

KEY TERMS

Free association—A technique used in psychoanalysis in which the patient allows thoughts and feelings to emerge without trying to organize or censor them.

Interpretation—A verbal comment made by the analyst in response to the patient's free association. It is intended to help the patient gain new insights.

Neurosis—A mental and emotional disorder that affects only part of the personality and is accompanied by a significantly less distorted perception of reality than in psychosis.

Psychodynamic—An approach to psychotherapy based on the interplay of conscious and unconscious factors in the patient's mind. Psychoanalysis is one type of psychodynamic therapy.

Regression—The process in which the patient reverts to earlier or less mature feelings and behaviors.

Therapeutic alliance—The working relationship between a therapist and a patient that is necessary to the success of therapy.

Transference—The process that develops during psychoanalytic work during which the patient redirects feelings about early life figures toward the analyst.

Working through—The repeated testing of insights, which takes up most of the work in psychoanalysis after the therapeutic alliance has been formed.

Attempts to compare the effectiveness of psychoanalytical treatment to other modes of therapy are difficult to evaluate. Some aspects of Freudian theory have been questioned since the 1970s on the grounds of their limited applicability to women and to people from non-Western cultures. In particular, some psychiatrists with cross-cultural experience maintain that psychoanalysis presupposes a highly individualistic Western concept of human personhood that is alien to traditional Asian and African societies. There is, however, general agreement that psychoanalytic approaches work well for certain types of patients, specifically those with neurotic conflicts.

Resources

PERIODICALS

Blass, R. B. "On Ethical Issues at the Foundation of the Debate Over the Goals of Psychoanalysis."

International Journal of Psychoanalysis 84 (August 2003): 929–943.

Gabbard, G. O., and D. Westen. "Rethinking Therapeutic Action." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 84 (August 2003): 823–841.

Lombardi, R. "Mental Models and Language Registers in the Psychoanalysis of Psychosis: An Overview of a Thirteen-Year Analysis." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 84 (August 2003): 843–863.

Roland, A. "Psychoanalysis Across Civilizations: A Personal Journey." *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry* 31 (Summer 2003): 275–295.

ORGANIZATIONS

American Psychoanalytic Association. 309 East 49th Street, New York, NY 10017. (212) 752-0450. <<http://www.apsa-co.org>>.

differences in cultural background may prevent the formation of a solid therapeutic alliance.

Normal results

Psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy both have the goal of basic changes in the patient's personality structure and level of functioning, although psychoanalysis typically aims at more extensive and more profound change. In general, this approach to treatment is considered successful if the patient has shown:

- reduction in intensity or number of symptoms
- some resolution of basic emotional conflicts
- increased independence and self-esteem
- improved functioning and adaptation to life

Rebecca J. Frey, PhD

Psychological tests

Definition

Psychological tests are written, visual, or verbal evaluations administered to assess the cognitive and emotional functioning of children and adults.

Purpose

Psychological tests are used to assess a variety of mental abilities and attributes, including achievement and ability, personality, and neurological functioning.

Achievement and ability tests

For children, academic achievement, ability, and intelligence tests may be used as a tool in school placement, in determining the presence of a learning disability or a developmental delay, in identifying giftedness, or in tracking intellectual development. Intelligence testing may be used with adults to determine vocational ability (e.g., in career counseling) or to assess adult intellectual ability in the classroom.

Personality tests

Personality tests are administered for a wide variety of reasons, from diagnosing psychopathology (e.g., personality disorder, depressive disorder) to screening job candidates. They may be used in an educational or vocational setting to determine personality strengths and weaknesses, or in the legal system to evaluate parolees.

Neuropsychological tests

Patients who have experienced a traumatic brain injury, brain damage, or organic neurological problems (for example, **dementia**) are administered neuropsychological tests to assess their level of functioning and identify areas of mental impairment. They may also be used to evaluate the progress of a patient who has undergone treatment or **rehabilitation** for a neurological injury or illness. In addition, certain neuropsychological measures may be used to screen children for developmental delays and/or learning disabilities.

Precautions

Psychological testing requires a clinically trained examiner. All psychological tests should be administered, scored, and interpreted by a trained professional, preferably a psychologist or psychiatrist with expertise in the appropriate area.

Psychological tests are only one element of a psychological assessment. They should never be used alone as the sole basis for a diagnosis. A detailed history of the test subject and a review of psychological, medical, educational, or other relevant records are required to lay the groundwork for interpreting the results of any psychological measurement.

Cultural and language differences in the test subject may affect test performance and may result in inaccurate test results. The test administrator should be informed before psychological testing begins if the test taker is not fluent in English and/or belongs to a

minority culture. In addition, the subject's motivation and motives may also affect test results.

Description

Psychological tests are formalized measures of mental functioning. Most are objective and quantifiable; however, certain projective tests may involve some level of subjective interpretation. Also known as inventories, measurements, questionnaires, and scales, psychological tests are administered in a variety of settings, including preschools, primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, outpatient healthcare settings, social agencies, prisons, and employment or human resource offices. They come in a variety of formats, including written, verbal, and computer administered.

Achievement and ability tests

Achievement and ability tests are designed to measure the level of an individual's intellectual functioning and cognitive ability. Most achievement and ability tests are standardized, meaning that norms were established during the design phase of the test by administering the test to a large representative sample of the test population. Achievement and ability tests follow a uniform testing protocol, or procedure (i.e., test instructions, test conditions, and scoring procedures) and their scores can be interpreted in relation to established norms. Common achievement and ability tests include the **Wechsler intelligence test** (WISC-III and WAIS) and the **Stanford-Binet intelligence scales**.

Personality tests

Personality tests and inventories evaluate the thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behavioral traits that comprise personality. The results of these tests determine an individual's personality strengths and weaknesses, and may identify certain disturbances in personality, or psychopathology. Tests such as the *Minnesota multiphasic personality inventory* (MMPI-2) and the *Millon clinical multi-axial Inventory III* (MMPI-III), are used to screen individuals for specific psychopathologies or emotional problems.

Another type of personality test is the projective personality assessment. A projective test asks a subject to interpret some ambiguous stimuli, such as a series of inkblots. The subject's responses provide insight into his or her thought processes and personality traits. For example, the Rorschach inkblot test and the **Holtzman ink blot test** (HIT) use a series of inkblots that the test

KEY TERMS

Norms—A fixed or ideal standard; normative or mean score for a particular age group.

Psychopathology—A mental disorder or illness, such as schizophrenia, personality disorder, or major depressive disorder.

Quantifiable—Can be expressed as a number. The results of quantifiable psychological tests can be translated into numerical values, or scores.

Representative sample—A random sample of people that adequately represent the test taking population in age, gender, race, and socioeconomic standing.

Standardization—The process of determining established norms and procedures for a test to act as a standard reference point for future test results.

subject is asked to identify. Another projective assessment, the **Thematic apperception test** (TAT), asks the subject to tell a story about a series of pictures. Some consider projective tests to be less reliable than objective personality tests. If the examiner is not well-trained in psychometric evaluation, subjective interpretations may affect the evaluation of these tests.

Neuropsychological tests

Many insurance plans cover all or a portion of diagnostic neuropsychological or psychological testing. As of 1997, Medicare reimbursed for psychological and neuropsychological testing. Billing time typically includes test administration, scoring and interpretation, and reporting.

Preparation

Prior to the administration of any psychological test, the administrator should provide the test subject with information on the nature of the test and its intended use, complete standardized instructions for taking the test (including any time limits and penalties for incorrect responses), and information on the confidentiality of the results. After these disclosures are made, informed consent should be obtained from the test subject before testing begins (except in cases of legally mandated testing, where consent is not required of the subject).

Normal results

All psychological and neuropsychological assessments should be administered, scored, and interpreted by a trained professional. When interpreting test results for test subjects, the test administrator will review with subjects: what the test evaluates, its precision in evaluation, any margins of error involved in scoring, and what the individual scores mean in the context of overall test norms and the background of the test subject.

Resources

ORGANIZATIONS

American Psychological Association (APA). 750 First St. NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242. (202) 336-5700. < <http://www.apa.org> >.

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Psychosis

Definition

Psychosis is a symptom or feature of mental illness typically characterized by radical changes in personality, impaired functioning, and a distorted or non-existent sense of objective reality.

Description

Patients suffering from psychosis have impaired reality testing; that is, they are unable to distinguish personal subjective experience from the reality of the external world. They experience **hallucinations** and/or **delusions** that they believe are real, and may behave and communicate in an inappropriate and incoherent fashion. Psychosis may appear as a symptom of a number of mental disorders, including mood and **personality disorders**. It is also the defining feature of **schizophrenia**, schizophreniform disorder, **schizoaffective disorder**, delusional disorder, and the psychotic disorders (i.e., brief psychotic disorder, shared psychotic disorder, psychotic disorder due to a general medical condition, and substance-induced psychotic disorder).

Causes and symptoms

Psychosis may be caused by the interaction of biological and psychosocial factors depending on the