

Adversity Quotient Profile: An Effective Psychometric tool to hire the finest aspirant for contemporary organizations

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Abstract: The AQ Profile is popular in today's scenario as it has been tested widely and it is free from all sorts of biases across say gender, ethnicity and age and is proven to be the most robust instrument in today's existence for measuring and developing human resilience. According to top researchers, business leaders consistently underestimate the cost of poor hiring decisions which includes various factors like cost of recruiting, time involved recruitment process, selection with pre and post screening, placement, additional training and development and all HR efforts put in to grow a single employee. It also considers the effects of a bad hire like on employee morale, productivity and customer retention costs when the employee under performs. The employees with right attitude contribute to the company's growth, success, stability and prosperity. This paper aims to understand as how AQ Profile plays a key role in the recruitment and selection of finest aspirants who are resilient and are required for today's contemporary organizations that can deliver the best for the present demanding circumstances and also ensures to minimize the risk factors associated with a bad hire. It is evident that AQ has helped many companies improve employee's customer service and sales, strengthen employee morale, develop resilient leaders, create high performing teams and hire high performing people. AQ Profile is the only statistically valid and reliable tool in existence for measuring AQ which is simple, quick, user friendly and inexpensive.

Keywords: Aspirants, Adversity Quotient Profile, Psychometric Tool, Adversity Quotient, Organizations

Introduction

The word psychometric basically refers to the measurement of the mind. Unlike facets such as education, skills, experience, appearance and punctuality, the behavioural traits and personality of a candidate can be much more difficult to assess during an interview. Some employers choose to use psychometric testing during their recruitment process to help give a better overall evaluation of a candidate and hopefully secure the best fit for the role. There's some debate over the value of psychometric testing, but those who use it believe that it can give a more objective overview of a candidate's character, strengths, weaknesses and working style. Typically, a psychometric test will never be used in isolation, but as one component of a wider, integrated evaluation strategy. For employers, psychometric testing could help to gauge the future performance of a candidate and hopefully improve employee retention by making successful hiring decisions. Psychometric testing can measure a number of attributes including intelligence, critical reasoning, motivation and personality profile. An interview process can be fairly subjective and although employers will normally assess skills and experience fairly accurately, much can still be left to gut

instinct regarding aligned values. A psychometric test aims to provide measurable, objective data that can give you a better all round view of a candidate's suitability. It could be argued that psychometric testing offers some scientific credibility and objectivity to the process of recruiting. It perhaps provides a more fair and accurate way of assessing a candidate, as all applicants will be given a standardised test. Traditionally, these tests have taken the form of pen and paper, multiple choice questionnaires, but increasingly they're moving into a digital realm. This means they can be quick and easy to integrate into any stage of the process. Some organisations often favour psychometric testing as a way of screening and subsequently eliminating large amounts of candidates at the start of a recruitment drive. In this case, psychometric testing could help to drastically reduce the hiring manager's workload, as it helps to swiftly identify a smaller pool of suitable applicants who have the potential to perform well in the later stages of interview. [1]

In a Nutshell, The Key Reasons for using Psychometric Tests are to eliminate the following common mistakes of Recruitment process:

- a) Candidates may “over prepare” their resumes.
- b) Educational achievements may not indicate abilities.
- c) Candidates may “over prepare” for the interview.
- d) Interviewer may show unacceptable bias.
- e) Lack of references from previous jobs.
- f) Increased cost and legal risks of hiring.

Adversity Quotient

Adversity Quotient or AQ is the science of human resilience, people who successfully apply AQ perform optimally in the face of adversity the challenges big and small that confront us each day. Dr. Paul Stoltz, has introduced the concept of Adversity Quotient[3,4]. According to him Adversity Quotient or AQ is the ability to handle adverse situations. He states, AQ, measures a person’s ability to prevail in face of adversity and this AQ can be increased thereby giving a permanent boost for your ability to survive in crisis and finally succeed. In fact, one not only learns from these challenges but they also respond to them better and faster. According to Stoltz, “AQ is about, what it takes to get things done in highly demanding times. Adversity Quotient is a scientifically grounded theory that describes measures and strengthens, how people respond to the full range of adversities that now comprise a typical day”. Drawing from three major sciences: Cognitive Psychology, Psychoneuroimmunology and Neurophysiology, Adversity Quotient embodies two essential components of any practical concept scientific theory and real world application. The work done on AQ builds upon the landmark research of dozens of top scholars and more than 500 studies from around the world. As a result of 19 years of research and 10 years of application, AQ is a major breakthrough in understanding of what it takes to succeed. Thus, according to Stoltz, success in work and in life is largely determined by adversity Quotient. AQ takes three forms say First, AQ is a new conceptual framework for understanding and enhancing all facets of success based on research it offers a practical, new combination of knowledge that redefines what it takes to succeed. Second, AQ is a measure of how one responds to adversity it provides to measure, understand and change one’s response to adversity. Finally, AQ is a scientifically grounded set of tools for improving how one responds to adversity. Adversity quotient encompasses four dimensions which exactly measures the AQ of an individual. They are control, origin and ownership, reach, and endurance embodied in the acronym **CO2RE**.

C stands for control over an adverse event. People who respond to adversity as temporary, external and limited have optimistic explanatory styles and tend

to enjoy life’s benefits. With perceived control, hope and action are turned to reality or learned helplessness shall pass. The more control one has, the more likely one has to take positive action. **O2** denotes origin and ownership. The first **O** stands for origin and has something to do with blame. Blame has two functions which help one to learn from and adjust behaviour causing improvement. This blame leads to guilt obliging one to search own soul and weigh the way one might have hurt others. The feeling of guilt is a powerful motivator when used properly for it can help heal real, perceived or potential damaged to an important relationship. Too much blame can be demoralizing and destructive which can destroy ones energy, hope, self worth and immune system leading one to decide to quit. It is indicative of the level to which one or an external entity is the origin of the event, and to what degree one owns the outcomes. Those with lower AQ scores tend to blame themselves. Higher scores tend to properly place responsibility, and therefore also have high self-worth. An individual having low AQ blame oneself for bad events, but with higher AQ an individual learn one’s behavior to become smarter, better and more effective the next time similar situation is encountered. The other **O** means ownership that reflects accountability. This answers the degree of owning the outcomes of adversity whether good or bad. High AQ people enhance their accountability to control, empower and motivate action while low AQ people disown the problem causing failure to act, give-up, point fingers, reduced performance and angers at others and many more negative actions. Owning the outcome reflects accountability for achieving a specific result in response to a problem. High scores tend to accept responsibility for creating a specific outcome regardless of the causes. **R** stands for reach evaluating how far the adversity gets into the areas of one’s life. Low AQ response allow adversity to affect other aspect of one’s life leading to financial panic, sleeplessness, bitterness, distancing self from others and poor decision making. But with high **R**-score one may limit the reach of the problem to the event at hand. A misunderstanding relationship is one misunderstanding although painful and not a sign that life is falling apart. **E** means endurance responding to the time adversities last. Attribution theory of Peterson & Seligman et al (1993) indicated that there is a dramatic difference between people who attribute adversity to something temporary versus something more permanent or enduring. Applying this theory, people who see their ability as the cause of failure (stable cause) are less likely to continue than people who attribute failure to their effort (a temporary cause). According to the AQ theory of Stoltz, employees in any organization are of three kinds - climbers, campers and quitters. Climbers are employees who seek challenges and have high AQ levels. Entrepreneurs and sales people who work on

commission basis are among the climbers. The organizations that are adventure centric also fall into this category. Microsoft has been quoted as one such climbing organization. Climbers have an utter refusal to be insignificant. What they do and who they are, has to matter to them is Stoltz's opinion. Campers constitute about 80% of the typical workforce in any organization. These people resist giving up their comforts, no matter what the price. Quitters are those who are risk averse and flee from challenges. They are usually inclined towards education and take up teaching and mentoring. Campers and quitters are tension creators and often frustrate climbers. They are the cause for organizations losing climbers their key talent. Organizations are increasingly adopting the AQ concept to capitalize on its benefits. Understanding an individual's AQ can not only help organizations to hire and retain highly motivated and talented employees, but also help in developing employees to their full potential, and create a leadership culture. This can in turn help in encouraging employees to put forth their best efforts and maximize their performance capabilities leading to overall better organizational performance. AQ training has been successful in improving the average AQ level of the companies by 23%. One can expect anything between 5% and 15% improvement just by raising people's awareness of their own AQ. At Florida Water Services in US, about 250 managers and key employees half of their workforce, who underwent the AQ training, got stunning results in converting the campers into climbers.[2]

Background of the study

Adversity Quotient (AQ) is a construct which evolved out of researches by Paul Stoltz and his team over two decades[3]. AQ is seen as a quantitative measure of a person's resilience. Research in resilience predates the use of the term AQ. Other synonymous terms that appear in literature include coping skills and hardiness. Resilience has been defined as the ability to bounce back after a set-back. Individuals as well as organizations demonstrate resilience, or its absence, when they are faced with difficult circumstances. The majority earlier research on resilience deals with people in various traumatic and extreme conditions and studies how they cope and rise out of their adverse conditions. A large number deal with correlating resilience and coping to social/environmental conditions and various psychological constructs. Adversity Quotient (AQ) is the science of human resilience [4]. Further studies of Stoltz [4] described how one can cope with adversity in their professional and private lives. He found out that there are three components of human capacity that is required capacity existing capacity and accessed capacity. Required capacity is the amount of capacity that is demanded from a person as they encounter greater adversity in their jobs and lives. Existing

capacity is what people have when they begin a job, when they are hired. It consists of their experience, aptitudes, knowledge, talents everything. Accessed capacity is what a person taps what they actually use. Most people according to him actually access tap and use between 5% and 25% of their existing capacity[5]. Since adversity quotient is learned, studies of Dweck [5] showed that one's response to adversity is formed through the influence of parents, teachers, peers, and other key people during childhood. Additional result of the studies reveal that response to adversity can be interrupted and permanently changed so one can rewire one's brain for success. Thus discovering, measuring and applying AQ in one's area allow us to understand how and why some people consistently exceed the predictions and expectations of those around them. Those who cannot overcome adversity will suffer on all fronts while those with sufficiently high AQ's are likely to continue until they succeed. They will acquire benefits in all areas of their lives. Adversity has three levels of involvements that is say societal adversity, workplace adversity and individual adversity[4]. Today the world is facing global economic crisis which affected society including the educational system. The schools are no longer a safe haven for children. Cases of drug addiction, early pregnancy, and broken family are the common societal adversity in schools. The workplace adversity now demands reengineering, restructuring, rightsizing, downsizing, revitalizing and decentralization. Workers are faced with constant change that calls to upgrade knowledge and skills. Individual adversity is the accumulated burden one carries due to societal and workplace adversities. The accumulated effects of large scale adversities are sometimes inspiring for many but to others the danger of losing hope. Changes begin at the individual and control is instigated to make a difference. A study of Schmidt [6] compared the adversity response scores of leaders in education to leaders in business and industry. Her study transferred the concepts related to adversity responses of business leaders to the educational realm and provides the leaders with information and support to make changes in the current system. Areas of research investigated and discussed were hardiness, resiliency, learned helplessness, self efficacy, attribution theory and the individual responses to challenges and how these areas of study relate to leadership effectiveness. A total of seventy six education leaders and one hundred fifty eight business leaders were the respondents. She utilized the ex- post facto, descriptive study using a quantitative approach to data collection. The Adversity Response Profile (ARP), a self- rating questionnaire developed by Stoltz [3] was used to measure the individual's style of responding to adverse situations. Findings revealed that business and industry leaders scored high on ARP and can be interpreted that the business and industry leaders

respond more effectively to adverse conditions than their education leader's counterparts. Furthermore, it indicated that business and industry leaders are honed to address adversity for they react positively and are more hardy and resilient leaders.

AQ Instrument

The adversity quotient of an individual plays an ever greater role in reacting to adversities being dealt with greater uncertainty, demands, challenges, changes and complication. Individual's AQ can be both measured and improved from these elements which can determine whether he/she can stand strong and true, continue to grow when faced with adversity or if he/she will be crippled or destroyed. AQ is the foundational factor of success that can determine the 'how', 'if', and 'to what' degree of attitudes, abilities and performance are manifested by a person. As posited by advocates of adversity quotient the above cited gap could be resolved

by upgrading one's capacity through strengthening one's adversity quotient. When used properly AQ is a vital piece of any effort to strengthen leaders and their ability to thrive in this demanding work environment. Stoltz [3] has developed an assessment instrument that is similar in form and format to the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and it assesses AQ. The AQ scores fall into three broad bands, with an expected normal distribution, Low AQ characteristics (low levels of motivation, energy, performance and persistence and the tendency to 'catastrophize' events), Moderate AQ characteristics (under utilization of potential, problems take a significant and unnecessary toll, making climbing difficult, and a sense of helplessness and despair arises from time to time), High AQ characteristics (able to withstand significant adversity, continue forward and upward progress and maintains appropriate perspective on events and responses to them)[7].

Significance of Psychometric tool in HR Process

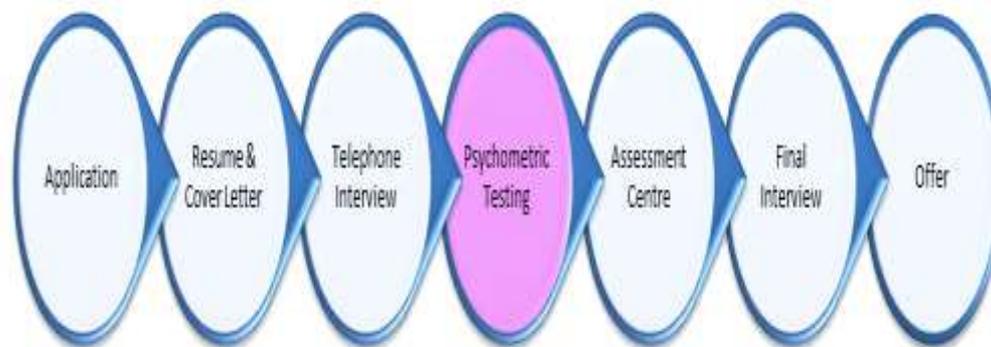


Fig-1: Depicts the Process of Recruitment. Source[10]

a) Application

Application forms are for data gathering only. The information contained in an application may have to be taken on trust at the screening stage, but inconsistent and ambiguous information should be during the interviews or later through references. The application form contains a wealth of information which if interpreted correctly will significantly reduce the number of applicants required for interview.

b) Resume and Cover Letter

It basically checks factual data from the application form against the minimum acceptable requirements set out in the person specification such as age, qualification and experience. Good applicants are based on consistency of the data contained in their resume.

c) Telephone interview

This type of interview allows an employer to screen candidates on the candidates experience, qualifications, and salary expectations pertaining to the position and the company. The telephone interview

saves the employer's time and eliminates candidates that are unlikely to meet the company's expectations. It is a tool for the recruiter to assess whether you are a serious applicant and decide whether or not to take you further through the application process. The positive thing about phone interviews is that they are quicker and more convenient.

d) Psychometric testing

Psychometric tests are a standard and scientific method used to measure individual's mental capabilities and behavioural style. Psychometric tests are designed to measure candidate's suitability for a role based on the required personality characteristics and aptitude (or cognitive abilities). They identify the extent to which candidate's personality and cognitive abilities match those required to perform the role. Employers use the information collected from the psychometric test to identify the hidden aspects of candidates that are difficult to extract from a face-to-face interview. They're objective, convenient and strong indicators of job performance. Most psychometric testing is completed online, though some paper questionnaires

remain. Most tests are timed, but some can be completed in multiple sittings.

e) Assessment centre

An Assessment Centre is an extended period of interviews, tasks and assessment exercises, organised and held by recruiters. Recruiters use assessment centres to find out how candidates perform in various situations, in particular group situations, which are often modelled on real work-based scenarios. They are most frequently used by large graduate employers who want to hire a relatively large number of people for a similar job role. The term assessment centre is used because employers usually conduct these extended assessments in a single centre, either an office of the employer themselves or at a third party venue, such as a hotel or function room.

f) Final Interview

It is the last step in the interview process and the last interview you will have before finding out whether or not you will be getting a job offer. A final job interview can be a very tense time for both the interviewer and interviewee. The job-seeker is anxious to prove him and land the job he wants. The questioner has gone through several processes to weed out bad candidates and is almost certain that the person in front of her is the optimal choice. A candidate's poor performance will force the employer to start the search again.

g) Offer

A job offer is an invitation for a potential employee, whether he or she has applied for a job, or not, to become an employee in your organization. The job offer contains the details of your employment offer. The initial job offer may be extended verbally, but most employers follow up with a written job offer that may take the form of a job offer letter or an employment contract. A job offer typically contains the salary that you are offering for the job, your standard employee benefits, the job title of the position you are offering, the name of the supervisor of the position, and other terms and conditions of employment. The job offer may be negotiable, depending on the position[8].

The Building Blocks of AQ

One has to know the intricacies of AQ and what is the magic formula that helps employees to perform efficiently and effectively keeping all sorts of burn outs intact, the three factors are:-

- Cognitive Psychology-One's ability to deal with adversity influences all aspects of performance and success
- Neurophysiology-The brain is equipped to form habits. Those habits can be changed or formed to overcome adversity

- Psychoneuroimmunology-There is a direct link with how we mentally deal with stress and our physical health and wellness

Technical Overview for the AQ Profile

Reliability and Validity

The AQ Profile (8.1) is an oppositional, scale-based, forced-choice questionnaire designed to gauge an individual's resilience that is, their capacity to respond constructively to difficulties by eliciting their hardwired response pattern to a broad range of adverse events[3].

Applied Across Cultures

The AQ Profile has been tested across respondents from 51 countries and has demonstrated strong universality and applicability across cultures.

Normative Scale

The AQ Profile is normative, meaning higher scores are generally superior, reflecting greater overall resilience and effectiveness.

Highly Reliable

In studies conducted by an independent psychometrician trained at Educational Testing Service (ETS) in the U.S., the AQ Profile and each of its CORE dimensions have been shown to be highly reliable. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) can range from zero to one. In repeated, independent studies conducted by ETS (the producer of the SAT), the AQ Profile and each of its CORE dimensions have been shown to be highly reliable, or consistent. The Profile has an overall reliability of .91, higher than most popularly accepted psychological instruments and achievement tests.

Norms

AQ scores are presently available from a diverse sample of 500,000 employees and students in 37 different companies and educational institutions worldwide. The distribution of their AQ scores provides norms against which anyone taking the AQ Profile can compare his or her score.

Mean and Range

AQ scores range from 40 to 200, with a global mean of 154.5. When measured, most groups reflect a fairly broad range of two or more standard deviations in either direction from the mean, as well as a standard bell curve distribution of AQ scores. AQ means vary from group to group based on occupation and industry. A general finding is that those in what are stereotypically the adversity rich occupations tend to have the highest average AQs. Conversely, groups in the most stable occupations often score below the global mean, validating the notion that people tend to select occupations based on their AQ. The AQ Profile® has been tested extensively and shows no age, gender,

or ethnicity bias. It is the most robust instrument in existence for measuring resilience.

Resilience through AQ a global best practice

- AQ is exceptionally robust whereby it can be validly and reliably measured for a broad range of contexts and purpose.
- AQ is scientifically grounded as it is based on the landmark breakthroughs in eight foundational sciences, drawing from more than 1,500 studies over 37 years and from applications with more than 5,00,000 people worldwide.
- AQ can be permanently rewired and improved, as many witness groups that complete AQ programs improve their AQ's 11 to 23 percent on average a statistically significant gain and these gains stick over time.
- AQ is flexible as it can be easily adapted to a broad range of uses and enterprises.

The AQ Profile is the most robust instrument in existence for assessing resilience, the capacity to respond constructively to adversity and challenges of all sorts. AQ is the most scientifically robust and widely used method in the world for measuring and strengthening human resilience. Top leaders, industry leading companies, and governments worldwide use AQ to enhance or transform the following attributes to an increasing level like Performance, Productivity, Innovation, Agility, Change, Pace, Problem solving, Optimism, Engagement, Morale, Retention, Energy, Hiring, Development, Coaching, People, Leadership and Culture[9].

Conclusion

The applicants have to take up the AQ test to realize their AQ scores and it will tell a lot about themselves which they may have not known, as it provides with a transparent feedback and helps them to realize about themselves as how they respond to adverse situations which is building pressure and stress in dealing with real life situations and if it is left unchecked these patterns of poor responses will remain with them for life time so one has to seek honest and positive feedback and rectify your fixed response

patterns. C2ORE is the ultimate tool to find out your Adversity Quotient:

- a. Control- How much control do you have over the adversity?
- b. Origin- Who or what is the origin of the adversity?
- c. Ownership-What part to I have in the adverse situation?
- d. Reach-How far will the adversity reach to other aspects of my life?
- e. Endurance -How long will the adversity last?

With this magic tool employer and employee can change their thought process, change the dimensions of dealing with work life problems by attaining success, prosperity and stress free healthy life style.

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