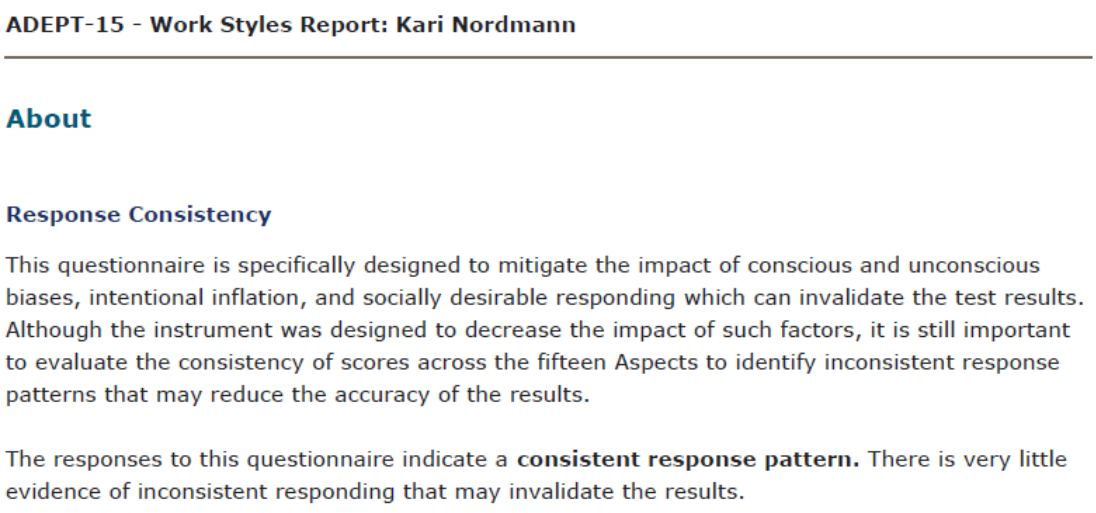
The consistency scale on tests

Sarah Kippernes - 2024-07-05 - Practical use of assessments

As humans we have a tendency of wanting to present ourselves as better or different than we really are. We also tend to fool ourselves into thinking that we are better than we really are. This can be particularly true in social situations because we want people to like us. In the world of assessments, this poses a challenge since the human tendency of wanting to present ourselves as likeable can affect the level of honesty, either conscious or sub-conscious, when answering a personality assessment. Particularly in job application situations, where one has strong motives to present oneself in an appropriate and positive way, this tendency can affect the assessment results. We try to uncover these tendencies through consistency scores.

Consistency of *ADEPT-15*

The ADEPT-15 personality test is specifically designed to reduce the effects of conscious or unconscious bias, intentional exaggeration and conformity to social norms, which can invalidate the test results. While the tool is designed to weaken the effects of such factors, it is still important to evaluate how consistent a candidate's score is across the 15 aspects in order to identify patterns of inconsistency that may reduce the validity of the results. The ADEPT-15 provides an indicator of a candidate's consistency in the form of a "response stability". You can find this on the last page of the *Work Styles Report*.



ADEPT-15 - Work Styles Report: Kari Nordmann

About

Response Consistency

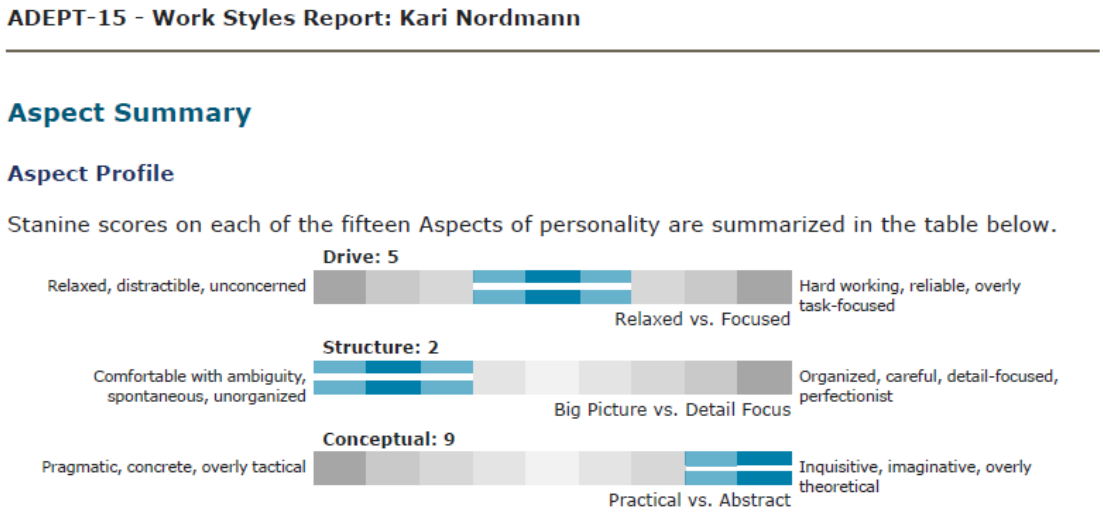
This questionnaire is specifically designed to mitigate the impact of conscious and unconscious biases, intentional inflation, and socially desirable responding which can invalidate the test results. Although the instrument was designed to decrease the impact of such factors, it is still important to evaluate the consistency of scores across the fifteen Aspects to identify inconsistent response patterns that may reduce the accuracy of the results.

The responses to this questionnaire indicate a **consistent response pattern.** There is very little evidence of inconsistent responding that may invalidate the results.

This is what the response stability tells you:

- **Consistent response pattern:** Valid profile.
- **Somewhat inconsistent response pattern:** You can use the results, but you should keep this in mind during the read-back conversation.
- **Inconsistent response pattern:** In this case, we need to examine the distribution of scores on the different aspects:
    - If scores are on the left (1, 2, 3 and 4) or right (6, 7, 8 and 9) side: The profile is valid.

- If all scores are in the middle (4, 5 or 6): Ask the candidate if they were attentive and able to focus during test completion. If they confirm, we treat it as a valid profile. If they were unfocused and/or inattentive, it is more likely that the candidate will not recognize all the descriptions and you can consider letting the candidate retake the test.



Consistency of *shapes* and *views*

The personality test shapes and the motivational assessment views show consistency scores on a scale from 1-9 in the report.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Should be investigated further	Should be investigated further	Borderline cases	Normal response					

As this figure indicates, scores of 1 and 2 should be checked. A score of 3 is in a grey area, and you can choose whether to check the results or not. Consistency of 1-2 may indicates that the test taker has attempted to “play it safe” and has taken few risks to make sure that none of the dimensions are low. One characteristic of such situations is that the candidate scores between 4 and 6 on every dimension. Since there will be no clear ranking of the profile, it will be hard to interpret.

A consistency of 1 can also be caused by the assessment having been answered at random, particularly if the test has been completed in a short amount of time. Random answers can be detected by looking at the point distribution and seeing if the candidate has distributed points very differently for statements that measure the same thing. For example, the test taker may have distributed 6 points to the statement “I like to take charge” and 0 points to the statement “I like being in charge”. The system will see this as a sign of the test being answered at random since it is very unlikely that someone who does not like being in charge likes taking charge.

A consistency of 9 may indicate that the test taker is trying to give a very specific image of some dimensions. Characteristics of such situations are that the test taker scores very high on some dimensions and very low on others. However, research from Aon Assessment that one cannot with certainty assume that a consistency score of 9 indicates an attempt to seem better than the reality.

The consistency can be affected by the situation that the test taker is in when answering the test. Stress can make the test taker complete the test a bit faster, and possibly allocate the points somewhat random during the test. Therefore, we recommend that you look at how long time the test taker has spent answering the test.

Other possible sources to low or very high consistency can be:

- That the test taker has interpreted the test in an unusual way
- That the test taker has attempted to avoid low scores on dimensions
- That the test results can be characterized by random answers (short time usage in combination with low consistency can indicate random answers)
- That the test taker has attempted to present a very particular image of some dimensions
- That the circumstances around the test completion can affect the result
- It may be that the test taker truly believes that he/she is this way

If the consistency is very low (1-2) you can proceed this way:

- Tell the test taker that the answer to the test is unusual compared to most other answers and that this makes the results hard to interpret
- Try to figure out how the test taker has interpreted the instructions in the test. Be mindful to ask if the test taker has understood that one is to rank the three statements by using the 6 points.
    - If it becomes clear that the test taker has misunderstood something or interpreted the test in an unusual way you can allow the test taker to retake the test after making sure that he/she understands the test correctly
    - If the test taker does not seem to have interpreted the test unusually, or does not want to retake the test, the interpretation of the test results become difficult. In these cases you can, as an alternative to the test, use other assessment methods as the main source of information, for example do a structured interview where you focus on finding out how the person is in regards to the relevant competencies being investigated. You can for example use our recruitment report which includes competency based interview guides.

Related Content

- Personality assessment with shapes