

# Sentence completion test essay



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Tests are used to measure. In different fields, there are tests specifically designed to measure a specific thing. In psychology, a projective test is a type of personality test in which the individual offers responses to ambiguous scenes, words or images (Cherry, 2010). Projective tests are widely used in this field because of its capability to explore one's unconscious and reveal those hidden from conscious awareness. There are a number of different projective tests one of which is the Sentence Completion Test. According to Lubin, Larsen, and Matarazzo (1984 as cited by Knoff, 1986) in a survey, sentence completion test was among the 10 most frequently used tests. This particular test is popular in eliciting the psycho diagnostic information on individual's need states, attitudes, and personality dynamics.

The sentence completion test consists of a number of incomplete sentences which an individual completes either orally or in writing (Knoff, 1986).

Responses to these sentence stems are voluntary and limited to the range of attitudes and feelings that they elicit from within the individual. An expert then analyzes the responses provided by the individual and used these responses to determine attitudes, personality styles, and dynamics. Like any other projective tests, the sentence completion test also faces controversies and debates.

The subjectivity of the process is the primary concerns of some who questions this test. Among all the projective tests, the sentence completion test has many types. We will discuss the different types later on this paper. Among the different types of sentence completion tests the notable similarities among them are their formats. All of these tests includes

sentence stems related to self-image and emotions, perceptions of significant others, and environment. They all vary just with their content, as well as their length, complexity and purpose (Knoff, 1986).

## HISTORY OF SENTENCE COMPLETION TEST

Historically, the sentence completion test was developed to measure individual's mental abilities as well as to gain insight to their attitudes and personalities (Knoff, 1986). Ebbinghaus (1897) hypothesized that different mental abilities could be identified through the analysis of incomplete sentence responses. The more complex the responses are the more it reflect greater mental capacity, while simple and undeveloped answers were to reflect inferior mental abilities Ebbinghaus' sentence completion task was included in Binet and Simon's intelligence scale. In the last 25 years, the use of sentence completion to measure mental abilities has weakened because of the existence of more reliable measures in assessing mental abilities.

Word association has said to be the forerunner of sentence completion test. Carl Jung explored on the idea that much could be learned from the inner life of a person by eliciting their associations with words (Weiner, Greene, 2008). Expanded research on this idea, elicited that greater depth of feeling can be expressed from one-word stimuli to incomplete sentences.

During World War II, there was a great demand for sentence completion test. It was used for the evaluation and placement of American Soldiers. The success of the usage of this test to military screening gave way to the development of a 40-item sentence completion test by Rotter and Willerman used in military hospitals. Later on the test was adapted and was used for <https://assignbuster.com/sentence-completion-test-essay/>

the general civilian population and was named Incomplete Sentence Blank (ISB: Rotter, Rafferty, & Schachtiz, 1949 as cited by Knoff, 1986). The Incomplete Sentence Blank served as a general model to the other developing sentence completion tests.

#### FOUR ELEMENTS OF THE SENTENCE COMPLETION TEST

In developing the sentence completion test considerations in terms of purpose, form and administration, and interpretation must be considered. These are basic elements of this test and are present and common on all sentence completion tests. Determining the characteristics of each sentence completion test, creator or developer makes the following decisions with regard to the four elements (Knoff, 1986):

1. What is the target population and what kind of information should the test provide about that population?
2. What diagnostic information is desired, and thus what sentence stem content and structure should be used to elicit this information?
3. What test administration procedures should be developed to prepare and facilitate
4. How can the responses to the sentence stem be analyzed to ensure valid assessment of the desired information and an appropriate understanding of the individual subject?

The following decisions involve standardization and methodological procedures. It helps in assessing appropriate population samples,

establishing scoring and normative criteria; determine its reliability and validity and adequate interpretation of data.

## PURPOSE

Social Scientists use sentence completion test in determining attitudes of individuals which are difficult to obtain in mere questionnaire format. The open-ended structure of SCTs provide clinicians with client's verbal quotes and a wider range of unique information that cannot be obtained by other tests. The information obtain is used to analyze attitudes in relation to environment, as well as other factors. This test provides respondents with beginnings or stems of questions and respondents complete the sentence in ways that are meaningful to them. The responses are believed to provide indication of attitudes, beliefs, motivations, or other mental states ( Rhode, 1957; Lah, 1989). SCTs address issues such as: Self-Concept, Self-Esteem, Relations with Adults, Problems, Peer Relations, and Self-Control

Many social scientists used this test in different researches. The different sentence completion tests serve different purpose. The Rhode Sentence Completion Method was developed to explore the dynamics of neurotic personality disorder and better understand schizophrenic patients. The Sacks Sentence Completion test was developed to explore on the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious thoughts and feelings.

## FORM

The purposes of developing a test direct its form. Form refers to the content and structure of the sentence stems (Knoff, 1986). The content of each

sentence stem is designed to increase the likelihood of the individual taking the test to reveal conscious and unconscious attitudes and constructs of personality. Thus the content of the sentence stem must be aligned on what the practitioner is trying to explore. For instance if the practitioner were exploring on children's hidden conflicts, the content of the sentence stem might refer to mother, sex or fears. A researcher studying students' perception of school might include words such as math, recess or teachers (Knoff, 1986).

The detail and specificity of the sentence stem is referred to as the structure. A content of stem that focuses on specific topic are structured and directs individual's thinking and responses. Unstructured stem on the other hand has stimuli which are ambiguous which gives a wide range of possible responses.

The form of the sentence stem plays a vital role in developing sentence completion test. Forms must be aligned to the purpose of the practitioner to elicit responses that corresponds with the purpose.

## ADMINISTRATION

There are variations in terms of the administration of the sentence completion test this occurs because of the different formats, instructions or directions given to the subjects, and behavioral observations among the tests.

## INTERPRETATION

The data collected from SCTs can usually be analyzed either quantitatively or qualitatively. SCTs usually include some formal coding procedure or manual. SCT ‘ test’ stimuli are standard and the ‘ tests’ are administered in a standardized fashion. However there are no cited objective scoring nor are there reliability or validity data for SCT. Interpretive suggestions include examining the general tone. A score would permit verification of the composition of the scales. The SCTs seem to reveal anxieties and hostilities whereas the report reveals only the rationalizations or sublimated motives.

#### STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS OF SENTENCE COMPLETION TEST

Validity and Reliability are difficult to obtain. Since the test is assessing the projection of the unconscious and is a carryover from Psychoanalytic theory these testing factors can be lacking.

The validity of each sentence completion test must be determined independently and this depends on the instructions laid out in the scoring manual.

There are some expectations regarding normal answers to the stems, but generally projective tests are asking the clinician to interpret the data. Thus like any other projective tests the SCT is highly subjective because interpretation of data are dependent on the clinician’s interpretation.

The strength of the SCT is that it gives room for free responses because of its open-ended structure. This test unlike others is very easy to administer and very brief in nature. It is also a tool for engaging for client and can become part of clinical interview.