

Psychological Assessment

Introduction

Learning Objectives:

- To *understand* **sound administration, interpretation and write** up psychological assessments
- Too fully understand the importance of a valid, standardised and reliable psychological assessment;
- To understand barriers to sound assessment and to develop skills to address them when encountered;
 - There are always barriers and the impact these may have on the results
- To understand the link between assessments and treatment;
- To understand the ethical issues involved in psychological assessment

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT:

How are you being assessed?

- Being assessed differently in all different contexts
- Assessing others in all different situations
 - Assessments of safety, avoiding hazards
- Assessments when driving

What?

- Personality
- Cognitive Function
 - Intelligence
 - Neuropsychological assessments
- Aptitudes and interests
 - Education
 - Occupation
- Creativity
- Behavioural assessments
- Achievement tests

Why?

The most important thing is to know why you are doing the assessment – what exactly do you want to know?

- What is the referral question?
 - Needs to be very clear
- To draw inferences based on the outcomes of the assessment
 - If achievement score is significantly lower than intelligence score, this might mean?
 - If the person's ability to cognitively shift set is impaired despite sound verbal abilities, this might mean?
 - If an army recruit scores high on conscientiousness, this might mean?
 - These inferences can have a big impact on somebody's life

How?

- Interviews
 - Involved in nearly all assessments
 - Structured clinical interviews
- Observation
 - Examiner
 - Parents, teachers

- Computer testing
- In person testing
- Paper and pencil testing

Many sources of influence in testing

- Standardization
 - All tests need to be done in the same way despite who is conducting them to compare the results
- Desirable procedures
- The influence of the examiner
- The influence of the examinee

Standardization

- Consistency in administration, scoring and interpretation across settings, examiners, and contexts
- Based on 4 key things:
 - Competency
 - The more competent you are the less likely you are to drift from standardisation
 - Knowledge
 - The more you know about the test the more able you are to consistently administer the test and be prepared for variations
 - Familiarity
 - Practice

The Referral Question

- Possible the most important – and most overlooked – part of an assessment
- Referral must be:
 - Clear
 - Specific
 - Appropriate
 - Possible

Example Referrals:

- Is this person suited to group mindfulness therapy?
 - Not specific
 - Not clear what is trying to be assessed
- Is this student's drop in grades due to intellectual impairment?
 - Not specific – what are possible explanations for this decline? What has happened?
- Is this person suited to a career as a military officer?
 - What makes a good officer?
 - What needs to be assessed?
 - Intelligence?
 - What level of intelligence? High, low, somewhere in the middle?
- Does this person have sufficient cognitive capacity to make decisions about their own medical treatment?
 - What medical treatment?
 - What effects this ability?
 - How much cognitive capacity does a person need to have?
 - Age?