

ELEMENTS OF SOUND TESTING

Appropriate, ethical use of psychological instruments requires general knowledge of measurement as well as specific information about the test you are considering. Formal academic course work in tests and measurement, or other equivalent training, provides the necessary foundation for the proper use of most instruments. Membership in a professional organization whose code of ethics governs the sound use of educational and psychological instruments is also desirable. With this background, a careful reading of the test manual is then necessary. Specialized knowledge and training is required for purchase of instruments that could be harmful to an individual if misused. For such instruments, supervised field experience and/or graduate level training in Psychology or a related field is necessary to conduct proper administration and interpretation.

The testing procedures and measurement concepts specified below provide a check for those whose training in educational and psychological measurement is limited. This list represents essential knowledge necessary for the proper and ethical use of tests.

Test Selection

You understand the instrument measures what you need to measure. You know whether the norms are appropriate for your purpose and for the specific population you wish to test.

Administration

You understand the appropriate procedures and conditions for administration and realize that results will be invalidated if precise procedures and instructions are not followed.

Testing Context

You understand how to establish rapport with the examinee and how to create the appropriate testing climate for your purposes. You are also aware that results of testing can sometimes be influenced by the physical setting and interpersonal context in which testing is conducted.

Scoring

You understand how to accurately score the instrument, checking to ensure that all scores are accurate before reporting them. You also understand the difference between raw scores and scores derived from them, such as percentiles, standard (sten) scores, or preference scores.

Validity/Reliability

You understand the concepts of reliability and validity and are able to locate and interpret information relevant to each. You understand how reliability limits the interpretation of scores and how validity must be interpreted with reference to a specific application of the instrument.

Measurement Error

You understand that no measurement is free of error and that knowledge of the degree of error for a specific score is essential to the interpretation of test results.

Misclassification

You understand the potential harm resulting from misclassification of an individual on the basis of test results. You can recognize the possibility of a misclassification and are aware of the need to consider information beyond the scores to determine the appropriate classification.

Moderator Variables

You can estimate the extent to which other variables, such as sex, age, anxiety level, nationality, or client history, may affect the test results or comparisons with norm groups.

Interpretation

You understand how to properly interpret the instrument, including how to integrate test results with other information about the examinee. If computer-generated narratives are used as a basis for interpretation, you understand the limits of such narratives and retain personal responsibility of accurate interpretation.

Responsible Testing Practices

You are willing to accept responsibility for the proper use of instruments in your organization, including insuring that only qualified individuals have access to the instrument, that the item content and scoring procedures are secured, that the copyright of all materials is honored, and that client confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Referral

You can identify the limits of your competence in testing and make referrals for administration or interpretation of any instrument that exceeds those limits.

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