Polygraph Exams And Psychological Tests In Policing

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Introduction

The expensive process of recruitment has caused several problems for different organizations, including the law enforcement department. There are many reasons behind the usage of psychological tests, but the main reason for taking such tests is because of the sensitive job, including the potential of the person who will be employed. It saves costs by going through the different procedures and validating which employees will benefit from the organization. These psychological tests are not only used at the start but also by the department during the job in order to figure out the stability of the employee and the promotion so that maximum output of performance could get out of it(Honts, Charles, and Racheal, 5). The further discussion will highlight both the major tests, polygraph exams, and psychological tests in policing, including the advantages and disadvantages of their accuracy in serving the purpose.

Discussion

The most important considered test in the recruitment of law enforcement employees, which is also being misunderstood, is the tests related to psychology. It is not the important aspect of pre-employment screening in the law enforcement and criminal justice career that either makes or breaks the chances of being hired as a police officer. The estimation shows that 90% of the law enforcement agencies in the United States of America have made these tests mandatory in their recruitment process. If it is being compared considering all the psychological tests, then drug screening is 8 percent and 65 percent only is polygraph exam. The agencies that helped the candidates in guiding the hiring procedure of the law enforcement department greatly emphasized psychological tests because these tests have been considered to be the most important ones. Apart from New Jersey, several other states use these tests for the hiring of law enforcement employees (Stickle, 10).

Before pursuing a further in-depth understanding of the aim of tests, the understanding should be developed to identify what the results of these tests show. Failing the psychological tests doesn’t mean that a person lacks sanity, but it suggests to the recruiter and the candidate that a career in law enforcement is not suitable for him/her. The nature of the job for law enforcement employees involves not only tough physical work, which is being perceived, but continuous mental pressure and

emotional stress. The nature of the job involves playing with posture and gestures, which helps maintain a firm attitude on the job. Considering all of these things, the police job is not for everyone, and these tests, as claimed by the law enforcement department, help in figuring out who people are suitable for this job.

The tool related to psychological tests is the psychological screening test, which agencies use to make sure the hired person is suitable for the job, and it facilitates other processes of recruitment. This test includes a basic abilities test, investigating the background information, checking the credit, and finally, a polygraph exam. The exam is divided into three stages: a pre-test, surveys, and a final interview. All of these tests further help in finding out the suitability of the candidate and figuring out how suitable the law enforcement career is for that person. These tests categorize every candidate into types before the final decision. The first one is low risk, followed by medium or high risk. On the basis of these categories, the types determine the acceptability or unacceptability of that candidate (Nelson, 22).

Along with the above-mentioned types, these tests serve the purpose of identifying the traits of the candidate's personality. There are a few important traits which law enforcement prefers the candidates, and those are controlling impulse, general intelligence, judgment skill, ability to perform tedious and boring tasks easily, courage, integrity and honesty, lack of biasedness, and reason for choosing this career, sexuality dealing and in the end which is most important is drug use.

The benefits of using the psychological tests are as follows:

- The maintainer of autonomy helps in hiring.
- There is less interference in the screening and hiring of candidates.
- No dual relationship.
- These tests are broader in nature and more flexible to take.
- Confidentiality.
- Less pressure.

The disadvantages are as follows:

- It creates a barrier to understanding among psychologists and law enforcement agencies.
- The nature of the job is different than the psychological level.
- The recommendation of the psychologist is purely based on the psychological level of the mind, but the job involves other aspects as well.
- Less opportunity for research.

After the overview of psychologist tests, the polygraph is also the most significant and important test

by law enforcement agencies, and it is commonly used for both purposes. To select the candidate and to test the criminals. This exam is referred to as the lie detector, which records and measures pulse rate while asking a specific question to know whether the one on whom the exam is being taken is lying or telling the truth. The connectivity of skin and blood pressure is being tested in this exam, not just the pulse rate. It is always difficult to identify the responses of the person to whom questions are being asked because all people respond and react differently to different situations. The scoring method of this exam is different and solely depends on the person who is taking the test. The level of the standardized score has not yet been created, and these scores fulfill the requirements of the nature of the job (Stickle, 10).

These specific ways and steps need to be followed for this exam. The polygraph session starts with an interview to gather primary information. After getting the primary information, the diagnostic questions are designed. Before conducting the final polygraph exam, the test taker will analyze and examine the questions to determine whether or not they will give a clear result. The start of the test takes place by asking the candidate to lie deliberately so that it can identify what response it give when the lie comes. Then comes the relevant question, and the interview starts in order to conduct the polygraph exam. Different ranges of questions, according to their nature, were asked, and the responses noted down with the expressions and recording of blood, pulse, and skin take place.

There are several criticisms of this exam because it puts pressure on the candidate due to the style of the test being like an interrogation. This test often confuses the candidate, which, as a result, gives the wrong results for the exam. The nervous state of the candidate will give the response the same way as someone is lying. Alternative tests have also been developed so that errors can be figured out. Lately, the test has also been questioned by scientists, and they are questioning the validity of this test because, somehow, it is also an outdated way of hiring.

The following are the advantages of this test:

- It detects the dishonesty of the person, which helps scrutinize the candidate. It will help to know which person will benefit the department and which one will harm it. A dishonest person in a field like the police will only undermine the integrity of this profession because honesty is the core of it.
- This test sets the expectation because even from the start, those who apply for the job will know that no matter what, in the end, the lie detector will catch if they are not being honest in their documents.

The following are the disadvantages of the

polygraph test:

- It will hurt the morale of the candidate because the lie detector, as suggested by the name of it, will leave the impression that the candidate, even if not ling, will be seen as dishonest to the recruiter. It put pressure on the candidate due to the style of the test being like an interrogation. This test often confuses the candidate, which, as a result, gives the wrong results for the exam. The nervous state of the candidate will give the response the same way as someone is lying.
- The results are inaccurate most of the time, as mentioned earlier. Alternative tests have also been developed so that errors can be figured out. Lately, the test has also been questioned by scientists, and they are questioning the validity of this test because, somehow, it is also an outdated way of hiring. It will damage the oral of the candidate in other phases because even though they are not lying, the inaccurate result will make them undermine their own self-respect (Nelson, 22).

Conclusions

Several law enforcement agencies use these tests and exams now. While considering the advantages and disadvantages of these tests, to some extent, they are providing help in hiring the candidate for the sensitive type of job. There are many reasons behind the usage of psychological tests, but the main reason for taking such tests is because of the sensitive job, including the potential of the person who will be employed. It saves costs by going through the different procedures and validating which employees will benefit from the organization. It is not the important aspect of pre-employment screening in the law enforcement and criminal justice career that either makes or breaks the chances of being hired as a police officer. The agencies that helped the candidates in guiding the hiring procedure of law enforcement departments greatly emphasized psychological tests because these tests have been considered to be the most important ones. The nature of the job for law enforcement employees involves not only tough physical work, which is being perceived, but continuous mental pressure and emotional stress. The nature of the job involves playing with posture and gestures, which helps maintain a firm attitude on the job. There are a few important traits which law enforcement prefers the candidates, and those are controlling impulse, general intelligence, judgment skill, ability to perform tedious and boring tasks easily, courage, integrity and honesty, lack of biasedness, and reason for choosing this career, sexuality dealing and in the end which is most important is drug use. The lie detector records and measures pulse rate while asking a specific question to know whether the one on whom the exam is being taken is lying or telling the truth. The connectivity of skin and blood pressure is being tested in this exam, not just the pulse rate. It is always difficult to identify the responses of the person to whom questions are being asked because all people respond and react differently to different situations.

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