Fairness in the Higher Education Admissions Procedure: The Psychometric Entrance Test in Arabic

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to examine whether the higher education admissions process in Israel discriminates against the Arab population. The specific measures examined were the criterion – the grade-point average at the end of the first year of university studies (FGPA) and six predictors, namely the high school matriculation certificate (HSM), the Psychometric Entrance Test (PET), its three subtests (Verbal, Quantitative and English) and the composite admission score (a combination of the HSM and the PET). The question of fairness was analyzed from two points of view, differential validity and differential prediction. It was found that the validity of the predictors is considerably higher among the examinees in Hebrew than among the examinees in Arabic. Regarding the differential prediction it was found that in very few cases, the FGPA is under-predicted for the examinees in Arabic, whether the predictor is the HSM, the PET or the composite admission score. On the other hand, the criterion is over-predicted in quite a number of instances, especially when the HSM is used as the predictor. The effect size of the differences between the examinees in Arabic and in Hebrew was also calculated, separately for the academic departments with under- and over-prediction, as well as for the unbiased ones.