
UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO ASSESSMENT: DEFINITION, DESCRIPTION AND DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN TESTING AND ASSESSMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Assessment is the process of collecting information with regard to abilities, interest, aptitude, personality, attitude and beliefs. It is an integral part of day to day life, and is one of the important work of the counselor. Without assessment the counselor can not reach any conclusion; so it is a basic step to get information related to the client. For psychological assessment in counseling the counselor uses various assessment techniques for which the most known is the standardized tools named as psychological test to assess clients' behaviour. Formal assessment is planned and is based on certain predetermined criteria whereas some assessment techniques are non standardized such as case study, interview, observation etc. In this unit you'll know the principles, purpose and methods of assessment, the difference between psychological assessment and testing, and different types of psychological tests.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the meaning of psychological assessment;
- Differentiate between psychological assessment and psychological testing;
- Describe the purposes for which psychological assessment is used;
- List out the important principles of assessment;
- Describe the different methods of assessment;
- Select a good psychological test; and
- Describe the different types of psychological tests.

1.2 MEANING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Let us first define the term assessment. It can be defined as “the use of standards or systematic procedure for observing our behaviour.” Assessment describes the status of a phenomenon at a particular time; it describes without value judgment a situation that prevails; it attempts no explanation of underlying reasons and makes no recommendations for action. It may deal with prevailing opinion, knowledge, practice, or conditions. The definition of assessment for our purpose can be the process of collecting information to be used as the basis for informed decision by the assessor or by those to whom results are communicated.

Psychological assessment usually involves a more comprehensive assessment of the individual. This process of assessment makes use of psychological tests or other qualitative method. Therefore, it is a process of collecting information which can be formal, informal, qualitative and quantitative.

Psychological assessment is a process that involves the integration of information from multiple sources, such as tests related to ability, intelligence, interests or attitudes, as well as information from personal interviews. Collateral information is also collected about personal, occupational, or medical history, such as from records or from interviews with parents, spouses, teachers, or previous therapists or physicians. Moreover the psychological assessment is a structured interview that gathers information from and/or tests a person to evaluate his or her mental health. It is “an extremely complex process of solving problems (answering questions) in which psychological tests are often used as one of the methods of collecting relevant data” (Anastasi, 1990).

The psychological assessment gathers information about the individual to provide him/her guidance and counseling. It is the first step in any guidance and counseling situation. The process typically starts with a key complaint or presenting problem—this is usually what prompts the person to seek help. A complete psychological assessment should include: bio psychosocial history, neurological assessment, psychological testing and physical examination.

Once it is completed, the assessment will help to establish either a tentative or definitive diagnosis. With this information, the counselor can inform to the client about the results, and psycho therapy/counseling can be given.

Thus, a psychological assessment is the attempt of a skilled professional, usually a psychologist, to use the techniques and tools of psychology to learn either general or specific facts about another person, either to inform others of how they function now, or to predict their behaviour and functioning in the future.

Maloney and Ward describe assessment as follows. It

- 1) Typically does not involve defined procedures or steps
- 2) Frequently uses tests
- 3) Contributes to some decision process to some problem, often by redefining the problem, breaking the problem down into smaller pieces, or highlighting some part(s) of the problem
- 4) Requires the examiner to consider, evaluate, and integrate the data
- 5) Produces results that can not be evaluated solely on psychometric grounds
- 6) Is less routine and inflexible, more individualised.

The point of assessment is often diagnosis or classification. These are the act of placing a person in a strictly or loosely defined category of people. This allows us to quickly understand what they are like in general, and to assess the presence of other relevant characteristics based upon people similar to them.

Assessments can be both process and product oriented. Process-oriented assessments do not necessarily produce a finished product; they are primarily tools used to guide ongoing relationships to direct activities and plans. Of course, assessments frequently overlap in their nature and purpose. Product-oriented assessments are assessments that result in the creation of a report or document. For example, a medical history is required when patients are hospitalized and mental status examinations and their results concerning emotional and cognitive functioning are documented.

1.3 PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

The purposes of assessment in guidance and counseling situation are as follows:

- 1) **Self Understanding:** The basic purpose of carrying out an assessment is for gaining insight in helping the client understand themselves better, helping them to know what they can do and cannot do including their strengths and weaknesses.
- 2) **To Diagnose Student's Problem:** To diagnose the client's problem is another purpose that assessment data fulfills. By using the data properly, we can interpret causal factors. It also helps to identify various aspects such as family background, physical health, academic performance etc
- 3) **To Help in Career Planning and Education:** Assessment done with the help of various psychological tools guides the students in making choices for their career and selection of subjects/courses.
- 4) **To Help Predict the Future Performance:** Counselors use assessment data to estimate individual's attitude, ability, personality, etc that have implication for the success and adjustment which help to predict the future performance of the individual. Moreover, the counselor can also motivate the client in a direction where he /she can get more success.

- 5) **To Evaluate the Outcome of Counseling:** Assessment is done prior to counselling as well as at the end of it. This gives the counselor valuable insights for further intervention and to achieve the expected outcome.

1.4 PRINCIPLE OF ASSESSMENT

The principles of assessment have been given by Shertzer and Linden which states that assessment should be Holistic, Ongoing, Balanced, Accurate and Confidential. These are explained below.

- 1) **Assessment should be Holistic:** This principle involves multiple methods in collecting information. The use of a combination of assessment techniques increases the likelihood of applying positive intervention and consequently the achievement of the desired goals. The principle of holistic assessment follows a systematic process to arrive at an understanding of the individual. To make the assessment process more systematic a counselor needs to keep in mind three important factors i.e. What to assess, when to assess and in which state of assessing is required.

Assessment should be within the context of life pattern of the individual, i.e., supportive information regarding other aspects of the person need also to be considered to better understand the problem. For example, a student may experience difficulty in school due to limited academic preparation. However, it may not be the only factor; other factor such as self esteem which might not be evident, but could influence the academic achievement of the students.

Assessment measures and procedures must be based on the demands of the situation. The selection of the tool and procedure to be used will depend on the demands of the presented situation. Therefore, first the basic data should be collected and examined before obtaining information on the supporting factors through administering different tests.

Special condition and situation for understanding client's behaviour should also be given due consideration in the process of assessment. In addition to this the counselor should also keep in mind the capacity, motivation and other aspects related to client's behaviour while assessing. The counselor should be alert to behaviour which is observable through nonverbal cues. Nonverbal behaviour shows many hints which can be noted through body posture, facial expressions, hand movements etc. of the client .

In holistic assessment it is necessary for the counselor to know the culture and the social context of the client, as it can explain the nature and personality of the client. Different characteristics of the client such as self reliance, assertiveness, competitiveness and adjustment with the group members can be understood in the context of the client's cultural context.

- 2) **Assessment should be on Going:** Ongoing assessment allows comparison between the client's initial present problems and the client's current functioning. It appraises the counselor of possible new and urgent needs which may arise after the initial assessment, therefore psychological assessment must take into account the dynamics nature of the human behaviour which involves his/her needs, goals, abilities etc.

In assessment, the conceptualization of an individual must be continuous. This is important because the counselor keeps on refining his conceptualization of the client in the light of more and more information collected and interaction between the client and the counselor. Hence, assessment needs to be considered as ongoing and not episodic. As far as possible, assessment should be based on the longitudinal data i.e. understanding of individual's behaviour is better and more meaningful if the data is collected over a period of time rather than on current information. e.g. longitudinal data is helpful for the diagnosis of the maladaptive behaviours.

- 3) **Assessment should be Balanced:** Assessment makes use of normative information as well as individualised data. Both types of data combined try to give a better understanding about the client. It is the purpose and the situation that decides which type of assessment data is required.
- 4) **Assessment should be Accurate:** The assessment device used should be accurate and the counselor should have the skill for interpreting the data. Counselors must keep in mind the possibility of errors, as all tools may not be 100% accurate; so they must try to minimize the errors by using standardized procedures.

Predictions of future behaviour should always be stated in terms of probabilities as human behaviour is so complex and dynamic. Assessment therefore can only provide useful insights to derive inferences rather than making prediction in absolute terms.

- 5) **Assessment should be Confidential:** Clients need to be assured of confidentiality of their personal information. This will develop trust with the counselor. It is one of the basic ethic of counseling as well. The client will also be able to build a good rapport based on mutual trust and respect.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Define psychological assessment.

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- 2) Describe the different ways in which assessment can be used in guidance and counselling situation.

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3) What do you mean by holistic assessment?

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1.5 PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is always a systematized and planned process involving a number of steps. These are as follows:

- Formulating goals
- Identifying tools and techniques
- Data collection
- Interpreting specific assessment data
- Integrating data from different sources
- Formulating assessment information
- Reformulating goal

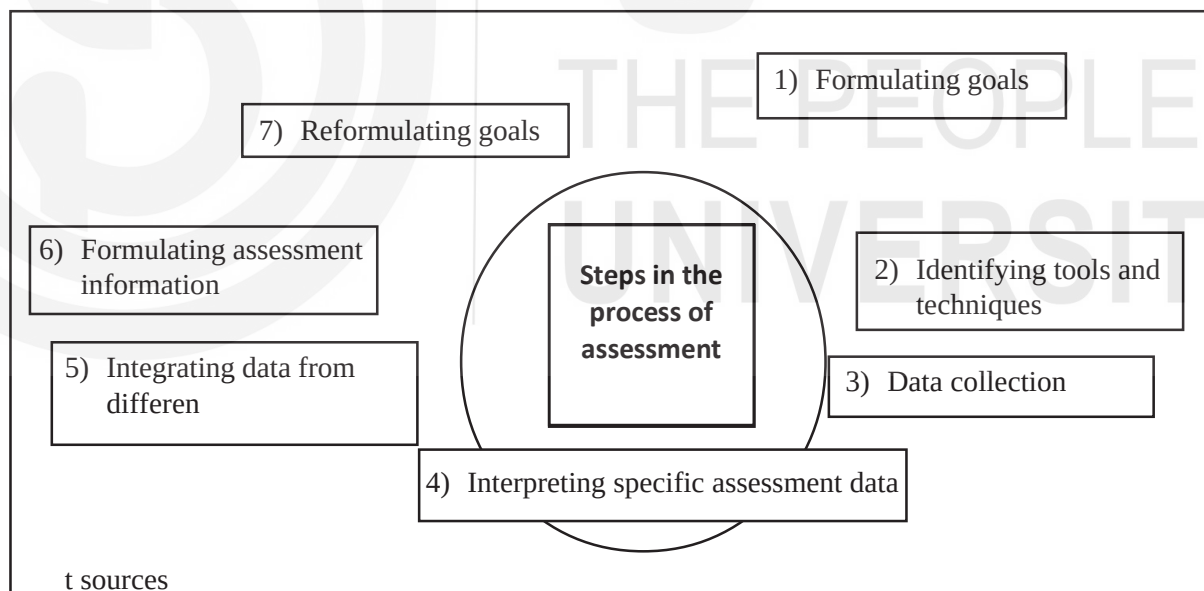


Fig. 1.1: Process of Assessment

The first step in the assessment process always starts with defining or formulating goals for counselling. According to the goals decided, the tools and techniques for assessment are identified. This assessment tools aim at providing data with regard to the goals established. Then the actual data collection process starts; the data collected then are interpreted. This results in getting information about the client and his situation. However, for a comprehensive understanding of the client, the interpretation of the data collected is also collated with data obtained from different sources. Interpretations are then translated into their implications for

various decisions, conclusions and recommendations. In the process of assessment, if the counselor finds that goals set were not properly formulated, then the goals are reformulated.

1.6 METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

The counselor can make use of different methods of assessment. It depends on the requirement of the case, e.g., if the client is suffering from mental or developmental problem, the counselor may use case study method. The various methods of assessment are interview, observation and case study. These are described below.

1.6.1 The Interview Method

The interview is probably the most commonly used assessment tool. Counselors use interview method to help gather information about clients and clarify results of other assessments. Assessors must be appropriately trained. Their skills and experience are essential for the interviewee.

Below are several aspects which must be kept in mind:

Verbal and face-to-face: what does the client tell you? How much information are they willing/able to provide?

Para-verbal: how does the client speak? At normal pace, tone, volume, inflection? What is their command on language, how well do they choose their words? Do they pick up on non-verbal cues for speech and turn taking? How organised is their speech?

Situation: Is the client cooperative? Is their participation voluntary? For what purpose is the interview conducted? Where is the interview conducted?

There can be two types of interview: Structured and Unstructured. That is, the interview can range from being totally unplanned i.e., unstructured to carefully designed i.e., completely structured.

- i) **Structured Interview:** The most structured interviews have characteristics such as standardized questions, trained interviewers, specific question order, controlled length of time, and a standardized response evaluation format. A structured interview will be more reliable and valid. It is designed to provide a diagnosis for a client by detailed questioning of the client in a “yes/no” or “definitely/somewhat/not at all” forced choice format. It is broken up into different sections reflecting the diagnosis in question. Often Structured interviews use closed questions, which require a simple pre-determined answer. Examples of closed questions are “When did this problem begin? Was there any particular stressor going on at that time? Can you tell me about how this problem started?” Closed interviews are better suited for specific information gathering.
- ii) **Unstructured Interview:** Interviews can also be less structured and allow the client more control over the topic and direction of the interview. Unstructured interviews are better suited for general information gathering. Unstructured interviews often use open questions, which ask for more

explanation and elaboration on the part of the client. Examples of open questions are “What was happening in your life when this problem started? How did you feel then? How did this all start?”

Major functions of interview method are:

Description: Interview has been found to be particularly useful in providing insight into the interactive quality of social life. The verbal interaction enables the interviewer in understanding how people view the subject under investigation.

Exploration: In this the interviewer tries to explore some new variable for study as it also helps in conceptual clarity. A review of the work done in the related area also is taken into account.

The advantage of interview method is that it allows greater flexibility in the process of questioning. It facilitates the counselor in obtaining the desired information.

1.6.2 Observation Method

Observation method is a fundamental technique of the data collection. It refers to watching and listening to the behaviour of the client over time without manipulating and controlling it. It also records findings in ways that allow some degree of analytic interpretation and discussion. Thus, observation involves broadly selecting, recording and coding behaviour; therefore, it is scientific. It tells us, How does the person act – nervous, calm, smug? What do they do and not do? Do they make and maintain eye contact? How close to you do they sit? Often, some of the most important information you can gather from the observation of behaviour. Behavioural observations may be used clinically (such as to add to interview information or to assess results of treatment).

Type of Observation Method:

- 1) Naturalistic observation
 - 2) Structured observation
 - 3) Unstructured observation
 - 4) Participative observation
- 1) **Naturalistic observation:** Naturalistic observation is particularly good for observing specific subjects. It provides ecologically valid recordings of natural behaviour. Spontaneous behaviours are more likely to happen.
 - 2) **Structured observation:** Allows control of extraneous factors and the reliability of results can be tested by repeating the study. It provides a safe environment to study contentious concepts such as infant attachment.
 - 3) **Unstructured observation:** Gives a broad overview of a situation. Useful where situation/subject matter to be studied is unclear.
 - 4) **Participant observation:** Gives an “insiders” view. Behaviors are less prone to misinterpretation because researcher is a participant. It provides opportunity for the researcher to become an “accepted” part of the environment.

The advantages of the observation method are that it removes any kind of artificiality. It is one of the valid forms of assessment as it is direct and capable of analysing the situation or behaviour of the client.

1.6.3 Case Study Method

A case study is an in-depth investigation/analysis of a single person. Counselor uses case study to investigate in detail a specific situation or person. Case studies are often used in clinical cases or in situations when lab research is not possible or practical. Typically data are gathered from a variety of sources and by using several different methods. Experiments, interviews, questionnaires, observations, diaries, and psychometric tests can all be used within a case study.

Case study can be based on an individual, a family, a social group, event, or series of events.

The case study research method originated in clinical medicine (the case history, i.e. the patient's personal history - idiographic method). The case study method often involves simply observing what happens to, or reconstructing 'the case history' of a single participant or group of individuals (such as a school class or a specific social group). Case studies allow a counselor to investigate a topic in far more detail than might be possible if they were trying to deal with a large number of research participants.

Therefore it has advantages as case study method provides sufficient basal factors of the client on which opinion can be drawn easily.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Describe the various steps in the process of assessment.

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- 2) What are the different types of observation?

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- 3) Describe the major functions of the interview method.

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1.7 MEANING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

Psychological testing is a field characterised by the use of samples of behaviour in order to assess psychological construct(s), such as cognitive and emotional functioning, about a given individual. The technical term for the science behind psychological testing is psychometrics. By samples of behaviour, one means observations of an individual performing tasks that have usually been prescribed beforehand, which often means scores on a test. These responses are often compiled into statistical tables that allow the evaluator to compare the behaviour of the individual being tested to the responses of a norm group.

Psychological tests are written, visual, or verbal evaluations administered to assess the cognitive and emotional functioning of children and adults. It is “an objective and standardized measure of a sample of behaviour.” Psychological testing is a standard procedure of measurement designed to measure characteristics, abilities, personality, etc. They are used to measure the quantified characteristics and have standards.

According to Anastasi (2003), psychological test can be defined as a sample of an individual's behaviour, obtained under standard conditions and scored according to a fixed set of rules that provide a numeric score. Test can be used to compare the same individual on one or more tests; at the same time two or more persons can also be assessed and compared. A psychological test is characterised by a standardized procedure of administration, scoring, and interpretation which are uniform across the different examiner and settings.

Thus a psychological test is an instrument designed to measure unobserved constructs, also known as latent variables. Psychological tests are typically, but not necessarily, a series of tasks or problems that the respondent has to solve. Psychological tests can strongly resemble questionnaire which are also designed to measure unobserved constructs, but differ in that psychological tests ask for a respondent's maximum performance whereas a questionnaire asks for the respondent's typical performance. A useful psychological test must be both valid (i.e., there is evidence to support the specified interpretation of the test results) and reliable (i.e., internally consistent or give consistent results over time, across raters, etc.).

1.7.1 Difference between Psychological Assessment and Psychological Testing

A term closely associated with assessment is psychological test, which Anastasi and Urbina (1997) defined as an objective and standardized measure of a sample of behaviour. Cronbach's (1990) definition is similar, with a test being a systematic procedure for observing behaviour and describing it with the aid of numerical scales or fixed categories. As these two similar definitions suggest, there are some commonalities among all the definitions of assessment. They all discuss getting a measure or using some type of measurement. In assessment, counselors often want an indication of quantity (e.g., How depressed is the client? Are the test scores high enough to get into Harvard?).

In simple terms, many test questions are related to whether there is a lot of “something” or just a little. In counseling, practitioners are often interested in

human constructs such as emotions, intelligence, personality factors, self-esteem, and aptitudes. These constructs, however, cannot be directly measured. For example, individuals cannot give a pint of emotions in the same way they can give a pint of blood. Humans, for the most part, indicate their emotions by their behaviour, their statements, or even the answers they give on a questionnaire.

It is important to remember that speaking and responding to a questionnaire are behaviours. When working with clients, a counselor must consider this sample of behaviour and then reflect on two important questions: first, is the sample of behaviour indicative of how the person usually behaves, and second, are the inferences being made correct?

Psychological assessment is similar to psychological testing but usually involves a more comprehensive assessment of the individual. Psychological assessment is a process that involves the integration of information from multiple sources, such as tests of normal and abnormal personality, tests of ability or intelligence, tests of interests or attitudes, as well as information from personal interviews. Collateral information is also collected about personal, occupational, or medical history, such as from records or from interviews with parents, spouses, teachers, or previous therapists or physicians. A psychological test is one of the sources of data used within the process of assessment; usually more than one test is used. Many psychologists do some level of assessment when providing services to clients or patients, and may use for example, simple checklists to assess some traits or symptoms, but psychological assessment is a more complex, detailed, in-depth process. Typical types of focus for psychological assessment are to provide a diagnosis for treatment settings; to assess a particular area of functioning or disability often for school settings; to help select type of treatment or to assess treatment outcomes; to help courts decide issues such as child custody or competency to stand trial; or to help assess job applicants or employees and provide career development counseling or training.

A distinction is there in assessment and testing given by AERA, APA and NCME (1999). It defines assessment as a broader term referring to a process that integrates test information with information from other sources e.g. from schools, hospitals etc.

Difference between Psychological Assessment and Psychological Testing

Psychological Assessment	Psychological Testing
1) Assessment is a broader term 2) Assessment is process of collecting information through various techniques such as formal, informal, qualitative and quantitative 3) Professional psychological assessment usually also includes: interview, demographic information, medical information, personal history, observations by others	1) Testing is a narrow term 2) Test is a standardized procedure of measurement designed to measure characteristics such as ability, personality, aptitude, interest etc. 3) Psychological testing (e.g., an intelligence test, personality test, or mental health test) occurs as <i>part</i> of the process of psychological assessment 4) An objective and standardized measure of a sample of behaviour”

4) An extremely complex process of solving problems (answering questions) in which psychological tests are often used as one of the methods of collecting relevant data 5) Information collected about the client's behaviour is more accurate and is detailed. 6) Refers to any method used to measure characteristics of people, programs, or objects 7) The assessment process combines and evaluates all the information gathered about an individual.	5) Information collected is based on test only; so little is known of client's behaviour. 6) It is a task upon which people are asked to try their best (aptitude & achievement tests). They measure maximum performance 7) A test provides only part of the picture about a person.
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Historically, testing and assessment have been important foundations of counseling and applied psychology. Tests have important roles both as tools to facilitate the goals of counseling and for assessment.

1.8 PURPOSE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

Psychological tests are used to assess a variety of mental abilities and attributes, including achievement and ability, personality, and neurological functioning.

For children, academic achievement, ability, and intelligence tests may be used as tools in school placement, in determining the presence of a learning disability or a developmental delay, in identifying giftedness, or in tracking intellectual development. Intelligence testing may also be used with teens and young adults to determine vocational ability (e.g., in career counseling).

Personality tests are administered for a wide variety of reasons, from diagnosing psychopathology (e.g., personality disorder, depressive disorder) to screening job candidates. They may be used in an educational setting to determine personality strengths and weaknesses.

Tests are thus used in the selection, classification, diagnosis, prediction. The counselor makes use of it to determine client's behaviour, know her/his personality and help the client in making educational and vocational planning.

In short it can be said that the Psychological tests are formalized measures of mental functioning. Most are objective and quantifiable; however, certain projective tests may involve some level of subjective interpretation. Also known as inventories, measurements, questionnaires, and scales, psychological tests are administered in a variety of settings, including preschools, primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, healthcare settings, and social agencies. They come in a variety of formats, including written, verbal, and computer administered.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Describe the different situations in which psychological tests are used.

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- 2) Point out the similarities and differences between psychological assessment and psychological testing.

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1.9 CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD PSYCHOLOGICAL TEST

A test used in counseling / guidance or for training and development is considered good if the following can be said about it:

- 1) The test measures what it claims to measure. For example, a test of mental ability does in fact measure mental ability and not some other characteristic.
- 2) The test measures what it claims to measure consistently or reliably. This means that if a person were to take the test again, the person would get a similar test score.
- 3) The test is purpose-relevant. In other words, the test measures one or more characteristics that are important to specific career decisions or for predicting or monitoring training and development outcomes.
- 4) By using the test, more effective decisions can be made by and about individuals. For example, an interest inventory helps you to guide a client toward careers in which he or she is more likely to be satisfied. A mechanical aptitude test may help you predict who would benefit from mechanical training.

Thus, a good test is both reliable and valid, and has good norms. Test reliability and validity are two technical properties of a test that indicate the quality and usefulness of the test. These are the two most important features of a test. The counselor should examine these features when evaluating the suitability of the test. Reliability refers to the consistency of the test results. Validity refers to how well a test measures what it says it does. Norms are designed to tell you what the result of measurement (a number) means in relation to other results (numbers).

The “normative sample” should be very representative of the sample of people who will be given the test. Thus, if a test is to be used on the general population, the normative sample should be large, include people from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds, and include people from all levels of income and educational status.

A good psychological test is thus a standardized test with a manual which gives complete information about the development of the test, administration, scoring and interpretation of the results.

However, whenever you use a psychological test you should keep in mind a few things. Good test use requires:

- Comprehensive assessment using history and test scores
- Acceptance of the responsibility for proper test use
- Consideration of the Standard Error of Measurement and other psychometric knowledge
- Maintaining integrity of test results (such as the correct use of cut-off scores)
- Accurate scoring
- Appropriate use of norms
- Willingness to provide interpretive feedback and guidance to test takers.

1.10 TYPES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS

The psychological tests vary in their content as well as the way they are administered. Thus there are verbal test and nonverbal tests; power test and speed test; group test and individual test. Psychological tests can be of various types such as achievement tests, aptitude tests, mental ability tests, interest inventories, personality inventories etc. Now let us know about these tests.

Intelligence test: IQ tests purport to be measures of intelligence, IQ (or cognitive) tests and achievement test are common norm-referenced tests. In these types of tests, a series of tasks is presented to the person being evaluated, and the person’s responses are graded according to carefully prescribed guidelines. After the test is completed, the results can be compiled and compared to the responses of a norm group, usually composed of people of the same age or grade level as the person being evaluated. IQ tests which contain a series of tasks typically divide the tasks into verbal and non verbal and performance test. Some of the important IQ tests are, Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales, Wechsler Adult Intelligence scale, Draw a man, Bhatia’s Battery of Performance Test of Intelligence, Raven’s Progressive Matrices Test.

Tests of Interest and Aptitude: Tests of Interest assesses the likes and dislikes of the client whereas aptitude tests aim at measuring the potential of the client in a particular field. These are mainly used for the educational and vocational counselling. Examples of Interest test are Strong Vocational Interest Blank and Kuder Preference Record. Commonly used aptitude tests are Differential Aptitude Test (DAT) and DBDA.

Attitude tests: Attitude tests assess an individual's feelings about an event, person, or object. Attitude scales are used in marketing to determine individual (and group) preferences for brands, or items. Typically attitude tests use either a Thurston Scale or Likert Scale to measure specific items.

Tests of Achievement: Achievement tests measure the individual's performance in a particular area. It assesses the acquisition of knowledge and skills by the individual after the completion of a course/training. Achievement tests can be standardized or informal achievement tests made by teachers. Achievement tests help in finding out the student's strengths and weaknesses in particular areas and assessing student's performance over a period of time.

Neuro-psychological tests: These tests consist of specifically designed tasks used to measure a psychological function known to be linked to a particular brain structure or pathway. They are typically used to assess impairment after an injury or illness known to affect neuro-cognitive functioning, or when used in research, to contrast neuropsychological abilities across experimental groups.

Personality tests: Personality tests and inventories evaluate the thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behavioural traits that comprise personality. The results of these tests can help determine a child's personality strengths and weaknesses, and may identify certain disturbances in personality. Psychological measures of personality consist of rating scale or self-report measures and free response measures or projective tests.

Objective tests, i.e., rating scale or self-report measure

These have a restricted response format, such as allowing for true or false answers or rating using an ordinal scale. Prominent examples of objective personality tests include the MMPI, MCMI and Child behaviour check list. Objective personality tests can be designed for use in organisations for potential employees, such as the NEO-PI, the 16PF, and the Occupational Personality Questionnaire, all of which are based on the the Big Five Factor Model of normal personality.

Projective tests (Free response measures) attempt to measure personality based on the theory that individuals tend to project their own unconscious attitudes into ambiguous situations. An example of this would be the Rorschach test, in which a person states what each of ten ink blots might be. Other projective tests include Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), the House-Tree-Person Test, Robert's Apperception Test, and the Attachment Projective.

Direct observation tests

These are also used in many situations. Although most psychological tests are "rating scale" or "free response" measures, psychological assessment may also involve the observation of people as they complete activities. This type of assessment is usually conducted with families in a laboratory, home or with children in a classroom. The purpose may be clinical, such as to establish a pre-intervention baseline of a child's hyperactive or aggressive classroom behaviours or to observe the nature of a parent-child interaction in order to understand a relational disorder. Direct observation procedures are also used in research, for example to study the relationship between intrapsychic variables and specific target behaviours, or to explore sequences of behavioural interaction.

1.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you learned about one of the important task carried out by a counselor, i.e., psychological assessment of the client. There are various things to be kept in mind about the assessment process. These principles of assessment were described in detail. You also learned about the purpose and the steps in the process of assessment. The methods of assessment – interview, observation and case study were described. Psychological assessment is a broader term which includes psychological testing. The purpose of testing was described and the characteristics of a good psychological test were delineated. You also came to know the different types of psychological tests available which a counselor can make use of to collect information about the client.

1.12 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Describe the purposes for which psychological assessment data are used.
- 2) Enumerate the important principles of assessment.
- 3) Illustrate the process of assessment.
- 4) Differentiate between psychological assessment and psychological testing.
- 5) Explain the various methods of assessment.
- 6) Explain the various types of psychological test.
- 7) Discuss the seven steps of assessment process.
- 8) Explain the purpose of psychological testing.

1.13 GLOSSARY

Psychological Assessment	:	Any method used to measure characteristics of people, programs, or objects (process of collecting information).
Psychological Test	:	A standardized procedure of measurement designed to measure characteristics- ability, personality, attitude etc. It is a task upon which people are asked to try their best (aptitude & achievement tests). They measure maximum performance.
Questionnaires and Inventories	:	Evaluate typical performance. Personality and interest inventories elicit self-reports of opinions, preferences, and typical reactions. Standardized Assessment versus Non-standardized Assessment
Standardized Assessment	:	Meet certain criteria of test construction, administration, and interpretation. This includes uniform testing procedures, objective scoring methods, and representative norm groups for test interpretation, reliable test scores, and studies of validity.

- Non-standardized Assessment** : (Ratings scales, projective techniques, behavioural observations, and biographical measures) Produce less reliable and less valid results than standardized assessments but allow counselors to consider aspects of behaviour or the environment not covered by traditional psychological tests. Nomothetic Assessment versus Idiographic Assessment
- Nomothetic Assessment** : Greek for “law”. Emphasis is placed on variables that show lawful or meaningful distinctions among people. The group provides a frame of reference for determining which variables to assess and how to interpret the results.
- Idiographic Assessment** : Greek for “personal”. Emphasis is placed on those variables that can be most helpful in describing the individual. The individual serves as the reference point to identify relevant variables and how to interpret the data. Quantitative Assessment versus Qualitative Assessment
- Quantitative Assessment** : Most psychological tests are quantitative procedures, yielding a specific score on a continuous scale. Quantitative procedures have been studied in terms of reliability and validity.
- Qualitative Assessment** : Procedures such as interviews and autobiographies produce verbal descriptions of a person’s behaviour or of a situation that can be placed into one of several categories. (Examples: developmental stages or personality types). Qualitative procedures provide a holistic and integrated view of clients, encourage activity on part of the client, form part of the treatment in addition to assessment, and can be easily adapted for clients from different backgrounds. Individual Assessment versus Environmental Assessment
- Individual Assessment** : Counselors have historically paid more attention to assessment of individuals.
- Environmental Assessment** : Counselors recently have begun devoting more attention to the environment in determining one’s behaviour.

1.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 2 ASSESSMENT COMPLEXITIES

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Meaning of Assessment Complexities
 - 2.2.1 Issues in Assessment
- 2.3 Prerequisites for Assessment
 - 2.3.1 Need for Assessment
 - 2.3.2 Appropriateness of the Test
 - 2.3.3 Reliability and Validity of the Test
 - 2.3.4 Consent of the Test Taker
 - 2.3.5 Confidentiality
- 2.4 Errors in Assessment
 - 2.4.1 Environmental Factors
 - 2.4.2 Competence of the Counsellor
 - 2.4.3 Client's Subjective State
 - 2.4.4 Ethnic, Linguistic and Cultural Differences
 - 2.4.5 Administration, Scoring and Interpretation
 - 2.4.6 Fallibility of Test Scores
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Unit End Questions
- 2.7 Suggested Readings

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Assessment is an integral part of guidance and counselling. It plays a crucial role in the successful outcome of counselling. A good assessment can pave the way to the solution of the problem whereas a poor assessment can hamper the process of counselling and may adversely affect the client. Hence care need to be exercised in using an appropriate assessment procedure. Right from deciding why to assess and what to assess, to selecting a suitable test, administering, scoring, interpreting and communicating the test results to the client – each and every aspect is important and needs to be handled in a proper way. It can be said that when assessment is properly done, half the job is done. Then counselor will have a fair understanding of the client, his/her problems, issues concerned, the dynamics involved etc. This will make the counselling more effective and fruitful enabling the client to make proper decisions and appropriate choices and plans.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- To know the meaning of assessment complexities;
- To know the necessary requirements for assessment; and
- To describe the various factors affecting the findings of assessment.

2.2 MEANING OF ASSESSMENT COMPLEXITIES

Human behaviour is a complex phenomenon. Therefore, assessment of human behaviour is equally complex. Assessment often tries to find out the magnitude or quantity of a particular aspect/factor/problem in the client. For example, what is the motivation level of the client, how depressed is the client, what is the mental ability of the client, what are the interests of the client etc. Thus it gives an indication of whether there is a lot of something or just a little. The accuracy of this plays a great role in the success of counselling. However, there are a host of factors which may affect the accuracy of the assessment scores. Hence the counselor must exercise utmost care to ensure that assessment is carried out in an appropriate manner.

Assessment in itself is an elaborate process where we need to keep in mind several things. We need to understand the different issues related to assessment to appreciate the complexities of assessment. These are described below.

2.2.1 Issues in Assessment

Time and Effort Required in Assessment

How successful is our current assessment program? The decision to use a test is an important one. Counselor needs to carefully consider several technical, administrative, and practical matters. This requires the counselor to spend time and effort to understand the various related aspects of assessment and make a conscious decision about using a particular test. The counselor should weigh all the costs and benefits with an aim of ultimately increasing the effectiveness of the assessment procedure leading to success in counselling.

The counselor should also have an idea about the construction of psychological test including the process of establishing its reliability and validity. How has the test been developed? This is a rigorous process which takes lot of time, hard work and money, ultimately giving us a standardized test having norms for different population. The counselor has to interpret the assessment results in reference to these norms. Hence he/she should take time to read the manual of the test and know whether the norms available for the particular test would be applicable for the client. For example, if the client is a high school student, does the test which the counselor intends to use have the norm for high school students? If it is not there, then the test scores of the client cannot be interpreted.

Use of Technology in Assessment

Computer administration of psychological assessment clearly saves time of the counselor but the results of such test may not give reliable and valid scores. Some psychologist believe that the computerized assessment has not been sufficiently validated (Metarazzo 2000), whereas others fear that the increasing use of computer in counseling will increase the risk to the confidentiality of client's information.

Misuse or Overuse of Tests

A single test cannot be expected to be valid in all situations and for all groups of people. A test, generally is developed to measure specific characteristics or to predict specific performance criteria for a particular group. Hence one needs to

be careful to choose an appropriate test for the assessment of a client. Overuse of test also is a serious concern which we need to be aware of. Tests should not be used for anything and everything. Just like popping a pill whenever we have a common cold, the tendency to use a test on the slightest pretext must be avoided. Only when it is necessary to use a psychological test as part of the assessment process to gain some understanding about the different issues involved in counselling, the tests should be used. Tests serve as an aid to provide information about the client. In the initial counselling sessions, the counselor can decide whether any tests need to be used as part of assessment procedure; if yes, then what types of tests and their appropriateness for the client should be found out.

Hence, use of psychological tests should be in the strict compliance of the proper procedure needed for administering a test to the client. This will give us accurate findings. However, care is also to be taken that test results do not lead to labeling of the client. If the client has got low score on test of mental ability, we should not say that the client has low intelligence and then accordingly assume that s/he will be low in every aspect. There are other factors also which need to be taken into account before we say that the client has low intelligence. Even then we need to exercise care in communicating the test results in such a way that it does not lead to any negative effect on the client.

Indirectness of the Measurement

Most of the psychological assessment and test are indirect e.g., a school counselor wants to measure the mental ability or intelligence of the students of a particular class. Now intelligence can not be seen directly. The counsellor, therefore depends on the assessment which includes a sample of behaviour representative of an intelligent act. Such a sample, however, may itself suffer from number of limitations. In such a situation measurement of any trait itself becomes a source of perpetual difficulty.

Incompleteness of Measurement

Since only one dimension of behaviour is assessed at a time, it does not give a comprehensive picture of the whole behaviour. The connectedness among the various strands of behaviour is missing which may lead to a less clear understanding of the concerned client. For this there is a need to understand the client's situation from a total perspective and accordingly decide on which aspects need to be assessed. Results from the tests should also be combined with information or findings from various other sources so that we can arrive at a comprehensive measure of the individual.

Safety of Testing Material

All materials used in the assessment process, whether paper-and-pencil or computer-based, must be kept secure. Lack of security may result in some test takers having access to test questions beforehand, thus invalidating their scores. To prevent this, test administrators should, for example, keep testing materials in locked rooms or cabinets. This is especially required in situations like school setting or organisational setting where assessment usually forms a part of guidance activities or human resource activities. Another reason for ensuring the safety of testing material is the high cost involved in the purchase of the test materials and equipments.

Some instruments used in counseling and in self-assessment are not held to the same strict standards of security. The purpose of testing often will dictate the importance of security for test materials. Security is also the responsibility of test developers. The security of a test may become compromised over time. To protect security, test developers periodically introduce new forms of tests.

2.3 PRE-REQUISITES FOR ASSESSMENT

A few things are there which need to be kept in mind before the counselor goes for an assessment of the client. It should be noted here that assessment is not a haphazard process; it follows a systematic procedure starting with a rationale for the assessment.

2.3.1 Need for Assessment

What is the need for the assessment? What are the aspects we want to assess? What information/answer are we looking for through the assessment? All these should be clarified before we start the assessment procedure. This explains what are our goals in assessing the client and what do we want to get through this assessment and how is this going to contribute to our explanation of the client's behaviour or solving her/his problem.

Care should be taken to use assessment tools in a purposeful manner. It is critical to have a clear understanding of what needs to be measured and for what purpose. Assessment strategies should be developed with a clear understanding of the knowledge, skills, abilities, characteristics, or personal traits that are going to be measured. It is also essential to have a clear idea of what each assessment tool measures.

When a client comes to the counselling situation, the counselor first tries to understand the client and enable the client to understand himself/herself so that effective decisions are taken and appropriate choices are made. To achieve this aim of counselling, the counselor needs to use an assessment procedure which will assess the required fields and generate information which will aid in providing proper counselling to the client. For instance, a student wants to go for medicine as a career. Here, the counselor needs to find out the aptitude of.

2.3.2 Appropriateness of the Test

After deciding the need for assessment, the counselor needs to select an appropriate psychological test to be administered to the client. Tests are available specific to the age, gender and social cultural status. The suitability of a particular test needs to be found out by the counselor. An assessment tool usually is developed for use with a specific group; it may not be valid for other groups. For example, a test designed to predict the work values of adults may not be valid for use with junior high school students. It is possible that many junior high school students are not vocationally mature enough for the assessment tool to be meaningful, or perhaps the reading level of the test is not suitable for junior high school students. Tests should be appropriate for the individuals the counselor wants to test, that is, the target population or the client.

Many tests have more than one version or form. Items differ on each form, but each form is supposed to measure the same thing. Different forms of a test are

known as parallel forms or alternate forms. These forms are designed to have similar measurement characteristics, but they contain different items. These tests are required to be given when the counselor wants to give the same test again.

2.3.3 Reliability and Validity of the Test

Reliability and Validity are the two most important issues in selecting assessment tools.

An assessment tool usually is developed for use with a specific group; it may not be valid for other groups. For example, a test designed to predict the work values of adults may not be valid for use with junior high school students. It is possible that many junior high school students are not vocationally mature enough for the assessment tool to be meaningful, or perhaps the reading level of the test is not suitable for junior high school students. Tests should be appropriate for the individuals the counselor wants to test, that is, the target population or the client.

Only reliable assessment instruments need to be used. In other words, only those assessment tools that provide dependable and consistent information are required to be used. This will help reduce the complexities in assessment and make our results accurate. Further, use only assessment procedures and instruments that have been demonstrated to be valid for the specific purpose for which they are being used. Use assessment tools that are appropriate for the target population or the client.

2.3.4 Consent of the Test Taker

Prior to administering any psychological test, consent of the client taking the test should be obtained. Since we are dealing with human beings, it'll be a violation of human rights to administer the tests without their agreeing to it. Hence, consent of the client for taking the test is a must. The counselor also needs to explain the client about the need and purpose of giving the test. Prior to taking the consent of the client, the counselor needs to explain to the client about the roles and responsibilities of the counselor as well as the client, the process of counselling, its limitations and advantages. The structuring of the counselling session, number and duration of sessions, administration of psychological tests, issue of termination of counseling – all are explained to the client and then the client's consent is asked for. It has to be an informed consent by the client or the test taker.

2.3.5 Confidentiality

Assessment results are highly personal. Maintaining the confidentiality of assessment results is very important. As a professional, counsellor must respect the test taker's right to confidentiality and ensure the confidentiality of the assessment data. The client has to be assured of the confidentiality of the findings of the assessment process.

As a counselor, you should recognise this fact that trust is a cardinal factor in the counselling relationship. You should earn this trust by establishing proper rapport, setting up appropriate boundaries, explaining the roles, responsibilities, limitations, and maintaining confidentiality.

Assessment results should be shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know. Communication and use of any information/data gathered from psychological assessment has to be done with the consent of the client. While communicating the results, the cultural background also needs to be taken into consideration. However, there are certain situations where confidentiality cannot be adhered to. For example, when there is a threat/danger to the life of the client or other people; in cases of legal and court requirement; in cases of contagious and life-threatening diseases – the counselor is required to communicate the results to the concerned authority.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What do you mean by assessment complexities?

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2) Explain the misuse or overuse of psychological tests.

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3) How will you find out the appropriateness of the test?

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4) Explain the aspect of confidentiality in psychological assessment.

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2.4 ERRORS IN ASSESSMENT

Since counseling is a behavioural science, it involves many uncontrolled factors which may lead to errors in assessment. For example, when a school counselor is measuring the intelligence of a child with the help of intelligence test, there can be several factors which may decrease or increase the actual score of the students as the child might be nervous or s/ he might be distracted by other internal factors. All these sources of errors in assessment create problems which adversely affect the scientific value of assessment. Using unbiased and fair tests will enable to provide the most appropriate assessment services to clients. In addition, there are a host of other factors which need to be considered to ensure effective assessment and counselling.

2.4.1 Environmental Factors

There are various extraneous influences that may affect the reliability and validity of an assessment procedure. For example, room temperature, noise in the testing room, poor lighting, inaccurate timing, damaged test equipment or even the test administrator may adversely affect an individual's test performance. The physical setting of the test situation therefore needs to be optimum so that it reduces the chance of affecting the client's performance on the test. The counselor should ensure that the testing environment is suitable and that administration procedures are uniform for all test takers and the clients.

The testing room should be well ventilated with proper lighting. Extremes in temperature will make the client uncomfortable and affect the test result negatively. The client should feel relaxed so that s/he can attempt the test in a relatively calm mind. The environment should feel welcoming and inviting. It will reduce any inhibitions that the client might be having and open up the client to get himself or herself involved in the assessment procedure. Consequently, test findings will reflect accurate result. The environment should also be free from noise and any other kind of disturbances which may affect the assessment findings adversely.

2.4.2 Competence of the Counsellor

Assessment is an important aspect of the process of counseling. Hence, the counselor must have a good understanding of the psychological assessment and must be well equipped with the different assessment techniques. If the counselor is not competent enough with regard to the assessment procedure, then the counselor may not get a proper picture of the situation and the diagnosis of the problem may not be accurate. As a result, the counseling or the therapy provided by the counselor on this basis may not lead to effective results.

As a counselor, the ultimate goal is to take care of the interest and welfare of the client. For this the counselor needs to have necessary competencies to help the client. The counselor should have knowledge of the individual differences, human development, counselling theories, assessment principles and procedures, and ethical responsibilities. Further, the counselor should also have an understanding of the theories of personality, human rights and multicultural issues. These will enable the counselor to equip himself/herself with the required knowledge to understand human beings in a variety of situations. The counselor should also

have the required skills and competences to develop rapport with the client and carry out the process of counselling. Various initial counselling skills and core counselling skills are necessary to win the trust and confidence of the client and enable the client to open up and express himself/herself in the counselling situation. Counselling also requires a sound knowledge of the ethics of counselling which will ensure the safety of the client. The counselor needs to have a genuine concern for the interest and welfare of the client.

2.4.3 Client's Subjective State

The subjective state of the client refers to his/her temporary psychological or physical state. Test performance can be influenced by a person's psychological or physical state at the time of testing. For example, different levels of anxiety, fatigue, or motivation may affect an individual's test results. Mood of the client and the counselor also affects the test situation and may influence the test result. Hence as a counselor when you are administering different tests to the client, you need to keep in mind the emotion and motivational level of the client.

You must be aware that the client has come to the counselling situation with a number of apprehensions, inhibitions, expectations, fear and limitations. The client may not be sure of what to expect from the counselling situation and what does it involve; or he/she may have mistaken expectations, wrong notions about counselling. Many a client believes that counselling is a miracle – it'll make your entire problem go away like nothing. These misplaced beliefs need to be handled carefully and gently the client may need to be reoriented towards the reality of the counselling situation.

The source of referral also determines the subjective state of the client. If the client is self referred, i.e., has come on its own, s/he is in a more positive state to get involved in the process of counselling. However, in cases where client is referred by the parents, school authorities, some organisations, court or welfare agencies, the client may not be receptive. Again in this latter case, when the client is referred as well as willing to go for counselling, it becomes easy to establish rapport and proceed in counselling. However, in cases where the client is referred but not willing to take counselling, it becomes a difficult scenario for the counselor. These clients are called resistant and their subjective states are not conducive for them to enter into the counselling process. It is a real challenge for the counselor to change their hard attitude and make them somewhat amenable for the process of counselling and assessment.

2.4.4 Ethnic, Linguistic and Cultural Differences

The counselor must keep in mind the diverse array of ethnic and cultural groups with their ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences. The variations in the cultural background of the clients play an important role in determining how the client will approach the counselor and the process of counselling itself. The cultural diversities affect the way the beliefs, values and attitudes develop in the client. As a counselor you must be aware of this. This will make the client feel accepted and understood as a result of which rapport formation becomes easier. As you know, rapport establishment is the foremost requirement in assessment and counselling. When the counselor respects the ethnic, linguistic as well as cultural differences in the client, the client feels important and understood; and develops trust and confidence in the counselor. Then the client is ready to participate in

the assessment process and take the tests in a proper way. The counselor needs to find out the suitability of the psychological test for the particular client based on his/her ethnic/linguistic/cultural background. Otherwise, it may negatively affect the test result.

2.4.5 Administration, Scoring and Interpretation

Psychological tests are standardized measures of behaviour. They follow uniform procedure of administration and scoring. Deviation from this may lead to errors in assessment. Test results may get affected because of the variation in the way the test is administered and scored. There are different types of psychological tests. Based on administration, they can be classified as Individual Tests and Group Tests. Counsellors should have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the administration of individual tests as well as group tests. Individual tests require one-to-one supervision whereas group tests are administered in a group setting. However, the counselor needs to know how to administer the test to a group of individuals - distributing the test booklets, giving instruction, ensuring understanding of the instruction by the group, monitoring, collecting the test booklets and answer sheets back and concluding the testing session. A trained counselor should have competence in the test administration and scoring which will ensure uniformity in the assessment procedure leading to reliable results.

Test results may not be accurate if the tests have not been administered and scored properly, or if the results are not interpreted appropriately. Interpretation of the test results also is very crucial. Counsellors should have knowledge of how to interpret different types of tests. For example, projective type of tests are less objective in their interpretation. It requires the counsellor's rich experience and knowledge in the field to arrive at accurate interpretation. Although researchers are trying to bring in more objectivity into such interpretation, some tests by nature may not lend themselves to full objectivity. Hence the counselor needs to exercise proper care in interpreting such results.

Tests help us make inferences about people's knowledge, skills, abilities, traits, interests and values. The inferences should be reasonable, well-founded, and not based upon stereotypes. If test scores are not interpreted properly, the conclusion drawn from them are likely to be invalid, thus leading to poor decision making. Hence there is a need to ensure that the interpretation of test results are done strictly according to the procedure given in the test manual. This will provide credibility to the test score interpretations and be a solid basis for making counselling decisions.

2.4.6 Fallibility of Test Scores

Professionally developed tests and procedures that are used as part of a planned assessment, program may help in guidance, training, and development. However, it is essential to understand that all assessment tools are subject to errors, both in measuring a characteristic such as verbal ability, and in predicting performance, such as success in training. This is true for all tests and procedures, regardless of how objective or standardized they might be.

The counselor should not expect any test or procedure to measure a personal trait or ability with perfect accuracy for every single person, and also must not expect any test or procedure to be completely accurate in predicting performance

or job satisfaction. For example, there will be cases when a test score or procedure will predict suitability for a particular occupation, when in fact the person would not prove to be satisfied in that occupation. There also will be cases in which an individual receiving a low score will be advised against a particular occupation, when in fact the person actually would be a capable and good worker. Similarly, there will be cases where a test score or procedure will predict success in training for an individual who then does not succeed. Such errors in this context are called selection errors. Selection errors cannot be completely avoided in any assessment process.

Why use testing despite these errors? The answer is that appropriate use of professionally developed assessment tools on average enables individuals and organisations to make more effective decisions than use of simple observations or random decision making. Using a single test or procedure will provide the counselor with a limited view of a person's career interests or training needs. Moreover, the counselor may reach a mistaken conclusion by giving too much weight to a single test result. On the other hand, using a variety of assessment tools enables the counselor to get a more complete picture of the individual. The practice of using a variety of tests and procedures to more fully assess people is referred to as the whole-person approach. This will help reduce the number of selection errors made and will boost the effectiveness of decision making of the counselor.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Describe the importance of client's subjective state for psychological assessment.

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- 2) Why is the competence of the counselor important in assessment?

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2.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we focused on the assessment complexities. Assessment plays an important role in guidance and counselling. Assessment instruments, like other tools, can be extremely helpful when used properly, but counterproductive when used inappropriately. Often, inappropriate use stems from not having clear understanding of what you want to measure and why you want to measure it.

Having a clear understanding of the purpose of your assessment system is important in selecting the appropriate assessment tools to meet that purpose.

The counselor needs to understand the various issues related to psychological assessment which were explained here in this unit. There are certain necessary conditions which need to be fulfilled before starting the assessment procedure. These were described in detail. For example, the test taker needs to be informed about the testing procedure and the issue of confidentiality. Finally, despite all the precautions taken and steps followed, sometimes the assessment may not lead to accurate result. These errors in assessment were described. The counselor should be well versed with the process of psychological assessment so that it can provide with valuable information to make the counselling effective.

2.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss the various issues in assessment.
- 2) Discuss administration, scoring and interpretation of test scores.
- 3) How do we accommodate linguistic, ethnic and cultural differences in assessment?
- 4) What are the prerequisite factors that need to be considered for assessment?
- 5) Discuss the Fallibility of tests scores
- 6) What are the various errors in assessment? Elucidate.

2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 3 THE AMBIENCE AND CLIMATE NEEDED FOR ASSESSMENT AND COUNSELING

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 How to Provide Safe and Positive Environment
 - 3.2.1 Establishing Rapport
 - 3.2.2 Initial Counselling Skills
- 3.3 Counselling Setting
- 3.4 Mind Set of the Client
- 3.5 Pre -Counselling Interview
 - 3.5.1 Preliminary Assessment
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Unit End Questions
- 3.8 Suggested Readings

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The ambience and climate needed for assessment and counseling plays vital role in the success of counselling. When the client comes to the counselling situation for the first time, he or she will have his / her own reservations, inhibitions, doubts and confusions. These coupled with the problems the client is facing and the anxieties/stress he is going through makes it a challenging task for the counselor to build rapport with the client. Hence it is the prime responsibility of the counselor to ensure a safe and positive environment for the client in the beginning itself. This will help establish rapport between the client and the counselor. The client will feel welcome and unravel his or her inner thoughts and problems. The ambience and climate should be inviting which will give the initial assurance to the client to open up and express.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you'll be able to:

- Understand the importance of a safe and positive environment in assessment and counseling;
- Describe the meaning of rapport in assessment and counseling;
- Identify the components of counselling setting;
- Describe the counselling skills required in initial counselling phase; and
- Explain the different mindsets of clients.

3.2 HOW TO PROVIDE SAFE AND POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

The Counseling Service has no magical power to solve every problem immediately. It is essential for those being helped to want to be helped. Assistance is effective to the extent that the individual is open to change and new experiences. The environment and condition in which the individual finds himself or herself play an important role in the process of assistance. It is essential to accept that the effectiveness of assistance will change from person to person, subject to subject and situation to situation. However, it is the utmost responsibility of the counsellor to create a safe and positive environment which will enable the client to derive benefits from counselling.

Clients come to the counselling situation with their insecurities, fears, inhibitions, uncertainties and confusions. They require help, assistance and guidance from the counsellor to overcome their fears, understand themselves and their situation properly. However, this is possible only when the client gets a feeling of accepted and understood in the counselling situation. A counselling environment where the client feels safe and welcoming will facilitate the process of interaction between the client and the counsellor leading to the ultimate goal of enabling the client to overcome his or her problems. Hence, a safe and positive environment where the client feels encouraged is very crucial for the success of counselling. Two important factors contributing to this are the establishment of rapport with the client and use of various counselling skills by the counsellor. These are described below.

3.2.1 Establishing Rapport

Rapport establishment is an important activity on the part of the counsellor which will create a positive environment for the client. When the client comes initially to the counselling situation, the counsellor and the counselling situation is new for him. The counsellor needs to establish an effective rapport with the client in order to proceed further in the counselling situation. Rapport refers to relationship. It is a warm, friendly and understanding condition which is essential for an effective relationship between the counsellor and the client. Establishing rapport helps the counsellor to reach out to the client. This helps to develop a friendly and trusting relationship.

Rapport is the first and foremost requirement in a counselling situation. Without rapport between the counsellor and the client, counselling cannot happen. Not only rapport has to be established, but also has to be sustained throughout the counselling. How to establish rapport? Rapport requires simple but thoughtful acts like reaching out to greet the client in the first instance, taking interest in the client, expressing warmth, putting him at ease and showing genuine concern. When we meet somebody for the first time, usually we exchange pleasantries. We ask about the other person basic things like their name, where did they come from, their occupation etc. If it is a referred case, we already know the person's name. So we can straightaway start by addressing the person by his or her name. In case of a school student we can ask about his or her friends, classes and studies. Later on as the counselling progresses, sensitiveness to the client's needs, feelings and problems helps to sustain rapport. A genuine concern for the client's interests and welfare helps in creating a positive counselling environment.

Readiness of the Client

The readiness of the client affects the establishment of the rapport between the counsellor and the client. Usually clients are of two types: (a) those who seek counselling voluntarily, and (b) those who are referred to the counsellor by the school, agency, parents or court. In the first category, the clients are ready to receive help; they actively want to get help and solve their problems. In such case establishing rapport is easy and facilitated. It should be noted here that rapport establishment is a two way process. Hence when the client is ready and willing to extend himself for the counselling, rapport gets established quickly. In contrast, the second type of clients who are referred may not be willing to take help. Thus in this category again you'll find those who want to benefit from counselling and those who resent it. Rapport establishment becomes difficult with those clients who are referred and who resent this referral to the counsellor.

3.2.2 Initial Counselling Skills

Active Listening

Listening is a skill and active listening is much more than mere listening. It can be acquired easily if we develop the habit of being genuinely interested in other people. Many a times we don't listen in a proper way to what the other person is telling. Our listening will be superficial, i.e., not paying much attention to what the other person is saying or; selective, that is, we tend to listen only to those things which we want to listen. Both these will lead to inaccurate listening.

Active listening involves paying attention to verbal communication as well as non-verbal communication. The facial expression, postures, gestures, tone of voice of the client and periods of silence all convey something which need to be observed and attended to by the counselor. This will make the client feel understood and the counselor can develop insight into the client's problems.

Active listening is a very important counselling skill which is required throughout the process of counselling. It is also called attentive listening which involves listening not only to words but also to the thoughts and feelings of the client. This is very essential as it will very accurately reflect the client's state of mind and what he or she is expressing at present.

Asking Questions

Remember that the person asking the questions is leading the direction of the conversation. Ask interesting questions that allow the other person to talk about themselves or their interests and then listen attentively to what they are saying. Allow the client to express himself. Give them positive feedback followed by non-threatening questions that allow them to expand on what they are saying.

As a counselor you should also be aware of the open-ended questions and close-ended questions. Open ended questions are those where the client can elaborate on his or her answer. The client has a scope to describe the things. However, close ended questions are those where you get a single word response only. There is no chance to describe or elaborate on the things. For example, when did this thing happen?, Where did you go after the incident?, How many times did that happen? – all these are close ended questions. Open-ended questions include such as How did this happen?, Why was he angry with you? The counselor needs to use more open – ended questions so that he or she can get more clear

information. However, closed questions are also required for some purpose. Thus both open ended and close ended question need to be used depending on the nature and type of information that the counselor wants to elicit.

Communication

Counselling is reaching out to the inner world of the client. For this communication skill is very important. The counselor needs to communicate in such a way that the client feels accepted and shares his or her psychological world with the counselor. A clear and transparent channel of communication should be adopted. The non-verbal aspect of communication also needs to be considered. Not only what the client is saying but also his or her non - verbal behaviour, i.e. body language, gestures should be observed. This will help the counselor in forming a connection or rapport with the client. The client feels that his or her problems, concerns are being listened to and understood.

Empathy

Empathy is a core counselling skill which refers to putting oneself in the other person's shoes. That is, empathy is the capacity to feel 'with' while sympathy is to feel 'for'. According to Rogers (1961), empathy is a necessary condition in counselling. He states that empathy is "to sense the client's private world as if it were your own, but without ever losing the 'as if' quality – this is empathy, and this seems essential to therapy; to sense the client's anger, fear or confusion as if it were your own, yet without your own anger, fear or confusion getting bound upon it, is the condition we are trying to describe". Here, the counselor has to develop a closeness with the client as well as maintain a distance. The counselor should not get carried away by the client's emotional states.

When the counselor feels what the client feels, he or she is showing empathy towards the client. By showing empathy, the counselor acknowledges and tries to understand the subjective world of the client. This creates a positive environment and makes the client feel safe in the counselling situation.

Besides these skills, there are a few other things the counselor needs to remember. Develop a friendly nature and establish a habit of smiling. Friendliness puts the client at ease and creates a positive climate. Accept and appreciate the client and give importance to them. One way to do this is to learn their name and use it often during the conversations. Allow them to feel important. It is important to remember to keep your ego under control. Ego has been responsible for breaking rapport on more occasions than any other behaviour. Ego is a sign of low self worth. If the counselor develops a strong feeling of self worth then he/she will not have the need to allow his ego to get in the way.

A safe and positive climate is an essential requirement of counselling situation. For this the counselor needs to establish a proper rapport with the client and use various counselling skills to develop trust in the client and make the client feel secure to express himself. The focus should be on the client. The counselor should convey positive regard for the client. There should not be any judgement or conclusion passed on the client, but respecting the client as a person should be there. This will bring in a positive ambience and climate in the counselling.

3.3 COUNSELLING SETTING

Prior to engaging in the interpersonal communication process, there are basic requirements which will influence the client's ability to express him/her, and to make decisions regarding the relationship. These aspects refer to the counseling setting, which in the initial meetings can cause a significant impact in the client's perception towards the counselor and the whole counselling process. The physical setting of the counselling should include the following:

- Proper lighting and ventilation
- Proper infrastructure
- Facilities/amenities
- Quiet and calm environment
- Privacy

The counselling room should create a feeling of quiet and calm with a soothing environment and cheerful ambience. There should not be strong lights; it should not be too hot or cold feeling; and should give a feeling of relaxed atmosphere.

The counselor must keep in mind the noise factor also as it can lead to negative results. Too much noise will distract the client and he or she will not be able to pay proper attention to the test. Noise in the testing room, poor lighting, inaccurate timing, and damaged test equipment may adversely affect test takers. The counselor should ensure that the testing environment is suitable and that administration procedures are uniform for all test takers and the clients. Otherwise, it will affect the accuracy of the assessment and the effectiveness of counselling.

Confidentiality of the assessment results is also crucial. A psychological counselor is required to keep his or her discussion with a client confidential. The client needs to be assured of the confidentiality of the test results and the privacy of the counselling sessions. This is an ethical issue which needs to be taken care of. The setting of the counselling should be such that privacy can be ensured. There should not be scope of other people going in and going out of that room. There may be barrier or partitions also to ensure the privacy of the counselling situation. The assessment findings as well as the interactions and deliberations during the counselling session should not be disclosed without the prior consent of the client. The client needs to be assured about the confidentiality of such things. This will help ensure the success of counselling.

Example of an initial counseling session is given below in the box.

Mr. XYZ is the client today who has taken appointment for 10 am. As he knocked on the door and entered the room, I warmly greeted him and asked him to take a seat. The room was well ventilated. Since it was summer, there was air conditioner and the room was cool enough to make one feel comfortable and relaxed. It was an independent room, so no distraction from any other source, e.g., outside noise etc. This also ensured proper privacy for the counselling sessions. The ambience of the room was welcoming. There was proper soothing light with potted plants which gave a relaxed feeling.

As the client sat, I asked him did he find any difficulty in reaching the counselling centre. I offered him a glass of water to make him comfortable. Then I started, “So, you are Mr. XYZ; where do you work? Who are there in your family? Like this some general things were asked to make the client feel at home. Here the main goal is to establish rapport with the client. We are not going to start asking about his problems in the beginning itself. First the client needs to feel comfortable and develop trust in the counselor. The counselor needs to tell the client about the confidentiality aspect also. The counselor has to use the different counselling skills as described above to make the client feel confident about the counselor. For example, as the client is sitting in the chair, the counselor notices that the client is fidgeting. The counselor needs to observe this and try to make the client comfortable. After the client feels secure in the counselling environment, he is ready to open up and share things/issues with the counselor.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What do you mean by client readiness?

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2) How should be the physical setting of the counselling?

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3.4 MINDSET OF THE CLIENT

When it comes to interpersonal communication in assessment and counseling, being flexible and responsive is one of the most beneficial skills a counselor can have. Clients come with different mindsets and emotional states and the counselor’s ability to adjust to a client’s needs is likely to dictate the success of that relationship.

Following is a description of the diversity of mindsets with which clients approach counseling. The five types of mindsets and the respective strategies to deal with them to help improve the relationship and enhance client-counselor rapport are given below.

a) **An emotionally unstable client**

The client is emotionally unstable and finds difficulty in expressing him/herself. Emotionally unstable clients normally require a client-centered approach which enforces the need to establish rapport and trust, and to ensure the client is aware that he or she is in a safe and friendly environment. The client will normally have difficulty in expressing him/herself because he/she is unable or not ready to deal with emotions. Counseling strategies to establish rapport would include: using self-disclosure to relate to the client's situation and create an emotional link; creating goals and accountability in order to encourage action from the client; providing transparency and positivity through communication.

b) **An involuntary or skeptical client**

The client has been forced to attend to counseling (e.g. legally mandated). This type of client may be difficult to deal with in the early stages of the relationship. Normally, he or she will be skeptical about the process, and may not acknowledge any need to change. It is important for the therapist to gain respect from the client, and use that respect to establish trust. One of the most common strategies to gain respect and create responsiveness from the client is to outline the process of counseling: what he or she is there for; what is the structure of the relationship; what are the rights and duties of the client; what might be the expected positive outcomes. Solution-focused strategies are a good way to create a sense of accountability and need for change.

c) **The client is adolescent or a child**

Dealing with children is always challenging as there is a perceived 'bigger' communication gap. The goal for the counselor is to establish trust using humors; engaging in activities such as games; encouraging a collaborative approach; using self-disclosure and role-playing. These are all common strategies to help improve communication with young clients. The counselor has to come down to the child's level and empathize with him or her. Winning the trust of the child is a challenging task as they'll not easily be amenable to counselling. Most of the cases, they will be referral cases. Hence they may not be willing to undergo counselling and develop a resentment attitude. Hence extreme care needs to be exercised while dealing with adolescent or child clients.

The counselling set up should be such that the child feels attracted to it. It should be designed keeping in mind the interests and concerns of the particular group of children. For example, counseling room should have variety of toys, children's books/literature and play materials which will help the children to feel at ease and comfortable. There can be a sand pit, different puzzle games, board games, toy animals etc. The ambience should be as per the interests of the children. A proper environment will help children and young clients to trust the counselor and express the different issues/concerns related to them.

d) **The uncommitted client**

Lack of commitment can be a challenging problem in the counseling setting. Normally, a client with little or no commitment has a specific agenda which

justifies their attendance at a counseling session (an example would be a husband who was asked by his wife to attend counseling in order to preserve their marriage). Framing and re-framing are good tactics to re-model the way the client perceives the counseling relationship: shifting from the 'helping' mode to the collaborative approach. Creating goals and structuring will also motivate the client to go through the necessary stages for change, collect the rewards, and move on with his/her own life.

e) **The demanding client**

A demanding client will normally believe that the counselor will provide answers to his/her problems. They will come to counseling without much resolve to act upon their current situation, and will normally create very unrealistic expectations regarding counseling relationship and the counselor. These clients will expect the counselor to give them suggestions and solve their problems. They need to be clarified that the onus for changing things and getting solutions lies with the client only. The counselor can help and provide appropriate guidance to the client to enable him or her to understand self and situational factors. Accordingly, they need to take a decision or plan a course of action.

3.5 PRE-COUNSELLING INTERVIEW

The counselling process usually consists of three parts: the request for assistance (intake), the counselling proper (counselling) and the termination of the counselling relationship. The pre counselling interview is the beginning of the actual contact between the client and the counselor. The client usually comes to the counselling situation with lots of apprehension, unsure of what is going to happen. The counselor needs to take care of this by structuring the counselling. This will calm down the insecurities and confusions in the mind of the client and create a safe and positive climate for the client. Many clients come with the expectation of getting a readymade solution to their problem. When you go to a doctor, he gives you medicine for your fever, and you are cured. However, counselling is not like this. Since counselling involves human dynamics, issues of interrelationship, the changing nature of human beings, the counselling process requires involvement and commitment by the client as well as the counselor.

The client is made to understand that he has to function within a system or structure. He is given an idea of what is going to happen in counselling. The details of the sessions, duration, fees, types of psychological tests to be administered and other related issues are discussed. The issue of confidentiality and privacy is also discussed with the client. Further, the roles and responsibilities of the client as well as the counselor in the counselling process is explained. Any misconception that the client might be having is dispelled at this stage.

3.5.1 Preliminary Assessment

In counseling, the process of assessment begins before the first interview when the counselor take the initial counseling interview. Typical items include the client's name, address, age, educational and work history, reason for referral to counseling, and whether the client has been or is being counseled elsewhere.

The assessment process will enable the counselor to evaluate the client's needs and will help the counselor to select the most appropriate type of assessment tools for the individual. A positive counselling environment should be established which will help the client give information and take the necessary psychological tests.

The counselor should review the fairness evidence associated with assessment instruments. Before selecting tools the counselor must be clear about the relevance of the test by examining the test manual and independent test reviews.

If a person takes the same test again, will he or she get a similar score, or a very different score? A reliable instrument will provide accurate and consistent scores. To meaningfully interpret test scores and make useful career or employment-related decisions, use only reliable tools. Test manuals usually will provide a statistic known as the reliability coefficient, giving you an indication of a test's reliability. The higher the reliability coefficient, the more confidence you can have that the score is accurate.

Validity is the most important issue in selecting assessment tools. It refers to (1) the characteristic the assessment instrument measures, and (2) how well the instrument measures the characteristic. Validity is not a property of the assessment instrument itself; it relates to how the instrument is being used.

Test manuals provide information about both the development and psychometric characteristics of tests. They inform about the procedures for administration, scoring and interpretation, the recommended uses of an instrument, the groups for whom the test is appropriate, and test norms. They also should include a description of the validation procedures used and evidence of validity, reliability, and test fairness.

Assessment instruments must be administered properly in a conducive environment to obtain valid results. Assessment is a crucial part in the process of counselling. A good assessment will lead to a better understanding of the situation of the client. For this, the counselor needs to have a proper environment including an adequate physical setting with suitable infrastructure and other facilities.

Self Assessment Questions

1) How will you deal with an emotionally unstable client?

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2) What do you mean by structuring the counselling?

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3) What is preliminary assessment?

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3.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you learned about the importance of a proper counselling environment. The effectiveness of psychological assessment carried out in counselling and the success of counselling process itself depends upon proper ambience and climate. A safe and positive environment is the prime requirement of counselling. You also learned that the counselor needs to keep in mind the different aspects such as the physical setting of counselling, readiness of the client and rapport establishment which help in creating a safe and positive climate for the client in counselling. The initial counselling skills which help develop assurance, trust and confidence in the client were also described. You came to know that clients come with a variety of mindsets and how to deal with them in the pre-counselling interview.

3.7 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss the conditions of providing a safe and positive environment.
- 2) Explain the ambience and climate needed for counseling.
- 3) Describe the different mind sets of the clients and how to deal with it.
- 4) Explain the counselling skills required in the initial stage.

3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Anastasi, A. (2003). *Psychological Testing* (5th ed.). Macmillan: New York.

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UNIT 4 DETERMINATION OF ASPECTS TO BE COVERED

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Psychological Assessment: Objective and Subjective Approach
 - 4.2.1 Objective Approach
 - 4.2.2 The Subjective Approach
- 4.3 The Process of Assessment in Counselling
 - 4.3.1 Intake Interview/ History Taking
 - 4.3.2 Understanding and Defining the Problem
 - 4.3.3 Client's Coping Skills and Strengths
 - 4.3.4 Methods of Assessment
- 4.4 Components of Assessment
- 4.5 Skills of Assessing
 - 4.5.1 Skills of Observation
 - 4.5.2 Skills of Empathy
 - 4.5.3 Skills of Analysing Client Information
 - 4.5.4 Understanding and Integrating Client Information
 - 4.5.5 Developing Counselling Goals
- 4.6 Areas of Assessment
 - 4.6.1 Assessment of Mental Abilities
 - 4.6.2 Assessment of Personality
 - 4.6.3 Assessment of Interest and Aptitude
 - 4.6.4 Assessment of Achievement
 - 4.6.5 Assessment of Creativity
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Unit End Questions
- 4.9 Suggested Readings

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Psychological assessment plays a major role in the process of guidance and counselling. The counselor needs data about the individual to be able to provide effective counselling. There are different aspects of assessment which will be discussed in this unit. However, one thing can be noted here. Assessment should always be comprehensive taking into account information from other sources also. Since the goal of assessment is its proper and effective use for the purpose of guidance and counselling, you need to develop a clear understanding of the various tests and their assessment procedure. You need to have the skill of selecting an appropriate test related to mental ability, personality, interest, aptitude and achievement.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Know the different approaches to assessment;
- Identify different steps of assessment in counselling;
- Identify the components of assessment;
- Describe the various skills required for assessment in counselling; and
- Discuss the areas in which assessment can be done.

4.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT: OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE APPROACH

In the previous units you have studied the meaning of assessment, the issues in assessment, the difficulties that you may face in the process of assessment and the proper climate that should be present during assessment and counselling. Interpretation of the result is an important aspect of assessment. Let us discuss about the two approaches to assessment, that is, objective and subjective approach. The reliability and validity of the result depends on the approach to assessment.

4.2.1 Objective Approach

The objective approach to assessment offers a construct that limits or excludes the potential interpretations, biases, or influences of the observer or assessor. This approach uses objective perspectives that enable potentially authentic reactions or measurements from the individuals being assessed. This model of assessment is not based on rater interpretation. This makes it possible for a broad use of this type of measurement. Different from subjective measurements, the results are not dependent upon the assessor's analysis and subsequently personal influence. Although this form of assessment can yield informative results with certain types of personality assessments, however, there is less scope for trained or skilled interpretations, individual observations of the test-taker, and further investigation upon the individual's personality. Historically, objective tests have been designed to measure a specific faculty of personality, which can limit many other areas that contribute to the individual. For example, many objective measurements are not culturally sensitive. A subject's response on a test which is designed to measure American individuals may indicate a deviation from the norm and label that individual inaccurately because the test is not based on Indian culture. Even within India also there may be differences in response patterns because of cultural differences.

4.2.2 The Subjective Approach

A subjective approach elicits the skill of an observer to interpret the responses of the individual given on the test. An example of this type of test would be a projection test like the Rorschach Inkblot Test. A skilled observer could recognise distortions in thought or personality through the use of subjective tests. Although these types of assessments offer useful insight to an individual's personality, they are difficult to standardize because they are dependent on the abilities of the tester. It is also difficult, if not impossible to get the same results for an individual if assessed by two different testers. Personal interpretation varies too much to consider these methods reliable.

Tests that use objective approach will be more reliable than the tests using the subjective approach to assessment. Objective measurements are designed to be reliable. Objective tests that measure timed responses to questions will always measure accurately how long it takes participants to answer a question. However, the reason an individual takes longer to respond is not considered when evaluating the response. A language barrier may be the cause, affecting the length of response time. This suggests that objective assessments are not as valid as they are reliable. Subjective measurements tend to be more valid, in that the intended measurement is accurately assessed and considered. Unfortunately, subjective forms of measurement are not reliable because of the variations between testers.

4.3 THE PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT IN COUNSELLING

Assessment occupies a central place in the process of counselling. The success of counselling depends on the success of assessment. When the client comes for counselling, the counselor starts with the preliminary assessment of the client.

Initial assessment data may be obtained by the individual or agency doing the referral. In school the teacher can provide the background information including academic performance etc. The information is generally based on the intuitive judgment, clinical experience and observational skills of the counselor.

The presenting or externally observed problems are often just the iceberg and may be a camouflage for the deeper issues. As the client begins to trust the counselor and find relief from the relatively less troublesome issues, he/she may then begin to express the deeper level conflict, fear, doubt, thus revealing the underlying insecurities and self perception. Therefore, the counselor has to use an appropriate assessment procedure to reveal the deeper problems and develop an understanding about various issues.

The initial assessment is followed by the following steps to gain a deeper understanding about the client's problem.

4.3.1 Intake Interview/History Taking

History Taking is the first important step of assessment. It generally begins with collecting standard identification data such as Name, Address, Age etc.(case history method). Beyond this information it is important to note the physical appearance, present symptoms, and behaviour of the client including verbal and non verbal cues. In taking history past and present problems must also be taken into account.

Before the process of taking history the client has to be assured of the confidentiality and security of the personal information revealed to the counselor and no information would be divulged without the consent of the client. The other part of history taking is interview method, observation method by which detailed recording can be done.

4.3.2 Understanding and Defining the Problem

The next stage in assessment is the problem definition, understanding the problem from various perspectives and understanding the variables that contribute to the problem.

A problem can be assessed from different perspectives. Given below is the outline for the detailed understanding of the problem.

- 1) **Specific aspect related to the problem:** associated feeling such as anger, fear etc., bodily reactions such as headache, shivering etc., associated thoughts, beliefs, attitudes etc., self talk and interpersonal aspect such as relation with other including family friends and peers.
- 2) **Pattern of events contributing to the problems:** what happens before the occurrence and after the occurrence.
- 3) **Extent to which the problem exists and affects client's life:** how long the problem has been with the client.

4.3.3 Client's Coping Skills and Strengths

What does the client do to cope up with the problem what kind of support he/she gets and what are the difficulties.

In order to understand the client's problems we have to perceive it from his/her point of view. The use of variety of assessment techniques and tools is required to determine the causal, contributory and the reinforcing factors that are maintaining the problem behaviour.

The qualitative or subjective assessment has always been an important means of assessing people. Increasingly professional counsellor are becoming inclined to be more objective and exact in their assessment. Thus knowledge of both qualitative and quantitative methods of assessment becomes an essential part of the training of a counsellor.

Therefore the assessment of client's problems is possible through formal and informal method, that is quantitative approach also called psychometric or objective method of assessment as well as informal method, also known as the qualitative approach or descriptive method of assessment.

4.3.4 Methods of Assessment

As described above, the counselor needs to apply a variety of methods of assessment Formal methods of assessment include Tests, Inventories, Ratings and Check lists; whereas Informal methods of assessment include Observation, Case Study, Interview, Self Description and Support System. Tests and inventories are standardized instruments having norm tables, reliability and validity. On the other hand, observation, interview, case study etc. are informal ways of collecting information about different aspects. These provide qualitative data. A good assessment plan always includes both quantitative methods of assessment as well as qualitative methods of assessment.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) What are the various stages in counseling?

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2) How do psychologists assess the client's strength and coping skills?

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3) Describe the processes of assessment in counseling?

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4) Describe the various methods of assessment.

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4.4 COMPONENTS OF ASSESSMENT

There are different components of assessment which the counselor follows:

1) **Planning**

Planning addresses the following two points:

- a) What do we want to know
- b) How should we go about learning it

Making the choice of assessment depends on what is to be measured. Accordingly, the counselor decides on the tools of assessment.

2) **Data Collection**

Data collection for assessment can be qualitative and quantitative in nature such as case study, observation, interview etc. The use of both types of assessment will provide complete picture about the individual and his situation/problem.

3) **Processing of Data**

Processing involves inferring; it is the outcome of the data collection process where the counselor analyses the raw data and puts it in psychological terms in order to reach to the conclusions.

4) **Communication of Results**

**Determination of Aspects to
be Covered**

Report based on assessment should be precise, relevant, clear and should communicate the findings in simple, well-defined, exact and accurate manner. Assessment is a systematic procedure of observing the human behaviour. At the fundamental level, it is the way the psychologist or the counselor communicates the result that is very important. The results of the assessment have to be communicated in such a way that it does not lead to any labeling or negative consequence.

4.5 SKILLS OF ASSESSING

There are different skills required on the part of the psychologist/counselor during the process of assessment. The experienced counselor makes use of his or her own skills of observation, empathy, analysis, recognising etc.

4.5.1 Skills of Observation

It includes behavioural observations such as appearance of the client, body language, demeanor (e.g. sad, fearful, angry expressions etc.) eye contact.

4.5.2 Skill of Empathy

It is the fundamental skill used in counseling. A competent counselor always tries to place himself or herself in the client's shoes; thus the counselor tries to experience the same feeling and emotions that the client is feeling.

4.5.3 Skill of Analysing Client Information

The analytical skill are those that help the counselor to quickly focus on the significant issues – identify gaps in the information and draw out the relevant information .

4.5.4 Understanding and Integrating Client Information

During counseling session the client may say things which are not relevant to the current problem so it is important on the part of the counselor to recall the past information and filter out those which is of no use. And the next step is to integrate the information which was collected from the client and significant others in the client's life, along with one's own impressions and judgments. Assessment or understanding of the problem should lead to formation of counseling goals as to what a change does the client want to achieve.

4.5.5 Developing Counseling Goals

Purpose of assessment is to help the client set goals and initiate action. Goal setting fulfill the following functions: goals represent the desired outcome, goals give directions to counseling process, and goals determine what can be achieved.

As the process of assessment continues there is considerable degree of modification and refinement that goes on to help the client to change his/her thinking, feeling and behaviour. Goal setting involves a lot of mutual effort as there is a great deal of give and take between the client and the counselor. The client begins to feel that it is not the "I" only situation but now a "WE" situation where the goals are shared as the client and the counselor agree to work together

to achieve them. The main function of goal setting are motivating, educating, clarifying and evaluating.

If the client and the problems are correctly understood, and the assessment is made properly the outcome becomes easy, as it can help in identifying the clients' resources and the ability to bring about the changes and to set realistic goals of counseling. This further helps in choosing appropriate therapy /counseling to be provided by the counselor.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What are the various components of assessment?

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2) What do you mean by initial interview?

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3) Mention the different skills of assessing.

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4) Describe the different methods of assessment.

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5) How do we develop counseling goals?

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4.6 AREAS OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment covers all the areas of our behaviour and personality. Broadly, we can say assessment can be in the area of mental ability, interest, aptitude, personality and achievement.

4.6.1 Assessment of Mental Abilities

Mental abilities is one of the common areas of assessment especially in case of children. Ability refers to what the person is capable of doing now. Mental ability is also commonly called as intelligence. There are different types of intelligence tests such as verbal, non-verbal, group, individual, performance test. Group tests are administered in group setting whereas individual tests are administered on an one-to-one basis. Both can be verbal as well as nonverbal. However, performance tests are always individually administered. Thus from the point of view of administration, intelligence tests can be classified as individual and group tests; whereas on the basis of nature of tests, intelligence tests can be verbal, nonverbal and performance type test.

Intelligence is all round mental ability. It has been defined in various ways. Terman (1921) points out that intelligence is an ability to carry on abstract thinking. Munn defines intelligence as the flexibility of the mind to meet the new situations. According to Freeman (1923), intelligence is a capacity for successful adjustment by means of traits which we ordinarily call intellectual. The most widely used definition is given by Wechsler. According to him, intelligence is the aggregate or global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally and to deal effectively with his environment.

There are two aspects of intelligence: the innate potential of the individual and the functional expression of that potential in terms of the individual's behaviour. Intelligence tests measure the latter one.

Some important tests of intelligence are Stanford Binet Test of Intelligence, Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices, Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, Bhatia's Battery of Performance Test of Intelligence and Cattell's Culture Fair Intelligence Test. It was Binet who first developed the measure for assessing intelligence.

Assessment of intelligence is done in terms of Mental Age and Intelligence Quotient (IQ). IQ is found by dividing the mental age by chronological age and multiplied by 100. Thus, the formula is: $IQ = MA / CA \times 100$. Intelligence tests are frequently used. However, the scores of intelligence test are always found to be confounded to some degree by the test taker's past exposure, training, interest, motivation etc. Performance on intelligence tests is also partially dependent on the culture in which the individual has been raised. Although culture free tests are there, but testing is still affected by culturally derived motives, attitudes and values.

Intelligence tests measure among other things, a person's ability to use and understand words, to handle quantitative data, to remember, to perceive similarities and differences, to reason logically, to handle abstract symbols and to do other things which are required for success in school. Thus, the assessment

of intelligence finds usefulness in measuring scholastic aptitude, providing guidance to the learners, educational and vocational counselling, guiding students in cases of poor academic achievement, and understanding student misbehaviour and personality problems.

4.6.2 Assessment of Personality

Personality is a broad term which includes all our psycho-physical dispositions, behaviours, views, interests and attitudes of an individual.

Personality tests include check lists, factored tests, observation techniques, rating scales and personality inventories/multidimensional tests. Check lists are useful for initial screening purpose. It provides initial assessment. The personality inventories or questionnaires suffer from the drawback of social desirability effect. There is a possibility that the subject can fake the answer. The projective tests are not obvious/transparent in assessing the personality. That is, the subject will not be able to know that it assesses his personality. That is why they are called the projective tests. The subject projects his personality unknowingly into the responses he gives to these tests.

The projective technique attempts to view and understand personality as a whole; it interprets its components in their inter relationship with other components as well as with whole. However, these tests suffer from the limitation of objectivity in terms of scoring and interpretation. Despite this, these tests are being widely used as it provides useful insight into the personality of the individual. Commonly used projective techniques are Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), Rorschach Inkblot Test, Sentence Completion Test and Word Association Test.

Assessment of personality has significance for many purposes ranging from career selection to personal-social guidance. Many issues of interpersonal relationship and adjustment problems require assessment of personality of the individual.

4.6.3 Assessment of Interest and Aptitude

Interest is an integral part of our personality. It is not a separate psychological entity, but merely one of several aspects of behaviour. Interest refers to an individual's likings and preferences. An interest is a tendency to become absorbed in an experience and to continue it and to enjoy it. Interest may be intrinsic or extrinsic. E.g. playing hockey or tennis for the sake of it is intrinsic interest, whereas playing it for earning money is extrinsic interest. Thus extrinsic interests are connected with the pursuit of different activities which give rise to satisfaction or pleasure; intrinsic interests are those related to the pursuit of the activity itself.

Interests can be assessed formally as well as informally. When you ask somebody about her interest, this is eliciting information at an informal level. Informal assessment techniques include client's expression of interests and observation. As a guidance counselor, you can interview the client and collect information regarding the client's interests. On the other hand, Formal assessment techniques make use of interest inventories. There are different types of Interest Inventories. Important ones are Kuder's Preference Record and Strong's Vocational Interest Blank (SVIB). There are also R.P. Singh Interest Record and Chatterjee's Non-language Preference Record.

Assessment of interest has implication for one's job and career. Interest inventories are used in the classification or selection of individual for different occupations. It provides the basis for selection of individuals for different jobs. Interest is also essential in the education sphere. Information about the interests of students is very much useful in selecting/choosing particular subjects and courses. Thus, individual differences with regard to interest finds usefulness for both vocational guidance as well as educational guidance and counselling.

Aptitude refers to the potential that the individual has, e.g., he has aptitude for music. This means he has the potential for music; with suitable training he'll be able to develop this ability. On the other hand, if a person does not have an aptitude for music, no amount of training can help him develop musical talent. It'll be useful to distinguish the terms aptitude, ability and achievement here. Ability refers to what the individual is capable of achieving in the present situation. Whereas Achievement refers to what the individual has been able to learn/achieve. Thus ability is concerned with the present whereas achievement depends on past experience and training. Aptitude is concerned with future performance, what the individual can achieve with necessary training input given.

Aptitudes are assessed by administering Aptitude Tests. These tests usually consist of a number of tests. The most commonly used Aptitude tests are Differential Aptitude Test (DAT), David's Battery of Differential Aptitude (DBDA), General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) etc.

Aptitude tests are useful in providing helpful information about the individual. They are used in the selection of individuals for different courses as well as professions. They predict success in training or on a job. Assessment of aptitude helps the individual gain better self understanding and provide guidance in making proper educational and vocational choices. However, the guidance and counselor should consider the results of aptitude tests as broadly indicative of the probable areas of success. The individual should himself analyse and think about the possible choices and take a decision. The counselor may discuss the choice with the individual to help him arrive at an appropriate plan and decision.

Assessment of abilities, achievement, interest, aptitude and personality of the individual will provide useful information in several related aspects of the behaviour of an individual. These will help the individual understand himself better. The guidance and counselor can make use of these relevant assessment findings to provide effective and successful guidance and counselling.

4.6.4 Assessment of Achievement

Achievement tests assess whatever the individual has acquired after some learning or training has taken place. In case of students, it assesses how much s/he has learned. It measures knowledge and skills attained by the students in a particular subject consequent to the classroom teaching. Achievement tests can be formative, i.e. assessment done during the learning/or knowledge acquisition phase; or summative, i.e., assessment done at the end of learning. Achievement tests can also be prognostic or diagnostic. Prognostic achievement tests are used to predict how well an individual is expected to profit from training. On the other hand, diagnostic achievement tests provide information on the performance or achievement of the students in different areas and indicates their strong and weak

areas. There are also standardized achievement tests as well as teacher made classroom/informal achievement tests.

Knowledge of achievement scores will help you find out your strength area and weak areas. For example, if you have secured 92% in Maths and 78% in English, then you know that mathematics is your strong area. The achievement test scores also indicate the relative standing of a student in a group. This helps in identifying one's position in a group and accordingly try to improve oneself. Assessment of achievement helps provide educational guidance and counselling to the students. Teachers make use of the data for the purpose of classifying, grouping, promoting, diagnosing or evaluating students. Counsellors/teachers can make use of achievement scores to promote the student's self understanding and diagnose the problems faced by the students.

4.6.5 Assessment of Creativity

Developing creativity is one of the goals of our school education. For this we need to identify the creative talent and encourage it in our children. Hence, assessment of creativity is very important. Creativity is multifaceted. It consists of a number of abilities, qualities and skills. Fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration are the four main criteria of creativity. It refers to something new/novel which has usefulness also for the society.

Since creativity is multifaceted, its assessment also has to be multi-dimensional as no single method of assessment can provide all the information. There are a number of assessment techniques informal as well as formal. The informal techniques make use of observation, ratings, check lists, anecdotal records, general school activities etc. Formal assessment involves the use of standardized tests, prominent among which are Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, Bacquer Mehdi Test of Creativity, Passi-Usha Test of Creativity.

The main feature of creativity tests is that they are open ended. They allow the respondent to answer in a variety of ways. The creativity tests assess the divergent thinking, the ability to see relationships between two unrelated things/objects, put things in a new context and guess consequences. In contrast, intelligence tests assess convergent thinking. It assesses such abilities as memory, logical reasoning and clear thinking. There is a right or wrong answer in intelligence tests whereas there is no right or wrong answer.

A proper conducive environment is essential for the assessment and expression of creativity. Assessment of creativity will enable the counselor to provide proper guidance to the students to actualize their potential. Assessment data will also help the teachers in planning their lessons and providing different types of curricular and non curricular experiences to enhance their creative potential. Creativity is there in each and every individual It is a matter of providing the right opportunity, encouraging and rewarding the child for the expression of creativity

Self Assessment Questions

1) What is meant by mental ability?

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2) What are the tests available to test personality?

3) Write names of a few main intelligence tests. Describe the applicability of intelligence test results.

4) Define Aptitude. What are the various aptitude tests available>? List them.

5) What methods psychologists use to measure achievement?

6) How do you assess creativity?

4.7 LET US SUM UP

The existence of differences among people makes life worth living. However, these differences only create problems in adjustment and interpersonal relationship in family as well as work place. Differences in abilities and achievements among the students leads to comparison, labeling and inferiority feeling. Psychological assessment helps in identifying these differences.

Accordingly, the guidance and counselor helps develop self understanding in the individual and enables him/her to take proper decisions and make suitable choices. In this unit you learned about the different aspects of psychological assessment. The process of assessment in counselling was described and the skills that are required in the process of assessment in counselling were explained. You also learned about the different areas of our behaviour and personality in which assessment can be carried out. Assessment of these areas will provide helpful information and guidance to the individual. It is important to note here that results/findings of any particular test should not be seen on its own, but should always be supplements with information from other sources. This will give a comprehensive picture about the particular aspect of the individual.

4.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Compare and contrast the subjective and objective approach to psychological assessment.
- 2) Discuss the components of assessment.
- 3) Describe the usefulness of the assessment data on interest and aptitude tests.
- 4) What are the subjective and objective approaches in psychological testing?

4.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Anastasi, A. (2003). *Psychological Testing* (5th ed.). Macmillan: New York.

Cronbach, L.J. (1970). *Essentials of Psychological Testing* (3rd ed.). Harper & Row: New York.

Sharma, R.A. (2004). *Development of Learner and Teaching-Learning Process*. Surya Publication: Meerut.