavioural dimensions by which people tend to vary (Walsh, 1973). "Members of a particular sub-culture would tend to behave in similar ways, as part of (and consistent with) their shared understanding or perception of the environment" (Walsh, 1973, p. 41). Barker's theory of behaviour setting and the sub cultural approach both suggest that the environment shapes human behaviour of those that occupy the environment (Walsh, 1973).

Holland's theory of personality types and model environments states that, "human behaviour is a function of both the individual's personality and the environment in which he lives" (Walsh, 1973, p. 41). According to Holland, people hold characteristics of six personality types namely: realistic, investigative, social, conventional, enterprising, and artistic (Walsh, 1973). Holland's suggestion is that "each individual behaves in a manner reflecting one or two of these orientations more strongly than the others" (Walsh, 1973, p. 64). If the balance between the dominant personality types and the environment is held, the more stable and satisfying the experience is for the individual (Walsh, 1973).

The work of Kurt Lewin set the foundation for Stern's theoretical approach which states that "scientific psychology must take into the account the whole situation defined as the state of person and environment" (Walsh, 1973, p. 97). There are three assumptions which underlie Stern's need x press=culture theory. The basic assumption is that "behaviour is a function of the transactional relationship between the individual and his environment" (Walsh, 1973, p. 98). The second two assumptions are implicit in Stern's earlier writings, the first implicit assumption is that the "psychological significance of the person may be inferred from behaviour" (Walsh, 1973, p. 98). The second implicit assumption is that the "psychological significance of the environment may be inferred from behavioural perceptions" (Walsh, 1973, p.100).

Pervin's transactional approach refers to "human behaviour can be best understood in terms of the interactions (cause-effect relationships) and transactions (reciprocal relationships) between the individual and his environment" (Walsh, 1973, p.157). According to Pervin, there are interpersonal and non-interpersonal environments for each individual which tend to match or fit the individual's personality characteristics. A match of the person to the environment will most likely contribute to a higher degree of performance and satisfaction (Walsh, 1973).

These five central approaches shape the theoretical framework for the person-environment fit theory in organisational settings. Each approach contributes to the extent to which the qualities of fit between an individual's characteristics match those of the environment. This leads to the definition of personnel selection which states that "Employee selection is concerned with making *decisions* about people. Employee selection therefore entails the *actual process* of choosing people for employment from a pool of applicants by making inferences (predictions) about the *match between a person and a job*" (Coetzee & Kriek, 2010, p. 185). Values are central to an individual's personality as they influence human behaviour in terms of attitudes, moral judgements and decisions (Suar & Khuntia, 2010). Organisations possess values which are rooted in the vision and mission statements and are built-in rules, policies and practices to maintain the integrity of members of the organisation (Suar & Khuntia, 2010). "...values are preserved formally by selecting personnel during recruitment whose values match with the organisation and socialising them to the organisational ethos, and informally through rituals, stories, myths, and heroic acts" (Suar & Khuntia, 2010, p. 444). This demonstrates the importance of personality assessments which ultimately determine whether future employees of an organisation will *fit* with the organisations culture.

1.7. Limitations of Personality Assessments

Many organisations are becoming reliant on personality assessment to select their employees. "The costs of making bad hiring decisions and the difficulties of getting meaningful information from reference checks of prospective employees have led many employers to use personality tests as part of their hiring process" (Stabile, 2002, p. 279). Personality assessments can be labelled as "useful" only if personality traits are identified as

valid and reliable predictors of success in a particular job (Stabile, 2002). Personality assessments are said to be a good investment as personal characteristics are matched to particular characteristics of a job/organisational culture thus reducing the negative outcomes such as undesirable applicants (traits such as dishonesty, or tendencies towards violence) and potential litigation disputes. Assessment centres allow for a holistic view of an individual therefore reducing biases and reliable information can be obtained as it is a thorough technique allowing an objective decision to be made.

There are some conflicting ideas on whether personality traits will have optimal success at a particular job. It is difficult to identify what personality characteristics will make someone a good pilot or computer programmer for instance (Stabile, 2002). With regard to personality tests, issues around faking, socially desirable responses and fairness arise. The high face validity of personality items may result in test takers faking their responses. Personality inventories are found to be "poor predictors of criteria such as job performance and are difficult to justify as a basis for making high-stakes decisions about individuals" (Morgeson, Campion, Dipboye, Hollenbeck, Murphy & Schmitt, 2007b, p. 1032). With regard to self-report tests, test-takers do not always answer the questions honestly because important decisions are made based on these tests. Test-takers tend to give socially desirable responses and faking becomes an issue because people seek employment positions to a great extent.

1.8. Conclusion

In conclusion, personality tests and assessments have come a long way especially in the South African context. Thus this particular study will make a significant contribution to the knowledge in organisational psychology in terms of documenting the value or lack thereof of personality assessments in personnel selection. In addition to this, the study will provide a better understanding of the place of personality assessment as well as obtain a view of common practice employed in organisations in South Africa.

Chapter 2: Methods

2.1. Research aims

This study explored industrial psychologists' perceptions of personality assessment in personnel selection. Thus the study explored whether personality assessment is or is not used in the industrial psychologists' organisation and the reasons behind this. Industrial psychologists' perceptions of the reliability, validity and fairness of personality assessment in South African organisational settings were explored with both users and non-users. The types of assessments used (whether it be testing or other assessment techniques), and ultimately their usefulness within personnel selection was explored in cases where personality assessments are employed. This provided a deeper insight to personality assessment and the aspects which are considered as influential within the context of personality assessment in South Africa.

2.2. Rationale

Personality assessment has various functions as it is used to identify individuals' strengths and weaknesses, make decisions about how suitable an individual is for a job and assists in identifying the training needs for individuals (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2009). Personality assessments therefore serves a vital function in the organisational setting, but are underweighted in the field of assessment research and deserve more careful consideration in industrial/organisational programs (Butcher, Gucker & Hellervik, 2009).

The theory that surrounds personality assessment in an organisational context is the person-environment fit theory, which states that it is a "process of adjustment between organisational members and their work environments" (Caplan, 1987, p. 249). This demonstrates the importance of personality assessments as it provides the quality of fit between individual characteristics and organisational culture because organisations search for certain qualities within individuals (honest, loyal, reliable etcetera) that match the organisations' culture.

Prior to the political transformation in South Africa, psychological tests that were from overseas were utilised across the entire community (Meiring, et al., 2005). Cross cultural issues began to emerge as these psychological tests were not efficient due to the realisation of South Africa being a diverse country in terms of language differences and cultural differences (Meiring et al., 2005). After 1994, due to the political transformation in South Africa, there was an integration of different cultures therefore there had to be a way to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in the workplace. A multicultural society creates various challenges to the use, development and adaptation of psychological assessments in South Africa. The Employment Equity Act was therefore established to ensure that psychological tests/instruments can be used by all cultures and language groups in South Africa. Thus schools, universities, the workplace and society in general began using psychological measuring instruments that were compliant with the Employment Equity Act (Meiring et al., 2005).

Following eighteen years of democracy, it is essential to review if organisations in South Africa use personality assessments or not, as well as the types of personality assessments used, and most importantly, if organisations in South Africa find these assessments useful. This particular study in South Africa focused on personality assessments since it had the potential to inform using thick description the value and dis-value of personality assessment in South African organisations.

2.3. Research questions

- What are industrial psychologists' perceptions of personality assessment in personnel selection in South Africa?
- What factors are identified as influential within the context of personality assessment in South Africa?

2.4. Sample

The sample consisted of 11 industrial psychologists who were involved in the human resource industry within the most prominent organisations in South Africa, particularly in the

Johannesburg area. The sample consisted of individuals who are registered as industrial psychologists. Registration implied that individuals needed to be formally registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa in the category "Industrial psychologist."

Non-probability, convenience sampling was used where individuals were contacted based on recommendations from lecturing staff in the psychology department at the University of the Witwatersrand. Only psychologists practicing in the Johannesburg or Pretoria areas were invited to participate in the study, primarily for convenience. As there was a need to identify more participants, snowball sampling was used such that a participant who has agreed to take part in the study recommend individuals that were known to them.

The sample consisted of 11 registered industrial psychologists (nine females and two males) who were either involved in the human resource industry in an organisation (n = 5) or they were involved in consulting for other organisations (n = 6). In terms of experience, it ranged from two years of experience through to twenty years of experience.

2.5. Research Design

In order to explore industrial psychologists' perceptions of personality tests in organisations, this study had chosen to use a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is characterised by research that aims to provide an "in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories" (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 3). There are two main goals qualitative researchers seek to achieve: "to create an account of method and data which can stand independently so that another trained researcher could analyse the same data in the same way and come to essentially the same conclusions; and to produce a plausible and coherent explanation of the phenomenon under scrutiny" (Mays & Pope, 1995, p. 110).

2.6. Instruments

Semi-structured interview schedules were used to interview individuals[1]. The interview schedules were separated for individuals that use personality assessments and those that do not use it. The interview schedules for those that do employ personality assessments as well as for those individuals that do not employ personality assessments within their organisations consisted of 11 open-ended questions. Both these schedules allowed the participant to respond to different topics and explore personal experiences relating to the topic. The interview had taken approximately 20 minutes to half an hour to complete.

The schedule consisted of 3 sections. Section 1 focused on contextual questions. Section 2 focused on understanding the place of personality assessment in personnel selection, within organisational settings in South Africa. Section 3 focused on obtaining a view of common practice employed in organisational settings in South Africa. The interview schedule was developed based on literature reviewed (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2009; Barnard, 2010; Friedman & Schustack, 2006; Butcher, et al., 2009) as well as in conjunction with my supervisor. The interview schedule was piloted on two industrial psychologists practicing in organisational settings as well as two lecturers at the University of the Witwatersrand. Based on the pilot, appropriate changes to the schedule were made, in terms of adding a few more in-depth questions

2.7. Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the Human Research Ethics Committee as well as the Higher Degrees Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand. Once permission had been granted, participants were contacted either telephonically or by email and invited to participate in the study. Potential participants received an email which included a brief description of the study as well as the implications of the study, i.e. the cover letter[2]. If the individual agreed to participate, a date and time that was convenient to the participant was set up.

[1] See Appendix B
[2] See Appendix A

On the day of the interview, participants were shown the cover letter again and they were verbally briefed about the study. Participants were then requested to sign a consent form which referred to permission being granted to participate in the study which comprised of an interview as well as acknowledging that the interview will be tape recorded. The interview was then conducted. On completion of the interview, participants were thanked for their valuable input in this study and, the participants were informed that a summary of the results will be available six months after the interview, should they require feedback. Following the interview, the data was transcribed and analysed using the ATLAS.ti program (ATLAS.ti, 2009).

2.8. Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the transcribed data. Thematic content analysis is a practical research tool in qualitative research as it uses a flexibility approach which can provide "a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Thematic content analysis can be defined as, "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). In order to analyse the data, researchers begin to search for underlying assumptions and ideas across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are six steps in thematic content analysis. The first step includes transcribing the data in which initial ideas are noted down. Secondly, initial codes were produced in an organised manner throughout the data set. Step three included a search for themes by collecting all data that is significant to the potential themes. Step four consists of reviewing the themes in relation to the coded extracts and throughout the data set. Step five creates definitions and describes each theme. Finally step six produces a report of the analysis as selected extracts relate back to the research question and the literature review (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These steps were followed in this study.

2.9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand (Protocol number: MORG/12/004 IH)[3]. The individuals that were approached by the researcher had to give their consent to carry out the research. In order for this to happen, the researcher had sent out emails to individuals in different organisations inviting them to take part in this study. They were also contacted telephonically. Potential participants were fully briefed about the study and participants were assured that they will not be harmed in any way. Participation was completely voluntary and it was made clear that there will be no advantages or disadvantages for participation or non-participation in this study as this study did not comprise of any incentives. Once they agreed, a day and time was set up for the interview.

At the time of the interview, participants were given a cover letter[4] with a consent form that they were required to sign. The consent form referred to permission obtained for participation in the interview as well as granting permission to tape record the interview. Both verbally and in the cover letter, participants were once again briefed about the study. Participants were assured that confidentiality was guaranteed even though anonymity was not possible since there were no names or any identifying information that was used in the research write-up, presentations and/or subsequent publications. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the participants. The researchers' contact details were made available for the participants, such that if the participant wished to contact the researcher, the participant could do so. Should the participants require feedback; the participants could have contacted the researcher six months after the interview and a 1-2 page sheet summarising the study and its results would be emailed to him/her. The data has been stored on one password-protected computer that will only be accessed by the researcher and the supervisor of this research study. This data will be kept for a period of three years to facilitate the presentation and publication of findings thereafter the data will be destroyed.

[3] See Appendix C
[4] See Appendix A

2.10. Self-Reflexivity

Considering the fact that I am a researcher in the field of industrial psychology, I acknowledge that reflexivity involves an on-going process of being self-aware throughout this research project. This will enable the construction of knowledge to produce more accurate analyses (Pillow, 2003). Therefore throughout the duration of the entire research process I will try not to allow any of my perceptions, biases, and attitudes to affect this research. Due to the fact that I am a student who is inexperienced in the workplace setting, I understand that I have biases that favour industrial psychologists that use personality assessment during personnel selection. Furthermore I recognise the fact that I have prejudices concerning unethical behaviour as I have certain perceptions for those who employ personality assessments in terms of following an ethical procedure. In order to do this I will keep a journal to express my thoughts and feelings that are relevant before, during and after the interviews. This will allow me to explore and discover my thoughts and feelings and whether or not it has an effect on the research report as well as in the interviews.

Chapter 3: Results

3.1. Introduction

This study looked to explore industrial psychologists' perceptions of personality assessment in personnel selection. Hence the study explored the value of personality assessments in South African organisations as well as the factors identified as influential within the context of personality assessment in South Africa**.** Interviews were conducted with 11 industrial psychologists that were either involved in the human resource industry in an organisation or they were involved in consulting for other organisations. Interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic content analysis. The analysis resulted in five themes namely, person-environment fit; other purposes for which personality assessment are used; personality tests commonly employed; limitations of personality assessment; ethical considerations with the use of personality assessment. The results for each of these themes and subthemes are presented below.

3.2. Person-Environment Fit

The most dominant theme to emerge from the analysis centred around person-environment fit. All participants discussed the notion of person-environment fit as the key reason for using personality assessments during personnel selection. Four subthemes were discernible, namely, necessity to match the person to the environment; the role of personality assessments in person-fit theory, the need to employ assessment batteries; the lack of theory underlying personality assessment.

3.2.1. Necessity to match the person to the environment

The majority of industrial psychologists (n=10) emphasised the importance of matching a person to the environment they are placed in. Participant 11, who currently does not utilise personality assessments for selection purposes notes the importance of personality assessments which is to "*see what the person's preferences are and where that they fit into the organisation".* Participant 5 agreed that "*it really comes down to somebody who is in the right position that's matched to you will stay with you longer and they work more effectively…"*

The necessity to match the person to the environment was best described by Participant 10

> *I think you're looking at if the person will fit into the organisation. I mean, you can go to CELLC, MTN and Vodacom and you're doing the same job but you're not going to fit in the same way. I think that personality assessments help with looking at the culture of the organisation. Are you going to be happy there? Is the company going to be happy to have you? Also, your department and your team that you are working with…certain personalities are going to thrive and certain personalities are not. So there are certain constructs that talks about the organisation and certain constructs talks about the job.*

It is important to note that the above quote also describes a two-way benefit of utilising personality assessments in personnel selection. Participant 6 highlights this as well, as she states that , "*the biggest thing is trying to get a fit for a person upfront because very often a recruitment campaign can paint a picture and the expectation that the picture creates can be misunderstood or the recruitment thinks they're aligned but they're not. Uhm also of course in an interview a person is going to try and paint the picture that they are…you know going to fit in this organisation. But for both sides it really benefits to try and get a sense of whether this person is going to really fit into this organisation, into this role they're being selected for".*

As much as the participants noted the importance of personality assessments in person-environment fit, they also highlighted the "*danger of how it's implemented"*. Four participants (5, 7, 8 and 9) discussed certain implications of not seeing the value of personality assessments. Participant 5 explains that, *"if you're just using it on a more random basis then you haven't really got a clear idea around the environmental fit and there is a danger if you having a look at organisational culture and that you may reinforce a particular kind of culture by only choosing people to fit that culture and then your potential would change a culture and the different conditions becomes reduced because now you got a whole lot of clone personalities in that kind of organisation".* In addition to this Participant 10 states that, "*people try and hire the same type of person and it's often a problem and they will have to get the whole groupthink going on".*

Participant 7 explains the turnover point of view of the organisation, "*you can have someone who has the most brilliant academics result and you can get somebody who uh is brilliant at what they do but if their personality is not conducive to the environment or to the manager or to that team, you are going to lose that person in 6 months".* Participant 9 further explains why the turnover occurs, "*the idea… a lot of people have this dogged idea that if you smart enough to do the job, you will do the job. They don t realise that a lot of the time that reasons people fail actually have to do with person-environment fit or things like what we understand".*

3.2.2. The role of personality assessment in person-environment fit theory

All the participants agreed (even the one participant that currently does not utilise personality assessment in personnel selection, in their organisation) that personality assessments are "*highly beneficial and almost always reflects actuality"* (Participant 1). Participant 1 also said that "*it is a very unbiased way of obtaining information on a particular individual that can help in, not only determining a selection decision but also can provide valuable information on how to on-board the person".* In addition, "*it gives us greater insight into the people that we employ, personality ultimately talks about one's preferences so if we know that a person has a preference for logic and facts over feeling and emotion putting them in a HR function may or may not be of benefit to them. Or you know finding an actuary that likes people for us might be quite valuable because that's a good person who could head up an actuarial function, who can lead the people"* (Participant 8). Participant 5 discusses the value from an organisational perspective, "*you don't have a cost of turnover, you don't have a cost of negativity, you have a happier person who is going to stay longer. So those are the obvious…they're tangible rewards in terms of doing that from a profit point of view. You get the right people, then you get better work outputs and you get a better profit from a company with more effectiveness".*

Participant 6 discussed a change she witnessed in an organisation "*I've worked with this business unit where they were very sceptical about assessment in the beginning, and now they won't move without it. You know kind of moving to the other extreme, but they certainly saw the value that it creates where they can see very soon between candidates as well as who's going to fit in best, who is going to require a lot more management"*. Participant 6 also

mentions that, *"a personality assessment is kind of like a base assessment to have a more in depth conversation. It's quite a nice end to get to know a person quite quickly".*

The majority of the industrial psychologists (n = 7) interviewed agreed personality assessments influenced the decision making process within organisations. The decision making process either involved the developmental aspect or the personnel selection aspect. Focusing on the personnel selection aspect, Participant 7 reported that, " *you might not have a 100% match but they'll put it down as areas of management or the manager will be aware of this, so it does influence it, it makes you alert to the potential issues you would as a manager experience".* Participant 9 stated that, "*obviously it gives you a more scientific basis for making decisions around whatever it may be selection, development and so forth*". Participant 1 discusses her point of view with regard to decision-making which is catered towards the client,

> *It depends on the client and how they perceive assessment to add value to their lives. I think that for very strategic, high risk positions that it absolutely has a very big say in whether someone gets appointed to a role, specifically if there are indications of a lack of integrity (Giotto) or the role requires a certain level of strategic thinking (CPA/CPP) and they don't have what is required. Emotional maturity is also another important factor influencing whether or not someone should be employed as well as their ability to tolerate stress, but I must stress that this is absolutely contingent on the client requirements. If there are red flags that are raised, of course it will have an impact, if it can't be addressed through on-boarding/coaching etcetera*

However, Participant 6 feels that in general the value of psychometric assessments are not used to its full potential

> *I think that the thing about psychometrics in general is the results are as effective as those people who requested are willing to use it. So, when assessments or when personality assessments are used for recruitment purposes, very often they, effectiveness of it stops at the selection level. You don't carry it forward to say okay well now this person is now being hired, how do we now manage them appropriately so that they fit, their on-boarding is seamless, their management in the first year is easy.*

3.2.3. The need to employ assessment batteries

It was emphasised by nine participants that *"it can be dangerous if used as a sole decision making tool, a battery of assessments and other processes need to be used to make informed decisions"* (Participant 2). This is further supported by Participant 7 as she explains that, "*you cannot use it in isolation because personality assessments look at preference. It's not a skills based test and I think that's very important to note. Yes it's one of the decision making criterion but not the only decision making criteria*". In addition Participant 9, 1 and 10 respectively stated that "*you always need to supplement it with a proper interview… it's more of a sales pitch for us then an ultimate decider but its influential*" and that "*there are other things to consider, actual on the job performance, line manager evaluations and the likes are very important*". "*The reference checking is important, the persons experience, the persons skills, education those should be as important".*

Participant 10 highlighted that a selection process should be viewed in a holistic manner "*often without doing any other assessments to back the person, learning abilities and things like that. They don't even do that, they just decide that nothing was going to come from that because you not this type of learner or you not going to get the job, you failed, things like that*.". In support of this, Participant 1 reported that, "*I have also dealt with companies where they will use one factor alone to determine whether or not someone is employed or promoted, specifically their current level on the [Cognitive Process Profile] CPP and that is ALL they use to inform their decision, it's really shocking".* Participant 8 further reports "*I don't believe that the people making the decision understand the impact of the information that they're being provided with. Making decisions on their own view of what information is being presented in front of them without actually seeing it again in that holistic manner".*

In addition to viewing the selection process in a holistic manner, it is important to link personality to specific competencies as participants (n = 4) emphasised that "*Assessment during selection must always be matched with a specific competency and it is absolutely crucial to make sure you have a thorough understanding of the role from the line manager and HR to ensure expectations are matched, or you could be assessing against something which is not relevant*" (Participant 1). Participant 9 suggested that "*the best you going to get, is an organisation that defined its competency model that you can align the assessment that*

you're doing with the competencies that you need. But beyond that, generally people aren't so good with actually incorporating it into the bigger theory". Participant 9 further stated that, "*with a great battery, I'd say it can probably increase your chances of making a good decision by say at least 80%".* Therefore, there are many other aspects to consider, not only should personality assessments not be considered in isolation, they should be accompanied with other assessments to evaluate individuals as well as to link personality profiles to competencies that are needed for a specific job profile.

3.2.4. Perceptions of an underlying theory surrounding personality assessment

All the participants indicated the necessity of the person-environment fit in personality assessments suggesting that participants were locating personality assessments within the person-environment fit theory. However some participants consistently highlighted the lack of theory underlying personality assessments themselves. According to Participant 4 "*if one looks at how these inventories are constructed a lot of them have to do like a factor analysis, so there's not necessarily an overarching theory necessarily of what comes out. So a lot of it is statistical analyses. There are some cases where you will find some elements of theory but it just depends..."* According to Participant 10 *"…the design of the actual assessment is embedded usually in some kind of theory… I think it should inform everything that you do in terms of feedback, I don't know if that happens even half the time".*

Others indicated the use of eclectic models in the absence of theory. Participant 1 highlighted that people are dynamic thus, "*We don't subscribe to any particular methodology or models and will always customise for our client when determining our approach to assessment. I think having one particular model that "describes personality assessment in perpetuity" is very narrow sighted and archaic, people are dynamic…and as such you need to move with the times".* Participant 6 suggested that it is an unconscious link, "*intuitively I think an industrial psychologist that has that background, that theoretical background, I think is going to link it. I don't know if it's going to be such a conscious link, I think it would be more intuitive".*

Participant 2 was the only respondent to locate personality assessment within the behaviourist framework. She reported, "*We have used the assessments in conjunction with the behaviourist model of thinking".*

3.3. Other purposes for which Personality Assessments are used

Participants stated that personality assessments may be used for various other reasons within the organisation, namely, developmental, team development, career coaching, talent management and training. As Participant 10 states that, "*I think personality assessment, can be really used across the board, for anything in the business that the persons hoping to do".*

3.3.1. Developmental

All the participants emphasised that personality assessments are "*far more used for developmental purposes"* (Participant 9). Most of the participants (n = 8) felt that "*there's probably more use from a developmental perspective than from a pure selection point of view"* (Participant 4). In addition Participant 1 said, "*From my point of view the implications should always be to the benefit of the individual and should always have a developmental component. Even if it is part of a recruitment process, the individual must be given developmental feedback aimed at generating self-awareness".* Participant 7 similarly says that "*it's a very powerful self-awareness tool to create self-awareness and to make a person understand their strengths and weaknesses".* Participant 5 highlighted a different developmental perspective as he discusses it from "*a counselling point of view, where people realise where they're coming from what it's all about and they can position themselves accordingly from their side, which is also sometimes useful".* He further explains that, "*giving people to work through issues and understanding why they have those issues, I think is important so counselling I think has a great application to self-development and self-awareness which would tie with career kind of placement and those kinds of issues".*

Three participants discussed the influence of decision making from a development point of view, as Participant 4 described his experience with regard to this, *"I definitely seen them been given serious consideration in the development state, fit into groups and for personal*

development. I've seen them been given serious consideration. From a recruitment perspective, it really depends on how they administer it, what's chosen, you know, what the battery essentially is. Uhm, I don't think they're given that much weight as opposed to a development type of application". Participant 1 concurred as she states, "*From a developmental perspective, it has a big input to development recommendations if part of a succession/pipelining initiative".* Whereas Participant 5 explained that "*if you going to be using it, you need to base decisions on it otherwise it's pointless actually using it, unless it's from a development point of view in which case it can be used what people should be exposed to, but that should affect your decision".*

3.3.2. Team Development

The majority of industrial psychologists (seven of the eleven interviewed) felt that personality assessments added value in team development. Personality assessments are used to determine "*how they can fit into groups and how they can work well with other people in a group type of setting"* (Participant 4). Participant 2 similarly stated that "*we also use personality assessments in team alignment sessions which have proved to have major success and increase understanding of team members".* She further explains that, "*I think the impact is to enrich development programmes both at an individual and team level. Furthermore an understanding of one's personality profile and how it fits into their team or organisation can contribute to team cohesion and thus effectiveness".*

3.3.3. Career coaching

Participants (n = 5) viewed personality assessments as useful and common for career coaching in addition to personnel selection. Participant 11 who currently does not use personality assessment in her organisation states that "*I would use it for both as well as career coaching in some way. Just see what the persons preferences are and where that they fit into the organisation".* Participant 6 expressed the idea of using personality assessments to help the individual grow, "*I think it's really, uhm, it's a buy-in process, so where an individual really buys into the results and takes it further by getting meaningful coaching thereafter".*

3.3.4. Training

Four participants were in favour of using personality assessments to help point out where the individual will require training in certain areas or they would "*like to include it in most training initiatives"* (Participant 1). However Participant 5 had a different opinion, "*training and personality assessments don't really mix because in training you pushed for time and I think you got to be careful when you giving personality information out that it's not a rushed kind of thing. It has to be done systematically with the people involved".*

3.3.5. Talent management

Two participants (2 and 9) have said that "*personality assessments can also be used within a talent management process as being one of many tools that can be used to identify current and future potential"* (Participant 2). Participant 9 used it as more of a strategy "*in terms of succession planning so, identifying talent in the organisation".*

3.4. Personality Tests Commonly Employed

The participants have shown to prefer certain personality tests over others for various reasons depending on the organisation they are in. However, Participant 8 noted that "*do I think that it's better than any of the other personality assessments? No, I think they all much of a muchness to be honest with you".* Participant 8 also explained that she had only been exposed to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16 PF) as she reports, "*I think that it's just a case that our outsource partner was selected before I joined this company it was a tool of their choice and because they won the tender to be our sole provider it's hence why we keep using it".* Participant 1 reported that, "*We do not have any particular preference for any assessment tools, and find that they all have their value to add if aligned with the client environment and competencies".*

3.4.1. Most popular personality tests

The most popular personality assessment among the participants interviewed was the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator (MBTI) as eight of the participants prefer using it. Participants 11 and 2 have both said that they have a personal preference for the MBTI. Participant 11 further states

that "…*I think that MBTI has great potential when it comes to team environments. So when it comes to team building, team development then I'd really look at personality tests much more closely*". However Participant 7 indicated that "*everybody is trained in MBTI, but the thing with MBTI is uhm it tends...there is some... There's a positive and a negative. Some people feel MBTI is boxed people because you're either IFP or PJ or you're some sort of profile".*

Following the MBTI, the OPQ is the second popular personality test (n = 6). Participant 7 explains why, "*it's probably the most popular in the workplace – work market because its work based and the questions are work relevant and its more behaviour based…you know in terms of how you would behave in typical work based situations as opposed to normal personality questionnaires asks you 'Do you like this? Do you like that?' It makes a difference.* Participant 6 highlighted that, "*The OPQ, I think is really helpful and I've used it very successfully for lower levels. I don't know if I would sell it as like a world class assessment for an executive level, I would definitely use the Hogan there".*

Other personality assessments that were mentioned were the Hogan Personality Inventory (n = 4), for reasons such as, "*because of my leadership development type of focus in my work and also it's a neat assessment because it's a bit different. The way it was constructed was a bit different, it was constructed in a real practical way not in a theoretical way like some of the other assessments. That's one of the aspects that I really love and it makes it a lot more tangible to people"* (Participant 6). Participants 3, 5, 7 and 8 preferred using the 16PF for reasons such as, "*because I've used it a lot in the past and its worked really well for me"* (Participant 5).Two participants have also mentioned that they used the Saville Holdsworth Limited (SHL) competency based personality assessment (Participant 7) and the SHL battery (Participant 11). Participant 7 further explains that, *the competency based ones ask you specific questions in the work context. So they validated in the work context so they're more popular because of that.* Participant 10 supported this by saying, "*I prefer ones that are specifically designed for work*". Participants 3 and 10 have both mentioned the 15FQ+ as they are *objective tests"* (Participant 3). Participant 10 used the MMPI once. "*I've done a MMPI as well. I remember the first time I did it, I wasn't trained in it, and I didn't understand it and the questions were too personal. It also brings out certain pathologies, which I think is not relevant for the business to know. I certainly worked in an organisation*

where they used the MMPI as well. So I personally object to that sort of thing. I don't think…it's like asking someone their medical history" (Participant 10).

Participant 1 reported a preference for colour based models as she reports, *"I must admit I do like colour based models as part of broader programmes, as they help in generating a common language and can be used as input to many other facets of an individual's development".*

Table 3.1. Most preferred personality tests

Personality Test	Number of participants preferred the test
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)	8
Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ)	6
Hogan Personality Inventory	4
16 Personality Factor Questionnaire(16PF)	4
SHL Battery	2
15 Factor Questionnaire (15FQ+)	2
Occupational Personality Profile (OPP)	1

Table 3.2. Other psychometric tests that were mentioned.

Psychometric tests	Number of participants preferred the test
Emotional Intelligence (EQI)	6
Cognitive Process Profile (CPP)	3
Giotto Values and Motives	2
Wave Assessment	2
Competency Based Testing	2
Technical Test Battery (TTB)	1
Aptitude tests	1
Belbin's Team role Inventory	1
Developmental assessment centres	1
SHL job-person manage	1
Behavioural events tests	1
Social Intelligence	1
APIL-B	1

3.5. Limitations of Personality Assessment

3.5.1. Abuse by line managers

One of the most prominent limitations of personality assessment highlighted by the participants was the abuse of line managers utilising the assessment results as a means to decline candidates. Majority of the participants felt that line managers have a lack of understanding with regard to psychometric assessments.

Participants (n = 4) discussed how "*HR Managers and Line Managers out there who would like to use assessment as a means of disqualifying people, only looking for risk factors and then excluding people based on limited assumptions"* (Participant 1). Participant 6 reported that, "*they also using the results unethically so you can use results from the selection process to inform a... uhm trying to manage a performer out".* Participant 7 had a similar point, "*I've seen managers say it when they decline candidates… say your psychometric results weren't right so we declined you".* Participant 9 also reported that "*line managers don't like to tell candidates the real reasons why they don't employ them. So sometimes they say you failed your psychometrics".* Participant 10 reports that the line managers brush it off as the industrial psychologists responsibility "*They also try and get the industrial psychologist usually to make the decision which is highly based on the assessment and I think is incorrect because that's my concern also with assessments in general. It's not our job to decide who to hire".*

Majority of the participants (n = 7) felt that there is a lack of understanding of psychometric assessments from line managers, therefore they "*prefer to go with their 'gut feel''* (Participant 3). Participant 10 reported that "*I've seen in businesses people giving the manager the actual assessment report. And they can't understand what that stuff means so they interpret it in their own way, which is very dangerous. It can exclude people in the workplace; it can give certain people preferential treatment".* Participant 7 points out that "*the line managers get feedback on a few hundred people a year, depends which area they working in- they feel they know the tools".* Participant 11 reports that "*managers love it because it puts people in a box now that's where you are, that is your potential that is who you are. And they don't understand that that's one aspect of you. You are still an entire entity; you are not just your*

personality". Participant 4 is in support of this as he says "*there really needs to be validation done because these managers or line managers or whatever it is, that will try and recruit certain types of profiles for their own use".*

Due to the lack of understanding of line managers and *"incorrect manner by the people that are not educated around what in fact the assessment is giving feedback on"* (Participant 8), participants have suggested that *"the people who use the reports like line managers that are not psychologists need to be better trained how they should and should not be using it"* (Participant 9). Participant 8 further suggests

> *It's around how do we educate both the administrator, the people, the consultants, the firm that's using it as well as you know HR and line and that type of stuff around this cannot be used void of a collective set of activities uhm and to teach our partners and all our stakeholders actually around the what role do personality and psychometric assessments play in a holistic recruitment, selection, development, whatever you going to use it for as a process, as opposed to what is your out-by in outcomes in assessment.*

It is important to note that participants (n = 3) "*haven't really seen a lot of it [abuse by line managers] maybe because I haven't worked with organisations for a long time."* (Participant 5) "*If there's an industrial psychologist there- then no"* (Participant 11). Participant 6 feels that, "*it's actually more not so much the personality instrument. I think they're a little bit more hesitant to get involved there because they do see the kind of psychological nature thereof".*

3.5.2. Test-takers' perceptions of psychometric assessments

People's perceptions of psychometric assessment are portrayed as a limitation by the participants that were interviewed. Reponses to this topic were as follows, "*people don't get what assessments are, so they think this is now it, you put me in a box. You get a lot of defensiveness when you put people in a box"* (Participant 11). Participant 4 highlights this notion of placing people into categories,

> *One has to be careful of and that is to put people into categories. Personality has to be viewed as a continuum and if you take introversion, extroversion as an example, people don't necessarily fit into either one specifically, depending on the particular context, environment, certain elements of both types may become manifest…I haven't found people that are necessarily outliers, a true, pure extrovert or introvert so that has to be always taken into account.*

Participant 5 also highlights this by saying "*some are more suited in some ways and are more suited in other ways, but unless you have that clearly worked out, then you got a danger of just putting people into certain boxes, pigeon-holing them".*

Participant 10 reports that "*In terms of candidates they don't trust these things it doesn't matter what assessment we talking about. They don't trust those things, as far as they are concerned, you can pass or fail… they say it's forced, particularly personality assessment".* Participant 9 explains that "*people themselves are quite reluctant generally to undergo psychometric assessments. They think it's a bit, sort of mystical and 'what are we up to' and 'how are we going to use the results' and where do they go to', that kind of thing. But people can make themselves quite anxious to actually undergo the process".* Participant 6 agrees with this as she says "*Very often they try to start work out you know, "what are they trying to do?" you know, then you'll have a bit of faking going on".* Participant 7 feels that "*the average person is not clued up with the law when it comes to psychometrics… and if the average person knew his rights you can take somebody to the labour court and challenge that".* Participant 10 also feels that *companies get away with it because people are not aware of their rights and people just accept like it's a test, whether they passed or failed, they just accept they failed.*

3.5.3. The issue of cost

Participants (n = 5) have made reference to the factor of cost of assessments in different ways. Participant 7 states that "*assessments are very costly because you can't use one battery, and you can't only use personality because by law it has to be you know valid, reliable…so often companies use assessment right at the end because of the cost"*. Participant 9 further explained that "*People don't understand the relationship between personality and*

performance at work because they so many factors in between, that it's not sort of a direct correlation. So it's very difficult to convince people as to why they should spend the extra you know 3-4 thousand on a full personality battery". Participant 9 also highlights the issue of cost "*the executive battery, you can look at R15000 a candidate, now you've got 10 candidates, are you willing to spend that amount of money?"* Participant 11 explains that her reason for not utilising personality assessments in her organisation is "*Only because of cost"* she further explains that

> *the cost is this huge issue with MBTI because it is quite expensive. So the value you gain from it is enormous but the cost is quite significant as well. The consequence of most things like although it adds all that benefit, the problem is number one cost in an organisation because you're looking at the volumes and if one person hears about it like you do it on one team then there's number of other teams going "but why aren't you doing this for us also?". So it becomes a cost factor.*

Participant 10 highlights an interesting point

> *A lot of companies unfortunately look at the assessment as sort of a 70% of the whole selection process and I don't think that's right, they'll probably spend more money on that I suppose that make sense in their minds that way. If it costs me R1000 to employ someone andR700 goes towards the assessment then that should be the one I rely on. I suppose that's how they thinking about it and it shouldn't be that way.*

Participant 6 discusses the point that was earlier made that personality should be linked to competencies however; "*most organisations don't have money to be able to do a WPS [Work Profile System] on all of their positions".*

3.6. Ethical Considerations with the use of Personality Assessment

3.6.1. Challenges to the ethical boundaries of industrial psychologists

Participants (n = 4) discuss the ethical procedures that have to be considered with psychometric assessments. Participant 6 best explains this

> *From an ethical perspective you've got to really know your stuff and understand like where are the boundaries and if they throwing something at you to know where they*

are sourcing something it from and what are the implications. As a practitioner you need to make sure that you're very clued up on the assessments that you use that you're not just a user that you become an expert at the assessment. And a lot of the organisations like the SHL's and JVR's …they're so dedicated to helping you to really work with the tool accurately and understand it fully and use it ethically and so on that there is really no excuse

Participant 7 reports that *"the field that has the most ethical dilemmas is psychometrics. Even though it's very clearly defined, by law it's probably the most defined and protected thing in our country but it's still the most sensitive, misused thing".* Participant 11 discusses what the ethical rules are

due to ethics, you have to get peoples consent, number one, that they understand that this is a psychometric assessment and that they are consenting to participate and we have to obviously also ensure confidentiality of the results… So we'll give them the assessment and give them the feedback and if they choose to share it after that then that's their right.

Participants (n = 4) emphasised that if personality assessments are "*set up correctly and used correctly its invaluable information for the organisation"* (Participant 9). In support of this Participant 3 said "*as long as the purpose of the assessment is explained sensitively at the outset and assessment used for intended purposes".*

Participant 1 also emphasised that, "*You just need to make sure that you uphold the ethical rules you are bound by and hold them to it as well or you could find yourself in a very tricky situation*". She further states that *there is a very fine line that you need to walk with your client (internal or external) and the boundaries have to be set up very clearly upfront. In spite of this, there will still be inappropriate requests made with regards to utilising data, that is can we use this to fire Mr X? Which is wholly unacceptable".* Participant 10 agreed with Participant 1 but also said that *industrial psychologists generally are very careless with the handling of that kind of information.* She further states that "a *lot of businesses want to use it to fire people. Often what happens is as an industrial psychologist we don't ask. We assume, we know for a fact in our heart of hearts we doing this to retrench a whole lot of people but*

we won't ask and they won't tell. So we just pretend that it's for a restructure". Participant 1 discusses it further "*This usually occurs when they have previously dealt with a psychologist who has not upheld their ethical boundaries and it is quite difficult to break that mindset and get them to view assessment as part of the process instead of the absolute final word on a candidate".* Participant 10 also believes that "*it's not just the line managers it's the industrial psychologists and we allow the line managers to do this because ultimately the assessment is your responsibility… you did the assessment, you did the report, what happens to that report is your responsibility".*

However Participant 9 had an interesting point,

> *I think from a psychological fraternity perspective, we're all quite ethical, and we're all sort of on the same page. I haven't come across a psychologist who is highly unethical… But I mean I also understand that often psychologists are put in a position where you may be consulting for a business and they're paying you a hellava lot of money and they want information to be centred in a certain way. Or they want for example; they want a robot approach of a red, orange and green candidate. And they sort of not interested in the information behind that, so I think that a lot of psychologists are put into a difficult position and maybe it gets grey and they sort of stray into the grey. But I've never come across somebody blatantly going against ethics.*

3.6.2. Considerations of South African legislation

Four participants (2, 6, 7 and 10) considered the South African legislation when discussing ethical issues fitting into assessment. Participant 2 stated that "*As psychologists we have an ethical obligation to ensure that the type and process of assessment is fair, standardised and in correspondence to the ethical code and SA legislation".*

Participant 7 highlighted that "*we the only country in the world that's very strict. We have a higher standard in terms of regulatory practices in the world. If you go to any part of the world, you don't have to be a registered psychologist or psychometrist to administer psychometrics".* Participant 6 agrees with this *"it's frightening how many people cast*

themselves off as being psychologists or trained in a particular instrument or think that they can bypass the legislation around here". Participant 7 supported this, "*we're the on the only country that says no we dealing with people's lives because of our history, and sensitivity around previously disadvantaged and tools must be you know culture-fair, culture-free, ethical, reliable, etcetera".* She further states that "*our law says any test we use or any "Unfortunately in this country if you don't do the assessment you probably don't get the job*".

3.6.3. Feedback to candidates

There are many ethical issues around providing feedback to candidates as portrayed by Participants (n = 5) (2, 5, 6, 7 and 10). Participant 7 points out that, "*by law you have to have either call it a registered psychometrist or psychologist giving feedback, or doing some sort of reporting but you need to know that in that reporting there shouldn't be scores".* Furthermore, *results need to remain confidential at all times unless given permission to disclose by the candidate* (Participant 2).

Participant 6 highlights the reality of feedback, "*in most cases it's actually the psychologist to make sure that the information is being interpreted properly and again there's a challenge there. I was in a very small little unit catering to a very large organisation and to be able to do a face to face feedback with every line manager's assessment was impossible so you end up having to write reports"*. She further states "*We couldn't do a work profile on each of the positions they were just too diverse, and the report goes off and do they use it? I don't know".* In addition, Participant 5 discusses the implications of this "*I've seen personality reports given to people without any understanding of really of what they were about and they can develop that feedback so how you actually put that information across is a big issue as well".* Participant 7 reports *that if you're not trained you can give damaging feedback to the candidate and scar somebody because it's not for you to give scores to candidates and only a trained psychologist would realise the way you convey feedback"*.

Participant 5 also states that "*if you going to be using personality tests, feedback to people is actually the important part of that… you actually use as part of a discussion kind of session as well… it becomes more legitimate that way, a person's agreed with what you've been*

saying rather than just writing something on a piece of paper and giving it to people". Participant 6 reports that "*people are defensive when it comes to giving feedback, so you get those who really are hungry to learn more and will use any tool to be able to improve but then there are those that you have to convince".* She further reports that, "*if you can give them real examples you know of behaviour or try and get them to give examples where this has come out then the buy-in is a bit easier".* Participant 10 feels "*that most of them are interested in the feedback I always encourage them and say to people you know what, even if you pay for it out of your own pocket, it's a wonderful thing to get feedback, go and get the feedback".*

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has presented five themes namely, person-environment fit; other purposes for which personality assessment are used; personality tests commonly employed; limitations of personality assessment; ethical considerations with the use of personality assessment using thematic content analysis. The chapter that follows will involve a more in-depth discussion of the above themes in relation to previous findings.

Chapter 4: Discussion

4.1. Introduction

This study looked to explore industrial psychologists' perceptions of personality assessment in personnel selection. Hence the study explored the value of personality assessments in South African organisations as well as the factors identified as influential within the context of personality assessment in South Africa**.** In this chapter the results which were presented in Chapter 3 are discussed following the sequence of themes presented in the chapter. Hence person-environment fit is discussed, followed by other purposes for which personality assessments are used; personality tests commonly employed; the limitations of personality assessment and finally the ethical considerations with the use of personality assessment.

4.2. Person-Environment Fit

All the participants concurred that the primary reason to utilise personality assessments in personnel selection was under the notion of attaining a person-environment fit. This concurs with Barrick and Mount (2005) who argue that personality predicts an individual's quality of life but over and above this, it "also influence(s) the fit with other individuals (e.g., supervisors), a team, or an organization" (p. 363). During the interviews with industrial psychologists, there were different aspects that arose around this notion of person-environment fit such as the necessity to match the person to the environment; the role of personality assessments in person-environment fit theory, the need to employ assessment batteries; perceptions of an underlying theory surrounding personality assessment.

4.2.1. Necessity to match the person to the environment

The notion of person-environment fit has been defined as a *match* between a person's characteristics to the environment or just simply known as fit (Caplan, 1987; Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert & Shipp, 2006). It is important to note that an organisations' selection process "determines the kinds of people in an organisation, which consequently defines the nature of the organisation, its structures, processes and culture" (Sekiguchi, 2004, p. 181). A previous study focused on Schneider's cyclic process known as the attraction-selection-attrition model which leads to the necessity to match the person to the environment. Firstly,

the attraction process involves people's preferences for particular organisations which is based on their own personal characteristics. Secondly, the selection process of the organisation is based on the attributes the organisation desires. Lastly the attrition process will occur when the person leaves an organisation simply because the individual does not fit (Cable & Judge, 1997; Schneider, Smith & Goldstein, 2000; Sekiguchi, 2004).

It is important to understand person-environment fit because of the influence it has on the outcomes of each phase of employees' organisational life cycles. For example the perceptions employees have on fit will predict whether or not they will join organisations, their behaviour and attitudes while employed and their intentions to leave the organisation (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). According to Morgan (2006, p.137) organisational culture represents an "active, living phenomenon through which people jointly create and re-create the worlds in which they live". Therefore the process in which employees are continuously interpreting and enacting aspects of their work environment builds the culture of the organisation and produce systems of shared meaning (Berson, Oreg & Dvir, 2008). It should be further noted that previous studies (Berson, Oreg & Dvir, 2008; Sekiguchi, 2004) and the current study support the idea that the reason for not fitting in with the culture of the organisation results in an increase in turnover as Participant 9 explains that *"the idea… a lot of people have this dogged idea that if you smart enough to do the job, you will do the job. They don t realise that a lot of the time that reasons people fail actually have to do with person-environment fit"*.

Person-environment fit theory needs to be recognised as multidimensional. Both people and the environment which they inhabit consist of multidimensional aspects. Multidimensional meaning internal factors such as - personality, attitudes, skills, emotions- and external factors like job requirements, organisational culture, pay structure, expected behaviour. It is difficult for researchers to capture both internal and external dimensions and determining how they fit together to influence behaviour (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010).

A particular point the participants raised on the limitations of person-environment fit was also found in Sekiguchi's (2004, p. 182) study where it is argued that

> …over time, the tendency for organisations to become homogeneous with regard to person types can be dangerous for long-term organisational effectiveness. Because of the high level of homogeneity, organisations may not be able to change themselves when environmental demands and conditions for organisational competitiveness are changing

This was highlighted by Participant 5 as he states that "…*there is a danger if you have a look at organisational culture and that you may reinforce a particular kind of culture by only choosing people to fit that culture. Then your potential would change a culture as the different conditions becomes reduced because now you got a whole lot of clone personalities in that kind of organisation"*

4.2.2. The role of personality assessment in person-environment fit theory

According to previous research, person-environment fit is said to be either a moderator or mediator variable with regard to personality predicting job performance and work behaviour (Hough & Oswald, 2008). To further explain this notion – "…culture and fit were recognised as moderator and mediator variables that interacted with individual difference variables such as personality to predict work behaviour and performance" (Hough & Oswald, 2008, p. 279). However, according to the Attraction-Selection-Attrition model individuals seek their own jobs and work environments/situations therefore "some situational contexts may result in mean performance differences across individuals but do not change personality–performance correlations (i.e., situations exert main effects), and other situational contexts result in mean differences and also influence correlations between personality and performance (i.e., there are interactions)" (Hough & Oswald, 2008, p. 279).

Murphy and Bartram as cited in Bartram (2004, p. 240) concluded that

> There is evidence that a variety of personality characteristics are consistently related to job performance. In particular measures of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to experience appear to be related to performance in a wide range of jobs. Average validities for measures of these traits are typically not as high as validities demonstrated by cognitive ability tests, but the evidence does suggest that personality inventories can make a worthwhile contribution to predicting who will succeed or fail on the job.

All the participants agreed that personality assessments provide invaluable information for the organisation in terms of person-environment fit.

A few participants in this study acknowledged that the true value of personality assessments are not used to its full potential from the selection phase right through to managing the individual in the organisation based on the results of the personality test. It would be useful for further research to explore this claim in the South African context.

4.2.3. The need to employ assessment batteries

Majority of the participants (n= 9) agreed that it is dangerous to use psychometric tests as a sole decision maker and emphasised that other aspects need to be considered. This concurs with Barrick, Mount and Judge (2001) who emphasise that personality assessments should always be used in conjunction with other selection methods. Other methods that were mentioned should be taken into consideration was an interview, "on the job" performance, reference checking, past work experience, skills and education (qualifications). Foxcroft and Roodt (2009) also emphasised that richer and broader sampling of behaviour will be gained by collecting extensive data in the assessment process but most importantly the assessment battery should be modified to an individual, group or organisation.

Participants (n =4) in the current study also explained that assessments in the selection process should always be matched to specific job competencies that are required for the specific role. Assessing for certain competencies is necessary for effective competence. Coetzee and Schreuder (2010, p. 516) defined competencies as the "knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics needed to perform a job…the set of behaviours instrumental in the delivery of desired organisational outcomes" Furthermore, competence needs to be demonstrated when performing a task and does not depend on qualifications and experience. For example, a person with the right amount of knowledge obtained from a university may lack the necessary skills or understanding required for the job, and thus not be competent" (Moerdyk, 2009, p. 146). There is therefore a need to explore the relationship between

personality tests and competence instruments to determine how they may work together to aid selection and ultimately person-environment fit.

4.2.4. Perceptions of an underlying theory surrounding personality assessment

With regard to selection, personality is an important concept to consider when selecting individuals. During the interview most of the participants brought up the person-environment fit theory as the key reason for using personality assessments during personnel selection but they indicated that they were not familiar with personality theories that underlie assessment. As one participant indicated, most objective instruments that measure personality arise from the trait approach that uses factor analysis to develop the scales. This is a common critique and has been identified consistently in the literature. Participants indicated using eclectic approaches or relying on intuition and knowledge gained from having been trained as an industrial psychologist. However these responses indicate a strong need within the South African context for theory-building. Further research is warranted.

4.3. Other purposes for which Personality Assessments are used

"Researchers have acknowledged and documented the fact that we all have personalities and that personality matters because it predicts and explains behaviour at work" (Barrick & Mount, 2005, p. 359). Personality assessment has historically been linked to an assortment of organisational dimensions, specifically: Performance criteria – overall job performance, objective and task performance, contextual performance, and avoidance of counterproductive behaviours; leadership criteria; team performance; entrepreneurship; and work motivation and attitudes (Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, & Judge, 2007; Goodstein & Lanyon, 1999). Studies have suggested that person-environment fit is not only used to influence decisions for selection and recruitment purposes but for "occupational choice, job satisfaction, performance, organisational commitment, turnover, and psychological and physical well-being" (Edwards, et al., 2006, p. 802). This concurs with the findings of this study where the industrial psychologists that were interviewed indicated varied uses for personality assessments. The most dominant use for personality assessments was for developmental purposes (n=10) which was followed by team development (n=7), then career coaching (n=5), then talent management (n=2) and lastly training (n=1). However with regard to training one participant felt that personality assessments were not for training purposes.

Psychologists frequently use personality assessments to identify an individual's strengths and weaknesses; and more specifically to identify the way in which an individual interacts with the world and the self (De Bruin & Taylor, 2009). One of the primary arenas wherein an individual interacts with the world is the workplace – "personality constructs have been demonstrated to be useful for explaining and predicting attitudes, behaviours, performance, and outcomes in organisational settings" (Ones, et al., 2007). Thus personality assessments are increasingly used in personal selection and human resource development within organisations (Bergner, Neubaurer, & Kreuzthaler, 2010; Goodstein & Lanyon, 1999;).

4.4. Personality Tests Commonly Employed

The way in which personality is assessed varies in terms of the definition that was used for personality by the developers of the personality instrument. "How to evaluate behaviour in order to conceptualise the personality of an individual is the central problem in personality assessment" (Vane & Guarnaccia, 1989, p. 6). Personality tests exist for each sphere of the psychometric definition of personality. The approach to assessing personality traits is generally considered to be the direct, structured method of measurement, which makes use of standardised questionnaires, inventories, or structured interviews (De Bruin & Taylor, 2009). Despite the infinite nature of personality characteristics, these characteristics are not mutually exclusive and thus a considerable amount of overlap and covariance is apparent (Costa & McCrae, 2009). Through factor analysis methods underlying dimensions associated with personality have been identified and have resulted in the aforementioned structured inventories and questionnaires (De Bruin & Taylor, 2009). These include: the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire, the NEO-PI-R, the Basic Traits Inventory, the Occupational Personality Questionnaire, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and many others (De Bruin & Taylor, 2009).

In this study, it is evident that all the participants use the structured approach and within this approach, a wide variety of standardised tests are used. The most popular test that was mentioned by the participants was the MBTI which a total number of eight participants preferred using it. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is another widely used personality instrument used in the work context, particularly in South

Africa, but it is suggested that it should not be used in selection for three reasons (1) "weak differentiation in interpreting high versus low scores on a given dimension (2) the preference theory underlying the instrument (3) the broad clustering of types" (Barnard, 2010, p. 157). Although it has been suggested that it should not be used in the selection process, the participants did not specifically stipulate that they use it for selection purposes but for other reasons such as "*I think that MBTI has great potential when it comes to team environments. So when it comes to team building, team development then I'd really look at personality tests much more closely* (Participant11). Following the MBTI, the OPQ test was the second most popular test in which a total of six participants preferred it because the questions are work related. The Hogan Personality Inventory (n=4) and the 16PF (n=4) was the third most popular test which the participants had a personal preference for them. Lastly two participants mentioned the SHL Battery which they prefer to use because it is specifically designed for work and competency based.

Two studies which were conducted in relation to psychometric testing practices in selection are compared to what the current study has found. The first study focused on establishing which "psychometric tests are used, and for what purposes in industry today" (Van der Merwe, 2002, p. 77). Van der Merwe's study focused on psychometric testing in 20 different organisations in the Eastern Cape in order to determine which tests are used and who administers them. Post graduate students in industrial psychology interviewed representatives from the human resource department from each organisation (Van der Merwe, 2002). A component of the results is as follows:

Table 4.1. Most preferred psychometric tests used in the Eastern Cape

Test	Number of organisations that preferred this test
16PF	15
South African Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (SAWAIS)	6
Intermediate Battery	5
MMPI	4
Senior Aptitude Test (SAT)	4
Career Path Appreciation	4
Dover/Vienna System	4
High Level Figure Classification Test	4
OPQ	4
Customer Contact Styles Questionnaire	4
Thomas Personal Profile Analysis	4
MBTI	3
Group Interaction Exercise	3
Presentation	3
In-Basket Exercise	3
Structured-Objective Rorschach Test	2
Nineteen Field Interest Inventory	2
High Level Battery	2
Self-directed Search Questionnaire	2
Personnel Test Battery	2
Thematic Apperception Test	1
Normal Battery	1
Academic Aptitude Test	1
Programmer Aptitude Battery	1
Management and Graduate Item Bank	1
Critical Reasoning Test Battery	1
Customer Contact Aptitude Series	1
Perceptual Battery	1
Raven's Progressive Matrices	1
Mechanical Comprehension	1

Note. Most preferred tests in the Eastern Cape. Adapted from "Psychometric testing and human resource management", by Van der Merwe (2002).

From Van der Merwe's study it is important to note that "quite a few tests are used by only one or two organisations. Some tests are used by three or more organisations, and the most widely used test is the 16 PF, which is used by fifteen of these organisations" (Van der Merwe, 2002, p. 80). The second study was conducted by Furnham (2008) determined the validity, cost, practicality and legality of different assessment techniques as well as the knowledge and use of personality tests. The study was completed by 255 European professionals concerned with selection, assessment and training (Furnham, 2008). A component of the results is as follows:

Table 4.2. Most preferred psychometric tests used in Europe.

Personality test	Have you heard of this test % Yes	Have you completed this test % Yes	Does your organisation use this test? % Yes	How valid do you rate this test? 1-10	How useful is this test for selection? 1-10
(16PF)	85.5	63.9	28.6	6.94 (2.04)	6.16 (2.22)
(NEO-PI-R)	62.5	41.5	22.9	7.20 (1.99)	6.37 (2.15)
California Personality Inventory (CPI)	46.3	23.0	7.5	6.87 (2.68)	5.42 (2.52)
Eysenck Personality Tests (EPI) (EPQ) (EPP)	62.8	27.1	7.1	6.44 (2.28)	5.25 (2.27)
Hogan Personality Questionnaires (HPI, HDS)	46.4	24.6	15.9	6.37 (2.25)	5.85 (2.41)
Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)	84.2	72.2	55.6	6.92 (2.14)	3.82 (2.68)
Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ)	79.8	52.6	34.7	6.98 (2.01)	6.12 (2.19)

Note. Most preferred tests in Europe. Adapted from "HR professional's beliefs about and knowledge of assessment techniques and psychometric tests" by Furnham. (2008)

Overall it seemed there was a positive relationship between the ratings. People had heard about more than they had personally completed but those tests seemed the most well known and used. Results suggest there remains a handful, roughly four to six tests that are well-known, well-rated. Overall however it also indicates that a

> surprisingly large number of the respondents had not heard of many tests nor did their organisations use them (Furnham, 2008, p. 303).

A project by Paterson, Le Roux, Herbst and Foxcroft, (2004) determined the test-use patterns and needs of psychological assessment practitioners by conducting a survey. They found the top ten tests that are being used by industrial psychologists.

Table 4.3. Top ten psychometric tests used in South Africa.

Test	Frequency	% of industrial psychologists
16 Personality Factor Inventory SA92	88	70.4
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator	82	65.6
19 Field Interest Inventory	64	51.2
Occupational Personality Questionnaire	53	42.4
Senior Aptitude Tests	41	32.8
Self-Directed Search Questionnaire	40	32.0
Jung Personality Questionnaire	37	29.6
Raven's Progressive Matrices	31	24.8
Fifteen Factor Questionnaire Plus	31	24.8
South African Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale	30	24.0

Note Needs survey results. Adapted from "Psychological assessment in South Africa: A needs analysis" by Paterson, Le Roux, Herbst and Foxcroft, (2004).

Comparing the four different studies, the results differ quite significantly. The current study has found the MBTI to be the most preferred test for various organisations in Johannesburg whereas Van der Merwe's (2002) study found the 16PF to be the most preferred test in the Eastern Cape. Furnham's study (2008) and Paterson, et al.'s study, (2004) concurred with

Van der Merwe's study with the 16PF being the most preferred test. There are various tests mentioned in the three studies and the administrators of these tests prefer using it for various different reasons. This explanation came through in the current study as there were many influencing factors as to what tests and assessments are used such as the outsourcing partner, previous experience with tests and what the organisation prefers. The current study included both industrial psychologists who work as consultants and industrial psychologists who are based at a specific organisation. This could have many influential factors. The consultants may find that their clients (organisations) require different batteries as so forth. Psychometric tests are adapted to the South African context everyday with regard to which norms to use for different groups therefore Van der Merwe's study and the current study may differ seeing that twelve years have passed and there have been many implementations thus far. Furnham is a European study and therefore does not share the history as the other two studies in terms of context.

4.5. Limitations of Personality Assessment

4.5.1. Abuse by line managers

"Research has shown that managers weight individual personality characteristics as if they were nearly as important as general mental ability, during the hiring decision" (Dunn, Mount, Barrick, & Ones, 1995, as cited in Barrick & Mount, 2005, p. 359). This could be viewed as a benefit although the current study found it to be a drawback. Based on the responses of participants (n=5), the current study has found that line managers are using personality tests as a means to decline candidates. Majority of the participants (n=7) felt line managers have a lack of understanding of psychometric assessments. This would be an area that warrants further exploration as majority of the participants claim to have witnessed the abuse of psychometric tests in general and personality assessments by line managers.

Another form of abuse reported in this study would be the use of psychometric tests that are not valid and reliable and are freely available on the internet. Participant 11 best describes this,

> *... people are downloading assessments and using them. Because they don't understand the validity, the reliability- all of those things that come with an*

assessment. For instance they would say "Oh there's a free online assessment for EQI why do we spend this much money buying one? Let's just download it and use it"

This concurs with Kwiatkowski (2003) who argues, "There is a danger, though, that psychometric tests may become a commodity item, that they will be available so cheaply and so easily over the Internet that organisations will use and abuse them in equal measure" (p. 390). This seems to be fast growing within organisations that do not have industrial psychologists or psychometrists to control and monitor the use of psychometric tests.

4.5.2. Test-takers' perceptions of psychometric assessments

Due to South Africa's sensitive past, the practice of psychometric testing has resulted in a general mistrust of psychological testing amongst the black population in South Africa (Foxcroft & Davies, 2008; Laher & Cockcroft, 2013; Nzimande, 1995; Sehlapelo & Terreblanche, 1996). The current research found the perceptions of test-takers to be a limitation as the industrial psychologists (n=5) describe test-takers to be sceptical when they have to complete a psychological assessment. A few participants (n=4) mentioned that they feel that test takers are not well informed about their rights when consenting to take these psychological tests and assessments. The Professional Board for Psychology's main function is to protect the public. Therefore if the test taker is aware of their rights, they are able to contact the Professional Board of Psychology and if necessary they will intervene in the situation where irregular practices have taken place. There is a need for further research on test-takers' perceptions of psychometric testing within the South Africa context as most literature focuses on ensuring fairness in psychometric tests for the various groups of people in South Africa .

4.5.3. The issue of cost

One way of looking at the factor of cost that is found in literature is seen as "the costs of making bad hiring decisions and the difficulties of getting meaningful information from reference checks of prospective employees have led many employers to use personality tests as part of their hiring process" (Stabile, 2002, p. 279). However the industrial psychologists (n=5) that were interviewed discussed a different issue of cost being that the tests and assessments available are expensive. The only industrial psychologist that currently did not

use personality assessment in her organisation that was interviewed, explained that the only factor that was preventing her from using it was the factor of cost. This was also found in Van der Merwe's (2002, p. 80) study as he found that, "in the case of organisation J, they only started using psychometric testing recently and it will only be used on supervisory and managerial positions. Because it is a relatively small company, assessment centres are not used – it is too costly". Another form of looking at the issue of cost which only one participant in the current study mentioned that "*I always say to people you know what, even if you pay for it out of your own pocket, it's a wonderful thing to get feedback, go and get the feedback*".

According to Moerdyk, (2009) organisations have a tendency to regard assessment results as the property of the organisation, specifically when the results have been obtained for the purpose of selection. It is important to note that

> …the party that pays for the administration of the assessment process has a right to the report, while the participant has the right to feedback. However, the participant cannot prescribe the nature or the format of the feedback or how he is to access the information (Moerdyk, 2009, p. 96).

4.6. Ethical Considerations with the use of Personality Assessment

4.6.1. Challenges the ethical boundaries of industrial psychologists

There are several advantages to using personality assessments within an organisational context. However, it is critical to note that the use thereof needs to be done in an appropriate manner. This entails several considerations. It is critical to bear in mind contextual elements in the administration of personality tests– not only is it critical that factors such as contextual norms are considered, but smaller contextual elements need to be observed as well in order to account for transient errors that occur due to fluctuations in mood, feelings, and mental states (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001). All the participants were aware of their ethical obligations as industrial psychologists with reference to psychological testing and assessment. Only one participant felt that industrial psychologists allow the misuse of the psychological assessments by line managers to take place. However another participant indicated that industrial psychologists are put in a very difficult situation as the company is paying them a large amount of money to centre the assessment the way the company wants them to. Levin

and Buckett (2011) identified five ethical challenges faced by psychologists. Participants (60 registered industrial psychologists, 7 psychometrists, 3 psychometrists in training, 5 intern industrial psychologists, and 4 students) were asked to rank ethical challenges. The majority of participants found the misapplication of assessment results to be the biggest ethical issue as it was identified that assessment results are not managed well in terms of an agreement could not be reached as to who the client is, the organisation or the client requesting the results. This concurs with the current study as the participants were faced with the same dilemma. Secondly, confidentiality was the second biggest ethical issue in terms of results being discussed out of context. Following this, people who are not trained properly or who are partially trained assess people was the third biggest issue. Technology, language and culture were identified as the fourth ethical challenge and the final biggest issue was research. Research in terms of test publishers ensuring that extensive research is conducted in the area of assessment and the associated ethics of assessment which contains ethical guidelines and the purpose of the assessments (Levin & Buckett, 2011). This leads to further exploration into the above mentioned ethical issues and the ways industrial psychologists can address them.

4.6.2. Considerations of South African legislation

Since the democratic change in 1994, psychological tests in South Africa have been regulated through legislation. There are two particular forms of legislation that control the utilisation of psychological tests in South Africa. One is the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and the other is the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974 (Barnard, 2010; Foxcroft and Roodt, 2005,). Majority of the industrial psychologists in this study were aware of this and repeatedly mentioned that their ethical practices are embedded in legislation. Two participants specifically discussed that because of South Africa's sensitive history, practitioners need to be extra careful when conducting assessments which is why South Africa is the only country that requires qualified industrial psychologists and psychometrists to conduct assessments. Foxcroft and Roodt (2009, p. 108) state that "such requirements help to ensure that the assessment practitioners possess the requisite knowledge and skills to administer psychological assessment measures". In addition, the psychology profession in South Africa is very strictly regulated in comparison to the world standards. "This contrasts quit markedly with most other countries, where control lies largely in the hands of the profession itself" (Moerdyk, 2009, p. 104). Laher and Cockcroft (2013) have argued that South Africa is in the

lead with regard to psychological assessment compared to other countries in the world due to the country's history.

4.6.3. Feedback to candidates

Five participants highlighted that that test takers have a right to the feedback of the tests. Personality tests have a developmental aspect to the person who receives the feedback which is beneficial because the individual is aware of their strengths and weaknesses (Moerdyk, 2009). It was also noted by Moerdyk (2009) and Barnard (2010) that only registered psychologists and psychometrists can provide feedback to the test takers as there is a professional technique to provide feedback. Those who are not trained might scar the test taker as they are not professionals. Moerdyk (2009, p. 96) states the following with regard to feedback, which concurs to what the current study found. "The final stage in the assessment process is to provide feedback on the outcome of the assessment. In many circumstances, this is given directly to the individual(s) concerned. However, care must be taken with this process".

In the section to follow, salient limitations with regards to this study are identified and recommendations for further research are presented.

4.7. Limitations

This study particularly aimed at focusing on industrial psychologists' perceptions of personality assessment in personnel selection and the issues associated with personality assessment in South African organisations. As with all studies, this study had a number of limitations which will be outlined below and recommendations for future research will be explored.

Seeing that qualitative research was used in this study to obtain rich, in-depth understanding of the place of personality assessment in personnel selection and common practice employed in organisational settings in South Africa, there are a few limitations that go with qualitative

research. Good qualitative practice considers the researcher's impact of the context of the study as well as the how the data was interpreted (Kelly, 1999). Since the researcher is a part of the study, the issues of transferability, reflexivity, credibility and dependability are evident. Transferability refers to the "extent to which the interpretive account can be applied to other contexts than the one being researched" (Kelly, 1999, p. 431). This study was conducted only in the Johannesburg area therefore the findings of this study are not a true reflection of all industrial psychologists in South Africa. Credibility refers to the truthfulness of what the researcher reports in terms of explaining what was observed and the reason for observing what was observed (Lewis, 2009, p. 4). Objectivity was maintained as the supervisor of this research study examined the transcripts and saw the underlying reasons the researcher made with regard to the interpretation of the data.

It is always important to consider the position of the researcher in terms of the "definition of the problem to be studied and with regard to the way the researcher interacts with the material to produce a particular type of sense" in order to minimise the role of subjectivity (Parker, 1994, p.13).The researchers' biases and beliefs are fundamental in this research study which cannot be ignored. As a student in the field of industrial psychology, personal opinions and values may have influenced the interviews that were conducted and the interpretation of the responses may have been affected as a result. To alleviate this impact a journal was kept to minimise any biases and subjectivity as experiences and views were noted down. The journal was used as a means to reflect towards reactions the researcher had to the interview responses, therefore biases were minimised and the data was not affected as the journal provided insight.

With regard to the sample, the sample size was appropriate for the purpose of this study however, due to time constraints it could have been larger. A larger sample would have provided additional opinions or they may have confirmed other responses of industrial psychologists. With regard to the interviews, it was difficult to acquire interviews with industrial psychologists as they found time to meet problematic as it interfered with their working hours. Due to time constraints, a few participants only agreed to participate in the study if they were able to send their responses via email. Therefore time constraints were a crucial limitation to this study. A possible reason for the difficulty in acquiring the sample

could be that industrial psychologists may find the topic sensitive as there could be legal implications when discussing psychometric assessments. The initial sample set out to include human resource practitioners that administer psychometric assessments in organisational settings as well as industrial psychologists. However it was difficult to find human resource practitioners that administer psychometric assessments in organisations and who were willing to participate in this study. Hence the focus was made to only include industrial psychologists in the sample.

Despite the above mentioned limitations, this study provided valuable information to personality assessment in organisational settings and possible focus areas for future research.

5. Recommendations for Future Research

This study has highlighted many different areas of research that can be explored. Firstly, the true value of personality assessment needs further exploration in terms of further utilising the personality profile beyond the selection level in terms of managing the individual as it ultimately reflects individuals' strengths and weaknesses.

In terms of theory building, the underlying theory of personality assessment needs to be explored in a South African context as there were many different perceptions as to what the underlying factors are. Future research could focus on exploring the perceptions of human resource practitioners as well as industrial psychologists towards psychometrics assessments in organisational settings in terms of many of the ethical issues and limitations that go along with psychometric assessments. These were the researcher's suggestions for future research. However Participant 8 best describes what future research needs to focus on.

> *It's around how do we educate both the administrator, the people, the consultants, the firm that's using it as well as you know HR and line and that type of stuff around this cannot be used void of a collective set of activities uhm and to teach our partners and all our stakeholders actually around the what role do personality and psychometric assessments play in a holistic recruitment, selection, development, whatever you going to use it for as a process, as opposed to what is your outcomes in assessment.*

This would ultimately address the ethical issues and the profession of industrial psychology would not be taken lightly by line managers.

Further recommendations may include a sample of only human resource practitioners' perceptions of personality assessment in personnel selection. Furthermore, industrial psychologists' perceptions in different areas in South Africa need to be considered for substantial evidence on this topic. Ideally a qualitative study should be turned into a quantitative one which can be widely applied in South Africa. Seeing that ethical issues was an important area that came up with a sample of 11 participants a greater sample in a quantitative study might lead to education of ethical issues and ultimately addressing these issues that administrators might be currently facing with psychometric assessments.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to explore industrial psychologists' perceptions of personality assessments in personnel selection. The results suggest that there is invaluable information gained from determining whether or not a person will fit into the organisation which will ultimately have an effect on the turnover rate in the organisation. Secondly, there are numerous influential factors that need to be considered in personnel selection specifically in the South African context. The most preferred tests were established from the industrial psychologists that were interviewed and the reasons for their popularity. However, a few limitations with the use of personality assessment were also established in an organisational context. Ethical considerations have to be acknowledged and both the test-taker and the administrator are required to know their rights around psychological tests.

The findings of this study in context with past research have significant implications for industrial psychologists as well as psychometrists and human resource practitioners. Following eighteen years of democracy, this study has found that further research is required in the field of psychometric assessments in organisational settings within the South African context in terms of addressing the various ethical issues the administrators are currently facing. Person-environment fit theory is a crucial theory that underpins the use of personality

assessment in personnel selection. Industrial psychologists have shared their perceptions relating to the true value of personality assessment in an organisational setting. This includes the one participant that does not currently use personality assessment in the organisation as cost was an issue.

Industrial psychologists hold interesting perceptions and experiences of psychometric assessments in organisational settings. Many different topics were brought up with just these eleven participants. Extensive research is required to explore these topics especially in a South African context.

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Appendix A – Participant information sheet and consent form

Psychology

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Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Sapna Fakir and I am a student at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am conducting research in order to attain my Masters Degree in Industrial Psychology. This study will explore industrial psychologists' perceptions as well as human resource practitioners' perceptions of personality assessments in personnel selection. Thus the study will explore whether personality assessment is or is not used in the individuals' organisation and the reasons behind this. The aspects that will be explored include the perceptions of reliability, validity, fairness of personality assessments, the types of assessment used, and ultimately their usefulness within the organisation in cases where personality assessment are employed. This will provide a deeper insight to personality assessment and the aspects which are considered as influential within the context of personality assessment in South Africa.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and participants are under no obligation to consent to participation. Participation and non-participation will not benefit or disadvantage you in any way.

The process of this study entails one interview session which should last between forty-five minutes to an hour. No written responses will be needed. However, all interviews will be recorded and thereafter transcribed. Tapes will be destroyed on completion of this degree and transcripts will be stored in a password protected and encrypted file at the university. No names will be used in any reports, publications or presentations at any time. Thus confidentiality is guaranteed. Should you require feedback, you can contact me six months after the interview and a summary of the study and its results will be emailed to you. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you have the right to do so.

Should you have any queries in this regard, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our details appear in the signature below. If you would like to participate in this study, please keep this sheet and complete the attached consent forms as formal agreement to participate and be tape recorded.

Thank you for reading this.

Sapna Fakir

+27 72 774 6809

sapna721@gmail.com.

Prof. Sumaya Laher (Supervisor)

+2711 717 4532

sumaya.laher@wits.ac.za

Consent Form: Participation and tape recording in research

I _____ consent to participate in the study entitled, "Exploring industrial psychologists' and HR practitioners' perceptions of personality assessment in personnel selection and the issues associated with personality assessment in South Africa", I consent for Sapna Fakir to interview me for this study and to tape record the interview. I understand that:

-Participation is voluntary

-My name and personal details will not be included in the research reports. (There will be no names or any identifying information as pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of the participants)

-My responses are confidential

-I will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way by participating in this study

-I may withdraw my responses from this study at any stage of the research process.

- My name and personal details will not be included in the research reports

-My responses are confidential - All recordings will only be heard by Sapna Fakir and her supervisor.

-I understand that tape recordings and any transcribed materials will be stored securely at the University of Witwatersrand on completion of the study.

I **do** give consent to complete the interview with Sapna Fakir.

Date: ..... Signed: .....

I **do** give consent to be recorded in an interview with Sapna Fakir.

Date: ..... Signed: .....

Appendix B – Interview Schedule for participants that employ personality assessments

Hi I am Sapna, before we begin the interview I would like to thank you for participating in this study. I would like to ensure you that everything you say in the interview will be kept confidential, and only my supervisor and I will have access to the audio tapes. There will be no names used in any reports, publications or presentations at any time as a pseudonym will be assigned to your information in the report. I would like to remind you that if you wish to withdraw from this study, you have the right to do so. You may refrain from answering any question that you consider inappropriate. Feedback summarising the results will be available on request, once all data has been collected.

I will need you to read through and sign these two consent forms, before we begin the interview.

Section 1: Contextual questions

1. How long have you been practising as an industrial psychologist/ working in HR?
2. Tell me about your career background.

Section 2: Understanding the place of personality assessment in personnel selection within organisational settings in South Africa

3. What has been your experience with psychological assessment, specifically personality assessment in organisational settings?

4. Are there any other purposes for you to employ personality assessments in your organisation?

5. In general, what are the implications of personality assessment in an organisational setting?

6. Can you please comment on the effectiveness of personality assessment for the various functions in your organisations?

7. Is assessment conducted in conjunction with any of the models in the literature that inform the use of personality assessment in the workplace? (If so, which ones?)

Section 3: A view of common practice employed in organisational settings in South Africa

8. What types of personality assessment do you prefer to use at your organisation?

(Prompt with how useful have the assessments been, what are the limitations with procedure and what other techniques are useful)

9. Do you believe personality assessments influences decision making in organisations?

10. How do you see ethical issues fitting into assessment?

Interview schedule for participants that do not employ personality assessments.

Section 1: Contextual questions

1. How long have you been practising as an industrial psychologist/ working in HR?
2. Tell me about your career background.

Section 2: Understanding the place of personality assessment in personnel selection within organisational settings in South Africa

3. What has been your experience with psychological assessment, specifically personality assessment in organisational settings?

4. What are the reasons for you not to employ personality assessments in your organisation?

5. In general, what are the implications of personality assessment in an organisational setting?

6. Are there any reasons based on the models/ theories in the literature that you choose not to use personality assessments?

Section 3: A view of common practice employed in organisational settings in South Africa

7. What is the procedure in this company to select employees?

(How appropriate has these tests/assessments been?)

8. Are there any ethical considerations around personality assessment in which your organisation chooses not to use personality assessments?

Appendix C- Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MORG/12/004 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Exploring industrial psychologists' and HR practitioners' perceptions of personality assessment in personnel selection and the issues associated with personality assessment in South Africa
INVESTIGATORS	Fakir Sapna
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	10/07/12
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 19 July 2012

CHAIRPERSON K. Cockcroft
(Professor K. Cockcroft)

cc Supervisor:

Dr S. Laher
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2014

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES