

Three Useless Recruitment and Selection Criteria

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Last week we focused on why the interview is the worst selection tool due to its low reliability and validity. This week we will focus on other job selection criteria that are close to useless but employers still use them regardless of ample scientific evidence showing little to no relationship with actual job performance.

A cursory look at most job adverts will show that employers, especially in Zimbabwe, still use age as a criterion when hiring. Research shows that there is no relationship between age and performance. If you find that, there is any relationship between age and job performance it points to a faulty performance assessment tool that is overrating people based on their age instead of performance. In a seminal article in 2016 ([The Validity and Utility of Selection Methods in Personnel Psychology: Practical and Theoretical Implications of 100 Years of Research Findings](#)), Schmidt found no relationship between age and performance. What does it mean therefore if employers continue to put age restrictions when hiring? It means employers and more specifically managers are looking for opportunities to influence who is selected. In the process, they exclude very capable people who may not fit the age range preferred. The only time it will be reasonable to use age as a criterion is when you want to omit people who are over the retirement age and children who are below the employment age range. Any other reason is wasteful expeditious fishing by poorly informed managers or just outright corruption.

Another factor often used in job selection is experience in a similar role or such other experience stated in the job advert. In the same study above Schmidt found the correlation between job experience and performance is significant but very weak ($r=0.16$). What it means is that you should not put too much weight on it when recruiting. If you do you may lose good and capable candidates who may not have the requisite experience but have the right cognitive capacity for the role. In an article by Alison Beard {Harvard Business Review}, she reports on a study by Chad H. Van Iddekinge {et al} of Florida University, they reviewed 81 studies to investigate the connection between an Individual's prior work experience and performance in a new organisation. The results are revealing; they found no significant relationship. What is even more worrying is that even in cases where people had worked in exactly the same role in other organisations, they found no significant relationship. What this means is that scientific research shows that candidates who have more experience do not perform better than those with less experience in a job. What this means for employers is that do not overemphasize years of experience when hiring as that has no relationship with actual job performance. Most employers prefer to put arbitrary experience requirements that are not backed by research. This makes the selection process based on this criterion more unstandardized leading to the selection of the wrong people for the job.

The third factor often preferred by employers is the years of education. This is often reflected in the higher qualifications demanded by employers. In the study by Schmidt cited above he found that the relationship between years of education and actual job performance was significant but very weak ($r=$

0.1}. Look at how employers demand Masters Degrees and some such other higher qualifications. The approach alone is a sure way to exclude highly capable people from jobs. This means many organisations could be losing many skilled people by using these exclusion requirements. While years of education has a weak relationship with actual job performance, job knowledge has a strong significant relationship with job performance { $r=0.48$ }. Possessing a qualification does not guarantee that an individual has acquired enough knowledge to do the job well. I am sure you know people who possess required qualifications but fail to deliver on the job.

The only way to get the right people for any job is to assess them for cognitive ability as it the biggest predictor of job performance in any job. Despite all the scientific evidence, organisations still prefer the unscientific, unsubstantiated selection tools and criterion {experience, age, and years of education as reflected in demands for higher qualifications}. A recruitment and selection tool that does not include the assessment of cognitive ability, personality and managerial/leadership competencies through validated selection tools will always get you the wrong people.

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