

# **Testing, Assessment, & Diagnosis in Counselling**

EDPY 442: Intro to Counselling

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# Assessment

- The procedures and processes of collecting information and measures of human behavior.
- A total picture of the person.
- Involves a combination of procedures, such as diagnostic interviews, tests, checklists, behavioral observation and reports by significant others.
- Structured clinical interviews provide diagnostic and descriptive data.

# Assessments in Counselling

- To obtain information on the client's presenting problem
- To identify other variables associated with the problem
- To determine client goals
- To gather baseline data as part of ongoing evaluation and treatment
- To educate and motivate client
- Treatment planning

# Mental Status Examination

- Appearance – physical characteristic, attitude, activity level
- Mood and Affect
- Speech and language
- Thought process (organization, flow), content and perception (delusions, phobias)
- Cognition
- Insight and judgment

# Diagnosis

- A description of a person's condition that is usually translated into a classification system.
- It is a measure in time, not a fixed entity.
- Negative diagnosis may set up self-fulfilling prophecies for clients.
- When used appropriately diagnoses can: Describe a person's functioning, provide a common language, lead to consistent care, focus treatment planning, and help counselors fit clients within their scope of trt.

# Diagnosis as a Guide

- A general and short description of a client's current functioning
- As means for clear communication between clinicians – most important
- To help direct and focus treatment planning
- A guide that ensures consistent and continual care
- Ensure that counsellors work with clients within their scope of care

# DSM-IV-TR Multiaxial System

## Five Axes:

- I - Clinical syndromes (e.g.: 305.00 alcohol abuse, moderate).
- II - Personality disorders and mental limitations (317.00 mild mental retardation)
- III - General medical condition (chronic pain)
- IV - Psychosocial and environmental problems (divorced, unemployed, no friends)
- V - Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) or Global Assessment of Relational Functioning (GARF) (e.g.: GARF=40).

# Arguments Against Using Tests in Counselling

- Encourages dependence on an external source
- Tests are culturally biased and inappropriate for many minority groups
- Measure irrelevant skills and obscure client talent
- Administrative problems – mechanical administration, malingering, invade privacy
- Can prejudice counsellor's view of client
- Data can be invalid and unreliable



# Arguments For Using Tests in Counselling

- Increases client self understanding
- Evaluation of client needs and counsellor qualification
- Assists with selection of intervention methods
- Prediction of client's performance in the future – e.g. career counselling
- Helps stimulate new areas of interests within clients
- Assist with evaluation of outcome of counselling efforts

# Test Qualities

- Validity – the degree to which a test measures what it claims to measure
- Reliability – the degree to which a test produces consistent scores when people are retested with the same or equivalent measure.
- Standardization - conditions (uniform) in which a test is administered - important for comparison (of scores over time and with other people's scores)
- Norms – average performance scores for specific groups that assist with comparison in relation to what can be expected.

# Personality Tests

- Personality - can be defined in many ways and is culturally-biased
- Personality tests are either objective or projective
- The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2)  
Most widely used psychological test. Has a separate form for adolescents: 10 clinical (depression, paranoia etc.) and 3 validity scales
- The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)
- Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

# Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

**Favorite World:** Extraversion (E) vs. Introversion (I)

You enjoy having a wide circle of acquaintances: Y/N

**Information:** Sensing (S) vs. Intuition (I)

You are inclined to rely more on improvisation than on careful planning: Y/N

**Decisions:** Thinking (T) vs. Feeling

Strict observance of the established rules is likely to prevent a good outcome :Y/N

**Structure:** Judging (J) vs. Perceiving (P)

You are almost never late for your appointments Y/N

# Achievement Tests

- Evaluates learning in a specific subject or task compared to others.
- In school settings provide direct evaluation of students in relation to their age and grade-level.
- Communication tool between school personnel and parents.
- Adult achievement tests
  - Tests of functional literacy exams
  - Professional achievement exams
- Often used by psychologists as part of a larger battery of tests.

# Intelligence/Aptitude Tests

- An instrument designed to measure an individual's aptitude for scholastic work or other kinds of occupations requiring verbal ability and reasoning (Aiken, 1997)
- Intelligence tests are validated against measures of academic achievement and are often designated as tests of scholastic aptitude.
- Aptitude tests measure a person's ability to profit from further training or experience in an occupation or skill (e.g.: Scholastic Aptitude Test).

# Interest/Career Tests

- Assesses a person's preferences for activities and topics.
- Interest tests are used frequently in career counseling.
- Strong Interest Inventory: Encompasses 207 occupations. Also incorporates Holland's theory of career development, which proposes six types of people: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional.

# Interest/Career Tests

## Holland's Six Categories of Personality

