

Testing and assessment in counselling

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ABSTRACT

Counselling has developed in recent years into a humanistic partnership in problem solving and growth. Consistent with this development is the client's participation in decisions regarding all aspects of the counselling relationship. Testing and assessment need to be included here. In this regard, clients need to realize that tests are no more than instruments for furnishing information about themselves, as well as a guide for the counselling process and future decision making. Ultimately, test use by counsellors must be seen as an adjunct to the entire counselling process. Test results provide descriptive and objective data which help the counsellor to assist clients better in making the choices that will affect their lives. In order to make the best use of available tests in a counselling relationship, the process of testing and the issues which surround the process must be examined.

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INTRODUCTION

Leppma and Jones (2013) asserted that assessment has for quite some time been viewed as a principal part of helping all careers and the foundation of the counselling process. In its most straightforward terms, assessment is the process of gathering information and evidence about a client. Through assessment and testing, counsellors are able to discover important information about clients, such as the nature of their problem; the magnitude and impact of the problem; the interplay between family, relationships, and past experiences with respect to the problem; the client's strengths and readiness for counselling; and whether counselling can be beneficial to the client (Drummond & Jones, 2010). Assessment and testing is likewise basic for setting up counselling goals and objectives and for deciding the most effective intercessions (Leppma & Jones, 2013).

Dogar, Azeem, Majoka, Mehmood and Latif (2011) expressed that counselling is the word which as a rule joins direction with guidance consistently or interchangeable to it, yet there is a slight distinction between the two. It is commonly seen that counselling in school involves helping students separately or in little gatherings to manage the worry or challenges, they are encountering. Dash (2003) buttressed that counselling is significant piece of guidance program. In this way, counselling and guidance are used in school to solve the problems of students. These issues are identified with society, education and not last their very own strategies and methods to do as such. One of the significant attributes of counselling is that in this process, genuineness, trustworthiness and transparency assumes a significant role. "The counsellor needs to be earnest, legitimate and ought to believe in their hypothesis and techniques of counselling. He should assist the client with identifying his/her possibilities for future advancement" (p.213, 225).

One significant commitment for counsellors to have the option to help individuals to settle on viable life decisions and obtain new practices is an intensive comprehension of individual clients and their introducing concerns. This comprehension depends on information gained from as well as about the client in some efficient and targeted ways utilizing cautiously created testing and assessment strategies. Assessment is utilized here to mean techniques or methodology utilized by counsellors and psychologists to acquire usable and substantial information on different parts of human conduct including their potentialities, interests, aptitude and developmental concerns (Popoola & Oluwatosin, 2018).

For sure, testing and assessment assume a basic job in the counselling profession. Wall (2004) (as cited by Popoola & Oluwatosin, 2018), communicated the view that basing decisions, choices, and mediations explicitly on information procured in some orderly and targeted path is of major importance in the life of a practicing counsellor. Accordingly, choices identifying with various issues, for example, marriage and family, economy, career, education and psychological well-being frequently require the utilization of observations, interviews, surveys, rating scales, and checklists, just as progressively formalized assessments and tests. In this manner, as an issue of need, practicing counsellors have to engage in assessment on a daily basis, regardless of whether using the use of published instruments, conducting intake interviews, or listening to clients' portrayal of life encounters. As Whiston (2000) has proposed, incorporating proper, gifted and refined assessment abilities is important to develop the viability of counsellors, as failure to utilize tests and assessment when and where fitting may constrain counsellors' adequacy in serving their clients.

Leppma and Jones (2013) underscored that in the counselling profession, numerous moral norms exist that help characterize and manage best practices for proficient counsellors. Despite the fact that assessment research writing advances the utilization of numerous strategies and various source assessment, current professional standards focus primarily on the ethical use of standardized tests (Association for Assessment and Research in Counselling, 2012). Owing to the quintessential role of testing and assessment in the counselling process, this paper analyses the need for testing and assessment in counselling, explicitly taking a gander at sorts of assessment and testing in counselling, principles of test or assessment selection in the counselling process and counsellors' competencies in the utilization of tests and assessment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of assessment in counselling

Several studies on counselling have identified different forms of assessment. Jeffrey, Greene, Kegal and William (2007) (as cited by Popoola and Oluwatosin, 2018) summarized some of these to include educational, career, behavioural, personality, neuropsychological and organizational assessments.

1. **Educational Assessment:** Counsellors working in educational establishment have an obligation to advance the scholastic advancement of students. Educational assessment hence offers significant information to counsellors. This includes technique for getting information identifying with the clients' general scholarly advancement in formal and casual learning. The significance of this procedure lies in its uses, some portion of which is to permit counsellors and others to settle on educated choice about scholastic headway regarding students.
2. **Career Assessment:** In counselling, career assessment is regularly used to give information with respect to a variety of areas, such as interests and personality styles. Career assessment evaluation can give a group of information that may take a long time to get in some other manner. A few strategies of career assessment measure interests and aptitudes, but then others measure values and esteems. They can be utilized to convey a target message about what part of an individual's behaviours, practices or character may hinder executing a lifelong arrangement and what the person in question can do to moderate the difficulties.

3. **Behavioural Assessment:** Behavioural assessment is predominantly utilized in clinical and school settings. It includes orderly assembling of observations of a set of target behaviours, looking at the connection between these observations and potential causes of behaviour, and applying information to treatment planning and progress checking.
4. **Personality Assessment:** This is a strategy that counsellors use to gauge an assortment of segments of personality including traits, states, identity, cognitive or intellectual and behavioural styles, and other different attributes. This technique of assessment depends on various hypothetical methodologies, which include psychoanalytic, cognitive, social, behavioural, dispositional, humanistic, existential and multicultural methodologies.
5. **Neuropsychological Assessment:** Popoola and Oluwatosin (2018) underlined that this sort of assessment centers around psychosocial develops, for example, knowledge, character characteristics and conduct. Neuropsychological assessment essentially deals with biological factors that impact conduct. It draws deductions about mind working dependent on practices showed by an individual under organized conditions. Neuropsychological assessment covers a wide scope of sensory, perceptual, motor and intellectual capacities, just as gives definite information on the client's behaviour and emotional functioning.
6. **Assessment of Organizational Culture:** Every organization has its own way of life and creates customs around how the organization is to be run and how individuals are to act inside the organization. Organizational culture is basically characterized as socially-transmitted conduct and standards normal for a specific organization. Jeffrey et al (2007) affirmed that the concepts within this aspect of assessment incorporate the structure and roles of the organization, authority styles, dominant values, support mechanism, past customs and trademark methods of communicating with individuals and organizations outside the way of life. Assessment of organizational culture is significant in light of the fact that authoritative elements can influence the soundness of workers, and breaking point their profitability and occupation fulfillment.

Types of tests in counselling

Fremer and Wall (2004) (as cited by Popoola and Oluwatosin, 2018) identified five major uses of tests in the professional practice of counselling. They include:

1. **Achievement tests:** Achievement tests are basically intended to gauge what an individual has realized. Achievement tests are regularly utilized in educational or work settings. They endeavour to quantify how much an individual thinks about a specific theme, that is, the individuals' accomplished information. Counsellors use achievement tests for symptomatic and specific purposes in instructive foundations and work places.
2. **Aptitude tests:** Aptitude tests are explicitly intended for choice and creation purposes. Hamersma (1972) declared that aptitude tests are largely concerned with the topic of what an individuals' ability or capability is in a unique region. This testing device is pertinent in making right visualization on clients' problems.
3. **Interest and occupational tests:** A counsellor sometimes need to assist his or her clients to make qualifications between their interest and occupational realities. There are heaps of recognizable grounds around here with regards to settling on occupational and institutional decisions. Occupational tests, endeavour to coordinate client's advantages with the interests of persons in known vocations.
4. **Personality tests:** These are tests intended to quantify the manner in which an individual ordinarily reacts to upgrades around him/her after some time. Two of the most notable personality tests are the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) or the revised MMPI-2, made out of a few hundred "yes or no" questions and the Rorschach (the inkblot test), and made out of a few cards of inkblots where

an individual basically gives a depiction of the pictures and emotions experienced in taking a gander at the ink blots.

5. **Intelligence tests:** These are tests which endeavour to quantify an individuals' insight, that is, an individuals' essential capacity to comprehend his general surroundings, acclimatize its working, and apply this information to improve the personal satisfaction. Intelligence, in this way, is a proportion of a potential, not a proportion of what has been realized (as in an accomplishment test), thus it should be autonomous of the testee's culture.

Test selection in counselling

Goldman (1971) stressed that steps involved in the process of using tests in counselling include the following; selecting the test, administering the test, scoring the test, interpreting the results and communicating the results. Hoover (1988) (as cited by Popoola and Oluwatosin, 2018) provided an explanation of each of these procedures.

1. **Selecting:** Having characterized the reason for testing, the counsellor seeks an assortment of hotspots for information on accessible tests. Resources include review books, journals, test manuals, and course readings on testing and measurement. The most complete wellspring of information on a specific test is normally the test manual.
2. **Administering:** Test administration is normally normalized by the designers of the test. Manual directions should be followed so as to make a legitimate correlation of a person's score with the test's standard group. Non-standardized tests utilized in counselling are best given under controlled conditions. This permits the counsellor's involvement in the test to become an internal norm. Issues of individual versus group administration need thought too. The clients and the reason for which they are being tested will add to decisions about group testing.
3. **Scoring:** Scoring of tests adheres to the directions given in the test manual. The counsellor is in some cases given the choice of having the test machine scored instead of hand scored. Both the positive and negative parts of this decision should be thought of. It is normally accepted that test scoring is best dealt with by a machine since it is liberated from predisposition.
4. **Interpreting:** The interpretation of test outcomes is generally the territory which considers the best adaptability inside the testing procedure. Contingent on the counsellors' hypothetical perspective and the degree of the test manual rules, interpretation might be brief and shallow, or point by point and unequivocally theory based. Since this zone takes into consideration the best adaptability, it is likewise the region with the most serious risk of abuse. While scoring is best done by a predisposition free machine, interpretation by machine is regularly excessively unbending. What is required is the experience of a skilled test user to individualize the interpretation of results.
5. **Communicating:** Feedback of test results to the client finishes the proper procedure of testing. Here, the therapeutic abilities of counsellors come completely into play. The counsellor utilizes verbal and nonverbal cooperation abilities to pass on messages to clients and to evaluate their comprehension of it.

Need for Testing and Assessment in Counselling

Popoola and Oluwatosin (2018) proclaimed that testing and assessment are key highlights and essential pieces of the counselling procedure. Various examination contemplates show that counsellors in an assortment of settings think about testing and evaluation as significant parts of their expert work. Whiston (2008) advised that counsellors ought not to see assessment as a particular movement in the counselling procedure in which they just manage tests. The conversations on the requirement for testing and appraisal exercises during the four phases of the counselling procedure are adjusted from the work of Whiston (2008) as cited by Popoola and Oluwatosin, 2018).

1. **Stage One: Assessing the client's problems:** In the underlying phase of counselling, a counsellor needs to evaluate the clients' problem in light of the fact that there is 'no one-size-fits-all' method to the therapeutic process. It is significant that counsellors ably evaluate the clients' problem, for if the assessment procedure is deficient or erroneous, the whole counselling procedure can be adversely influenced. Besides, if counsellors have restricted assessment skills, they may miss or think little of significant client issues. In the event that problems or issues are outlined in an effective way, treatment can be started sooner. Assessment skills, be that as it may, are not required exclusively in this first phase of counselling, they are significant all through the whole therapeutic process.
2. **Stage Two: Conceptualizing and Defining the Client Problems:** A counsellor might be uncommonly gifted at the beginning of the assessment procedure, yet in the event that he/she abstains from gathering additional information at that point, the procedure will be hindered. During conceptualizing, the second stage of the counselling procedure, counsellors need to ceaselessly evaluate a client to guarantee that they keep up a sufficient comprehension of the clients' needs and issues. Recognizing straightforward and complex issues is basic in the choice of treatment and the adequacy of the counselling. Accordingly, assessment skills are fundamental for satisfactorily conceptualizing the clients' interests, recognizing relevant elements that might be adding to the issues, and discovering factors that might be useful in the treatment period of counselling.
3. **Stage Three: Selecting and implementing effective treatment(s):** The third step in counselling includes actualizing treatment that depends on past assessment. In any case, assessment does not stop once treatment starts. Rather, the assessment process proceeds all through the treatment period of counselling. This is the phase of counselling where a counsellor may utilize either informal or formal assessment to address a therapeutic question. Clients often come to counselling for assistance in answering questions such as: Should I drop out of school? Should I get a divorced? or Should I change careers? Expanding the measure of information of clients usually boosts the decision-making process. Choosing instruments that produce information about occupational choices, career interests, relational peculiarities can frequently help clients in settling on significant choices.
4. **Stage Four: Evaluating the Counselling:** At long last, once the treatment stage is finished, counsellors need to survey, assess or evaluate whether it was operative and powerful. Similarly, as counsellors need viable relational abilities to support clients, they additionally need powerful appraisal and examination aptitudes identified with assessment and evaluation. Consequently, assessment and evaluation are basic piece of the whole counselling procedure and ought not be seen as a separate area in which counsellors essentially administer tests.

Counsellors' competencies in the use of test and assessment in counselling

The American Counselling Association ACA (2003) (as cited by Popoola and Oluwatosin, 2018) identified the following competencies which counsellors must possess to be able to utilize and carry-on assessment activities successfully.

1. **Skill in practice and knowledge of theory relevant to the testing context and type of counselling specialty:** Assessment, evaluation and testing must be incorporated into the setting of the concept and information on a forte region, not as a different demonstration, job, or element. Likewise, proficient counsellors ought to be skilled and gifted in treatment practice with the populace being served.
2. **A thorough understanding of testing theory, techniques of test construction, and test reliability and validity:** Incorporated within this are strategies of item assortment, speculations of individual disposition that lie beneath a specified assessment, reliability, and validity. Reliability includes methods by which it is determined, such as, test-retest, parallel forms, split half, and inter-item consistency, the qualities and restrictions of each of these strategies; the standard error of measurement, which demonstrates how precisely a person's test score reflects their true score of the attribute being

considered; and true score theory, which characterizes a test score as an approximation of what is accurate. Validity combines, at least, categories of validity which includes content, criterion-related (both predictive and concurrent), and construct strategies of evaluating each type of validity, as well as the use of correlation; and the gist and implication of standard error of estimate.

3. **A working knowledge of sampling techniques, norms, and descriptive, correlational and predictive statistics:** Sampling embrace knowledge about sample size, sampling procedures, and the connection between sampling and test accurateness. Descriptive statistics includes probability theory, measures of central tendency; multi-modal and skewed distributions, measures of variability, including variance and standard deviation; and standard scores, including deviation IQ's, z-scores, T-scores, percentile ranks, stanines/stens, normal curve equivalents, grade- and age-equivalents. Correlation and prediction comprise the principle of least squares; the bearing and degree of association between two sets of scores; determining a regression equation; the association between regression and correlation; and measures and methods used to compute correlations.
4. **Ability to review, select and administer tests appropriate for clients or students and the context of the counselling practice:** In utilization of tests, proficient counsellors must be capable to depict the principle and employability of distinct types of tests, together with the commonly utilized tests for their situation and purposes. Proficient counsellors use their knowledge of sampling, norms, test assembly, validity and reliability to precisely measure the qualities, boundaries, and suitable applications of an assessment for their clients. Proficient counsellors using tests in addition ought to be conscious of the possibility for inaccuracy while depending on computer printouts of assessment explanation. For accuracy of explanation, technical resources have to be expanded by a counsellor's actual understanding of the client and the test-taking setting.
5. **Skill in administration of tests and interpretation of test scores:** Skilled test users apply proper and standardized administration procedures and this obligation empowers proficient counsellors to offer guidance to others who aid with test administration and scoring. Test users make available testing situations that are comfortable and free of disruption while utilizing standardized methods. Skilled interpretation entails a well-built functioning understanding of the premise underlying the test, test's intent, statistical gist of test scores, and standards used in test assembly. Skilled interpretation also requires knowledge of the likenesses and contrasts between the client or student and the standard samples used in test construction. It is therefore essential that clear and accurate communication of test score meaning in oral or written form to clients or students be provided.
6. **Knowledge of the impact of diversity on testing accuracy, including age, gender, ethnicity, race, disability, and linguistic differences:** Proficient counsellors utilizing tests ought to oblige to decency in all phase of testing. Information derived and choices made concerning the client or student are applicable only to the extent that the test accurately and practically evaluates the client's or student's characteristics. Test assortment and explanation are made with consciousness of the extent to which items might be ethnically unfair or the standard sample not comprehensive of the client's or student's multiplicity. Test users recognize that age and physical disability contrasts may affect the client's capability to recognize and act in response to test items. Test scores are explained in light of the cultural, ethnic, disability, or phonetic components that may perhaps influence an individual's score. These consist of visual, auditory, and mobility inabilities that may necessitate suitable adjustment in test administration and scoring. Test users comprehend that certain sort of standards and test score interpretation may be unsuitable, contingent on the nature and principle of the testing.
7. **Knowledge and skill in the professionally responsible use of assessment and evaluation practice:** Proficient counsellors who utilize tests must be aware of the lawful and moral ethics and practices vis-à-vis test precautions, using copyrighted resources, and unsubstantiated use of assessment instruments

that are not intended for self-administration. In utilizing and supervising the use of tests, skilled test users exhibit a heightened knowledge of the fundamental significance of the well-being of clients and the privacy of test scores. Test users therefore pursue continuous educational and training openings to uphold capabilities and gain new skills in assessment and evaluation.

CONCLUSION

Testing and assessment have been part of the field of counselling from the very beginning and plays a pivotal role in the profession of counselling. The process of testing and assessment entails the gathering of information in order to identify, analyze, evaluate and address the problems, issues and circumstances of clients in the counselling process. Testing and assessment are used as a basis for identifying problems, planning interventions evaluating and/or diagnosing clients and informing clients and stakeholders. Testing and assessment should therefore be viewed as a process essential to all elements of the counselling process. It should be in a way in which it is helpful and boosting clients to recognize their needs and problems and solve their problems.

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