

EXERCISE 6.1: SHOULD TENNECO USE THE WONDERLIC TEST?

Overview

Although general mental or cognitive ability tests have been shown to be valid, they are likely to result in adverse impact against minorities because of test score differences. Recall the discussion in the text regarding the *Wonderlic Personnel Test*. The purpose of this exercise is to have the student consider the options available for dealing with the problem of a test that will probably cause adverse impact.

Learning Objectives

After completing this exercise, you should have a better understanding of the implications of the use of cognitive ability tests and should be capable of developing and articulating a rationale for the use of specific methods of selection.

Procedure

Part A: Individual Analysis

Before class, read the scenario presented next regarding the Tenneco Corporation and answer the questions on Form 6.1.1. Be prepared to defend your position in group discussion.

Part B: Group Analysis

In groups, each student should review the written responses of other members to the questions on Form 6.1.1. The group should then attempt to reach consensus on each of the questions. A written group response should be developed for each of the questions, and a group spokesperson

should be designated to present the group's positions on the use of the test.

Scenario

Tenneco Corporation has decided to use of the *Wonderlic Personnel Test* (see www.wonderlic.com/products) as part of its selection process for assistant store managers. Each assistant store manager has management responsibilities for one convenience store. Responsibilities include complete supervision of at least 15 employees, including hiring, firing, and scheduling; budgetary matters; inventory; vendor deliveries; and customer issues. Tenneco hopes to maintain a policy of promotion from within and has administered the Wonderlic to 400 store employees. A consultant from the Wonderlic Company recommends a particular minimum score of 24 for the assistant manager job. With this recommended passing score, the rate of passing (scoring at the minimum or higher) based on the ethnicity race of the job candidates was as follows: Whites: 75 percent passed; Blacks: 51 percent passed; Hispanics: 58 percent passed; Asian or Pacific Islander: 83 percent passed; American Indian/Alaskan Native: 70 percent passed. The 5-week training program at Tenneco headquarters has room for only 40 managerial trainees. The training is required for promotion to assistant store manager. As a new HRM personnel specialist, you have been asked to recommend a specific policy for the use of the Wonderlic results and other possible selection procedures. Answer each of the questions on Form 6.1.1.

FORM 6.1.1

1. Is there evidence of adverse impact against minorities if the *Wonderlic Personnel Test* is used as the sole basis for entry into the training? Explain your answer.

Learning Objectives

After completing this exercise, you should be able to:

1. Distinguish candidate information that is valuable and should be used in the decision from that which is not.
2. Given your response to Question 1, what are the policy options for this situation? What policy do you recommend that Tenneco adopt for the use of the Wonderlic? Defend your response by considering the job situation, the need for further research, legal and social implications, and alternative methods of selection. Provide a detailed recommendation and rationale for action. If you take a position to drop the use of the Wonderlic, how do you propose to identify the 40 candidates?

Procedure

Part A: Individual Analysis

Before class, review all material presented in the scenario that follows (including all exhibits). Assume the following: You are the vice president of personnel. You are to write a report (a two-page executive summary followed by no more than two pages of supporting information) that includes the following:

- a. A rank ordering of your top three choices for the Pittsburgh job based on the information you have now.

3. What if you conducted a PAQ analysis that indicated that the Wonderlic was a valid test to use for this job? Do you believe that this result establishes the legality of the Wonderlic? Given that the Wonderlic consultant recommended the particular passing score, is Tenneco on safe legal ground if candidates are selected based on that Wonderlic passing score?

by the Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity that Mr. Jackson should be hired since he meets the minimum qualifications and Tenneco has an affirmative action program.

A detailed discussion of how the selection process for hiring a plant manager should be changed in the future in order to make the process more effective. (e.g., statistical selection devices to test additional information to gather evidence to drop or change weights for the various components of the selection process.)

This report will be sent to the vice president of production and to the president of Tenneco Industries. Along with the report is this:

Part B: Group Analysis

Groups should be charged with reading a collection of the rank ordering of the top three choices. Each member should be given an opportunity to review the others' written reports. The instructor will designate five time to be allowed to discuss the report and will provide additional information as required. In addition, each group should reach consensus on the changes to be made for hiring the plant manager.

Recently, the company has been trying to hire a plant manager (see job description in Exhibit 6.1.1) for the Pittsburgh plant (plant manager report summary on the vice president of production). Although Tenneco Industries has experienced slightly above average growth and profit compared to its competitors, the Pittsburgh plant has been a trouble spot. Over the past 3 years, production and quality have been consistently high and have been better than most other plants in the company.

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Dynaco Industries does not have an established procedure for filling job openings. In the past, it has followed procedures from within the company. However, the vice president of production was hired externally. Dynaco has no policy on hiring a manager. In the past, most plant managers have been hired from within the company. The company benefits from the manager.

FORM 6.1.1 (Continued)

Name _____

Group _____

4. Could Tenneco convert each raw score on the Wonderlic to a percentile based on the ethnicity of the test taker? How might such a policy affect adverse impact? Is it legal?
5. Tenneco is also considering an interviewing process as the final hurdle for selecting trainees. What is your view of this option? If interviews are to be conducted, are there any recommendations for the interview content, process, or procedure? What do you recommend?
6. Another suggestion is to review the *Wonderlic* test and to remove all culturally biased questions to eliminate the adverse impact. Do you agree with this suggestion? Explain your answer.