Introduction to Psychometric testing
About us

Jenny

19 years experience
BA Psychology
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BPS Level A&B

Passionate about improving working lives

ENFP
Plant & Chair

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20+ years experience
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MSc Health Psychology
MSc Occupational Psychology
MSc Forensic Psychology
BPS Level A&B

ENTJ
Today’s agenda

• The basics – history, what, where, why
• Arguments for and against
• The right test for the task
• More detail – personality and ability/aptitude
• Ethical test use
• Candidate journey
• Develop your own case for using tests
History of psychometrics

- 5th century BC - Hippocrates identified 4 distinct ‘energies’
- 2200 BC - testing for proficiency introduced by the Chinese emperor Yao to assess fitness for office
- 1859 – Charles Darwin – ‘individual differences’ and Frances Galton Hereditary Genius – ‘mental tests’
- 1910 – Charles Spearman “g” – the measure of general intelligence, as well as ‘factor analysis’ for statistical comparison
- 1916 – Stanford-Binet IQ test
- 1920s – Carl Jung’s model of personality
- 1950s and 60s – first personality tests devised based on the “Big 5” personality factors from analytical research
Definitions

- Psycho = mind (Greek: ‘psyche’)
- Metric = measurement

Psychometric testing is an objective resource for identifying and measuring qualities in individuals in order to make informed decisions.
Features of a psychometric test

• Measures:
  – aspects of mental function

• Used for
  – differentiating between people

• Derived through:
  – rigorous scientific and statistical methods
What can be measured

• Ability
• Aptitude - “IQ”
• Personality and preferences
• Motivation / interests
• Emotional intelligence
• Attitudes
• Critical thinking / inductive reasoning
Where can they be used?

**Selection**
- Recruiting external job applicants
- Promoting existing staff
- Selecting for redundancy

**Training and development**
- Identify an individual’s development requirements
- Enhanced self-knowledge
- Career Development

**Team Building**
- Forming a new team
- Developing a team
- Dealing with issues
Why use psychometric tests?

- **Objectivity** – reduced bias
- **Clarity** - robust framework to fit with other HR tools
- **Efficiency** - greater throughput, earlier decisions
- **Reduced costs** – travel, time, mistakes, administration, preparation, lawsuits, demotivation
- **Equality and fairness** – standardised, transparency, reduced adverse impact
- ‘**Predictive validity**’ - increased likelihood of being able to predict future job performance
- **Enhanced candidate experience** - Positive brand image & minimised reputational risk
- **Consistency** – from selection through development
- **Fit** with job criteria / competencies
- **Common language**
Arguments against

- Cost – of testing, training, using consultants
- Selection decisions are only as good as the background work – e.g. job analysis
- Lazy administration – not keeping up to date with new research, tests, norms, etc. ; using ‘favourite’ test, or one that looks right
- Poor candidate experience - reputational risk!
- “They don’t work”
So, do they work?

Predictive validity ($r$), where 1.0 is perfect prediction

- Chance
- Age
- Graphology
- Education (years) / interests
- Job experience (years)
- Reference check
- Unstructured employment interview
- Integrity tests
- Job knowledge
- Structured employment interview
- General mental ability tests
- Work sample tests (e.g. In-trays)

However, using multiple techniques allows the weaknesses of any particular method to be compensated for by the strengths of another, increasing the overall validity and predictive value of assessment.

Schmidt & Hunter 1998
The right test for the right task

• Tests are designed for a specific purpose

• As with all tools, you need to choose the right one for the job you need it to do
Choosing psychometric tests

A test should be:

- Relevant
  - to the business and to the job

- Reliable
  - objective – unaffected by the tester’s beliefs, values or biases
  - “test-retest” reliability and internal consistency

- Valid
  - capable of accurately predicting performance
  - validity data from other organisations - norms

- Acceptable
  - not offensive or unduly obtrusive
  - the candidate can appreciate its relevance (face validity)
Choosing psychometric tests

The following must also be considered:

✓ Non-discriminatory
  – the test must comply with equality legislation
  – the test must not disadvantage any group
  – norms must be relevant
  – all test takers must be treated fairly and consistently

✓ Utility
  – cost-effective and convenient to administer and interpret

✓ Up-to-date
  content, wording, norms, testing methods
Ability / aptitude tests

- Work-related reasoning, perception and judgement
- Only one correct answer to each test question
- Timed test – designed to be restrictive
- Examples: Numerical reasoning, Verbal reasoning, Abstract reasoning.
- Look at numeracy, literacy, speed of thinking
- BPS Level A –  
  (test user: Occupational, Ability)
Useful because...

- Can check key skills objectively
- Can use online measures to sift out candidates
- Questions are obvious, giving user validity
- Either have the skill or not
Concerns...

- Cultural bias, e.g. literacy tests
- Testing the right skills for the job?
- Validity and reliability?
- Ease of administration and scoring?
Typical examples

- SHL Graduate Managerial Bank
- General Measure of Ability: Abstract
- Raven’s Matrices
- IT skills
- Reading comprehension
- Technical skills ability tests
In a verbal reasoning test, you are usually provided with a passage of text followed by one or more statements. In the example below your task is to determine whether each statement is true, false, or whether you cannot say, given the information in the passage:

A – True (the statement follows logically from the information or opinions contained in the passage)

B – False (the statement is logically false from the information or opinions contained in the passage)

C – Cannot say (cannot determine whether the statement is true or false without further information)

Give your answer to each question by clicking on either A, B or C. You will be told whether your answer is correct or not.

Example:

“Many organisations find it beneficial to employ students over the summer. Permanent staff often wish to take their own holidays over this period. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for companies to experience peak workloads in the summer and so require extra staff. Summer employment also attracts students who may return as well qualified recruits to an organisation when they have completed their education. Ensuring that the students learn as much as possible about the organisation encourages interest in working on a permanent basis. Organisations pay students on a fixed rate without the usual entitlement to paid holidays or bonus schemes.”

Statement 1 - It is possible that permanent staff who are on holiday can have their work carried out by students.

True    False    Cannot say

Statement 2 – Students in summer employment are given the same paid holiday benefit as permanent staff.

True    False    Cannot say

Statement 3 – Students are subject to the organisation’s standard disciplinary and grievance procedures.

True    False    Cannot say

Statement 4 – Some companies have more work to do in the summer when students are available for vacation work.

True    False    Cannot say
Raven’s matrices abstract reasoning test example
Personality tests

- A self-report questionnaire
- Covert questions (reading the question doesn’t reveal what it measures)
- Questions relate to aspects of your personality which are relevant to the workplace
- Has no right or wrong answers
- Not timed
- Result: the “personality profile”
- BPS Level B – (test user: Occupational, Personality)
Useful because...

- Can give insights into strengths and risks
- Provide a profile for feedback
- Can aggregate to find “typical” profile for e.g. sales, engineering, retail
- No “bad” profile
Concerns...

• Relies on self-report
• Over-interpretation
• Should be used as part of overall assessment
• Some really dodgy tests out there!
• Know what you are wanting to get
Typical tests

- NEO 5 factor test: Costa & McRae
- Hogan HPI “Bright side”
- Hogan HDS “Dark side”
- Hogan MPVI: motivations and drivers
- SHL OPQ
- MBTI: Jungian preferences
NEO sample feedback

• Freda’s profile suggests she generally assumes that people are trustworthy and sincere, but she is alert to any real grounds for suspicion. She agreed with this point and commented during feedback that she likes to be fair to people and tends not to be judgemental when meeting people for the first time.

• She feels compassion and sympathy as much as others, but she will also consider the rational and objective aspects before making a decision. This supports the idea that she is less straightforward than most in that she tends to consider what information to hold back for reasons of diplomacy or negotiating power. She tended to agree with this point commenting during feedback that she is a member of several committees and that it is important to have the ability to know when to hold things back and act in a professional manner.
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<td>Seems insightful</td>
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<td><strong>LEARNING</strong></td>
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<td>Seems insightful</td>
<td>Takes initiative</td>
<td>Values formal education</td>
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<td><strong>LEARNING</strong></td>
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<td>Takes initiative</td>
<td>Values formal education</td>
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<td>Takes initiative</td>
<td>Values formal education</td>
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<td><strong>SOCIAL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>INQUISTIVE</strong></td>
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<td>Doesn't ask for input</td>
<td>Values formal education</td>
<td>Seems insightful</td>
<td>Takes initiative</td>
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- **SOCIAL** characteristics: Outgoing & energetic, Warm and agreeable, Energetic/competitive, Quick-witted, Values formal education, Dependable & reliable, Familiar with pressure well.
- **INTERPERSONAL** characteristics: Talkative, Builds coalitions, Leader-like and mature, Understands big picture, Rule compliant, Energetic & competitive, Values formal education.
- **AMBITION** characteristics: Takes initiative, Values formal education, Familiar with pressure well, Energetic & competitive, Values formal education.
- **INQUISTIVE** characteristics: Quick-witted, Understands big picture, Values formal education, Familiar with pressure well, Energetic & competitive, Values formal education.
- **LEARNING** characteristics: Values formal education, Familiar with pressure well, Energetic & competitive, Values formal education.
HDS scales: examples

Excitable - A tendency to swing from enthusiasm for people, projects and organisations to disappointment or disaffection with them. Others find such people hard to work with because they are moody, irritable, bad tempered, inconsistent and impossible to please.

Sceptical - A tendency to be suspicious and to mistrust others' motives and intentions. Such people are shrewd and difficult to fool, but hard to work with because they take criticism personally, readily feel mistreated and are prone to retaliate when they feel they have been wronged.

Cautious - A tendency to be over concerned about making mistakes and being embarrassed. Such people are reluctant to take the initiative for fear of being criticised and are hard to work with because they are rule-bound and unwilling to take chances or express controversial opinions.

Reserved - A tendency to be self-sufficient and indifferent to social feedback or the moods and feelings of others. Others may find them hard to work with because they seem self-focused, uninterested in other people's problems and unaware of how their actions affect others.

Leisurely - A tendency to be inflexible about work practices and to be stubborn about sticking to one's own timetable and standards of performance. Others may find such people hard to work with because of their procrastination, stubbornness and reluctance to be part of a team.

Bold - A tendency to overestimate one's talents and accomplishments, to ignore one's shortcomings, and to have a strong sense of entitlement. Although they make a strong first impression, such people are hard to work with because they are opinionated, self-absorbed, and unwilling to learn from their mistakes.

Mischievous - A tendency to be impulsive, excitement seeking, and manipulative. Such people appear charming and make a good first impression, but are hard to work with because they are more 'spin' than substance, take risks and ignore their mistakes. They are also hard to advise and don't fully evaluate the consequences of their decisions.
MBTI

- One of most widely used tests
- 16 preferences
- Is useful for teambuilding
- Jungian, not based on research
- Not stable over time
- Ethics statement stipulates not to be used for hiring
MBTI Types

- **E – I**: Extraversion to Introversion
- **S - N**: Detail to Big picture
- **T – F**: Logic to Intuition
- **J – P**: Judgment (organised) to Perceiving (spontaneous, unplanned)
May 15, 2013 “Have we all been duped by the Myers-Briggs Test”, had this to say:

"The interesting -- and somewhat alarming -- fact about the MBTI is that, despite its popularity, it has been subject to sustained criticism by professional psychologists for over three decades. One problem is that it displays what statisticians call low "test-retest reliability." So if you retake the test after only a five-week gap, there's around a 50% chance that you will fall into a different personality category compared to the first time you took the test."
Psychometric testing involves an intrusion into a person’s life and puts the tester in some position of power over that person. For this reason, all testers must follow a code of ethics.
Ethical issues

- Adherence to correct procedure and methodology
  - test selection
  - scoring and norm selection
  - administration
  - environment
  - user qualification and competence

- Candidate treatment
  - respect
  - informed consent
  - feedback
  - access

- Confidentiality and test security

- Avoiding selection screening based on just one test

- Fairness – protected groups
  - special needs, language, cultural differences

- Cheating
The candidate’s journey – best practice

Application
- Online / postal
- Standard form

Invited to attend assessment
- What to expect
- What to prepare
- Reasonable adjustment

Sent link to online test(s)
- Standard text
- Informed consent
- Possible re-rest

Candidate sent acceptance / rejection
- Feedback offered
- Access offered

Candidate attends assessment
- Range of tools
- Paper tests / re-rest?
- Respectful treatment

Tests scored and report printed
- Correct norms used
- Probing interview questions prepared

Feedback supplied
- Results of ability tests
- Personality profile
- Not required to share results with others

Test results and other application data stored securely
- Confidential

Results monitored
- Predictive validity
- Equality
Using tests in your organisation

The use of psychometric tests represents a big investment for any organisation.

However, the rewards can be equally great.
Why use psychometric tests? (again!)

- **Objectivity** – reduced bias
- **Clarity** - robust framework to fit with other HR tools
- **Efficiency** - greater throughput, earlier decisions
- **Reduced costs** – travel, time, mistakes, administration, preparation, lawsuits, demotivation
- **Equality and fairness** – standardised, transparency, reduced adverse impact
- **‘Predictive validity’** - increased likelihood of being able to predict future job performance
- **Enhanced candidate experience** - Positive brand image & minimised reputational risk
- **Consistency** – from selection through development
- **Fit** with job criteria / competencies
- **Common language**
Or more simply...

The right person on the bus, and in the right seat...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accepted</th>
<th>Rejected</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>False positive</strong></td>
<td><strong>False negative</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The person looked right but was wrong</td>
<td>The person looked wrong but was right</td>
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<tr>
<td>MARGINAL COMPETENCE</td>
<td>LOST TO COMPETITORS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True positive</th>
<th>True negative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The person looked right and was right</td>
<td>The person looked wrong and was wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH PERFORMER</td>
<td>CORRECTLY REJECTED</td>
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Wrong decision | Right decision
Making the business case 1

• Decide:
  - What you want to do
    - selection  development  team building
  - What outcomes you require
    - greater speed, accuracy, fairness, fit with other HR processes
    - more positive candidate experience
  - What you need to measure
    - competency framework  person / job specifications
  - What tests / methods you wish to use
    - specific tests  tests with structured interview
    - assessment centre
Making the business case 2

Compare:

Costs (financial, time, resources) of:
- current assessment methods
- proposed assessment methods (including training in-house expertise and purchasing tests or using consultants)

Quality of:
- current outcomes
- potential outcomes
Typical costs - training

- Assistant Test User (formerly Test Administration) – qualified to administer tests only
  - Typically 1 day
  - £ Typically £350 + VAT

- Test User; Occupational, Ability (formerly Level A)
  - Typically 3 days
  - £ Typically £1000 + VAT

- Test User; Occupational, Personality (formerly Level B/B+)
  - Typically 3 days
  - £ Typically £1000 + VAT

- Additional personality tests (conversion)
  - Typically 1 day
  - £ Typically £350 + VAT
Typical costs – per test

• Ability tests
  – Mostly administered and scored online although some can still be done manually
    - 10 – 25 minutes
    - £ Typically £10 to £40 + VAT

• Personality tests
  – Almost all administered and scored online
  – Vary widely in the type of report available
    - About 45 minutes (open ended)
    - £ Typically £40 (profile only) to £500 (bespoke handwritten)
% of companies using psychometric testing

- US Fortune 500: 82%
- UK FTSE 100: 70%
Any questions?

“Yes, I think I have good people skills. What kind of idiot question is that?”
Thank you

From Jenny and Josie