

# Introduction to psychological testing

Psychology



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Introduction to Psychological Testing Paper The American Psychological Association, or APA, (2011), suggests that psychological assessments are an integral part of clinical psychology. Psychological assessments, or psychological testing, are used by skilled professionals, commonly psychologists, to learn either general or specific facts about people, either to inform others of how they function now, or to predict their behavior and functioning in the future (Psych Page, 2011). Throughout the course of this paper, the major assumptions and fundamental questions associated with psychological testing will be examined. This paper will define the term test, describe the major categories of tests, and identify the major uses and users of these tests. Additionally, this paper will also compare and contrast the concepts of reliability and validity and discuss how they affect the field of psychological testing. The Term Test Defined According to Hogan (2007), the term test can be defined in a number of ways. Originally, the term test was used to describe a cup “ used for smelting gold or silver ore, perhaps an apropos reference for some high-stakes testing today” (Hogan, 2007, p, 38). In present society, the term test is typically defined as being any assessments that are designed to measure peoples’ abilities, knowledge, behaviors, personalities, or skills. The term test can also be defined as “ any means, often formally contrived, used to elicit responses to which human behavior in other contexts can be related” (psychological testing, 2011, para 2). Hogan (2007) suggests that regardless of these various definitions of the term test, there are six common elements in what defines the term in the behavioral sciences. These six elements include procedure or device, information, behavior and cognitive processes, sample, systematic and standardized, and quantification or measurement (Hogan, 2007). Therefore, <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-to-psychological-testing/>

Hogan (2007) defines the term test as being “ a standardized process or device that yields information about a sample of behavior or cognitive processes in a quantified manner” (p. 41). Major Categories of Psychological Tests Hogan (2007) stipulates that there are four major categories of psychological tests. The first of these categories is mental ability tests. Mental ability tests include individually administered intelligence tests, group-administered intelligence tests, and a number of other ability tests, or intelligence tests (Hogan, 2007). The second major category of psychological tests is achievement tests. Achievement tests include achievement batteries, single-subject tests that cover one specific topic, licensing and certification tests for a number of professional fields, statewide achievement tests on general knowledge subjects, and individually administered achievement tests (Hogan, 2007). The third major category of psychological tests is personality tests. The tests in this category include objective personality tests, projective techniques tests, and tests of vocational interest measures (Hogan, 2007). Finally, the fourth category of psychological tests is neuropsychological tests. According to Hogan (2007), the typical neuropsychological tests include tests of memory for verbal and figural material, psychomotor coordination, and also abstract thinking. Major Uses and Users of Tests Psychological tests can be used in four major contexts (Hogan, 2007). One such context is clinical use. Clinical psychologists, counselors, school psychologists, and neuropsychologists each use psychological tests to help people with some type of problem; these problems may range from severe, such as a mental illness, to minor, such as selecting which college to attend or choosing a college major. In clinical use, psychological testing “ helps to identify the nature and severity of the

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problem and, perhaps, provides some suggestions about how to deal with the problem" (Hogan, 2007, p. 12). Another context of psychological tests is educational use. The results of various psychological assessments are used in educational settings, specifically by teachers, educational administrators, parents, and even the general public, especially by officials such as legislators and school boards (Hogan, 2007). Psychological tests are used in educational settings in order to determine the levels of student learning and to predict students' future success in their academic work. The next context of psychological testing is personnel or employment use. Psychological tests are used by businesses and even the military to select prospective employees or candidates and to allocate human resources as best as possible (Hogan, 2007). The final major context of psychological tests is research use. In research settings, psychological tests are used by skilled professionals from the fields of psychology, education, and other social/behavioral sciences. According to Hogan (2007), these tests serve as the operational definition of the dependant variable and are also used for the purposes of describing samples and performing research on the tests themselves. Reliability and Validity According to Hogan (2007), reliability refers to the stability of test scores, specifically whether the results are consistent, regardless of what the test is intended to measure. Several methods can be used to determine the reliability of a test; such methods include test/re-test, inter-scorer, alternate form, and internal consistency. Validity, on the other hand, refers to what a test measures, specifically whether the test measures what it was intended to measure. Evidence of validity can be classified into several types, including face validity, content validity, and criterion-related validity. Hogan (2007) states that test

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measures can be reliable without being valid, but they cannot be valid without first being reliable. Affects on Psychology The reliability and validity of psychological assessments are vital to the field of psychology.

Psychological tests, as previously suggested, are used for a number of purposes, in particular to gain an understanding of peoples' behavioral patterns and cognitive processes. In order for the results and data generated by psychological tests to be considered useful and, thus, utilized in clinical, educational, employment, or research settings, the tests must be relatively reliable and valid. Conclusion As previously mentioned, psychological tests are designed to aid psychologists in developing hypotheses about individuals and their behavior, personalities, and capabilities (Psych Page, 2011). These tests are also used to predict the future behavior and functioning of people (Psych Page, 2011). Throughout the course of this paper, the major assumptions and fundamental questions associated with psychological testing have been examined. This paper has defined the term test, described the major categories of tests, and has identified the major uses and users of these tests. Furthermore, this paper has also compared and contrasted the concepts of reliability and validity and discussed how these concepts affect the field of psychological testing. References American Psychological Association. (2011). Psychological assessments. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/pas/index.aspx> Hogan, T. P. (2007). Psychological testing: A practical introduction (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Psych Pages. (2011). Introduction to psychological assessment. Retrieved from <http://www.psychpage.com/learning/library/assess/assess.html>