Personality assessment and the prediction of future job performance: A review

Isla M Reid-Dicks

This report is submitted in partial fulfilment

of the degree

Master of Psychology (Organisational & Human Factors)

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School of Psychology

University of Adelaide

6 October 2017

Word Count: 12,994

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6 October, 2017

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Abstract

Organisations are increasingly exploring ways of distinguishing themselves in their market, attract and retain customers, and increase productivity. Employees are also increasingly being recognised as crucial to the success of these objectives. Personality assessment has been shown to be a valid predictor of future performance at work. Through selecting the right people for the roles initially, using personality assessment, undesirable outcomes such as counterproductive work behaviour, poor performance, and burnout can be avoided. The capacity of particular personality traits to predict future performance in teams and different professions has been extensively researched and is discussed in the following review, specifically focussing on the Big Five traits and the Dark Triad. Research regarding relationships between employee personality traits and counterproductive work behaviour and burnout are also reviewed, specifically in the context of the disability profession.

Keywords: Big Five, conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, counterproductive work behaviour, Dark Triad, burnout, personality assessment, Disability Support Workers, job performance.

Personality assessment and the prediction of future job performance: A review

The literature regarding the use and benefits of personality testing in the employee selection process has increased substantially in the past few decades. Potential benefits of selecting a suitable employee include improved team performance and dynamics (Mount, Barrick, & Stewart, 1998; Rothstein & Goffin, 2006), reduced turnover rates (Barrick & Mount, 1996; Li et al., 2014), lower incidences of counterproductive work behaviour (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007), and improved communication (Mohammed & Angell, 2003; Peeters et al., 2006). The classification of desirable personality traits is dependent on the industry or profession. However, multiple studies have found that the traits of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism are valid predictors of future behaviour at work across professions and industries (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Behling, 1998; Mount et al., 1998; Neuman et al., 1999). The behaviours associated with these personality traits, particularly when scoring lower on conscientiousness and agreeableness, or higher on neuroticism, are compounded when the job role is inherently stressful, such as those in the human services field (Bowling & Eschelman, 2010). Negative outcomes affect not only the employee and the team but also the clients being serviced. In light of this, it can been argued that personality testing for employees in the human services profession is even more crucial than in other professions and industries.

Productivity and Stress

Productivity, in an organisational context, is the efficiency with which a business translates inputs (such as employee time and skills, and money) into outputs (such as goods and services) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Organisations recognise the benefits of productivity and many invest significant resources in measures to improve their productivity. The below table (Table 1) reproduced from Buck Consultants (2009) shows how improving productivity or reducing presenteeism is the primary or secondary driver behind organisations introducing health promotion initiatives in Australia and the rest of the world. Presenteeism is the term for an employee being

present at work whilst unwell (either mentally or physically), resulting in reduced performance capacity (Medibank Private, 2007). One study found it can reduce a person's output by as much as one third (Hemp, 2004). Research has also found that presenteeism has a greater impact on productivity than absenteeism, with a cost of $34.1 billion to Australia's economy in 2009-10 (Medibank Private, 2011. Mental health, particularly depression, has been found to account for the largest proportion of productivity loss due to presenteeism (Medibank Private, 2007). Table 1 also shows that reducing employee absenteeism is the second or third ranked objective for organisations.

Table 1.

Top employer objectives driving the introduction of health promotion initiatives. Reproduced from: Buck Consultants (2009), "Working well: a global survey of health promotion and workplace wellness strategies".

Employer Objective	Africa	Asia	Australia	Canada	Europe	Latin America	U.S.
Improve productivity or presenteeism	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
Reduce employee absences	2	3	2	2	3	3	3
Improve workforce morale/engagement	4	1	3	4	2	4	4
Maintain work ability	3	6	6	7	4	2	8
Further organisational values	5	4	8	6	6	6	5
Attract and retain employees	6	7	4	5	5	7	7
Improve workplace safety	7	5	5	8	7	5	6
Reduce health care/insurance costs	9	9	11	3	11	11	1
Promote corporate image	8	8	6	9	8	9	9
Fulfil social/community responsibility	10	10	8	10	9	8	10
Comply with legislation	11	11	10	11	10	10	11
Supplement government-provided health care	12	12	12	12	12	12	12

The impact of mental stress on the productivity of workplaces and Australia's economy is extensive and is an increasing concern for employees and employers in Australia (Cotton, 2008; Guthrie et al., 2010). This is demonstrated by the fact that whilst compensation claims on the whole fell significantly between 1996 and 2004, the number of stress-related claims almost doubled in the same timeframe (LaMontagne et al., 2010a; Medibank Private, 2008; Noblet & LaMontagne, 2006).

A Medibank Private commissioned study reported that in 2007 the cost of work-related mental stress to the Australian economy was $14.81 billion. The direct cost to employers of stress-related absenteeism and presenteeism was $10.11 billion. Furthermore, these two figures are underestimating the overall cost due to other factors that incur costs such as recruitment and training processes that occur due to employee turnover (Medibank Private, 2008). Additionally, stress contributes to the development and exacerbation of other health conditions (LaMontagne et al, 2010; Medibank Private, 2008), which then places an increased burden on the health system and economy.

The median cost of a mental stress compensation claim is approximately $13,000, compared to the median cost of $1,500 of all accepted claims (SafeWork Australia, 2013). Similarly, the median number of working weeks lost due to a mental stress claim is 6.1 weeks, compared to the median number of working weeks lost due to all claim types being 0.6 weeks. The health and community services industry had the highest incidence of compensation claims for work-related mental stress out of all industries in Australia between 2008 and 2011, and the highest number of "serious claims" during 2013-14 (SafeWork Australia, 2013). Table 2 shows that community and personal service workers (who work within the health and community services industry) had the second highest frequency rate of "serious claims" in 2013-14 in Australia.

Table 2.

Workforce Characteristics by Occupation 2013-14. Reproduced from SafeWork (2013), 'Australian Workers' Compensation Statistics 2013–14'.

Occupation	Workers (million)	% of the workforce	% entitled to compensation	Serious claims	Claim frequency rate	Claim incidence rate
Clerical and admin workers	1.657	14%	96%	5 325	2.1	3.3
Community and personal service workers	1.143	10%	94%	18 465	12.3	15.9
Labourers	1.132	10%	90%	25 530	16.8	24.1
Machinery operators and drivers	0.762	7%	92%	16 110	11.4	22.7
Managers	1.47	13%	8%	4 615	1.7	3.6
Professionals	2.550	22%	93%	10 325	2.4	4.2
Sales workers	1.083	9%	96%	5 860	4.3	5.3
Technicians and trades workers	1.677	15%	86%	19 450	7.1	13.6
Total	11.482	100%	92%	106 565	5.9	9.8

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *Work-related Injuries Survey 2009-10* report noted that 70% of workers who reported that they had experienced work-related mental stress did not apply for compensation. Furthermore, this figure is solely workers who reported stress, and it is likely many more experience but do not report work-related stress. Work-related stress is a response experienced when a person's job demands and responsibilities are beyond their capabilities; they are not matched to their knowledge and abilities, and challenge their ability to cope (Leka et al., 2003; World Health Organisation, 2017). Individual personality traits can enhance or impede a person's capacity to process and respond to stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Suls & Martin, 2005). Traits can explain

some of the variability between how people react differently to the same situation, and the subsequent consequences for themselves, their team, and their organisation (Brief et al., 1988; Leka & Jain, 2010; Noblet & LaMontagne, 2006).

Personality assessment in the workplace

Researchers initially investigating personality measures for employee selection purposes concluded that the validity of personality as a predictor of job performance was low (Ghiselli, 1973; Guion & Gottier, 1965; Locke & Hulin, 1962; Reilly & Chao, 1982; Schmitt, Gooding, Noe, & Kirsch, 1984). At the time this initial research was conducted, there were diverse views on how personality should be classified and low agreement within the field. However, personality research and the resulting literature base has grown in the past few decades, with many psychologists converging and agreeing on the structure of personality. The growth of this personnel selection practice is likely to have stemmed from a series of meta-analytic research studies in the 1990s, where it could be concluded that certain personality measures have a high level of validity in predicting future behaviours and performance in the workplace (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Mount & Barrick, 1995; Salgado, 1997).

Modern day personality testing originated in the 1940s with Cattell's 16 Personality Factor (16PF) measure (Cattell, 1943). This measure, now in its fifth edition, and still commonly used in workplaces, identifies 16 primary personality traits derived through factor analysis (Cattell, R. B, Cattell, A. K., & Cattell, H. E. P, 1993). The more recently developed Five Factor Model (FFM; the model surrounding the Big Five personality traits) was developed through factor analysis of responses to the 16PF (Norman, 1963). Although the models use different types of factor analysis, there is widespread agreement that the 16PF five global traits and the Big Five are representative of the same personality traits (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Norman's work is particularly significant

because his labels for the five personality traits are now the agreed upon usage: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism (emotional stability), and openness to experience.

Conscientiousness is the extent to which a person is responsible, ethical, and reflects on the consequences of their actions before choosing a course of action (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1990). Agreeableness describes the likelihood of a person reacting in an angry or difficult way to situations, the extent to which they consider others before themselves, and their sensitivity to the needs of others (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1990). People scoring highly on the neuroticism trait are more likely to be anxious, have lower resilience, and experience mood swings and overall lower mood (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1990). Extraversion is characterised by high social energy, higher likelihood to seek out interpersonal interactions, and dominance (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1990). Those displaying higher levels of the Openness to Experience trait are intellectual, broad-minded, imaginative, and interested in cultural experiences (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1990).

Each FFM personality trait has six facets (Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991). The facets of Conscientiousness, include achievement striving, competence, dutifulness, self-discipline, deliberation, and orderliness. Agreeableness includes trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, and tender-mindedness. The facets of Neuroticism are anxiety, anger hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability. Extraversion facets are warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement seeking, and positive emotions. The facets of Openness to Experience include fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values.

It has been argued that trait facets, rather than global traits, are better at predicting future behaviour (Marinova, Moon, & Kamdar, 2013; Oswald & Hough, 2011). Schneider, Hough and Dunnette (1996) argue that narrower personality traits retain specificity that could add substantially

to criterion validity. Research in this area has been inhibited by lack of agreement on the lower-level facets. There are multiple frameworks of lower level personality constructs. Three of the widely accepted models include 30 facets (the NEO- PI; Costa & McCrae, 1992), which is described above, 44 facets (the HPI; Hogan & Hogan, 1992), and 45 facets (the AB5C measure; Hofstee, de Raad, & Goldberg, 1992). One meta-analysis found that the lower-order facets of the conscientiousness trait predicted success in managerial roles in different ways (Hough, Ones, & Viswesvaran, 1998). Achievement striving predicted promotions and salary, whilst the facet of dutifulness did not. This shows variability in the predictive ability of facets underlying personality traits. Paunonen and Ashton (2001) argue strongly for the use of lower-order facets when investigating future performance. They found that these facets accounted for more variance in their performance criteria than the broader traits. However, they conclude that the rationale for the continued use of the Big Five global traits remains given they can account for variance in broader measures of behaviour. This is particularly valid in the workplace when there are multiple variables contributing to employee behaviour, and it may not be feasible to isolate specific lower-level facets to study.

Several key studies have contributed to increasing our understanding of how and which personality traits are associated with behaviour at work (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick et al., 2001; Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002; Judge & Hies, 2002; Mount et al., 1998; Rothstein & Goffin, 2006). Following several meta-analyses exploring this relationship, researchers then carried out a second-order meta-meta-analysis (Barrick et al., 2001) and the consistency of the results led to the recommendation that no further meta-analyses of the relationship between personality and work performance were needed. However, this advice was not followed, with several further meta-analyses being conducted over the past decade (Dudley et al., 2006; Hogan & Holland, 2003; Judge et al., 2013), highlighting the enduring interest in both how personality affects work performance in different professions and industries and how narrow and broad personality traits contribute unique variance towards predicting performance.

One trait that has consistently been found to be positively related to job performance is Conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Behling, 1998). Most researchers are confident that conscientiousness is a valid predictor for all jobs and that it is unlikely a job will not be impacted by an employee's level of conscientiousness. It is considered to have the highest validity of all traits in predicting job performance (Behling, 1998). Conscientiousness has also been found to be negatively related to absenteeism (Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997). However, Hurtz and Donovan (2000) present a contrasting view, stating that the much cited meta-analyses (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Mount & Barrick, 1995; Salgado, 1997; Tett et al., 1991) investigating the Big Five, and particularly conscientiousness, are flawed. They take issue with the construct validity due to the post hoc classification procedure of non-Big Five measures into the Big Five categories. That is, these studies used results from personality measures that were not designed to measure the Big Five personality traits. Furthermore, they raise concerns with suboptimal levels of interrater agreement on how the results had been classified into the Big Five traits and general ambiguity on the classification (Salgado, 1997). Nevertheless, when they conducted their own meta-analysis of the Big Five and job performance, they concluded that conscientiousness and neuroticism are valid predictors across most jobs; agreeableness is a valid predictor of performance in jobs involving interpersonal interaction; and extraversion and openness to experience are valid predictors of performance in the sales and customer service occupations (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). However, they maintain that the validity estimates of 0.31 and 0.25 for conscientiousness provided by prior meta-analyses are over-estimated (Mount & Barrick, 1995; Salgado, 1997), with their own stated validity being 0.20.

Hurtz and Donovan's (2000) finding that neuroticism is a valid predictor across most jobs and measures of performance supports the association reported by Barrick and Mount (1991), Mount and Barrick (1995), and Salgado (1997) that neuroticism is negatively related to job performance in most jobs. This relationship might be due to the characteristics of individuals higher on the neuroticism trait

inhibiting rather than facilitating successful performance at work. It is important to note that findings in relation to neuroticism and performance at work are likely to be affected by "selecting-out". That is, people who are higher in neuroticism may 1) avoid jobs where they feel less able to cope with the demands, 2) avoid participation in testing, and 3) not be employed, either of their own volition due to their perception of their emotional stability, or, at the more extreme end, due to their inability to function effectively in a job (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

Although Barrick and Mount's (1991) meta-analysis was conducted using the results from employees in five occupation groupings that covered a wide range of jobs, such as: professionals (including engineers, architects, attorneys, accountants, teachers, and doctors), police, managers, sales, and skilled/semi-skilled (including clerical workers, nurses' aides, farmers, flight attendants, orderlies, airline baggage handlers, telephone operators, truck drivers, and production workers) they do highlight the fact that their results cannot be generalised to all jobs. They state that investigating whether their resulting model generalises to other types of jobs is an important area for future research. Mount et al's (1998) meta-analysis extended their research by focusing on personality and performance in professions where interpersonal interaction was a core focus. Their hypotheses were supported, with conscientiousness and agreeableness both being positively related to performance in jobs involving interpersonal interactions. Agreeableness and neuroticism were particularly strongly related, positively and negatively, respectively, to performance in jobs involving a high degree of teamwork. Whilst three of the samples included in the meta-analysis had a strong social/caring aspect to the role, such as counsellors and carers for children with disabilities, the remaining samples were in customer service and manufacturing roles. This means the results aren't wholly generalizable to employees in the human services or disability fields. The study also separated employees who work in teams and employees who have a "dyadic", that is one-to-one, relationship with a customer. Many workplaces now require employees to be able to work in both contexts.

The three traits found to best predict team performance are extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism (Rothstein & Goffin, 2006). There is no one agreed upon way to measure team performance, but most team performance ratings are task specific and are provided by the team's supervisor. Ratings can be given for quantity and quality of work produced, the planning and management of work, and interpersonal communication within the team (Peeters et al., 2006). Rothstein and Goffin (2006) describe how eleven of the fifteen studies used in their meta-analysis found significant correlations between extraversion and team performance (Barrick et. al., 1998; Barry & Steward, 1997; Kichuk & Weisner, 1997; Morgeson et. al., 2005; Neuman et al., 1999), group interaction styles (Balthazard et al., 2004), oral communication (Mohammed & Angell, 2003), emergent leadership (Kickul & Neuman, 2000; Taggar et al., 1999), task role behaviour (Stewart et al., 2005), and leadership task performance (Mohammed, et. al., 2002).

Conscientiousness and emotional stability (neuroticism) were found to be significantly related with team-based performance in eight and nine of the fifteen studies, respectively. Conscientiousness was positively related to team performance (Barrick et al., 1998; Halfhill et al., 2005; Kickul & Neumann, 2000; Morgeson et al., 2005; Neuman & Wright, 1999; Neuman et al., 1999), task role behaviour (Stewart et al., 2005), and leadership emergence (Taggar et al., 1999). Leadership emergence is the degree to which a person who is not a formal leader holds influence over other team members (Côté et al., 2010). Emotional stability (neuroticism) was positively related to team performance (Barrick et al., 1998; Kichuk & Wiesner, 1997; Neuman et al., 1999), leadership emergence (Taggar et al., 1999), leadership task performance (Mohammed et al., 2002), oral communication (Mohammed & Angell, 2003), transformational leadership (Lim & Ployhart, 2004), task focus (Bond & Ng, 2004), and task role behaviour (Stewart et al., 2005).

Counterproductive Work Behaviour

Research has investigated how personality can predict instances of poor performance at work, known as counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) (Elliot, 2010; Hastings & O'Neill, 2009; Kish-Gepart, Harrison, & Trevino, 2010). Cullen and Sackett (2003) report in their review that one or more of the conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism traits (or their facets) predict CWB. Types of CWB shown to be related to personality are absenteeism (Judge, Martoccio, & Thoresen, 1997), turnover (Barrick & Mount, 1996), harassment, substance abuse at work (Gruys & Sackett, 2003; Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Spector et al., 2006) damage to organisational property (Schmidt, Viswesvaran, & Ones, 1997), and workplace violence (Ones & Viswesvaran, 2001).

Mount, Ilies, and Johnson (2006) extended the research into traits predicting CWB by distinguishing between interpersonal behaviour and behaviour directed at organisations. They found that agreeableness predicts interpersonal CWB, whilst conscientiousness and neuroticism predict organisational CWB. Another meta-analysis (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007), found that conscientiousness was strongly negatively related with organisational CWB, agreeableness strongly negatively related to interpersonal CWB, and neuroticism strongly positively correlated with both organisational and interpersonal CWB.

Bowling and Eschelmen (2010) investigated the relationship between the above three personality traits and work performance, with the mediating factor of stressors. Their results support the above discussion, with negative relationships found between CWBs and conscientiousness and agreeableness, and a positive relationship between CWBs and neuroticism. The study also found that factors at work that caused stress in employees generated stronger relationships with CWBs for employees who were low in conscientiousness or high in neuroticism than those employees who were high in conscientiousness or low in neuroticism. Their proposed reasoning for this effect is that there

could be differences in coping styles between these employees. For example, when exposed to work stressors, the employees with low conscientiousness or high neuroticism may decide to engage in CWB such as avoidance by taking leave from work as a first response rather than considering other responses. Conversely, the employees high in conscientiousness or low in neuroticism use CWB as a last resort, only after other responses have been considered and put into practice. Bowling and Eschelman (2010) compare how these findings are consistent with research outside the workplace environment (Eaton & Bradley, 2008; Fickova, 2002; O'Brien & DeLongis, 1996; & Vollrath, Torgersen, & Alnaes, 1995), which suggests that individuals low on conscientiousness and high on neuroticism may have a lowered capacity for stress and ineffective coping strategies across different environments.

Jonason and O'Connor (2017) recently extended the CWB literature by investigating "corner-cutting" in the workplace using two studies. Cutting corners, or choosing to skip steps in a process for the purpose of completing the task with less effort and or time (Beck, Scholer, & Schmidt, 2016), is associated with low job performance (Sackett, 2002) and workplace injuries (Christian, Bradley, Wallace, & Burke, 2009; Halbesleben, 2010). They found that low conscientiousness consistently predicted corner-cutting behaviour across both studies. Individuals who were impulsive (a facet of the neuroticism trait) or who had low self-control (a facet of the conscientiousness trait) were more likely to engage in corner-cutting behaviour. They concluded that organisations should develop processes, particularly in the recruitment stage, to identify individuals who are more likely to cut corners in the workplace.

These findings have considerable implications for organisations and managers responsible for personnel selection. The incidence of work stressors in the work environment may pose a work-related risk for people with low conscientiousness or high neuroticism. This is particularly relevant for work environments and professions which are inherently stressful such as the disability field. CWB

loses businesses billions of dollars every year (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). Through introducing personality testing of potential employees, organisations may be able to reduce the incidence of CWB and protect against the flow-on effects to organisation productivity and customer service.

Dark Triad

A recently emerging area of interest is the malevolent aspects of personality and their relationship to CWB (Blickle & Schutte, 2017), specifically manipulation (Jonason, Slomski, & Partyka, 2012), sabotage, production deviance, withdrawal, abuse (Palmer et. al., 2017), and cutting corners (Jonason & O'Connor, 2017). Paulhus and Williams (2002) devised the term "Dark Triad" (DT) as encompassing the personality constructs of subclinical narcissism, subclinical psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. People with these traits are likely to be callous, selfish, and malevolent in their interpersonal relationships and interactions. The Short Dark Triad Questionnaire (Jones & Paulhus, 2014) measures these traits using three subscales consisting of nine items answered on a five-point scale, with answers ranging from "Disagree strongly" to "Strongly agree". Example items from the measure include "It's not wise to tell your secrets" [Machiavellianism item]; "People see me as a natural leader" [Narcissism item]; and "I like to get revenge on authorities" [Psychopathy item].

Links have been found between the Big Five and one or more of the DT traits, with consistent negative associations with agreeableness and conscientiousness (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985; Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006; Jonason, Koenig, & Tost, 2010; Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010; Jonason, Li, & Teicher 2010; Jonason & Webster, 2010; Miller et al., 2010; Nathanson, Paulhus, & Williams, 2006a; Nathanson, Paulhus, & Williams, 2006b; Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Williams et al., 2010). Jonason and O'Connor (2017) found that all three DT traits were significantly associated with higher likelihood of individuals cutting corners at work.

Two recent studies (O'Boyle, et. al., 2012; Palmer et. al., 2017) used the social exchange theory as a framework for investigating the impact of the DT on the workplace. When applied to the workplace, social exchange theory suggests that employees put in time and effort in return for direct and indirect rewards from the organisation such as pay, other material benefits, and status and recognition (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). Surrounding this exchange are further variables such as the extent to which the rewards are considered desirable, whether the exchange is judged as equal in terms of input and output, and the degree of commitment shown in the person-organisation relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

O'Boyle et al. (2012) found that all three DT traits were significantly associated with increased CWB, with the association for narcissism being unexpectedly large and the association for psychopathy being small. The study demonstrated how the DT accounts for a considerable portion of the variance in CWB, but the researchers recommended that more needs to be done to investigate how the DT operates when studied alongside other predictors of CWB. Palmer et al. (2017) built on this study by investigating the role of perceived organisational support (POS) on the relationship between the DT and CWB. They hypothesised that employee positive perception of their organisation's support for employees may inhibit any existing DT traits and therefore result in reduced CWB. POS is a measure of an organisation's commitment to its employees (Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), an employee's perception of an organisation's commitment to and valuing of them influences the employee's commitment to the organisation (Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Palmer et al. (2017) found that employees high in narcissism and psychopathy were more likely to engage in CWB, but this behaviour decreased when they perceived their organisation as supportive. A limitation of their study was the self-report measure of CWB. Whilst the measure was anonymous, potential for deception and bias remains.

There have been recent calls for the inclusion of sadism as a fourth trait of the DT, expanding the concept to the Dark Tetrad (Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014; Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus, 2013; Chabrol, Van Leeuwen, Rodgers, & Sejourne, 2009). Sadism, as measured by the Comprehensive Assessment of Sadistic Tendencies (CAST; Buckels & Paulhus, 2014) has been found to be moderately positively related with DT traits psychopathy and Machiavellianism, and negatively related to Big Five traits agreeableness (r= -.46, p < .001) and conscientiousness (r= -.28, p= .02) (Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus, 2013). The CAST is comprised of three subscales (Verbal, Physical, and Vicarious), totalling 18 items, which are rated on a 7-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Example items are "I was purposely mean to people in high school", "I enjoy physically hurting people", and "In video games, I enjoy the realistic blood spurts". Research has found that in two separate studies, sadism uniquely predicted behaviour, specifically, the decision to engage in harming behaviour, when controlling for overlap with the Dark Triad traits (Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus, 2013). Whilst research on this concept in relation to performance at work is in early stages, and clearly holds concerning ethical issues for study, the implications for organisations, particularly those with employees who care for vulnerable people, are vitally important.

Psychosocial safety in the human services industry

It has been identified that workers in caring professions, like the disability field, experience higher rates of burnout than many other professions (Schaufeli, 2003; Skirrow & Hatton, 2007). Early research discusses how workers in this field can find it hard to recognize any concrete results of achievement due to the complex nature of clients' behaviours and environments (Murgatroyd, 1985), and that they perceive their jobs as more stressful than other professions due to high investment of emotional energy (Corey, 1982; Kirkcaldy, Thome, & Thomas, 1989). Maslach et al. (2001) describe job burnout as being comprised of (1) overwhelming exhaustion where the person feels that their emotional and physical reserves are depleted (emotional exhaustion or EE), (2) depersonalisation (DP)

where the person feels detached from work and clients, and displays a pessimistic and callous attitude in the workplace, and (3) low personal accomplishment (PA), where the person feels their achievement capacity and productivity is lowered. Much research has focused on environmental predictors of burnout but individual factors also play an important role in an employee's susceptibility (Maslach et al., 2001). Depending on their personality traits, people perceive specific aspects of an event or interaction as more or less stressful, and will react differently (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Suls & Martin, 2005; Vollrath, 2001; Watson et al., 1999).

Research has shown low to moderate levels of each of the three burnout components in the Disability Support Worker (DSW) population (Alexander & Hegarty, 2000; Boumans & van den Berg, 2000; Chung & Corbett, 1998; Corbett, & Cumella, 1995; Lawson & O'Brien, 1994; Mitchell & Hastings, 2001; van Dierendonck, Schaufeli, & Buunk, 1996). Given that it becomes possible, due to burnout, that employees will provide a lower-quality service to their clients (Lawson & O'Brien, 1994; Rose et. al., 1998), it is important to investigate potential predictors of burnout and how the associated risk can be reduced. The five factor model has been used most widely in this research, as it has been agreed that these traits are sufficient to explain differences among individuals' psychological wellbeing (McCrae & Costa, 1991).

Research has found that employees scoring higher on the neuroticism trait are more likely to experience burnout (Vlerick, 2001; Zellars et al., 2000, 2004). Neuroticism positively predicts the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation components of burnout. One study examining employees working with people with intellectual disabilities found that high levels of neuroticism in employees was associated with high levels of employee-perceived stress (Rose et. al., 2003). These employees also reported the lowest levels of psychological well-being. Whilst burnout was not specifically studied, stress and wellbeing are related and are precursors to burnout (Hansung & Stoner, 2008; Lewandowski, 2003). Chung and Harding's (2009) study followed from Rose et al. (2003) and

aimed to further strengthen the link between DSW personality traits and burnout rather than stress generally. They found a positive relationship between neuroticism and burnout, with increased emotional exhaustion and decreased perception of personal accomplishment.

Findings have been contradictory regarding conscientiousness and burnout prediction. Burgess et al. (2010) found a positive relationship between conscientiousness and proactive behaviours such as planning and active coping, which therefore provides more control over the stressor. Conscientiousness has been shown to have a positive association with feelings of personal accomplishment (Deary et al., 1996, Deary et al. 2003; Piedmont, 1993). Chung and Harding (2009) and Deary et al. (2003) found a positive relationship between conscientiousness and the depersonalisation facet of burnout in DSWs and nurses. However, Zellars et al. (2006) found a negative relationship. Their research covered all facets of burnout, finding that higher levels of conscientiousness predicted lower levels of burnout generally in their nursing population. Research has also found that nurses who were low in agreeableness are especially susceptible to burnout (Burgess et al., 2010; Vlerick, 2001). Piedmont's (1993) study of therapists found a positive association between agreeableness and personal accomplishment and a negative association between agreeableness and emotional exhaustion. The third component of burnout, depersonalisation, has been found to have a negative association with agreeableness (Deary et al, 1996).

The implication from these findings is that personality traits predict burnout components in different ways (Zellars et al., 2000, 2004). Research findings have also been contradictory in regards to which personality traits predict the different burnout components. Neuroticism is the only trait that researchers agree is positively related to burnout. DSWs higher in neuroticism are therefore likely to be more at risk of experiencing burnout. DSWs high in conscientiousness may be more likely to experience higher levels of personal accomplishment. Finally, research suggests that DSWs high in agreeableness are less likely to experience burnout.

Employee personality in the Disability field

A pivotal role in the human services field is the Disability Support Worker (DSW), also known as the Disability Services Officer. Hewitt and Larson (2007) define the DSW role as supporting people with a disability to be fully included in their family, friend, and community networks. The role is broad; DSWs' responsibilities range from personal care work such as hygiene and continence management, through to transportation training, coordination of recreational activities, and linking with and accessing of other community resources. There is also a focus on documentation and keen observation of detail in all aspects of the role. DSWs are expected to work in accordance with the National Disability Standards and dignity in care principles (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006; Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). DSWs are required to make ethical judgments in their day to day work (O'Brien, 2002; Taylor et al., 1996) often without direct supervision.

A 2010 report published by the Australian National Institute of Labour Studies investigated various aspects of the community services sector workforce (Martin & Healy, 2010). The disability services sector was one of four sectors included in the research. At the time, it was estimated that over 58,000 employees provided direct support to people living with a disability, a role they termed 'non-professional worker'. This role included personal carers, home care workers, community care workers, and disability and residential support workers. They found that for non-professional jobs, where DSW was the predominant role, it took less than four weeks to fill over 70% of the most recent vacancies. This is higher than the average of 54% across the disability sector (including professional and manager positions). The report highlights an issue with recently hired employees' suitability. The surveyed disability providers indicated that they often hired disability workers who either did not have or only had minimal skills for the job. Of surveyed providers, 55% stated that recently hired disability workers were under-skilled. This was higher than other roles, with 22% and 26% of providers stating

the same for manager and administration roles, and professional roles, respectively. This shows a tolerance by providers to fill non-professional disability worker roles quickly, regardless of whether the applicant is entirely suitable for the role. The report highlighted a clear disparity between disability workers' perception of their skills and employer perception of workers' skills. Seven per cent of surveyed employees believed they did not have the skills to perform the job, whilst 55% of employers surveyed believed the disability workers were under-skilled. Conversely, 35% of disability support providers surveyed believed that some of their workers were over-skilled for the job.

There has been an increasing focus on interventions to improve the psychosocial outcomes of DSWs in recent years (McConachie, et al., 2014; Oorsouw, et al., 2014). A recent study of a population of DSWs (Kirby, et. al, 2014) found high levels of employee stress and bullying, reports of unsuitable people being hired for the DSW role, and evidence that some workers did not possess high enough emotional capacity to perform well in the DSW role. The study found that 43% of the DSWs surveyed reported experiencing high personal stress, and 34% reported experiencing high work-related stress, compared to 22% and 20% of the norm group, respectively. Significantly more (34%) DSWs reported experiencing bullying than the norm group (13%), and close to half of the respondents had witnessed bullying in their workplace.

In response to these findings, the researchers recommended that psychological testing be introduced in the employee selection process (Kirby, et. al., 2014). The Big Five traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness were named as desirable for future DSWs, as was emotional capacity, that is, low neuroticism. The psychological test used during recruitment identifies risk on different personality facets and generates questions to be asked in a second interview based on the risk classification. Early anecdotal evidence found that when the personality measure was implemented, there were several cases where the applicant's results meant they did not proceed to the next recruitment stage, where previously, without the measure, they would likely have been appointed. Managers participating in

the research felt that the introduction of the testing was useful in identifying and ruling out applicants who, if appointed, would have negative outcomes in the workplace. Potential negative outcomes identified were poor teamwork skills, low motivation, and low resilience leading to a higher likelihood of burnout and mental stress incidents. Further research is needed to evaluate the efficacy in terms of rated work performance and measures of absenteeism and work compensation claims as a result of the introduction of psychological testing of DSW applicants (Harries et al., 2015; Kirby, et al., 2015).

Conclusion

Ensuring suitable people are selected for specific roles is important for both employers and employees. Given the relationships demonstrated by studies of employee personality and work performance, particularly in relation to working with co-workers and clients, the inclusion of personality testing during the recruitment stage, in spite of the cost and additional time to administer, can result in significant improvements in worker productivity and reduced CWB. This is particularly salient for human services organisations with a primary purpose of supporting vulnerable people.

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Abstract

The relationship between personality and work performance has been widely researched, particularly in regards to the negative outcomes resulting from counterproductive work behaviour and burnout. To date, research has predominantly focused on studying personality and performance of workers concurrently. Furthermore, the literature base for personality and performance in the disability profession is small in comparison with other areas such as management and sales. Given the complexities associated with these caring roles, such as greater likelihood of experiencing burnout than many other professions, research in the area of disability support worker (DSW) selection, personality, and performance is needed. The current study investigated the efficacy of using a psychological measure assessing personality traits during the recruitment of DSWs. This study brings novelty to the literature due to the comparison of the performance of two groups of employees, recruited using different methodology, where prior research has generally studied one group of employees. The sample of 154 DSWs employed either prior to or after the use of psychological assessment in recruitment (pre-group = 85 and post-group = 69) was provided by an Australian disability organisation. Statistical analyses found that the group employed using the psychological assessment had significantly less sick leave and WorkCover claims and they were also rated as better performing employees on the majority of 19 work performance assessment items, with three of these differences being significant. The results support the use of personality measures for the recruitment of employees, resulting in better outcomes for the employees, clients, and the organisation.

Keywords: Big Five, conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, counterproductive work behaviour, Dark Triad, burnout, personality assessment, recruitment, disability workers, job performance.

Evaluating the effectiveness of psychological assessment in improving the recruitment of Disability Support Workers.

Extensive empirical research has found that individual differences in personality traits can predict and explain variability in employee performance at work (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hogan & Holland, 2003; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Salgado, 1997). Traits can predict the likelihood of employees engaging in counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) (Elliot, 2010; Hastings & O'Neill, 2009; Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Trevino, 2010;), their risk of experiencing burnout (Burgess, et al., 2010; Chung & Harding, 2009; Vlerick, 2001; Zellars et al., 2000, 2004), and rates of absenteeism (Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997). Given the negative outcomes associated with CWB and burnout for both individuals and organisations, there are important organisational, employee, and client-related interests in identifying people with higher potential for these issues prior to their employment. Conversely, personality traits can also be valid predictors of positive behaviour at work with respect to strengthening team cohesion and performance (Barrick et al., 1998; Kichuk & Wiesner, 1997; Neuman et al., 1999), communication (Mohammed & Angell, 2003), and task focus (Bond & Ng, 2004), a further compelling rationale for utilising personality assessments for the recruitment of new employees.

Research associated with the use of personality assessment and job performance has converged on the Big Five personality traits described in the Five Factor Model (FFM). These five traits: Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (sometimes referred to by its high pole of emotional stability), are referred to as global traits that have multiple facets (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Costa & McCrae, 1992). For example, a person high on conscientiousness will likely be disciplined, dependable, and act in accordance to rules and

expectations whereas a person low on conscientiousness will be more spontaneous, less reliable, and have lower regard for rules.

Organisations often write position descriptions with particular personality traits in mind. For example, disability worker position descriptions across Australia use words and phrases that can be linked to the Big Five personality traits. A search on job website Seek found position descriptions for Disability Support Workers (DSWs) with words and phrases such as 'embrace change', 'open minded', 'accepting and valuing diversity'- [openness to experience]; 'attention to detail', 'personal integrity', 'reliable character', 'documentation is timely and accurate', 'high level of commitment and responsibility'- [conscientiousness]; 'tactful', 'person-centred', 'collaborate', 'commitment to team-work', 'flexible', 'participates with "Can Do" attitude'- [agreeableness]; and 'ability to handle stressful and adverse situations', 'be able to manage own stress', 'remain calm during difficult situations', 'resilient in various challenging situations'- [neuroticism].

Conscientiousness, neuroticism, and agreeableness have been shown to be valid predictors of future work performance of employees (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick et al., 1998; Behling, 1998; Mount et al., 1998). Types of performance researched include team performance, where conscientiousness is positively related and neuroticism negatively related (Barrick et al., 1998; Kichuk & Wiesner, 1997; Neuman et al., 1999). Performance in roles involving interpersonal interaction, for example with co-workers and clients, is positively related to conscientiousness and agreeableness (Mount et al., 1998). However, the relative effectiveness of personality tests in recruitment can be dependent on the type of job (Barrick & Mount, 1991), indicating a need to validate their use for any particular type of job.

When compounded by inherently stressful work environments like that of disability work, traits can have greater influence on how individuals process and react to stress (Bowling & Eschelmen, 2010; Suls & Martin, 2005; Vollrath, 2001). This can be observed through instances of CWB (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007), and burnout (Rose et. al., 2003; Vlerick, 2001; Zellars et al., 2000, 2004). DSWs have been identified as more likely to experience burnout than many other professions, due to the high investment of emotional energy (Corey, 1982; Kirkcaldy, Thome, & Thomas, 1987, Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003; Skirrow & Hatton, 2007). DSWs with higher neuroticism are more at risk of experiencing all components of burnout (Vlerick, 2001; Zellars et al., 2000, 2004). Findings for the way other Big Five personality traits predict burnout have been mixed, but on the whole, researchers believe that DSWs high in conscientiousness and agreeableness are less likely to experience burnout (Burgess et al., 2010; Chung & Harding, 2009; Deary et al., 1996, Deary et al. 2003; Piedmont, 1993; Vlerick, 2001). Poor psychosocial outcomes such as burnout in DSWs are linked with poor quality of care for clients, absenteeism, turnover, and lower productivity (Dennis & Leach, 2007; Harvey & Burns, 1994; Lawson & O'Brien, 1994; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; VanYperen, 1995). These studies have been carried out with existing disability workers, whilst none that could be found on a search of the literature have examined predictive validity or comparisons between DSWs recruited with or without the use of personality assessment.

An investigation, commencing in 2013, was instigated by an Australian disability organisation following recognition of major psychosocial safety issues in their workplace (Kirby et al., 2014). The initial research project was led by researchers from the University of Adelaide and Flinders University and was funded by the SafeWork SA Commissioned Research Grant programme. The investigation found a range of causal factors proposed as contributing to DSW workplace injuries, both mental and physical. Participants outlined safety implications and benefits gained from ensuring suitable people are employed in the DSW role; for example, by ensuring the individuals employed have satisfactory emotional stability, thought to act as a protective factor against experiencing stress in the DSW role.

Other suggested benefits of personality assessment included greater team cohesion and a decline in CWB such as bullying and harassment (Kirby et al., 2014).

A second DSW research project (Kirby et al., 2015) followed the initial investigation with the aim of implementing the recommendations from the first project. Eight safety interventions were proposed for trial. One of these interventions was the introduction of psychological assessment, specifically personality testing, during the recruitment process. This intervention was targeted at particular psychosocial hazards that had been identified for DSWs, including: DSW stress, interpersonal conflict, poor communication between workers, and lack of appropriate teamwork in the workplace. Interestingly, psychological assessment using a personality test had previously been included in the recruitment process at the organisation. It had been judged by the organisation's psychologists conducting the assessments to be very effective in identifying suitable and unsuitable workers, although the relative effectiveness had not been formally evaluated. However, this personality-based assessment process ceased in 2007 following the reassignment of the psychologists to other roles.

The current study investigated the efficacy of the reintroduction of psychological assessment. The measure, developed by an Australian organisation specialising in pre-employment psychometric testing in human services organisations, has been in place for approximately two and a half years. Prior to this study's commencement, anecdotal reports from managers in the organisation have supported the reintroduction of psychological assessment. Managers believed it had led to the employment of people who are better suited to the DSW role, with resulting positive outcomes for the workplace such as decreased turnover, decreased interpersonal conflict, and better team cohesion. However, the researchers considered it important for the change to be formally investigated to better evaluate and understand its impact and to be able to make further recommendations.

The main aim of the reintroduction of psychological assessments for the recruitment of DSWs was to enable the disability organisation to identify and screen out applicants who were considered unsuited to the DSW job role, thereby improving organisational outcomes associated with health and safety and work performance. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of the psychological testing at improving the selection of workers, comparisons of health and safety outcomes and work performance were undertaken for DSWs employed prior to and after the use of psychological assessment in recruitment. With regard to these comparisons, it was hypothesised that there would be higher sick leave frequency and longer leave duration in the pre-testing group than the post-testing group, and higher frequency and duration of WorkCover claims in the pre-testing group than the post-testing group. It was further hypothesised that reintroducing psychological assessment would lead to better performing employees, as measured by manager ratings of employee work performance. A further aim of this evaluation was to determine the extent to which the psychological testing identified applicants considered suited to the DSW job role. This was completed by examining the relationship between the personality profile derived from the psychological assessment and the manager ratings on the work performance assessment for DSWs in the post-testing group. Finally, it was expected that managers interviewed would report on how workers selected using psychological assessment differed from those previously selected without the use of psychological assessment.

Method

The research methodology for this investigation involved three approaches: (1) a comparison of the work performance and health and safety outcomes for samples of DSWs employed prior to the introduction of psychological testing in recruitment with those employed subsequent to its use; (2) an investigation of the relationship between the personality profile derived from the psychological assessment and work performance of DSWs in the post-testing group; and (3) semi-structured

interviews with managers involved in DSW recruitment to establish whether the use of psychological testing results had improved DSW selection.

Participants

DSW participants: DSWs included in this research were employed by the Australian disability organisation involved in prior safety research projects discussed above. As the procedure for evaluating the use of personality testing in the recruitment of DSWs involved a comparison of DSWs employed before and after the reintroduction of psychological testing, the organisation was asked to provide two initial samples of 100 DSWs: (1) pre-psychological assessment group (pre-group), and (2) post-psychological assessment group (post-group). An email describing the research was distributed to DSWs by a senior manager, informing workers that they had an opportunity to "opt-out" of the research, whereby their individual data would not be included in the data sets. No such requests were received. The inclusion criteria for both samples was that the individuals were currently employed, and had worked for the organisation for a minimum of six months. The pre-group DSWs were employed between 2012 and 2014, meaning that no employee in this group was selected using the original personality measure that ceased being used in 2007. The post-group were employed from 2015 onward. Demographic data were not available for the pre-group. Demographic data were available for the post-group DSWs. Forty-nine per cent were female and 51% male. Post-group participant mean age was 39 years (SD=10). Thirty percent of post-group participants spoke a main language other than English.

Interview participants: Five females and four males participated in interviews regarding the reintroduction of psychological assessment. The selection process was restricted by the condition that participants needed to have had direct candidate interviewing experience in both the current recruitment process and the previous recruitment process. Their job roles included: Accommodation

Services Supervisor, Accommodation Services Manager, Acting Programme Manager, Acting Human Resources Manager, and Programme Coordinator.

Materials and Procedure

1. *Human resources data*

Human resources data pertaining to the DSWs' unplanned leave and WorkCover claims were provided for the pre- and post-groups. Leave without pay, sick leave, and sick leave pending WorkCover claim assessment were included in the absenteeism data. Absences due to study, pregnancy, or planned leave were not included in the data set. The timeframe for the leave data set and WorkCover data set was 18 months (1 Jan 2016 to 30 June 2017). The unplanned leave data set included 83 DSWs in the pre-group, and 56 DSWs in the post-group. The WorkCover claims data set included 14 DSWs in the pre-group, and 8 DSWs in the post-group.

2. *Worker Performance Assessments*

A senior manager at the disability organisation distributed the link for the online survey to managers and shift supervisors who had been identified as having direct experience managing or supervising the employees in the pre- and post-groups. The manager distributed the link via email along with the name and associated code of the employee they were to assess. The participant information sheet for managers and shift supervisors completing the survey was also attached to the email. Participants were able to complete the survey in their own time and remained anonymous.

Surveys were completed online via SurveyMonkey, which is survey development cloud-based software. The survey (Appendix 1) consisted of twenty-five questions, five of which related to information about the manager/shift supervisor completing the assessment and the DSW being

assessed (i.e. length of time supervising, position, assessment date). There were nine questions relating to employee knowledge and skills for the DSW role, four questions relating to employee motivation and reliability, and six questions relating to employee professional work behaviour. Items included: "Ability to learn and apply new skills" [knowledge and skills], "Reliability in terms of attendance at work, including arriving and leaving work" [motivation and reliability], and "Capacity to resolve work and personal issues with co-workers" [professional work behaviour].

The work performance questions had a 5-point Likert-scale response type. Responses could be: "Well above expectations (e.g. much more than is required for the job role)", "Above expectations (e.g. more than is required for the job role)", "Meets expectations (e.g. as required for the job role)", "Below expectations (e.g. below what is required for the job role)", "Well below expectations (e.g. well below what is required for the job role"), "Does not meet minimum expectations (e.g. inadequate for the job role)", "Don't know (i.e. no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)" and "Not Applicable". The survey also included opportunities for comments in free text fields after each section as well as a confidence assessment on the part of the manager/shift supervisor completing the survey. This asked how confident the person felt in their responses and the reason if they were 'somewhat' or 'not' confident.

Surveys were completed for 154 DSWs, 85 in the pre-group and 69 in the post-group. The average length of time the manager or shift supervisor completing the assessment had managed the DSW being assessed was 2.5 years (SD = 1.5 years) for the pre-group and 1 year (SD = 0.5 years) for the post-group. Assessments were excluded where a manager or shift supervisor indicated they were "Not Confident" in their assessment of an individual DSW. Assessments were also excluded where the manager or shift supervisor had managed the DSW for one month or less. This resulted in six surveys being excluded.

3. *Post-group Psychological Testing Profile*

Data were provided for the post-group employees' psychological testing at recruitment. The position of the assessment in the recruitment process was stage four, after the initial assessment of applications, phone interviews, and face-to-face interviews (which include literacy and numeracy assessment). The measure explores employee personality and has three clusters: "working with others", "work style", and "emotional control". These can arguably be linked on face validity with the Big Five traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism, respectively. Each section has multiple facets: Working with Others includes Anger management, Empathy/Other Person Focussed, Friendliness, and Humility; Work Style includes Conscientiousness, Follow rules, Integrity, Positive work attitudes, and Tolerate routine work; whilst Emotional Control includes Calmness, Emotional stability, Maturity, Patience, and Self-confidence. There are also Candid Responding and Consistent Responding facets. On completion, a risk score is generated for each of the sixteen facets, with those scoring within the range chosen by the organisation proceeding to a final interview. The risk scores range from 1-10, with 1-3 indicating "More Risk", 4-7 indicating "Average Risk", and 8-10 indicating "Less Risk". Questions for both the final interview and for referee checking are informed by the applicant's responses and risk profile on the psychological assessment.

4. *Manager interviews*

Nine managers participated in the interview process. The interviews were comprised of eight questions (Appendix 2), and completion took on average twenty minutes. The interviews were conducted over the phone, with participants first receiving a copy of the information and consent sheet. The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder. The researcher then transcribed these into Microsoft Word. Participants were asked about the use and consequences of personality testing in the recruitment process, particularly in regards to the identification of suitable or unsuitable candidates. Participants were given the opportunity to add any additional information at the end of

the interview. Thematic analysis was conducted with the interview transcriptions. This involved coding

the data corpus to identify themes. The data and coding were reviewed by an independent third party.

Agreement at or above 80% on the classification of data into themes was reached for all decisions.

All DSW data was coded numerically for confidentiality prior to the data being provided to the

researchers. Interviewee transcripts were also de-identified. Participation in this study was on a

voluntary basis, and participants were not compensated.

It should be noted that the organisation participating in this research was undergoing some

of the most significant change in its history. The National Disability Insurance Scheme in Australia was

rolling out across the sector with changes needing to be made at all levels of the organisation. A few

managers mentioned this transition during interviews in the context of future planning for employee

skills and teams. The immensely busy time at which the research was taking place in the organisation

may have impacted on the amount of data collected, such as less managers available for interviewing,

and less online surveys completed than under more normal circumstances.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 23. Measures were tested for

violations to assumptions of normality and internal reliability. Many variables demonstrated skewed

distributions or non-normal kurtosis. This was not unexpected given the nature of the work

performance assessment and psychological assessment measures, with the majority of employees

being assessed as being mostly middle risk and middle to high performance. Bootstrapping (using the

bias-corrected and accelerated method with 1000 iterations) was used when conducting analyses with

these variables.

Analyses of the differences between pre- and post-groups with unplanned leave, WorkCover claims, and manager ratings of performance were conducted using chi square tests and independent samples t-tests. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d for significant differences. Correlations were used to investigate the relationships between the recruitment psychological assessment scores and the managerial performance assessment ratings of these employees.

Ethics

Approval to conduct this research was formally granted by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee. The disability organisation involved also provided ethics approval for the study.

Results

Human Resources data

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the pre- and post-group human resources data associated with unplanned leave. Prior to undertaking any analyses, the sick leave data was pro-rated to account for differences between employee length of employment. The hypothesis that the pre-group would have higher amounts of sick leave than the post-group was supported using an independent samples t-test, t(152) = 3.814, $p < 0.001$. The effect size was medium r = .30. As can be seen in Table 1, there were differences between the average number of days lost due to a WorkCover claim, and the total number of days lost due to WorkCover claims in the same 18-month timeframe for the pre- and post-groups, however, these differences were not significant.

Table 1.

Reported amounts of unplanned leave, sick leave, and WorkCover claims for the pre-group and the post-group.

	Pre-Group (n=83)				Post-Group (n=56)			
	Mean	SD	Range	Total	Mean	SD	Range	Total
Pro-Rated Unplanned Leave	18.77	11.39	0 - 63	807	13.59	12.79	0 - 55	476
Pro-Rated Sick Leave	14.23	6.38	0 - 30	612	9.44	7.17	0 - 26	330
	Pre-Group (n=14)				Post-Group (n=8)			
Leave due to a WorkCover Claim	33	45	0- 125	458	17	20	0 - 58	134

Note. Figures for mean, std. deviation, range and total are for *days absent from work*.

Work Performance Assessment data

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for the pre- and post-groups for the work performance data obtained for DSWs from their managers/shift supervisors. As can be seen, and as hypothesised, the mean scores for the post-group were higher than those of the pre-group on 14 of the 19 work performance items. The post-group also had a higher overall mean performance assessment rating when totalling ratings for all nineteen items than the pre-group. This difference remained when the questions were grouped into "Person-oriented" and "Task-oriented" categories, with the pre-group having a lower score overall than the post-group in both categories.

Table 2.

Pre-group and post-group descriptives for the work performance assessment items in Person-oriented and Task-oriented categories.

Work Performance Assessment Item	Pre-group (n = 85)		Post-group (n = 69)	
	Mean (SD)	Range	Mean (SD)	Range
Person-oriented work performance questions				
Capacity to cope with emotional job demands	3.14 (0.58)	2 - 5	3.24 (0.78)	1 - 5
Capacity to recover from stress-related incidents at work	3.16 (0.67)	1 - 5	3.25 (0.67)	2 - 5
Capacity to resolve work and personal issues with co-workers	3.00 (0.67)	1 - 5	3.17 (0.75)	2 - 5
Empathy towards the feelings of the people they support	3.43 (0.57)	2 - 5	3.55 (0.65)	3 - 5
Contribution to a positive team culture	3.41 (0.62)	2 - 5	3.44 (0.80)	2 - 5
Willingness to seek assistance if needed	3.45 (0.67)	2 - 5	3.52 (0.74)	2 - 5
Professional conduct towards clients	3.49 (0.65)	2 - 5	3.55 (0.68)	3 - 5
Professional conduct towards co-workers	3.35 (0.63)	2 - 5	3.44 (0.74)	2 - 5
Professional conduct towards managers	3.41 (0.64)	2 - 5	3.48 (0.68)	2 - 5
Total person-oriented performance rating	3.34 (0.51)	1 - 5	3.41 (0.62)	1 - 5
Task-oriented category				
Knowledge and skills for the job	3.33 (0.61)	2 - 5	3.33 (0.63)	2 - 5
Verbal communication skills	3.27 (0.68)	2 - 5	3.51 (0.66)	2 - 5
Ability to learn and apply new skills	3.33 (0.68)	2 - 5	3.51 (0.66)	2 - 5
Capacity to cope with physical job demands	3.31 (0.58)	2 - 5	3.32 (0.72)	2 - 5
Capacity to support clients with diff. types & levels of disability	3.37 (0.61)	2 - 5	3.40 (0.70)	2 - 5
Capacity to deal with critical situations	3.25 (0.64)	2 - 5	3.18 (0.76)	2 - 5
Level of interest and motivation in their job	3.42 (0.68)	1 - 5	3.51 (0.66)	2 - 5

Reliability in terms of attendance at work	3.49 (0.63)	2 - 5	3.44 (0.76)	2 - 5
Reliability in terms of completing job tasks	3.41 (0.54)	3 - 5	3.36 (0.71)	2 - 5
Reliability in following procedure and instructions	3.35 (0.61)	2 - 5	3.35 (0.68)	2 - 5
Total task-oriented performance rating	3.34 (0.48)	1 - 5	3.37 (0.58)	2 - 5
Total work performance assessment rating	62.56 (10.45)	1 - 5	63.33 (11.89)	1 - 5

Using independent samples t-tests, there were two significant findings for differences between the pre- and post-group manager ratings of performance shown in Table 2. The post-group had significantly higher managerial ratings of performance for "Empathy for the feelings of the people they support" than the pre-group. This difference was significant t (82) = -1.423, $p < .05$. The post-group also had significantly higher managerial ratings of performance for "Client Interactions", where managers were asked to rate the employee as to how well they "get on with, and act professionally towards their clients (for example, are they cooperative, helpful and courteous in their use of language)". This difference was significant t(82) = -1.423, $p < .05$. The effect size was small for both findings at $r = .15$. Bootstrapping was used in these independent samples t-tests and the ratings were grouped into "Acceptable" (rated Well Above, Above, or Meets Expectations) and "Unacceptable" (rated Well Below and Below Expectations) categories.

Both significant differences occurred on aspects of work performance that were important in the personality assessment and interviews. However, in view of the finding that the mean scores for the post-group were higher on the majority of the work performance questions but only two mean differences were significant, additional between group comparisons were undertaken to compare frequencies of acceptable and unacceptable ratings for each of the work performance assessment questions. The work performance data for the nineteen items were considered using chi square by

categorising the ratings into the "Acceptable" or "Not Acceptable" categories as described above, and two significant findings were obtained. In particular, the post-group had significantly higher ratings on "Ability to learn new skills", X^2 (1) = 3.863, $p < 0.05$ and there was also an unexpected finding that the pre-group had higher managerial ratings of performance on "Reliability at completing job tasks" (X^2 (3) = 8.560, $p < 0.05$).

A better understanding of the pattern of ratings underlying the higher mean scores for the post-group can be obtained from visual inspection of the rating distributions for pre- and post-groups. As expected with measures of work performance, the data was positively skewed with more above than below average ratings. However, the data showed patterns that supported the favourable performance of DSWs in the post-group. Figure 1 shows that the post-group had a higher proportion of "Well Above Expectations" ratings than the pre-group on all 19 performance assessment items.
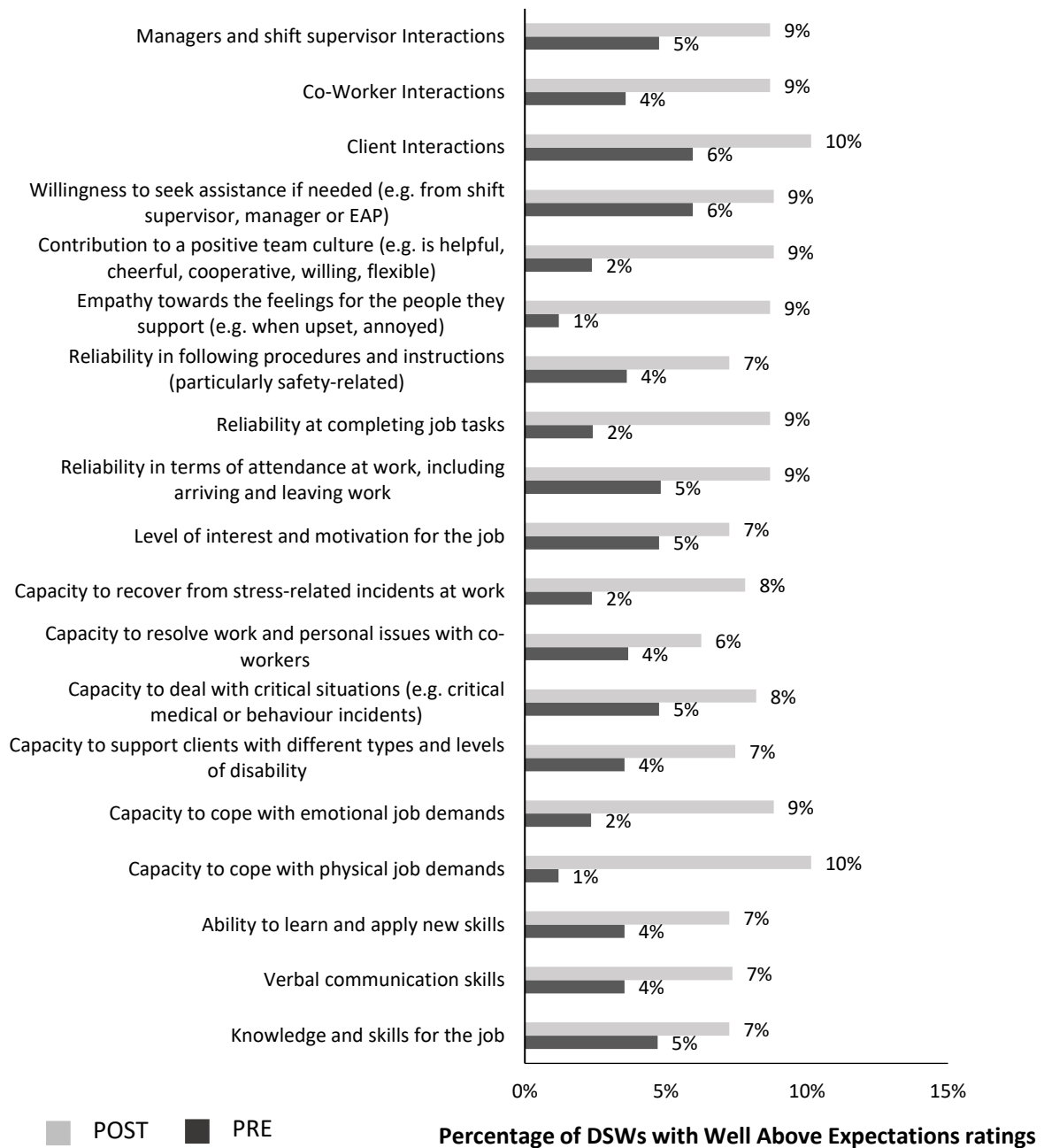
Figure 1.

Proportion of pre and post-group rated "Well Above Expectations" on the work performance assessment items.

Managers had an opportunity to comment on employee performance using free-text fields in the work performance assessment. Three common employee behaviours mentioned in the pre-group's manager comments were manipulation, negative interpersonal interactions, and poor communication. "Emotional blackmail" was mentioned twice, with one manager stating that another employee "Makes life complicated...knows how to push [supervisors'] buttons". No negative comments were made about employees in the post-group.

Post-group Psychological Assessment data

Analysis of the psychological assessment recruitment data of post-group employees was conducted to understand the relationship with work performance. The psychological assessment used during recruitment has a risk scale from 1-10 with lower scores of 1-3 classified as "More Risk", scores 4-7 classified as "Average Risk" and scores 8-10 classified as "Less Risk". Table 3 shows the psychological assessment items and the number of post-group employees assessed as falling in the risk categories. It can be seen in table 3 that most employees were in the average risk category and that in 12 of the 16 personality items there were more employees in the "Less Risk" category than the "More Risk" category. It can also be seen that of the 69 employees, there were less than 10 in the "More Risk" category in all but one of the 16 personality facets. The Empathy/Other Person Focussed facet had 12 employees in the "More Risk" category. This result may be due to the personality assessment being highly sensitive to any empathy issues, given that the measure was designed specifically for human services professionals.

Table 3.

Profile of risk classifications for each of the 16 personality facets from the psychological assessment of post-group employees completed during recruitment.

	Risk Classifications		
Risk Item	Less	Average	More
Candid Responding	9	53	7
Consistent Responding	0	61	8
Calmness	13	47	9
Anger Management	0	68	1
Emotional Stability	17	45	7
Maturity	19	46	4
Self Confidence	16	47	6
Patience	23	43	3
Empathy/Other Person Focussed	14	43	12
Friendliness	18	43	8
Humility	0	65	4
Conscientiousness	15	51	3
Follows Rules	10	58	1
Integrity	0	66	3
Positive Work Attitudes	12	51	6
Tolerates Routine Work	11	51	7

Correlations between the 19 work performance measures and risk scores showed significant correlations between the Patience Risk score and the "Contribution to positive team culture" ($r= 0.200$, $p < 0.05$) and "Level of interest and motivation for the job" ($r = 0.250$, $p < 0.05$) items from the performance assessment. This means that post-group employees who were rated during recruitment

as being more patient were then more likely to be rated highly by their manager in regards to their engagement at work and contribution to their team.

With respect to the sick leave and WorkCover claim data, there were significant correlations between the amount of "Sick Leave pending WorkCover claim" and the Calmness Risk score (-0.215, $p < 0.05$) and Emotional Stability Risk score (-0.215, $p < 0.05$). This means that post-group employees who were assessed as a higher risk on these facets, which fall under the Emotional Control section of the psychological assessment, were more likely to go on to have higher sick leave due to a WorkCover claim. Unfortunately, there was no data available as to the nature, physical or mental, of the WorkCover claim for each individual. Finally, there was a significant correlation between the amount of "Sick Leave pending WorkCover claim" and the Tolerates Routine Work Risk score (-0.223, $p < 0.05$) indicating that those assessed as a higher risk with respect to tolerating routine were more likely to have higher sick leave resulting from a WorkCover claim.

Manager views on psychological testing

As expected, managers reported in their interview comments that the reintroduction of psychological assessment had led to the recruitment of more suitable employees. From the eight questions asked regarding if and how psychological testing had affected the type of people employed, five major themes were identified through thematic analysis of the transcripts of manager interviews. Table 4 in the Appendices provides greater detail around the themes, subthemes and participant quotes.

Theme 1. More thorough and informative recruitment process

One of the most prevalent threads through the narratives of all participants was that the reintroduction of psychological testing during recruitment had made the process more thorough, enabling interviewers to gain a deeper understanding of the candidates' responses and motives. All participants felt that the psychological testing provided a much-needed, more stringent step for candidates following the first interview. They reported that the psychological testing and the following interview based on the test results meant that applicants who may likely have been employed following the first interview (in the old recruitment process) were not employed based on the results and second interview. One participant reported that:

"People could give you the right answers, what you want to hear, but when it comes to the psychometric that sorts them out a bit better…Better guide about what the person is thinking not what the person is saying".

Another interviewee commented:

"People have shone in initial interviewing but in the psychometric process have actually been quite scary. Quite odd."

Theme 2. Suitability; Workers who want to be here and are a good fit

All participants indicated that the process has led to "better" or more "suitable" workers. Managers discussed how it was important to find DSWs who wanted to be in the role for the right reasons. According to one interviewee it was important to know:

"Are they applying for it because it's a job or because they want to get something out of it".

Three subthemes within the suitability theme were

1) The process is producing a higher calibre of final applicant who wants to be there,

2) The use of psychological assessment has led to an overall improvement in the general workforce, with less people being "high risk", and

3) There has been a reduction in turnover as a result of employing more suitable workers. One participant summarised this by reporting:

"since the psychological testing, we get a better quality of people starting with us. Gut feeling is that the retention rate is the highest it's ever been…".

Theme 3. Impact on team/environment

What makes a candidate "suitable" was described by all participants with a common theme of contributing to a positive team culture and work environment. Managers discussed the impact that an unsuitable worker could have in a group home environment, such as those with "lack of empathy", and that psychological testing was good at identifying these people. One participant also discussed how:

"If they're not a team player and not willing to go along with the general plan then that could be just as bad as someone not being compassionate but being a team player".

Another person discussed how the assessment identified the importance of team cohesion:

"You might have a person who might like to follow the program, and a person who doesn't. Leads to conflict between workers. Have had a couple of circumstances lately where that has happened. These particular workers hadn't been through that testing [psychological testing]."

Recurring traits and facets discussed by participants included hostility, altruism, patience, conscientiousness, compassionate, self-centeredness, stubbornness and flexibility. Managers also frequently highlighted the importance of candidates being team players.

Theme 4. Room for improvement

Three participants mentioned that the psychological testing wasn't "fail safe" or "foolproof", citing instances where people who have been employed following the testing have then gone on to struggle in the work environment. Reliance on gut instinct was also discussed, even if assessment results demonstrated the person was not a high risk. A couple of participants felt that there had been times where the assessment had eliminated people who would have been suitable DSWs, but the risk assessment had not reflected this. One participant commented:

"Still are some cracks that allow people to slip through- bad people let through and exclude good people who should get a job".

These instances were minimal, however, and participants who contributed to this theme overwhelmingly reported that the process was better and had resulted in more suitable employees.

Theme 5. Characteristics of unsuitable employees

Managers observed that the reintroduction of psychological testing has led to less hostility and more compliance in workers. Several managers also mentioned the importance of flexibility rather than stubbornness as well as the importance of being happy to do what is asked, even if it is outside the job description. This could be argued as being representative of the compliance and modesty personality facets. Interviewed managers have also attributed the reintroduction of psychological testing with a decrease in people who would likely be low on conscientiousness. Anecdotal evidence of this is the comment from one manager that:

"...people who are stubborn and set in their ways in how they do things so they're not flexible in their work ethic. I've found that those are the things that have stared out to me when doing it [psychological testing]. Better at identifying those types of people."

Another manager commented on:

"people who aren't willing to do reasonable work and follow reasonable instructions… Most definitely less of that personality type getting through".

Hostility towards management was commented on by participants with one describing:

"defiant people get identified really easy. It knocks them out. It highlights those sorts of traits", whilst another person commented that the assessment "Highlights people who have defiant attitudes to management. When you work in this field you've got to have a 'can do' attitude. Behaviour like that has a very negative impact".

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the efficacy of the reintroduction of psychological assessment in the recruitment process at an Australian disability organisation. Efficacy was judged to be the recruitment of more suitable Disability Support Workers, with suitability being shown by decreased amount of WorkCover claims, decreased amount of unplanned leave, and higher manager ratings of performance of employees who underwent psychological assessment during recruitment.

The main aim of the reintroduction of psychological testing was to identify a minority of individuals who are not suited to work as DSWs and the results of this study provide support for this in terms of significantly reduced sick leave and less WorkCover claims, although the latter result was not statistically significant. The results also showed that psychological testing was successful in selecting workers who were higher on most work performance measures and significantly so for the work performance ratings related to interpersonal empathy and client interactions, both important characteristics for DSWs. Interestingly, the results suggested that psychological testing during recruitment was successful in identifying employees who were then more likely to be rated very highly on their work performance.

The validity of the psychological risk assessment ratings was also demonstrated by significant positive relationships between lower risk and higher ratings on three measures of work performance.

The comments from managers concerning negative personal characteristics of employees point to the potential existence of "Dark Triad" traits in some pre-group employees, particularly when viewed in light of the managers' poor ratings of these same employees on the empathy, interpersonal interactions, and team culture items. It is important to note that there was not the same negative commentary and ratings concerning the post-group.

The Dark Triad traits share the features of egocentricity, manipulation, and callousness (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006; Jones & Figueredo, 2013). These can be seen explicitly in managers' comments such as: "uses emotional blackmail to get own way"; "knows how to push their buttons"; "always knows best", and "too stern with clients". The potential importance of identifying Dark Triad traits is that they have been found to be linked with counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) (DeShong, et al., 2015; O'Boyle et al., 2012).

DeShong et al (2015) completed an exploratory analysis to evaluate whether the facets of agreeableness and conscientiousness predict CWB. They found that compliance negatively predicts interpersonal CWB, and modesty and achievement striving negatively predict organisational CWB. Similar research has found that conscientiousness negatively predicts engaging in CWB (Bowling, 2010) and cutting corners at work (Jonason & O'Connor, 2017). The comments consistent with there being Dark Triad characteristics amongst workers in the pre-group suggests that future research could investigate the possibility of explicitly trying to identify such characteristics during recruitment, with the aim of measuring and reducing CWB.

One of the limitations of this study is that some of the work performance assessment questions could favour employees who had worked for a greater length of time than others, and this might explain why ratings of "reliability at performing job tasks" were significantly higher in the pre-group who had been working on average longer than the employees in the post-group. Managers would have been more familiar with the pre-group employees that they were rating, and these employees would be more familiar with the job tasks required, and therefore more likely to be reliable at completing these tasks.

Given that one aim of psychological testing during recruitment was to identify a minority of applicants who would be unsuited to work as a DSW and contribute to sick leave and WorkCover claims if they were hired, studies with larger sample sizes may be required to achieve more statistically significant results.

Ratings of work performance were subjective, and may have been subject to bias, as managers were aware that the study was evaluating the use of psychological testing in recruitment and they may have known which employees were employed before and after the test was introduced. However, the fact that there were only three significant differences between the groups on the 19 work performance items suggests that there was no marked bias in their work performance evaluations. There was unlikely to be any reluctance to rate employees negatively given that managers were aware that both they and the employee would not be identified in the results.

A problem with trying to detect work performance differences between two groups is that most employees are likely to be rated using the middle category of "Meets Expectations" rather than "Above" or "Well Above" or "Below" or "Well Below Expectations". Using a rating scale with categories such as "Slightly Above" or "Slightly Below" may have resulted in less use of the middle category.

The findings have a number of implications. The results provide support for the continued use of psychological assessment in the recruitment process at the disability organisation. The differences between pre- and post-groups suggest that the measure has led to both less employees who are unsuited to work as DSWs being hired and more employees with suitable and desired personality traits being employed in the DSW role. This is supported by managerial ratings of work performance, manager comments and interviews, and in the sick leave and WorkCover claim data. People who have been employed following the psychological assessment were considered more likely to be empathic, communicate well, and have more positive interactions with clients and their team. They were also less likely to take sick leave, and some evidence suggesting less WorkCover claims. The timeframe over which the study was conducted was limited and a follow-up study is needed to investigate whether the positive outcomes of psychological testing are maintained over a more extended period of time.

The future of Australia's disability organisations will be greatly influenced by the people employed in the Disability Support Worker role. It is essential for organisations to recognise the importance of selecting the best-suited people for the work and to avoid selecting people who are not suitable. Having better-suited workers will result in more engaged, better performing, and more productive workers and teams, which is then likely to result in less burnout, sick leave, WorkCover claims and counterproductive work behaviour. This will result in people with disabilities receiving better care and having better relationships with their support provider. The result for disability organisations will be the provision of more effective and efficient services and improved outcomes for people with disabilities.

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Last updated 11 February 2016.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Disability Support Worker Performance Assessment

This survey has been developed to assist with an evaluation of recruitment processes at Disability Services. You are asked to complete this brief survey for the Disability Support Worker named in the email.

Position of Manager conducting assessment:……………..……………………………………………………..

Disability Support Worker Code (provided in request email): ………………………………………………….

Classification of Disability Support Worker……………………………………………………………………..

Approx. length of time supervising Disability Support Worker:……………..…………………………………..

Date of this assessment ………………………………………………………………………………………

1. How would you rate this employee's knowledge and skills for this job?

□ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

□ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

□ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

□ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

□ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

□ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

□ Not applicable

2. How would you rate this employee's verbal communication skills?

□ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

□ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

□ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

□ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

□ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

□ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

□ Not applicable

3. How would you rate this employee's ability to learn and apply new skills?

□ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

4. How would you rate this employee's capacity to cope with physical job demands?

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

5. How would you rate this employee's capacity to cope with emotional job demands?

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

6. How would you rate this employee's capacity to support clients with different types and levels of disability?

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

7. How would you rate this employee's capacity to deal with critical situations (e.g. critical medical or behaviour incidents)?

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

8. How would you rate this employee's capacity to resolve work and personal issues with co-workers?

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

9. How would you rate this employee's capacity to recover from stress-related incidents at work?

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT AND JOB PERFORMANCE

Comments (please comment on the employee's work-related abilities)

10. How would you rate this employee's level of Interest and motivation in their job?

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

11. How would you rate this employee's reliability in terms of their attendance at work (including arriving at, and leaving work)?

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

12. How would you rate this employee's reliability in terms of completing job tasks?

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

13. How would you rate this employee's reliability in following proper procedure and instructions (particularly safety-related)?

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

Comments (please comment on the employee's work motivation and reliability)

14. Please indicate the extent to which the person shows empathy towards the feelings of the people they support (for example, shows understanding when they are upset, annoyed or complain):

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

15. Please indicate how you would rate this employee's contribution to a positive team culture

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

16. Please rate this employee's willingness to seek assistance if needed (e.g. from shift supervisor, manager or EAP)

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

17. Please indicate how well this employee gets on with, and acts professionally towards, their <u>clients</u> (for example, are they cooperative, helpful and courteous in their use of language):

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

18. Please indicate how well this employee gets on with, and acts professionally towards, their <u>co-workers</u> (for example, are they cooperative, helpful and courteous in their use of language):

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

19. Please indicate how well this employee gets on with, and acts professionally towards, their <u>managers</u> (for example, are they cooperative, helpful and courteous in their use of language):

☐ Well above expectations *(for example, much more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Above expectations *(for example, more than is required for the job role)*

☐ Meets expectations *(for example, as required for the job role)*

☐ Below expectations *(for example, below what is required for the job role)*

☐ Does not meet minimum expectations *(for example, inadequate for the job role)*

☐ Don't know *(for example, no opportunity to observe or too soon to judge)*

☐ Not applicable

20. How confident are you of your assessment (based on a reasonable amount of hours worked, opportunity to observe, feedback from clients and team etc).

☐ I am very confident of my assessment

☐ I am somewhat confident of my assessment

☐ I am <u>not</u> confident of my assessment

Please indicate reasons for being somewhat or not confident in your assessment

…………..………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for completing this assessment.

Appendix 2.

Interview questions for managers regarding the reintroduction of psychological assessment.

1. How long were you involved in personnel selection of Disability Support Workers <u>before</u> the introduction of psychological screening?

2. How long have you been involved in personnel selection of Disability Support Workers <u>after</u> the introduction of psychological screening?

3. What has been your role(s) in the assessment process before and after the introduction of psychological screening? (e.g. test administrator, interviewer, designing the assessment protocol)

4. Has the introduction of psychological screening affected decisions made about who is selected to be a Disability Support Worker? If yes, what effects have there been?

5. If the answer to question 4 is that it identifies those suited or not suited to work as a Disability Support Worker: 1) which particular critical personality characteristics does psychological screening help to identify?, 2) what are the anticipated behaviours associated with those personality characteristics?, and 3) approximately what percentage of applicants have had their selection decision altered as a result of psychological screening?

6. Apart from the introduction of psychological screening, has any other aspect of the personnel selection procedure changed since psychological screening was introduced? If yes, what has changed? (e.g. what were the steps in the procedure before psychological screening and what were the steps afterwards?)

7. How could the current personnel selection process be further improved?

8. Do you think some type of psychological screening like this would be useful for selecting supervisors and managers? If yes or no, why?

Table 4.

Thematic analysis of managers' interviews: themes, subthemes, and quotes.

Theme	Subtheme(s)	Participant Quotes
1. More thorough and informative recruitment process	Delving deeper into participants' motivators Eliminating more people than previous process Solid data to use when making employment decisions Candidates would struggle to "fake good" in the longer interview	*"Previously it was based on chemistry, now you actually have ratings and there's more questions for a particular quality."* (Interview: Participant 1, 2017) *"The info they're holding in that first interview doesn't come out but delving deeper it comes out."* (Interview: Participant 4, 2017) *"I do think it's made a difference, certainly it's more stringent and we're not necessarily employing the person who's come through the first part of the process (initial interview)."* (Interview: Participant 5, 2017) *"Better guide about what the person is thinking not what the person is saying."* (Interview: Participant 6, 2017) *"Prior to (psychological testing), I believe that interviewing - we could only ask questions as they were written, couldn't delve further. What I see now with psychological testing, there's scope to delve further and leeway about what someone actually meant."* (Interview: Participant 8, 2017)

2. Suitability; Workers who want to be here and are a good fit	Employees who want to be there	*"I think we've got a better calibre of worker since we've done the psychological testing."* (Interview: Participant 2, 2017)
	Reduced risk in the general workforce	*"There's been less of those people now in the workforce who you think are a high risk."* (Interview: Participant 7, 2017).
	Reduction in turnover: Employing better suited people has led to less people leaving	*"The way my experience has been we've been able to filter out unsuitable candidates... psychometric testing goes that bit deeper. Can definitely judge a person's suitability."* (Interview: Participant 4, 2017).
		"...there are some people in the past who were here because it was a job, so I think it allows us to wean some of those out. Some of those questions you're able to ascertain whether they care or whether it's just a job. I think they're better support workers. They're better suited to the role...You're starting to get more people with specific traits that you want. People that actually want the type of work- support work." (Interview: Participant 3, 2017).
		"Attrition rate back then (years ago when started) was 90% over 3 months, and at one point 104% per annum, losing more people than gaining." (Interview: Participant 6, 2017)
		"Gut feeling is that the retention rate is the highest it's ever been." (Interview: Participant 5, 2017)

| 3. Impact on team/environment | Importance of team cohesion

Willingness to work hard and follow rules | *"For instance, if someone was lazy or did the minimal amount of work. That would certainly impact on the clients and there would be an assumption that people wouldn't use their initiative and get out and do things with people. One of them I'm thinking- one* [a candidate] *was easily bored with routine stuff. Some of the people we support have strong routines. If a worker was to come through not really liking that, the day to day stuff, people wouldn't be motivated to look past that."* (Interview: Participant 8, 2017).

"You might have a person who might like to follow the program, and a person who doesn't. Leads to conflict between workers. Have had a couple of circumstances lately where that has happened. These particular workers hadn't been through that testing [psychological testing].*"* (Interview: Participant 5, 2017).

"...with PT interviewing, we both agreed that the testing was spot on. Concerns raised were just right. Picked up that the person was self-centred, arrogant, didn't want to work in a team. These were all spot on." (Interview: Participant 7, 2017).

"Being flexible, being a team player, you could have most compassionate person but if they're not a team player and not willing to go along with the general plan then that could be just as bad as |

		someone not being compassionate but being a team player". (Interview: Participant 6, 2017)
4. Room for improvement	People being employed following psychological testing that have had issues in the workplace	*"Nothing is foolproof though. You might see someone down the track that I've known has come through interviews and you see they're not coping so well and they've been missed in the process."* (Interview: Participant 9, 2017)
	People not being employed following psychological testing that "should have been"	*"Still are some cracks that allow people to slip through- bad people let through and exclude good people who should get a job."* (Interview: Participant 7, 2017)
	Interviewer gut instinct	*"We interviewed a man some time ago and he had left the workforce to care for his aging parents and a lot of follow up questions related back to this. The way the questions were skewed, he couldn't get a job. He didn't pass the interview. If the questions could be asked differently he would have gotten through. He did a placement in my team and was* excellent. *But, because he'd been out of the workforce for a long time he ended up being eliminated."* (Interview: Participant 7, 2017)
		"Sometimes you have a gut instinct, even if someone gets 4/5 or 3/3, where you think something isn't right." (Interview: Participant 9, 2017)
5. Identifying characteristics of unsuitable employees	Importance of flexibility and a positive attitude	*"Highlights people who have defiant attitudes to management. When you work in this field you've got to have a 'can do' attitude. Behaviour like*

		that has a very negative impact. You get a lot of gossiping. People who aren't willing to do reasonable work and follow reasonable instructions. Most definitely less of that personality type getting through." (Interview: Participant 7, 2017). *"...people who are stubborn and set in their ways in how they do things so they're not flexible in their work ethic. I've found that those are the things that have stared out to me when doing it [psychological testing]. Better at identifying those types of people."* (Interview: Participant 2, 2017). *"It's bringing out people's...tolerance in dealing with behaviours, difficult clients. Patience. Sometimes the psychological testing nuts that out in the person."* (Interview: Participant, 9, 2017).