

Validity Study

Using MMPI Special Scale Configurations to Predict Law Enforcement Officers Fired for Cause

Robert D. Davis & Cary D. Rostow
Matrix, Inc.

As part of a special issue of Applied H.R.M. Research on using special scale configurations of the MMPI and MMPI-2 in selecting law enforcement personnel, we investigated the ability of these scale configurations to predict performance problems of 1,992 law enforcement officers in the Southeastern United States. The results indicated that scores on the Good Cop/Bad Cop ($r = .12$), Husemann Index ($r = .20$), Aamodt Index ($r = .19$), Goldberg Index ($r = .15$), and Gonder Index ($r = .13$) were all significantly related to an officer being terminated for cause.

Sample

The sample consisted of 1,992 sworn personnel employed by a variety of law enforcement agencies in the Southeastern United States. The mean age of sample participants was 30.18 years ($SD = 8.43$, range 17-77). The mean education level was 13.34 years ($SD = 1.95$, range 5-21). The majority of the officers were white (75.4%) or African American (22.8%) with a small percentage of Hispanics/Latinos (0.9%), Asians (0.4%), or other (0.6%) making up the rest of the sample. In terms of sex, 85.3% were men and 14.7% were women.

Use of the MMPI

Officers in this study had been screened prior to hire by a clinical psychologist using the MMPI-2, a background questionnaire, and several other personality measures.

Criterion Information

The performance measure used in this study was whether an officer had been terminated for cause for such reasons as absenteeism, discipline problems, and improper use of force. Officers who were not fired for cause were coded as "0" and those fired for cause were coded as "1". Of the 1,992 officers for which there were performance data, 296 (14.9%) had been terminated for cause.

Results

As shown in Table 1, all of the special scale configurations and two of the factors (I & V) were significantly related to an officer being terminated for cause. The Husemann Index had the strongest correlation of .20.

Table 1
Correlations with being fired for cause (0=not fired, 1=fired)

Scale Configuration	Mean	SD	Correlation
Good Cop/Bad Cop			
Good cop or bad cop	0.31	0.46	.10*
Inclusion of borderline category	0.40	0.66	.12*
Husemann Index (F + Pd + Ma)	146.72	16.02	.20*
Aamodt Index (F + Ma)	95.44	12.40	.19*
Goldberg Index (L+Pa+Sc-Hy-Pt)	56.67	14.68	.15*
Gonder Index (Pd + Pt + Mf + Ma + Hs + Hy)	290.54	28.26	.13*
Five-Factor Model			
Factor I (Hs + Pd + Pa + Pt + Sc + Ma)	292.06	31.19	.13*
Factor II (Hy + Hs + K – Ma)	104.11	23.51	-.04
Factor III (Si)	43.44	7.19	.02
Factor IV (Pa + MF – L – K)	- 26.10	24.53	.02
Factor V (F-K)	- 16.28	5.64	.07*

Table 2
Correlations among scale configurations (n=2,965)

Scale Configuration	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Good Cop/Bad Cop		.63*	.49*	.00	.66*	.64*	.06*	.10*	.29*	.20*
2. Husemann Index			.88*	.13*	.67*	.76*	-.22*	.11*	.38*	.45*
3. Aamodt Index				.18*	.44*	.55*	-.49*	.14	.44*	.64*
4. Goldberg Index					.00	.17*	-.05*	.02	-.23*	-.05*
5. Gonder Index						.87*	.39*	.03	.25*	-.05*
6. Factor I							.27*	.07*	.24*	.05*
7. Factor II								-.17*	-.49*	-.70*
8. Factor III									.24*	.48*
9. Factor IV										.67*
10. Factor V										

Table 3
Outcome frequencies for the Good Cop/Bad Cop method

GCBC Category	Frequency	% Terminated for Cause
Failed (2+ problem scales)	123	29.27
Borderline (1 problem scale)	372	18.55
Passed (no problem scales)	1,497	12.76