

PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING – CONTRIVANCE FOR CORPORATES

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(I) Introduction:

Psychological test is essentially an objective and standardized measure of a sample of behavior. It is standard way of measuring an aspect of mental performance. They are used to explore personal attributes like personality, career, employment interest, values, attitudes and motivation. These tests are different because everyone is presented with the same questions and instructions for completing them, test are administered under carefully controlled and timed conditions by a trained individual who follows precise instructions for scoring and interpreting the results. In this way there is no room for subjectivity and everyone is treated in exactly the same way.

The psychological testing contains information on the following aspects,

- **Test objective** – The degree to which it serves as an indicator of a relatively broad and significant area of behavior.
- **Standardization**- It implies uniformity of procedures in administering and scoring the test.
- **Objective**- The administration, scoring and interpreting of scores are objective in so far as they are independent of the subjective judgment of the particular test.
- **Reliability** – It means consistency. Test reliability is the consistency of scores obtained by the same persons when the identical test or with an equivalent form of the test.
- **Validity** – The degree to which the test actually measures what it purports to measure. Validity provides a direct check on how well the test fulfills its functions.

Psychological tests are one of the main measurement tools that have been developed to study differences between people; these differences have direct and practical impact on the job performance. Understanding this difference enables us to addresses questions like.

- What jobs would I be good at
- Which job applicant should be employed
- Who will benefits from this training programme
- How can interpersonal skills de improved
- How can a team contribute more to the project
- Leadership traits
- Emotional intelligence of employees

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Participants in the testing process are been divided into those who are directly involved in a particular testing session and those who are associated with the testing process more indirectly.

Direct participants in the testing process are:

Test User: The person who requires the tests results, normally for some decision making purpose. Sometimes this person provides scores or test interpretations to someone else who has, or shares, decisions making responsibility. For example, if the test user is supplying results to an employer, both are test users and they share responsibility for ensuring proper test use.

Test Taker: The individual who takes the test by choice, direction or necessity. In some cases this individual is also the ultimate consumer (e.g. in careers counseling), where an individual not only takes the test but is also the main user of the test results. In such circumstances special care is needed to provide an appropriate context for understanding the test results.

Test administrator: The person who supervises and has responsibility for administering the test. If test administration is either delegated to another person or delivered by a computer, the test administrator is the person who can be considered responsible for ensuring adherence to sound professional practice.

Second level participants are:

Test developer: The person or group of people who develop, publish and market the test. The development role is sometimes split between the following:

- **Test author:** The person who originally develops and researches the test.
- **Test publisher:** The organization, which markets and distributes the test and its accompanying documentation, such as the test manual. Scoring key and so on, which are required to use a test. The test publisher sometimes also provides scoring services.
- **Software author:** The person who develops the computer programs that administer, score and sometimes provide an interpretation of the test.
- **Test sponsor:** Usually an organization that contacts for the development of the test or the provision of the testing service.

Test reviewer: The person who conducts a scholarly review to evaluate the suitability of the test for its proposed users.

Psychological testing must use control measures to generate accuracy in behavior of individual. There are two main measures for control in the testing they are as under.

- To ensure that the testis given by a qualified examiner and that the scores are properly used.
- To prevent general familiarity with the test content, which would invalidate the test.

Qualifies examiner: The need for a qualified examiner is evident in each of the three major aspects of the testing situations: selection of the test, administration and scoring, and interpretation of scores.

Role of the test user: In this context, the user is anyone who uses test scores as on source of information in reaching practical decisions .The test user may or may not be the examiner who administer and scores the test.

Types of Psychological testing:

Cronbach (1990) categorized test into two main categories;

(I) Test of Maximum Performance

- Measure of general mental ability
 - (i) Individual test
 - (ii) Group Test
- Measure of special ability (Aptitude test)

(II) Tests of Typical Responses

- Observation
 - (i) Standardized observation procedures
 - (ii) Field observation in natural settings
- Self report
 - (i) Interest Inventories
 - (ii) Personality measurement test
 - (iii) Inferential Methods

The tests are divided as the aptitude test and the personality test. The aptitude test is taken into consideration for new entrants, whereas personality test is applied for assessing the personality of existing employees.

(II) Industries perceptive towards psychological testing:

Applications of psychological testing has been wide and varied in industry, prominent areas of application of these tests are as under:

Recruitment and selection – Aptitude tests and personality profiling questionnaires are be used as an aid to identify possible strength and weakness against particular job requirement. The information are used in a selection interview to investigate in what way an individual is likely to behave and perform in new or different work setting and assist in making better quality decisions on placements.

Job Profiling – Job profiling can be produced in the form of job and person specifications by suing commercially produced packages specifically designed for the purpose. Comparing the psychometric data for prospective candidates with the job profile information produces job match reports.

Personal development – Aptitude tests, career inventories and personality profiling questionnaires can be used in various combinations to help individuals understand themselves more fully an dhow also their behavior impinges on others.

Team building – Personality profiling questionnaires, particularly those designed to tackle team issues can be used to assist in team building, on as well as off the job, by identifying complementary personality types and associated behaviors as part of a process for improving team effectiveness.

Career counseling – Career inventories are particularly useful in the process of career counseling, often providing a degree of acceptable objectivity to candidates. As a further enhancement to the process, aptitude tests and personality profiling questionnaires can provide additional information to give a more thorough, comprehensive and objectively derived estimate of a candidate's capabilities and suitability for adopting new career.

Prominent Psychological tests in industry

16PF (16 personality factor)

It measures 16 temperament traits which include warmth, reasoning, emotional stability, dominance, liveliness, rule consciousness, social boldness, sensitivity, vigilance, abstractedness, privateness, apprehension, openness to change, self reliance, perfectionism and tension.

Myers Briggs Type Indicator (1942)

Measures a person's performance using four basic scales with opposite poles which include the following Extraversion / Introversion, Sensate / Intuitive, Thinking/ Feeling and Judging / Perceiving. The various combinations of these preferences results in 16 personality types.

Thomas Profiling

Utilizes predicative ability and aims to match the behavior to jobs. It can also be used to map the existing work behavior of an individual, so as to assess the individual's behavioral aptitude. The gap between behavior and the company requirements can be bridged through retraining the individual's skill.

Belbin Team Role profiling

Assesses nine team roles, which include action-oriented roles (shaper, implementer and completer finisher), people oriented roles (coordinator, team worker and resource investigator), cerebral roles (Plant, monitor evaluator and specialist). It describes a pattern of behavior that characterizes one person's behavior in relationship to another person.

Minnesota Multiphase Personality Inventory (MMPI)

The MMPI contains 566 statements or items for people to answer about themselves. They provide an insight on patterns of people answer and groups of people with known characteristics of interest.

Projective Methods

The basic idea behind these test methods is that people respond to vague or ambiguous situations is often a projection of their underlying feelings and motives. The most common type of projective test are (a) Rorschach Inkblot Techniques (b) Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

Over the last couple of years, psychological tools like PF16, MBTI and human job analysis are increasingly being used by HR departments across the globe. These tools enable the company to test the candidate's personality and behavioral aptitude. The trend has caught on in India over the last five years.

Organisations like UB, Bharti, Touchtel, Sanmar, i-Seva, Hindustan Motors, Arvind Mills, i-flex Solutions and Cisco have utilized psychological tests to assess candidates and select the right employee.

Benefits of psychological testing to industry:

Properly developed psychological tests, when used by competent and appropriately qualified individuals, have the following advantages:

- Improve your recruitment process
- Increase staff retention
- Enable more effective people management
- Understand your own identity in terms of team roles
- Work more effectively in teams
- Builds productive working relationship
- Match people to jobs more effectively
- Conflict modes of employees
- Stress analysis
- Role analysis
- Motivating the employees

Precautions for applying psychological testing in industry:

- Situations must be evaluated to see whether test use would be appropriate to help achieve the desired objective.
- Lack of correct training is also a significant danger in the use of psychological testing; training qualification system developed by the British Psychological Society is world-renowned institution providing training in psychological testing. Indeed, even attendance at a recognised training course is no guarantee that a person will at all times use tests and questionnaires correctly since some instruments, particularly personality questionnaires, require considerable experience and the possibility of misinterpretation or inappropriate interpretation of results is ever-present.
- Another important danger with psychometric testing is the use of personality questionnaires to try to assess a person's ability or skill in a particular area. For example, if a person scores highly on a personality dimension called 'Leadership', this does not mean that he or she will actually possess a high level of leadership skill. Rather it means that the person has the basic personality characteristics that are commonly found amongst effective leaders and, with sufficient experience and given the development of certain necessary skills, has the potential to become an effective leader. Unfortunately however, scores on scales such as this are often taken to imply that the person already has all the necessary skills and is already capable of performing at a high level in the area in question.

Conclusion:

Psychological tests have been in the industry for more than ten decades and have been providing insight about employee behavior. In India in the last five years they have made a remarkable application in Indian industry and in days to come they will contribute more to the development of employees and organisations.

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