



Appraisal Techniques for Counselling in Schools

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the various appraisal techniques that guidance experts use to collect data about individuals. These techniques include both standardized and non-standardized methods such as questionnaires, observation, sociometry, biography, cumulative records, and anecdotal records. Standardized tests of intelligence, interests and aptitudes provide reliable and valid information while the non-standardized techniques offer a broader and more subjective approach to data gathering and interpretation. The article also explains the basic principles of guidance, which include meeting the diverse needs of the students and aiding the individual in learning to achieve personal freedom to become independent and make informed choices. This article provides an overview of the various testing techniques used in counselling and their applications in aiding individuals to reach their full potential. Based on the review, the study concludes that the fundamental purpose of counselling is to develop in each individual up to the limit of his/her capacity the ability to solve his/her problems and to make his/her adjustments and that the techniques which are generally employed by guidance experts for collecting basic data about the individual are either standardized or non-standardized.

Keywords: Counselling, guidance, non-standardized test, sociometry, standardized test, testing technique

Introduction

The major goal of the educational system is to develop the potential of individuals with a view to achieving overall national development. In doing this, the educational process is tailored towards achieving desirable changes in people's cognitive, affective and psychomotor behaviour, such that every individual is sufficiently equipped to contribute his or her quota to overall national development. In this wise, professional counsellors are involved in helping people to make better decisions about matters relating to their personal development and, by logical extension, contribute to overall national development (Shama, 2011). In an era characterized by educational, social and economic reforms coupled with an ever-increasing need for efficient service delivery, counsellors are expected to become more proactive in assisting individuals to achieve their life goals and in facilitating the realization of national development goals.

A major requirement for counsellors to be able to assist people to make effective life choices and acquire new behaviours is a thorough understanding of individual clients and their presenting concerns. This understanding is based on information acquired from and/or about the clients in some systematic and objective ways using carefully-developed assessment procedures. Assessment is used here to mean methods or procedures employed by counsellors to obtain usable and valid data on various aspects of human behaviour, including their potentialities, interests, aptitude and developmental concerns.

There is no doubt that assessment plays a pivotal role in the counselling profession. Wall (2014) expressed the view that basing judgments, decisions, and interventions specifically on information acquired in some systematic and objective way is of major importance in the life of a practicing counsellor. Decisions relating to numerous issues such as marriage and family, economy, career, education and mental health often require the use of observations, interviews, surveys, rating scales, and checklists, as well as more formalized assessments and tests. Thus, as a matter of necessity, practising counsellors have to engage in assessment on a daily basis, whether through the use of published instruments, conducting intake interviews, or listening to clients' descriptions of life experiences. As Whiston (2010) has suggested, integrating appropriate, skilled and refined assessment skills into counselling is necessary to deepen the effectiveness of counsellors, as the inability to use tests and assessments when and where appropriate may limit counsellors' effectiveness in serving their clients.

Specifically, the study explores the reasons why testing and assessment are integral to counselling. It identifies the various types of assessment tools available to counsellors and describes competencies which counsellors must possess to be able to perform assessment activities effectively. Finally, the article discusses the implications of assessment activities in counselling.

Types of Assessment Tools in Counselling Practice

There are many behaviour characteristics in man that require peculiar measures for appropriate classification and treatment. This is why there are lots of assessment instruments available for counsellors' use today, such as: achievement test, aptitude test, interest and occupational test, personality test, intelligence test, observation, interview, questionnaire, sociometry, autobiography, and rating scale.

Achievement tests are primarily designed to measure what an individual has learned. Achievement tests are often used in educational or employment settings. They attempt to measure how much a person knows about a particular, topic, that is, the person's achieved knowledge. Counsellors use achievement tests for diagnostic and selective purposes in educational institutions and workplaces. These tests are used to assess students' performance in school units, semesters and terminal examinations. These tests focus on skills or abilities that are traditionally taught in schools. Therefore, achievement tests may be defined as tools designed to measure the degree of students' learning in specific curriculum areas common to most schools, such as Mathematics, English Language, and others.

Aptitude tests are specifically designed for selection and production purposes. An aptitude test measures the potential of one to achieve in a given activity or to learn to achieve in that activity. According to Hamersma (2012), aptitude tests are largely concerned with the questions of what a person's capacity or competence is in a special area. This testing tool is relevant in making the right prognosis on clients' problems.

Aptitude is a trait that characterizes an individual's ability to perform in a specific area or to acquire the learning necessary for performance in a given area (Hamersina, 2012). It presumes an inherent or natural ability that can be developed to its maximum through learning or other experiences. However, it cannot be expanded beyond a certain point, even by learning. Aptitude tests are largely concerned with the questions of what a person's capacity or competence is in a special area (Hamersma, 2012). This testing tool is relevant in making the right prognosis on clients' problems. Aptitude tests are specifically designed for selection and production purposes.

Aptitude tests can cover a wide range of domains such as verbal, written, and communication skills, logical reasoning, numerical ability, spatial awareness, mechanical comprehension, and creative problem-solving. The results of aptitude tests enable counsellors to guide individuals in making informed decisions about their career or educational choices, and also help employers in selecting candidates who possess the aptitudes needed for a particular job or role.

The main objective of aptitude tests in counselling psychology is to determine an individual's suitability and compatibility for a specific field or position. These tests can provide insights into an individual's strengths, weaknesses and potential for success in a particular area. Aptitude tests help counsellors assess whether a person has the innate abilities and potential to perform well in a certain profession or educational programme.

Interest and occupational tests are also used by counsellors in addition to aptitude test to direct their clients' realities. For instance, occupational tests, such as Otis Employment Test, Strong Vocational Interest Blank, Minnesota Vocational Interest Inventory and Vocational Interest Inventory (Nigerian version), attempt to match the client's interests with the interests of persons in known careers. The logic here is that if the things that interest the client are also things that interest people in his or her target occupation, then he or she might be a suitable candidate for the target occupation.

Interest is a behaviour orientation towards certain objects, activities or experiences. It is an expression of our likes and dislikes, or our attractions and aversions. An individual chooses the most acceptable, suitable alternative out of many, go after preferred objectives, activities, etc., and consequently derives satisfaction, success and happiness out of the activities selected. This explains why students show more inclination to Mathematics, while others to computers, some to literary activities, paintings, etc. Interests are related to general ability, special aptitudes and values in various ways. Linguistic and scientific interests are positively correlated with intelligence, technical interests are related to mechanical aptitude and business interests are related to the tendency to stress material as opposed to theoretical, social or aesthetic values and so on (Hoover, 2018). One way of assessing interests is by asking the individuals what they would like to do. Another way is to analyse the activities that a person performs. The third method of assessing interests is by the use of interest tests and inventories. There are many instruments now in use and majority of them deal with occupational interest and personality test.

Personality tests are tests that measure the way a person typically responds to stimuli around him/her over time. Two of the most well-known personality tests are the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), or the revised MMPI-2, composed of several hundred "yes or no" questions, and the Rorschach (the inkblot test), composed of several cards of inkblots in which a person simply gives a description of the images and feelings experienced in looking at the inkblots. Another well-known example is the MULTI modal Personality Inventory – MmPI by Prof. E. A. Akinade (2015) where conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience and extraversion are measured in scales of 0 to 100 as in Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis of Multimodal Personality Inventory (MmPI)

SECTION	SUBSCALE NAME	SCORE
C	Conscientiousness	64
A	Agreeableness	85
N	Neuroticism	64
O	Openness to Experience	78
E	Extraversion	81

Conscientiousness is the personality trait of being thorough, careful, or vigilant. The conscientious individual tends to exhibit strong sense of responsibility, hard work, competence, order, dutifulness, self-discipline, deliberation, achievement striving, planned rather than spontaneous behaviour. They are reliable, intelligent, tend to avoid trouble, and they often achieve high levels of success through purposeful planning and persistence. They are neat, systematic, careful, thorough and think carefully before acting. A conscientiousness measure of between 50 and 79 is considered high. In Table 1,

this individual who scored 64 in conscientiousness is in the high scorer spectrum of 50 – 79 which shows that he possesses a great deal of the personality trait recognizable with high score in conscientiousness.

Agreeableness is a personality trait manifesting itself in individual behavioural characteristics that others regard as kind, sympathetic, cooperative, warm and considerate. It reflects individual differences in cooperation and social harmony. Agreeable individuals value getting along with others. They are considerate, friendly, generous, helpful, and willing to compromise their interest with others. They have optimistic view of human nature. They believe people are honest, decent, trustworthy, kind, warm, and sympathetic. They tend to exhibit trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, cooperation, modesty, compassion, and tender mindedness. In Table 1, this individual who scored 85 in agreeableness places him in the high scorer spectrum of 80 and above which shows that he possesses a great deal of the personality traits recognizable with high score in agreeableness.

Neuroticism, also called Universal Emotional Stability, is a tendency to experience unpleasant or negative emotions easily, such as self-consciousness, anger hostility, anxiety, impulsiveness, depression, or vulnerability. A measure of 70 points and above indicate high score in neuroticism. Those who this trait generally lack ability to think clearly, make decisions, and cope effectively with stress.

Openness to experience depicts appreciation for feelings, beauty, aesthetics, arts, education, values, unusual ideas, imagination, fantasy, curiosity, actions, and a variety of experiences. It distinguishes imaginative, creative people from down-to-earth, conventional people. A high score in openness to experience ranges from 55 points and above which indicates that an individual is intellectually curious, ingenious, open to emotions, appreciative of art, and is willing try new ways or things. The persons who possess this trait are creative and capable of generating new ideas. They engage in self-examination, divergent thinking, and intellectual pursuits. They tolerate diverse life styles and cultures. In Table 1, this individual with high score of 78 in openness to experience is in the high scorer spectrum which shows that he has a great deal of the personality trait outlined in openness to experience.

Extraversion is a trait that exhibits warmth, sociability, liveliness, dynamism, activity, positive emotion, excitement, stimulation, and assertiveness. High Scorers in extraversion (55 and above) enjoy being with different types of people. Those in this group are comfortable speaking in front of people, full of energy, and experience positive emotions. This individual who scored of 81 in extraversion in Table 1 is placed in the high spectrum of extraversion.

Intelligence tests are tests which measure a person's intelligence, that is, a person's basic ability to understand the world around him, assimilate its functioning, and apply this knowledge to enhance the quality of life (American Counselling Association, 2013). Intelligence is a measure of a person's potential, not a measure of what has been learnt (as in an achievement test), and so it is supposed to be independent of the testees' culture.

An intelligence test in the context of counselling psychology is a standardized assessment tool used to measure an individual's cognitive abilities (Goldman, 2011). It is designed to assess various aspects of intelligence, such as problem-solving skills, reasoning abilities, memory, verbal skills, mathematical skills, and spatial awareness. These tests are commonly used in educational settings, career counselling, and clinical evaluations to understand an individual's cognitive strengths and weaknesses to inform decision-making regarding interventions or treatment plans. An example of an intelligence test used in counselling psychology is the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS). The WAIS is designed to assess cognitive abilities in adults aged 16 – 90 years. It consists of several subsets that measure different areas of intelligence, such as verbal comprehension, perceptual reasoning, working memory, and processing speed. The test provides an overall IQ score, as well as sub-scores that can help identify an individual's strengths and weaknesses in specific cognitive areas. The results of the test can be used to inform counselling and treatment planning, educational or career guidance, and to identify potential learning disabilities or intellectual impairment.

Another assessment tool for counselling is the **observation technique**. In this technique, behaviour is studied through observation by a trained observer. The effectiveness of the technique depends upon the skilfulness of the observer. The observer is expected to detect well defined behaviours free from biases and prejudices. Observational techniques are useful in the study of students and individuals but their usefulness depends upon the manner and purpose with which they are conducted. Observation is a relatively 'free' situation—one in which the pupils feel the absence of adult pressure may reveal important aspects of personality. Observing does not interfere with the usual school activities as testing does, and provides how the child responds in social situations and notes how he reacts to frustrating situations. However, it is almost impossible for most teachers to spend enough time observing to enable them to get a well-rounded picture of the child's personality in action. Bias and prejudice on the part of the observer could vitiate the result. In many situations, too, the child, particularly the older child or adolescent, will 'cover-up' to conceal his true feelings, and the same behaviour at different times may not have the same meaning.

An **interview** is a conversation with a purpose. The purposes for which interviews are conducted are introductory, fact-finding, evaluative, informative, therapeutic, and to cultivate a friendly relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. The occasion should be used for a friendly informal talk. The interviewee should be allowed to talk in a permissive atmosphere with confidence and freedom. Interviews differ with respect to the purpose for which the interview is instituted. For instance, it could be an employment interview in which case the purpose is to assess the fitness of a person for the job. The interviewer talks too much and the interviewee too little. The interviewee simply answers the questions posed to him; in a fact-finding interview, where the purpose of the interview is the verification of facts and data collection; diagnostic interview, the purpose of which is remediation where efforts are made by the interviewer to diagnose and solve the problem(s) of the interviewee; or counselling interview that provides insights, suggestions, pieces of advice to the interviewee. The counselling session begins with the work of collecting information and proceeds with guidance and finally ends with psychological treatment of the problem.

The focus of this article is on the various interviews explained above but employment interview. In counselling, interviewing allows counsellors to gather detailed information about client's personal histories, experiences, and current issues. By engaging in dialogue, counsellors can obtain a comprehensive understanding of clients' thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. It also helps the counsellor build rapport and establish a strong therapeutic alliance with

the interviewee(client). Through active listening, empathy, and understanding, counsellors can create a safe and supportive environment where clients feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings. The interview technique allows counsellors to adapt their approaches based on each client's unique needs, circumstances, and characteristics. Interviews provide a platform for both verbal and non-verbal communications. Counsellors do not only listen to clients' words but also observe their body language, facial expressions and other non-verbal cues. This can further enhance the understanding of clients' emotions and thoughts which provide the opportunity for immediate feedback and clarification. If a client's responses are unclear or ambiguous, counsellors can seek further explanation or ask for specific examples, which aid in better understanding. However, it must be noted that interview technique is subjective and so prone to bias and prejudice of the interviewer (counsellor) which often leads to the misinterpretation of gathered data.

A **questionnaire** is a list of questions to be answered by an individual or a group of individuals, especially to get facts or information (Hoover, 2018). A questionnaire is a systematic set of questions designed to collect data on specific variables of interest (Hoover, 2018). Questions are designed to get information about conditions and practices about which the respondents are presumed to have the knowledge. The questions in a questionnaire are basically of two types – the closed and the open type. In the open type, questions require the individual to think and write. For example, what is your favourite sport? The closed type requires the answer in the form 'yes' or 'no' or in a limited number of given categories. The open type questionnaire is time consuming and requires special skill in interpreting the responses. The closed type questionnaire can be easily scored, interpreted and is more objective

- i) Closed-ended questions include (a) Gender: Male/Female;(b) How often do you watch the Discovery Channel on TV: Every day/Once in a week/Occasionally/Never.
- ii) Open-ended questions include(a) Which types of programmes do you like to watch on TV? (b) What steps would you like to take to improve science teaching in your school?

In counselling, questionnaires are frequently used as a valuable tool for gathering information and assessing various aspects of an individual's psychological well-being. The questionnaire can be administered in a variety of formats, such as by hand (paper and pencil), post, e-mail or internet. Obilor (2018) provided a concise description of the methods of questionnaire administration below.

Copies of a questionnaire can be administered by hand from house to house or office to office. It can also be by group administration. In the house to house or office to office administration, the researcher or his agent(s) would carry copies of the questionnaire to individuals for completion at their homes or offices. But in group administration, people are assembled in a hall (classroom, church, company auditorium, etc.) and copies of the questionnaire given to them for completion. This method though very expensive and time consuming (especially with the house to house or office to office method), has a very high response rate.

Administration by mail is when copies of the questionnaire are mailed (posted) to the respondents. This is a very cost-effective method of administering the questionnaire. It is ideal for large sample sizes, or when the sample comes from a wide geographic area, and provides high degree of anonymity. However, low response rate (resulting from respondents' neglect to complete the questionnaire, refusal to mail back completed copies), requirement of high literacy level, and slow return of completed copies are major drawbacks of the administration of the questionnaire by mail.

Three-mail mode of administration is relatively new. It involves using the email addresses of respondents to deliver the questionnaire and get the completed questionnaire returned by email. It is clearly the easiest, most cost-effective, and fastest method of administering a questionnaire. Its response rate is also good. But anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Questionnaire administration by internet is one of the ways jobs very large surveys are carried out. All that is required is for the questionnaire to be made available on the internet and characteristics of respondents specified. It is very cost-effective and good for organisations. However, it requires IT literacy from the sample of the study.

Sociometry technique is the study of the nature of social relationship of individual within a group (Wall, 2014). It offers an opportunity to identify personality problems, especially in isolates and the rejected. Isolates are students who remain alone with no relationships in the class. Rejected students are disliked by other students. The technique is a useful source of information for appraisal of social behaviour of students. There are usually three types of sociometric techniques:

- (i) The nomination technique where the student is asked to select and name his/her peers in terms of some criterion suggested by the teacher. For example, the teacher may ask students to name three best friends in the class.
- (ii) The social acceptance technique requires that levels of social relationship are stated and the student is asked to express his/her sociometric choice.
- (iii) In the 'who's who' or 'guess who' technique, brief descriptions of various types of students are provided and they are asked to guess who in the class matches with the description. For example, one of the statements may be 'The boy is always in trouble with his parents', who?

The obtained sociometric data is presented in the form of a sociogram which shows attractions and repulsions within a group and helps the teacher and the counsellor in discovering the problems of students in relation to the group. It further suggests cues on the way out of any identified problems.

An **autobiography** is a description of an individual in his/her own words (Wall, 2014). As a counselling technique for studying the individual, it gives valuable information about the individual's interests, abilities, personal history, hopes, ambitions, likes, dislikes, etc. In counselling, structured autobiographic items are given to the individual and he/she is asked to write them out. The autobiographical material thus obtained is verified by various

other means. Since feelings, values and attitudes cannot be measured by any other technique, autobiography appears to be the one technique for appraising these characteristics.

Rating scales are measurement tools or systems used to assess and evaluate the performance, behaviour, skills, or other relevant characteristics of individuals, products, services, or any other subject of interest. They provide a structured framework for assigning scores to different attributes or criteria based on predefined criteria or standards. Rating scales are commonly used in performance evaluations, customer feedback surveys, research studies, and various counselling assessment processes. They provide a consistent and standardized framework for evaluation, ensuring fairness and objectivity and allow for comparisons among different entities or individuals based on a common set of criteria. Rating scales provide means of quantifying subjective or qualitative data, making easy for results to be analysed and interpreted. However, rating scales are subject to individual biases and prejudices, as different ratters may assign different ratings based on their perspectives, and may be influenced by contextual factors, such as the timing, environment, or ratter's mood.

Rating scales typically consist of a set of ordered categories or levels that represent different levels of performance, behaviour, or quality. These categories can be numeric (e.g., 1-5) or descriptive (e.g., excellent, good, fair, poor). The effective use of rating scales requires clear and well-defined criteria to maintain relevance and accuracy. When used appropriately, rating scales can provide valuable insights, facilitate decision-making, and support continuous improvement efforts in various contexts. Obilor (2018) described the following four types of rating scales commonly used in schools and by counsellors:

1. The Summated Rating Scale or the Likert-type Scale.
2. The Equal-appealing Interval Scale or the Thurstone Scale.
3. The Calculative Scale or Guttman Scale.
4. Semantic Differential scale.

The Summated Rating or Likert-type Scale: This is the most widely used scale in which the respondent is asked to rate himself by checking the point at which he would fall in a scale running from one extreme of the attitude in question to the other. In this type of scale, a list of statements about what is being measured is generated. The researcher will also provide a set of graduated response options into which an individual is expected to indicate his degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement. These response options are weighted by assigning numerical values and by summing up an individual's responses to all statements, a total score is obtained which will determine that person's standing on the variable or attitude being measured. This is why the scale is called summated rating scale. For example, in a study to determine the attitude of students towards Social Studies, the Likert-type items can be prepared as follows:

"I like studying Mathematics"

SA = Strongly Agree	5
A = Agree	4
U = Undecided	3
D = Disagree	2
SD = Strongly Disagree	1

A higher value indicates a more positive response than a lower value. A person who agrees with the above statement for instance has more positive attitude than someone who disagrees with it. If the statement was negative or reverse, it would read: "I don't like studying Mathematics", the weighing of response options should also be reversed to ensure that higher scores always indicate positive attitude than lower scores. The response in this case will be weighed as follows:

SA = Strongly Agree	1
A = Agree	2
U = Undecided	3
D = Disagree	4
SD = Strongly Disagree	5

Table 2: Scale that measures job satisfaction might look like Very Dissatisfied (1); Dissatisfied (2); Undecided (3); Satisfied (4); Very Satisfied (5):

S/No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	The actual job itself					
2	The degree to which you feel 'motivated' by your job					
3	Current career opportunities					

4	The level of security in your present job					
5	The extent to which you may identify with the public image or goals of your organization					
6	The style of supervision that your superiors use					
7	Your level of salary relative to your experience					
8	The way changes and innovations are implemented					

The Summated Rating or Likert-type Scale usually uses five to seven scales which consist of different possible themes of agreement. Even individuals without tremendous expertise can develop sophisticated measures using the Likert method for developing scales. Although originally developed with several statements in which individuals indicated their extent of agreement with response choices such as 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree, statements with other response choices such as importance, satisfaction, frequency, quality, stability, flexibility, creativity, politeness, attractiveness, elegance, formality, priority, practicality, appropriateness, knowledge, and many more can be used in place of agreement.

Thurstone scales: The Thurstone scale is made up of statements about a particular issue and each statement has a numerical value indicating the respondent's attitude about the issue, either favourable or unfavourable. People indicate which of the statements with which they agree and the average response is computed. First, you must be very clear about exactly what it is you're trying to measure and second you must collect statements on the topic ranging from attitudes that are favourable to unfavourable. For this example, we will use same sex marriage. Example statements are:

1. It's should be against the law
2. There's absolutely nothing wrong with it
3. Marriage is between a man and a woman
4. It should be a sin
5. It's perfectly appropriate for two consenting adults
6. It should be legalized
7. It can harm children
8. The same legal rights as a male/female couple
9. It's just horrible
10. It can't do any harm
11. It's wicked.

Next, you have judges evaluate, on an 11-point response format (1 very negative to 11 indicating very positive), what kind of attitude each of these statements reflects. For example, it's likely that the statement "It should be a sin." would be judged to represent a very negative attitude while the statement "It should be legalized." would be judged to represent a very positive attitude. The idea is that you'd like to develop a set of items that not only reflect the entire continuum between 1 and 11, but that your judges who helped you develop the set of items would have considerable consensus about what level of attitude each of the statements reflected. In this exercise, statements for which there is little consensus would be discarded.

So, let's assume that the average ratings among our judges are as below:

Average

It's should be against the law	1.6
There's absolutely nothing wrong with it	5.4
Marriage is between a man and a woman	2.7
It should be a sin	1.5
It's perfectly appropriate for two consenting adults	7.6
It should be legalized.	9.3
It can harm children.	2.4
The same legal rights as male/female couples	5.5

It's just horrible	2.3
It can't do any harm	6.7
It is wicked	1.2

Suppose that there was reasonable consensus among our judges for the above items. When administering the scale, we'd ask individuals to indicate which of the above they agreed with (the average level that our judges had agreed upon would not be indicated on the scale when administered to individuals). Finally, the average of those checked would be calculated to determine the individual's attitude. Problems with developing Thurstone scales include (1) it can be quite time consuming and expensive, and (2) examples for the mid-points of the scale for which there is consensus among the judges can be difficult to obtain.

Guttman Scales: The Guttman scale was first described by Louis Guttman in 1944. It allows progressive investigation in the nature of interview probing such that one can find to what extent respondents agree with a concept or principle. The Guttman scale refers to a situation where a respondent who agrees with any specific statement in the list will also agree with all previous statements. In other words, each statement subsumes the lower-order statements. That is items are arranged in an order that an individual who agrees with a particular item also agrees with items of lower rank order. The Guttman scale is also called cumulative scaling or Scalo-gram analysis. The purpose of this scale is to establish a one-dimensional continuum for a concept one wishes to measure.

According to Abdi (2010), the goal of the analysis is to derive a single dimension that can be used to position both the questions and the subjects. Suppose that we want to test a set of children to assess their mastery of the following mathematical concepts:

1. Counting from 1 to 50
2. Solving addition problems
3. Solving subtraction problems
4. Solving multiplication problems
5. Solving division problems

Table 3: The pattern of responses of a Guttman Scale.

Child	Counting	Addition	Subtraction	Multiplication	Division
S ₁	1	0	0	0	0
S ₂	1	1	0	0	0
S ₃	1	1	1	0	0
S ₄	1	1	1	1	0
S ₅	1	1	1	1	1

Note: In Table 3, a value of 1 means that the child (row) has mastered the type of problem (column), and a value of 0 means that the child has not mastered the type of problem

Semantic Differential Scales: The Semantic Differential Scales were used by Fred Fiedler in 1964 as the Least Preferred Co-Worker scale, in a measure of leadership style. The scales measure an individual's reactions to stimulus words and concepts in terms of ratings on bipolar adjectives at each end. For example, an eight-point response system that is anchored from hot on one end to cold at the other, or friendly at one end with hostile at the other, or good at one end with evil at the other, or polite at one end with rude at the other, etc. Typically, a scale would consist of a minimum of five bipolar pairs and the score would be obtained by adding the numeric values of the responses. An example of a semantic differential scale is presented below:

Valuable	_____	Worthless
Positive	_____	Negative
Pleasant	_____	Unpleasant
Careful	_____	Sloppy
Strong	_____	Weak
Tense	_____	Relaxed
Rejecting	_____	Accepting
Distant	_____	Close
Friendly	_____	Unfriendly

Cold	_____	—	Warm
Simple	_____		Complex
Supportive	_____		Hostile
Smooth	_____		Rough
Boring	_____	—	Interesting
Quarrelsome	_____		Harmonious
Gloomy	_____		Cheerful
Untrustworthy	_____		Trustworthy
Nasty	_____	—	Nice

Overall, the use of rating scales in counselling psychology offers several advantages in terms of standardization, objectivity, efficient, data collection, comparison, research, and communication. They enhance the effectiveness and professionalism of the counselling process, contributing to improved outcomes for clients. However, rating scales require expertise and understanding on the part of the ratters for effective use of this very vital assessment tool.

Selection of Assessment Tools

Tool selection in counselling refers to the process of choosing and using appropriate psychological tools to assess and gather information about an individual's abilities, personality traits, interests, or other psychological characteristics. This process involves considering various factors such as the purpose of the assessment, the specific areas or constructs to be measured, the cultural appropriateness of the measures, and ethical considerations.

Selecting the right tool is crucial for gathering accurate and meaningful information about individuals. The choice of an assessment tool should align with the specific goals of the assessment, such as career exploration, diagnostic evaluation, treatment planning, or intervention monitoring. Different assessment tools may be useful for different purposes, such as aptitude tests, personality inventories/tests, vocational interest assessments, or diagnostic measures.

Aptitude tests are used to assess a person's ability or potential to learn specific skills or perform certain tasks. They are commonly used in career counselling to help individuals understand their strengths and weaknesses about different career fields. These tests can help identify which areas a person may excel in and provide guidance on career choices.

Personality inventories/tests assess an individual's personality traits, characteristics, and behavioural tendencies. They are used in counselling to gain insights into a person's personality style, preferences, and coping mechanisms. This information can help counsellors understand a client's strengths and challenges, and guide them in making decisions related to career choices, relationships, and personal growth.

Vocational interest assessments are used to measure an individual's interests, preferences, and values regarding different types of work activities or career fields. These tests help determine a person's compatibility and motivation towards certain occupations. They are used in counselling to explore potential career paths and guide individuals in making informed decisions about their future career choices.

Diagnostic measures are used in counselling to identify and evaluate mental health conditions, learning disabilities, or other psychological issues that may be affecting an individual's well-being or functioning. These tests provide objective data that help counsellors make accurate diagnoses and develop appropriate treatment plans. Diagnostic measures can include various standardized tests, questionnaires, interviews, and observations. They play a crucial role in assessing clients and tailoring interventions to their specific needs.

It is important to consider the psychometric properties of the assessment tools, including reliability (consistency of results) and validity (accuracy in measuring the intended construct). Reliable and valid tests provide consistent and accurate results, increasing the credibility and utility of the assessment process. The use of tests by counsellors usually follows a number of procedures which include selection, administration, scoring, interpretation and dissemination of test results. Hoover(2018)providedanaptdescriptionofeach of these procedures below.

Test administration is usually standardized by the developers of the test. Manual of instructions need to be followed in order to make a valid comparison of an individual's score with the test's norm group. Non-standardized tests used in counselling are best given under controlled circumstances. This allows the counsellor's experience with the test to become an internal norm. Issues of individual versus group administration need consideration as well. The clients and the purpose for which they are being tested will contribute to decisions about individuals or group testing.

Scoring of tests follow the instructions provided in the test manual. The counsellor is sometimes given the option of having the test scored electronically rather than by manual scoring. Both the positive and negative aspects of this choice need to be considered. It is usually believed that test scoring is best handled by a machine because it is free from bias.

The interpretation of test results is usually the area which allows for the greatest flexibility with in the testing process. Depending upon the counsellor's theoretical point of view and the extent of the test manual guidelines, interpretation may be brief and superficial, or detailed and explicitly theory-based.

Because this area allows for the greatest flexibility, it is also the area with the greatest danger of misuse. Where scoring is best done by a bias-free machine, interpretation by machine is often too rigid. What is needed is the experience of a skilled test user to individualize the interpretation of results.

Dissemination or feedback from test results to the client completes the formal process of testing. Here, the therapeutic skills of the counsellor come fully into play (Phelps, 2014). The counsellor uses verbal and nonverbal interaction skills to convey messages to clients and to assess their understanding of fit.

Conclusion

The aim of all counselling is to assist the learners to acquire sufficient understanding of themselves and of their environment to be able to utilize most intelligently the educational opportunities offered by the school and the community. Counselling is the assistance given to individuals in making intelligent choices and adjustments in their lives. The ability to make wise choices is not innate; it must be developed. The fundamental purpose of counselling is to develop in each individual, up to the limit of his capacity, the ability to solve his own problems and to make his own adjustments. The techniques which are generally employed by counselling psychologists for collecting basic data about the individual include, but not limited to interview, rating scale, questionnaire, observation, sociometry, and autobiography.

Suggestions

The study recommends that professional counsellors should ensure the uses of appropriate assessment tools in dealing with clients; and government should organise workshops, seminars, conferences, and training for career counsellors on the importance and uses of assessment techniques.

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