

The Effect of Demography in Assessment Center: Does Similarity Make a Difference?

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Abstract

Researchers have long demonstrated that demographic characteristic would influence evaluative processes in the workplace. Recent research has argued that it is not the individual demographics but the resultant force from the pair/group that counts. Tsui and O'Reily (1989) have used "relational demography" to frame the phenomenon referring to the comparative demographics of members in the interaction. Intentionally or unintentionally, individuals tend to favor those perceived as similar to them. However, in the Chinese culture where self-effacement is prevalent, the emphasis of modesty and humbleness may suppress individuals from evaluating the ingroup as superior.

The present study explored the effects of demographic similarity and self-effacement in assessment centers (ACs). In particular, we investigated whether similarities in gender and race between the assessors and the assesseees would bias the assessment ratings. Case study approach was adopted using naturalistic data collected from a commercial corporation. We found evidence supporting both the effects of demographic similarity and self-effacement in ACs. Results were discussed in light of the AC setting and the cultural environment in Hong Kong. Implications were considered and suggestions were made to improve AC. This study has brought new directions to the discussion of relational demography.

摘要

研究人員早已驗證人口特徵，如性別、年齡和種族等，會影響工作場所中的評核過程。近期的研究主張整體組員或雙方的人口特徵比個別的人口特徵更具影響力。Tsui 和 O'Reily (1989)稱這現象為「相對性人口特徵」，意思指一交往中成員的人口特徵之比較。人們有意或無意地會偏袒被視為與己相類同的人。可是，在盛行「自我貶抑」的中國文化中，講求謙虛及謙卑的態度或許會抑制偏袒與己類同的人的傾向。

本研究旨在探討類同人口特徵及自我貶抑這兩個現象對評核中心的影響。我們的主要目的是調查若果評核人員與被評核者的性別或種族相同，會否對評核構成偏倚。本研究為一個案分析，採用了一商業機構內評核中心的紀錄。結果顯示類同人口特徵及個人貶抑均會影響評核中心的客觀度。

我們從評核中心的形式及香港的文化背景去理解報告的結果，並提出多個改進評核中心的意見。是次研究為有關相對人口特徵的討論帶來新的方向。