

Chapter 4

Application of Lens Model in HRM Research: An Effective Tool for Measurement and Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The appropriate use of data-gathering tools and statistical analysis is a formidable challenge in several domains of HRM research. The application of Brunswik's lens mode offers an innovative strategy in this context. Brunswik's lens model is presented and its procedural application as suggested by Hammond in terms of social judgment theory is elaborated. A broad range of application domains including multiple-cue learning, cognitive conflict, policy formation and social issues is described. Studies carried out in Indian context are reviewed. The immense possibility of application in HRM domain is indicated. The idiographic-statistical elements are pointed out. It is asserted that the application of lens model in HRM research would pave the way for greater elegance and expansion of research.

INTRODUCTION

A basic problem in social and behavioral research concerns measurement and analytic tools. While measurement of relevant variables is generally carried out in the form of questionnaires, survey instruments and psychometric tests, the scientific rigor demands that two fundamental requirements be met. First, the tools must have culture-

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specific meaningfulness. Second, the measuring devices must have equivalence across groups or cultures. Cross-cultural investigators term it emic-etic dilemma.

The recent emphasis on globalization with its catchy slogan “think globally and act locally” has stressed scientific efforts to look for novel ways of dealing with this emic-etic dilemma. Egon Brunswik’s lens model offers immense possibilities to meet challenges in this direction.

THE IDIOGRAPHIC APPROACH

In mainstream research, the basic objective is to compare groups with respect to one or more variables. This is termed nomothetic approach. In contrast, the idiographic approach examines the complexity of individuals trying to secure adaptation with an uncertain environment. While several cues are available in an environment and these cues can be utilized to maximize one’s adjustment, people differ with respect to the extent of cue utilization. For example, an intelligent person may identify a wise person on the basis of cues such communication skill and analytical ability of the target person. On the other hand, a schizophrenic may identify a wise person on the basis of his or her dress and hair style. Similarly, a competent doctor may diagnose a disease correctly on the basis of cues that indicate main symptoms of the diseases. In contrast, a quack may handpick incorrect symptoms as cues and may lead to wrong conclusion. While examining, care is taken to make sure that the individual is utilizing cues consistently in statistical sense of the term. That’s why the approach is termed idiographic-statistical approach.

Egon Brunswik (1952) gave a formal expression of probabilistic functionalism. It is concerned with nature of the organism’s adaptation to its environment. Brunswik believed that the fundamental problem in behavioral science is that of studying how the organism comes to terms with an uncertain environment. He argued that it is wrong to seek general laws of behavior, rather it is appropriate to seek general description of behavior.

Another distinctive feature of Brunswik’s methodology involves its representative design, not the systematic design. In representation design, the investigator attempts to find out whether or not the individual is utilizing specific cues consistently across a representative sample of tasks. The idiographic element looks into the consistency across trials whereas representative feature entails consistency across situations.

Egon Brunswik (1952, 1956) is a prominent cross-cultural psychologist. He introduced the concept of lens model as a way of conceptualizing the environment in general and cultural environment in particular. Later Kenneth R. Hammond (1966) proposed the empirical framework of social judgment theory with a view

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