

**THE ESTABLISHMENT OF IMPLICIT PERSONALITY
PERSPECTIVES AMONG TSONGA-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

Crizelle Swanepoel, Hons BA

Mini-dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Artium in
Industrial Psychology at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus

Supervisor: Prof S Rothmann

Potchefstroom

2006

COMMENTS

The reader should keep the following in mind:

- The editorial style as well as the references this mini-dissertation follow the format prescribed by the Publication Manual (4th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University (Potchefstroom) to use APA style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the following persons who made the completion of this mini-dissertation possible:

- To my Heavenly Father above, for your grace and inspiration. I could not have done it without your unconditional love.
- To my supervisor, Prof Ian Rothmann, thank you for your guidance and support.
- To my co-supervisor, Deon Meiring, thank you for your patience and advice.
- A word of thanks to my fieldworkers, Kiddy Mongwe and Gibson Senwana, who has assisted me with the data collection for this study. I appreciate the time and effort that you have put into this study.
- I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all respondents in the Limpopo Province that have participated in this study. Without your interest in this research and your input, this study would not have been possible.
- A word of gratitude to my devoted partner Willem, for all the support, love and understanding.
- Special thanks to my parents for the opportunity to complete this course in Industrial Psychology. You have given me something no one can take away from me. Your inspiration and support have carried me through postgraduate studies and this mini-dissertation.
- Dr Amanda van der Merwe, thank you for your expertise in the language editing of this mini-dissertation and a word of thanks to Tom Chauke of the SAPS for the language editing of the original interviews.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	iv
Summary	v
Opsomming	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Problem statement	1
1.2 Research objectives	5
1.2.1 General objective	5
1.2.2 Specific objectives	6
1.3 Research method	6
1.3.1 Literature review	6
1.3.2 Empirical study	6
1.3.2.1 Research design	6
1.3.2.2 Participants	7
1.3.2.3 Measuring battery	8
1.3.2.4 Data analysis	9
1.3.3 Research procedure	10
1.4 Overview of chapters	10
1.5 Chapter summary	10
References	11
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ARTICLE	15
CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
3.1 Conclusions	49
3.2 Limitations	53
3.3 Recommendations	53
References	55
APPENDIX A	57

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Description	Page
Table 1	Five Factor Model	22
Table 2	Characteristics of the participants	32
Table 3	Personality clusters	36

SUMMARY

Title: The establishment of implicit personality perspectives among Tsonga-speaking people in South Africa.

Key terms: Personality, personality psychology, personality inventory, psychometric testing, cross-cultural assessment, indigenous psychology.

Cross-cultural assessment in South Africa has become more prominent since the first democratic elections held in April 1994, and stronger demands for the cultural appropriateness of psychological tests have arisen. The use of psychometric testing, including personality assessment in the workplace, is now strictly controlled by legislation, among others the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), the Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995), and the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998), and the Health Professions Act (56 of 1974).

Much controversy has arisen regarding the relevance and applicability of assessment instruments in South Africa. The majority of assessment procedures still make use of imported instruments that are either used in their original or adapted form. Psychological assessment instruments imported from abroad have an insufficient suitability in the multicultural South African context. There are various perspectives regarding the appropriate measurement of personality across cultures. In this research study implicit perspectives of personality, the lexical approach, indigenous psychology and the emic approach were used to determine the personality perspectives of the Tsonga culture in South Africa.

The objectives of this study were to investigate how personality is conceptualised in literature, to identify the problems surrounding personality measurement for the South African context, to explore how personality perspectives could be determined and to investigate the personality descriptive terms in the Tsonga language group.

A qualitative research design was used to collect the data of this research. A total of 5 502 personality descriptors were obtained through the 10-item interview questionnaires. Content analysis was used to analyse, reduce and interpret the data obtained from the participants. The personality descriptors obtained were reduced by removing superfluous words. These

personality descriptors were then interpreted and categorised into a total of 109 personality dimensions. These characteristics were categorised into nine clusters, namely Optimism, Agreeableness, Emotional Stability, Narrow-mindedness, Intelligence, Conscientiousness, Aggressiveness, Dominance and Sociability. The following personality dimensions had the highest frequency: Emotional Stability, Caring, Helpful, Hard working, Advising, Generous, Traditional, Aggression, Recreational, Substance use, Religious, Sociable and Loving.

Recommendations for future research were made.

OPSOMMING

Titel: Die bepaling van implisiete persoonlikheidsperspektiewe in Tsongasprekende Suid-Afrikaners.

Sleutelterme: Persoonlikheid, persoonlikheidsielkunde, persoonlikheidstoetsing, kruiskulturele assessering, inheemse sielkunde.

Kruiskulturele assessering het toenemend aandag begin geniet sedert die eerste demokratiese verkiesing wat in April 1994 in Suid-Afrika gehou is en die behoefte aan die kulturele toepaslikheid van psigologiese toetse het toegeneem. Die gebruik van psigometriese toetsing, insluitend persoonlikheidsassessering in die werksplek, word tans streng beheer deur wetgewing, byvoorbeeld die Grondwet van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika (Wet 108 van 1996), die Wet op Arbeidsverhoudinge (66 van 1995), die Wet op Regverdige Indiensneming (55 van 1998) en die Wet op Gesondheidsprofessies (56 van 1974).

Talle debatte het ontstaan rakende die relevansie en toepaslikheid van sekere assesseringsinstrumente in Suid-Afrika. Die meerderheid assesseringsprosedures maak gebruik van die oorspronklike en aangepaste weergawes van ingevoerde instrumente. Ingevoerde psigologiese toetse is nie toepaslik vir gebruik in die multikulturele konteks in Suid-Afrika nie. Verskeie perspektiewe met betrekking tot die gepaste meting van persoonlikheid tussen kulture kan gevolg word. In hierdie navorsingstudie is implisiete perspektiewe van persoonlikheid, die leksikale benadering, inheemse sielkunde en die emiese benadering gevolg ten einde persoonlikheidsperspektiewe van die Tsonga kultuur in Suid-Afrika vas te stel.

Die doelstellings van hierdie studie was om te ondersoek hoe persoonlikheid in die literatuur gekonseptualiseer is, om die probleme rakende persoonlikheidsmeting in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks te identifiseer, om ondersoek in te stel na metodes waarop persoonlikheidsperspektiewe bepaal kan word, asook om persoonlikheidsbeskrywings in die Tsonga taalgroep te ondersoek.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp is gebruik om die data vir hierdie studie in te samel. 'n Totaal van 5 502 persoonlikheidsbeskrywings is verkry deur die afneem van 10-item-

onderhoudsvraelyste. Inhoudsanalise is uitgevoer met die doel om die response wat van die deelnemers ingesamel is te analiseer, te verminder en te interpreteer. Die persoonlikheidsbeskrywings wat versamel is, is verminder deur oortollige woorde te verwyder. Hierdie beskrywings is vervolgens geïnterpreteer en in 'n totaal van 109 persoonlikheidsdimensies is gekategoriseer. Hierdie dimensies is verder verdeel in agt groepe, naamlik Optimisme, Inskiklikheid, Emosionele Stabiliteit, Verkramptheid, Intelligensie, Konsensieusheid, Aggressiwiteit en Geselligheid. Die volgende persoonlikheidsdimensies het die hoogste frekwensie getoon: Emosionele stabiliteit, Omgee, Hulpvaardig, Hardwerkend, Adviserend, Vrygewig, Tradisioneel, Aggressief, Rekreasioneel, Substansgebruik, Godsdienstig, Gesellig en Liefvallig.

Aanbevelings vir toekomstige navorsing is aan die hand gedoen.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation focuses on the establishment of implicit perspectives of personality in Tsonga speaking South Africans.

Chapter 1 contains the problem statement and a discussion of the research objectives in which the general objective and specific objectives are set out. The research method is explained and the division of chapters is described.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over the last decade there has been a growing interest in the measurement of personality traits in applied settings, such as in selection, placement, therapeutic intervention and counselling. There is an increasing awareness in South Africa regarding “personality in the workplace”. Personality variables and issues related to their use, especially in work settings, have generated a vast amount of interest, research and publications (Bergh & Theron, 2003; Furnham, 1994)

A fundamental question for industrial psychologists interested in the measurement of personality and culture is whether personality traits are universal or culture-specific. The cross-cultural generalisability of personality characteristics has most often been investigated using an imposed etic approach (Berry, 1969), which implies that assessment instruments developed in Western countries were adopted in other cultural contexts, assuming that the underlying theories and constructs are universal (Berry, 1989; Church & Lonner, 1998). According to Church and Lonner (1998, p. 36), the imposed etic strategy may “optimize the chances of finding cross-cultural comparability and exclude culture-specific dimensions”. An obvious example of the use of the imposed etic approach is the growing number of studies investigating the cross-cultural replicability of the dimensions of the “Big Five” or five-factor model (FFM).

The FFM is composed of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism versus Emotional Stability, and Intellect or Openness to Experience (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Several questionnaires measuring the FFM have been established (Costa & McCrae, 1989; Goldberg, 1990; John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991) and widely applied in Western and other culture backgrounds. However, FFM can only be applied where it comes from, that is, where English is the native language of individuals (Cheung, 2004). Many researchers have confirmed the same FFM in different cultures (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Bermudez, Maslach, & Ruch, 2000; McCrae, & Costa, 1997; Trull & Geary, 1997), while others found quite different personality structures in different cultures (Bond, Nakazato, & Shiraishi, 1975; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Hahn, & Comrey, 2001; Church, Katigbak, & Reyes, 1996). Systematic lexical research on Chinese personality has also indicated that Chinese personality consists of seven factors (Cui & Wang, 2003), as opposed to the FFM personality structure.

Psychometric testing in South Africa, however, cannot be investigated without considering the country's political, economic, and social history (Claassen, 1997). Psychological assessment in South Africa has mainly followed international trends and an imposed etic strategy was pursued, which implies that assessment instruments developed in Western countries were adopted in South Africa, assuming that the underlying theories and constructs are universal (Berry, 1989; Church & Lonner, 1998). In the 1980s certain issues regarding fairness, bias and discriminatory practices were raised, which led to the development of separate psychological tests for the Afrikaans- and English-speaking groups (Claassen, 1997). Thereafter, bilingual tests were constructed for English- and Afrikaans-speakers and separate tests were constructed for speakers of African languages.

Cross-cultural assessment in South Africa has become more prominent since the first democratic elections held in 1994 and stronger demands for the cultural appropriateness of psychological tests culminated in the promulgation of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, Section 8 (Government Gazette, 1998). This Act stipulates that: "Psychological testing and other similar assessments are prohibited unless the test or assessment being used: (a) has been scientifically shown to be valid and reliable, (b) can be applied fairly to all employees; and (c) is not biased against any employee or group."

The Employment Equity Act imposes very stringent criteria on South African psychologists and the onus of proof has shifted to professional test users, since they are compelled to attest that their instruments adhere to the regulations of the Employment Equity Act and can be applied in a multicultural society. It becomes apparent that there is an urgent need for

measuring instruments in South Africa that comply with the Employment Equity Act requirements and can be used for all the cultural and language groups in the country.

The question as to how it is determined that a measuring instrument can be regarded as a psychological test is addressed by the Psychometrics Committee in that “A test is classified as being a psychological test when its use results in the performance of a psychological act.” In addition, the Health Professions Act, 56 of 1974, Section 37 (2) (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) states that a psychological act with respect to assessment is defined as being “the use of a psychometric measuring device, test, questionnaire, technique or instrument that assesses intellectual or cognitive ability or functioning, aptitude, interest, personality make-up or personality functioning, is constituted as being a psychological act” (Foxcroft, Roodt, & Abrahams, 2001).

There is an extensive amount of experience in personality assessment in South Africa in a professional context, as well as a research context. Much controversy has arisen regarding the relevance and applicability of certain assessment instruments in South Africa, as expressed by Sibaya, Hlongwane, and Makunga (1996). The majority of assessment procedures that are undertaken still make use of imported instruments that are either used in their original or adapted form. A study by Meiring, Van de Vijver, Rothmann, and Barrick (2005) showed that psychological instruments imported from abroad have an insufficient suitability in the multicultural South African context.

Multicultural personality research in South Africa is practically nonexistent (Abrahams, 1996, 2002; Abrahams & Mauer, 1999a, b; Meiring, 2000; Spence, 1982; Tact, 1999; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Boeyens, 1991; Wallice & Birt, 2003). Research by Abrahams (1996) on the cross-cultural comparability of the Sixteen Personality Factor Inventory (16PF) suggests that little support was found for construct equivalence of the 16PF across the different cultural groups in South Africa. Individuals whose first language was not English experienced problems with the comprehensibility of the items. It was concluded that the 16PF was not suitable as an instrument in the South African multicultural context. Despite these limitations of this personality measure, a study by Foxcroft, Paterson, Le Roux, and Herbst (2004) which focuses on the test-use patterns and needs of psychological assessment practitioners, indicates that the Sixteen Personality Factor Inventory (16PF) is the most widely used test in South Africa.

