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Report on: Statistical Practice - Factors Relating to the Degree to Which Statistical Consulting Clients Deem Their Consulting Experiences to be a Success, H. Dean JOHNSON and Dennis A. WARNER, *The American Statistician*, November 2004, Vol. 58, No. 4]

Johnson et al in the article "Statistical Practice" identify several factors relating to a successful statistical consulting experience. Students/faculty from West University (WU) and East University (EU) who have consulted the respective helpdesks participated in the survey. The survey is designed to identify factors such as the personality, statistical knowledge the consultant possesses etc and determine to what extent they contribute to success of a consulting assignment.

The survey consisted of questions that can be broadly categorized into two motivation groups:

Personality of the consultant

- whether the consultant is interested in the research problem statistics
- how communicative and accommodative he is
- and how enthusiastic he is

Collaborative skills of the consultant

- perceived statistical competence of the consultant
- depth of understanding of client's problem etc...

The remaining questions measure whether a client has requested a specific consultant, covariates such as gender, race among many others.

The authors used combination of multivariate techniques to assess co-linearity among the covariates. Factor analysis is used to identify the latent factors. Using the reduced number of explanatory variables, an ordinal logistic regression is performed to analyze the "importance" of these factors in defining the success.

Key findings from the paper are:

It is important that a consultant be able to communicate and emote well with the client. It is not enough if the consultant possess competent technical skills. It was also found that a consultant having history of "pleasing the client in the past" is more likely to please the client in the future as well.

In terms of the generality and limitations of the methods:

The study focused on two universities that may not represent all of the educational institutions. Even though the findings are quite intuitive, they may not generalize well with the populations. Further, they achieved 51% turn-around and mention that non-response could limit the applicability of the study.

Score for further study:

The paper tries to address the issues related to statistical consulting in a university set-up but it is not comprehensive. For example, issues that are important in a consulting assignment such as "number of appointments made", "how often did the clients change their consultants" etc..