

Tasks and concepts of psychological diagnostics in the context of aptitude tests, personnel selection and legally initiated assessments

Scientific approach and examples from my work in the
Institute for Psychological Aftercare of Accidents and Psychological Health Promotion, Cologne

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Basic procedure

A psychological assessment

1. is like an **experiment**
or also
2. like a research **project**

Build up.

Three main tasks of psychological assessments

1. Description of a mental condition: illness, disability, personality
2. Description of a mental condition with prognosis: development of an illness, disability, personality, danger to self and others, criminal acts
3. Evidence of a causal relationship between an event and a mental condition (e.g. a mental illness).
4. Complaint validation (see bibliography Keppler et al., 2017)

Informal and formal diagnostics

Informal: e.g.: "First impression", longer acquaintance

Formal: e.g. standardised behavioural observations,
standardised behavioural tests (faultlessness under load,
practical driving test, operation of a simulator),

Psychologically, psychiatrically based assessments

Mental health reports are often prepared not only by psychologists but also by psychiatrists.

Psychiatric expert opinions often differ very clearly from psychologically based expert opinions because of the professional background, from the procedure, from the selection and evaluation of facts.

The diagnostic procedure is oriented towards the purpose: e.g. emotional resilience in standard tasks, ability to work in a team and communicate, honesty and agreeableness, conceptual intelligence performance or abstraction ability.

Fields of application include:

- **Test of aptitude to operate a motor vehicle, a locomotive, an aircraft**
- **Personnel selection**
- **Examination of suitability for studies (e.g. for medicine)**
- **Examining the causes of problems in the family (especially when the welfare of the child is at stake).**
- **Examination of occupational disability in the event of health problems**
- **Examination of health disabilities in social law (degree of disability -GdB, reduction of earning capacity - MdE or degree of damage - GdS).**
- **Examination of the causal relationship between an event and health consequences**
- **Examining the credibility of a witness statement in forensics**
- **Checking health eligibility in the event of a name change**
- **Examination of guilt/incapacity under criminal law**

The results of assessments can also be used for advisory tasks.

The most frequent occurrences during my appraisals were:

Aptitude tests, examination of health problems, family psychological assessments

An evaluator must be familiar with the areas of application, e.g. in the case of aptitude tests in the professional requirements, in the case of health problems in psychosomatic facts and contexts, in the case of family court evaluations in the legal bases as well as the administrative practice of the youth welfare offices.

Examples:

In social law, the insurance law often deals with the question of whether the health damage is the result of an accident (contextual expert opinion, causal connection).

In family law, contact with one parent should not be made obligatory against the will of the child.

The question of occupational incapacity (in private law) is exclusively about the possibility of no longer being able to exercise the last profession exercised.

Focus of the lecture

Application of diagnostics for psychological assessments

No test theory:

Classical (e.g. Lienert) and probabilistic test theory (e.g. Rasch)

Also nothing about sensitivity, specificity, reliability, validity, although all this must be familiar in diagnostics for assessments.

Application examples in different fields

Description of the scientific methodology

Methodology of thought and investigation procedure correspond to the research principles, i.e.: hypothesis formation and falsification of H_0

Principles of diagnostic procedure

Diagnostic procedures are basically oriented towards the procedure of a psychological research project: problem or question, professional framework and selection of the model/construct, hypothesis formation, selection of the instruments, results of the investigation/findings, evaluation/interpretation of the findings (testing of the hypotheses), classification of the findings in the professional framework (e.g. diagnoses).

An assessment and the expert opinions are to be kept socially and morally value-free, although we in Europe live in a liberal concept, so we want independent self-responsible people.

From documents and from the exploration, it can be assumed in which areas the person to be assessed might have problems. As soon as it becomes clear which areas should be investigated, a hypothesis (in the sense of a scientific research methodology) can be formed.

Contribution of the diagnostic examination to clarifying the problem/answering the question

e.g. identification of functional and emotional stress limits, **specifics of dealing with problems and with conflicting goals**, communication and interaction styles, type and strength of competence opinion and expectation of self-efficacy, type and strength of empathy, **personal near and far goals**, intelligence structure and level, personality structure (including according to the Big Five - FFM), **substance dependencies**, **dealing with oneself**, **deviant** attitudes.

The selection of tests and investigation procedures follows the hypothesis generation for H_0

Example:

When it comes to the question of a disease, H_0 will be as follows:

"There are no diseases present."

Such a hypothesis can be refuted if diseases are found. This is possible, among other things, by applying selected tests.

A hypothesis "diseases are present" cannot be disproved, as one would have to exclude all possible and conceivable diseases.

**There are a number of recommendations for
conducting psychological assessments, e.g.:**

Assessment of mental and psychosomatic disorders.

Registration number 051 - 029. Classification S2k.

Status: 15.12.2019 , valid until 14.12.2024.

<https://register.awmf.org/de/leitlinien/detail/051-029>

The DSM-V (US-American cataloguing of mental illnesses) is used for diagnosis.

In Germany, however, the ICD-10 (new ICD-11 in draft, can already be used) is favoured by the funding agencies. The ICD is edited by the WHO.

Also from the WHO:

Important, obligatory in the context of social law is the ICF: International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (2005), which unfortunately hardly plays a role in the assessment practice.

The ICD classifies illnesses, the ICF the existing capacity in experience and action.

Echterhoff, 22.07.2022

Literature

Selection of not always familiar texts

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