

Personal, Social, and Temperament Assessment in the Vocational Evaluation Process

Andrew A. Cox, MSW, Ed.D., LPC, LMFT, LCSW, CVE

Professor, Counseling and Psychology
Troy University-Phenix City, Alabama

Suzanne Tew-Washburn, Ph.D., SPHR, CRC

Assistant Professor, Rehabilitation Counseling
Troy University-Phenix City, Alabama

Pamela L. Jones, M.Ed., CVE

Vocational Evaluation Specialist
Columbus, Georgia

Abstract

An overview of the nature and use of personal, social, and temperament assessment in vocational evaluation is provided. Examples of representative instruments and resources for identifying and selecting instruments within this assessment area are described.

Introduction

Personal, social, and temperament assessment can play a viable role in the vocational assessment process. Roles for this assessment area include: (1) Assess personal characteristics that would be emphasized or de-emphasized in a particular work environment or setting. Knowledge of these characteristics may aide the placement specialist and evaluation client in work selection or placement process; (2) assess personal considerations that may be barriers to vocational success; (3) assess personal attributes that may become vocational assets to be used in job interviewing or job placement situations; (4) assess potential psychopathologies or psychiatric/mental health symptomatology in need of further assessment or treatment to prepare or restore the individual to work readiness. Assessment of such symptomatology could assist the rehabilitation professional in planning restorative services.

Temperament is a dimension of the affective domain of individual functioning.

Temperament is a component of the individual's cumulative tendency of perception, retention, and organization (Allport, 1961; Chess & Thomas, 1991; Keirse, 1987; Keirse & Bates, 1978). It is a representative indicator of how a person learns and adapts to the environment (Zarghani, 1988). It is considered an individual's emotional nature,

the quality of prevailing mood, and fluctuation and intensity of mood (Sheldon, & Stevens, 1942; Talwar, Nitz, Lerner, & Lerner, 1991).

A component of the affective domain also includes personal and social dimensions of individual functioning. These refer to personal, emotional, and behavioral

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characteristics that the individual utilizes in interaction with the social environment. These dimensions also include internal cognitions that the individual uses in mediating behavior and environmental responses. These responses can be adaptive and non-adaptive in nature.

Assessment Considerations

Personal, social, and temperament measures are specialized assessments. These assessment measures fall into two basic categories: broad band and narrow band instruments (Corcoran, 2004). Broad band instruments are global measurements that are designed to capture a broad spectra of psychopathology, behavioral, or emotional characteristics. They may be used for diagnostic purposes with one instrument assessing multiple constructs (Corcoran, 2004).

Narrow band assessment instruments, on the other hand, are specific measurement devices assessing a single construct and focus upon a confined number of conditions (Corcoran, 2004). These measures are typically relatively short and can be repeatedly readministered to track changes in symptoms or a condition. They are completed by the test respondent who provides a self evaluation or "self report", or by a significant other who describes characteristics pertinent to the client being evaluated.

As personal, social, and temperament assessment is a specialized assessment area, the evaluator should have specialized competencies and knowledge bases to use such instruments. These competencies include: (1) Knowledge of the limitations of assessment measures; (2) knowledge of instrument normative sampling and how

such sampling is derived; (3) knowledge of various psychopathology conditions, and diagnostic considerations associated with these conditions as some personal, social, and temperament measurements assess characteristics associated with this functional domain; (4) knowledge of human growth and development and how typical and atypical behavior develops and is maintained; (5) some knowledge of personality dynamics and personality development; and (6) knowledge of instrument technical characteristics to include validity, reliability concepts and score interpretation.

Various test publishers have established a rating system for determining qualifications for purchasers to use their assessment products. Test instruments are classified into levels with these levels determining evaluator qualifications to use a particular instrument. Test user qualifications specify the academic degree, completed university coursework, and certification or licensure required to use a particular instrument. Some test publishers require the test user to participate in formal training pertinent to an instrument such as a workshop or qualification course in order to use a particular measure. As a user of personal, social, or temperament assessments, the evaluator must insure that one's qualification level is consistent with the practice, scope, and use of a specific test measure. The evaluation professional should review the qualifications section of the test publisher's catalog or on-line catalog to determine one's qualification level to purchase specific test instruments.

The reader is referred to ProEd (2007), Psychological Assessment Resources (2007), Western Psychological Services (2007), or Consulting Psychologists Press (2007) for examples of test user qualification levels.

Examples of Broad Band and Narrow Band Assessments

The presenters provided examples of instruments to illustrate the concepts of broad band and narrow band assessment instruments. Broad band assessment measures include the Behavior and Symptom Identification Scale-32 (BASIS-32), Symptom Checklist 90-Revised, Symptom Questionnaire, and Katz Adjustment Inventory.

The BASIS-32 (Eisen, 1996) is a 32 item self report measure of major clinical symptoms. The measure assesses mood and anxiety disorders, suicidality, psychotic symptoms, role functioning and interpersonal relations, completion of daily living skills, impulsivity, and substance abuse. A 5 point Likert scale is used to delineate the degree of dysfunctioning in each area.

The Symptom Checklist 90-Revised (Pearson Assessments, 2007; Smith, 1996) is a 90 item self report measure of psychopathology. This measure assesses somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic behavior, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism. General functional indices are also provided.

The Symptom Questionnaire (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000) utilizes 92 adjectives that are endorsed by the test taker to describe one's clinical condition. Assessed problem behavior dimensions include depression, anxiety, somatization, and anger-hostility. Four dimensions of well being to include relaxation, contentment, somatic health, and friendliness are also assessed.

The Katz Adjustment Inventory (Corcoran, 2004; Katz & Lyerly, 1963; Ogles, Lambert, & Masters, 1996) measures social and community functioning as well as psychopathology. Two sets of scales are completed; one by the test taker and a second by another informant familiar with the test taker's day to day functioning.

Selected narrow band assessment measures were provided as examples for this measurement area. The Beck Depression Inventory-II (The Psychological Corporation, 2007) and Beck Depression Inventory-II (The Psychological Corporation, 2007) are 21 item self report inventories using a 4 point scale assessing the severity of depressive or anxiety symptomatology.

The Walmyr Publishing Company (1997, 2007) publishes a wide range of assessment scales that assess a variety of functional areas. Most scales are 25 items in length that require responding via a 7 point scale. Interpretation is generally through the use of "clinical cutting scores" as indexes of personal-social dysfunctioning. There are 27 different Walmyr scales; examples

include Generalized Contentment Scale (depression), anxiety, stress, parenting attitudes, family relations, marital satisfaction, peer relations, drug and alcohol use, and self esteem measures.

Substance abuse is a commonly encountered problem area in rehabilitation and mental health practice. Alcohol and substance abuse screening may be an important vocational evaluation area to assist in rehabilitation service planning and readiness for vocational training and/or placement. The Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST) (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1994) and Self Administered Alcoholism Screening Test (SAAST) (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000) are examples of self report substance abuse screening measures. The DAST assesses drug usage problems through a 20 item format. The SAAST uses a 35 item format to assess alcohol related problems.

Identifying, and Selecting Potential Assessment Instruments

The vocational evaluator has a formidable task in selecting appropriate instruments for use in the evaluation process. This task involves selection of instruments that meet evaluation goals and are appropriate for use with specific evaluation clients or client groups. There are print and on-line resources that can be helpful to the evaluator in reviewing and selecting potential instruments. The reader is referred to Cox (2007) for a review of print and non-print resources to assist in test review and selection.

Relative to print resources, Cox (2007) describes the Buros Institute of Mental Measurements (2007) series of publications, Test Critiques (Sweetland & Keyser, 1984-1993), Directory of Unpublished Experimental Mental Measures (Goldman, Saunders, & Busch, 1996; Goldman, Osborne, & Mitchell, 1996; Goldman & Mitchell, 1995; Goldman, Mitchell, & Egelson, 1997; Goldman & Mitchell, 2003; Goldman & Mitchell, 2008), Handbook of Psychiatric Measures (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), Measures for Clinical Practice (Corcoran & Fischer, 1987, 2000; Fischer & Corcoran, 1994) as well as other written descriptive testing resources. On-line assessment resources reviewed by Cox

(2007) include the ETS Test Collection (Educational Testing Service, 2007), Health and Psychosocial Instruments (Ovid Technologies, 2007), and Risk and Needs Assessment, Inc. websites.

Summary

Personal, social, and temperament assessment can provide useful evaluation

data in the rehabilitation and career development practice areas. An overview of the nature, role and purpose of personal, social, and temperament assessment within the vocational evaluation process has been described. A framework for understanding this specialized assessment area within the overall evaluation process with representative instruments to illustrate the

concepts of broad band and narrow band assessment has been provided. References to resources to assist the vocational evaluation professional in identifying, and selecting instrumentation within this assessment area have been made.

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