
UNIT 2 APPROACHES TO PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT (SELF-REPORT, PROBLEMS OF RESPONSE IN PROJECTIVE AND BEHAVIOURAL ASSESSMENT)

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

Variety of assessment techniques is available to personologists in gathering information about people. They include questionnaire, ink blots, personal documents, behavioural assessment procedure, peer judgments, and what people reveal when asked questions about themselves. Each has specific strength and weakness regarding the kinds of responses obtained, scoring, interpretation, reliability, and validity. In this unit you will learn all about Self-Report Personality Tests (Inventory). What they are and how they are devised and administered. This unit will also discuss the merits and demerits of these self reports and would also indicate how these weaknesses could be overcome. In this unit you will also

learn some of the important self reports available . There will be another section in this unit that would discuss the projective techniques , its importance, merits and demerits, and the available tests of projective techniques. This will be followed by another section dealing with behavioural assessments and their importance, weaknesses and strengths.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define and describe Self-Report Personality Tests (Inventory);
- Explain the Strengths and weaknesses of self-report tests;
- Analyse factors to overcome the weaknesses in self-report tests;
- Elucidate important kinds of self-report tests;
- Define and describe Projective Techniques;
- Explain the strengths and weaknesses of projective techniques; and
- Define and describe behavioural Assessments.

2.2 SELF REPORT PERSONALITY TESTS (INVENTORY)

Self-report inventories, also known as personality inventories are self rating questionnaires, where the individual describes own feelings, environment, and reactions of others towards self. In other words, on the self-report inventories a person reports about one's own self in the light of the questions (or items) given therein.. Hence, the method is known as a self-report inventory.

Self-report inventories are classified into five types, as given below:

- 1) Inventories that attempt to measure social and certain other specifies traits such as self confidence, dominance, extroversion, etc.
- 2) Inventories that attempt to evaluate the adjustment of the person to different aspects of the environment such as school, home, health.
- 3) Inventories that attempt to evaluate pathological traits.
- 4) Inventories that attempt to screen individuals into two or three groups.
- 5) Inventories that attempt to measure attitudes, interests, and values of persons.

Let us deal with the above five self report inventories one by one.

- 1) These are tests or inventories which attempt to measure social and other specific traits including self confidence, dominance, extraversion etc. Examples of such an inventory are that of Bernreuter Personality Inventory, Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, Differential Personality Scale etc.
- 2) These are inventories that try to evaluate the level of adjustment of a person to different aspects of one's life. For instance some of the adjustments that are studied here include adjustment to self, health, home and school. Example for such an inventory is Bells Adjustment Inventory.

- 3) These are Inventories that attempt to evaluate the pathological traits in an individual. Some of these try to evaluate a large number of traits of pathological nature, while some confine to a few pathological traits. For instance the MMPI (The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory) tries to get at a very large number of pathological traits in addition to some normal traits. The 16 PF inventory attempts to evaluate 16 personality traits including 4 pathological traits. These pathological traits may include hysteria, paranoia, hypomania, depression, schizophrenia, etc.
- 4) These are inventories which attempt to screen individuals into two or three groups. The Cornell Index is the best example of such an inventory. The Cornell Index screens the persons into two groups - those having psychosomatic difficulties like asthma, peptic ulcer, migraine, etc., and those not having them that is, those who are normal.
- 5) These are Inventories that attempt to measure attitudes, interests, and values of persons. E.g., In regard to attitude we can give the example of Bogardus Social distance scale; in regard to interest inventory we can give the example of Strong Vocational Interest Blank, and in regard to values, we can give the example of Allport-Vernon Study of Values Scale.

This classification is based upon the purpose and the nature of item content. All the above self-report inventories are based upon same principle, which states that behaviour is nothing but the manifestation of trait and one can find out the presence or absence of a trait by means of assessing the behaviour. Self-report inventories are more widely used than any form of personality assessment. These are paper-and-pencil test that ask people to respond to questions concerning their traits, values, attitudes, motives, feelings, interests, abilities.

The term “self-report” refers to any information the person reveals directly about himself / herself by responding to specific questions or items with a limited number of prescribed choices (e.g. “Yes”, “No”, “Always”, “Don’t know”).

General feature of self-report test is standardisation of response alternatives. That is, people taking the tests have to select either true or false, agree or disagree, an alternative that varies from 1 (very characteristic of me) to 6, and so on.

In this manner, objectivity is achieved by restricting the degree of freedom people have in responding to test items.

Similarly standardisation of scoring procedures minimises the risk of personal bias of the persons scoring the tests.

Self-report inventories differ in regard to the number of personality dimensions they measure at one time.

2.2.1 Single-traits Tests

These are developed and used by researchers to measure some specific aspects of personality. They then examine whether people who score at the upper and lower end on the trait measure perform differently on the behavioural measure or differ on the self-report measure. In other words any person participating in the study may receive a high score (or may receive a medium or low score), but every person’s score is equally meaningful as a representation of that person’s personality.

Some single-dimension tests also provide separate measures of two or three traits. Examples of single-trait tests include

- a) the Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966),
- b) the Sensation Seeking Scale (Zuckerman, 1978),
- c) the Self Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974).

The scores obtained from these tests are assumed to reflect relatively stable individual differences along specific trait dimensions. In addition to these scales, there are many self-report inventories that measure several personality dimensions simultaneously.

2.2.2 Multidimensional Tests

These *multi-dimensional tests* have the advantage of providing a more comprehensive overview of the person being assessed and are used extensively in clinical, counseling, and personnel settings. For instance the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16-PF) is a 187-item test which measures 16 source traits of the normal personality identified by Raymond Cattell (1965). Scores derived from each of the source trait measures (e.g., submissive-dominant, trusting-suspicious) are plotted on a graph to provide a personality profile. This profile may be used by psychologist for counselling and to make important employment and promotion decisions about people.

2.2.3 Strength and Weakness of Self-report Tests

Assessment of individual differences is a significant aspect of personology. Much emphasis has been placed on self-reports as the basis for measuring the individual differences. The major advantage is that self-report tests provide more thorough, precise, and systematic information about an individual's personality than does casual information. The strengths of the self report inventories are given below:

- The objectivity of scoring minimizes personal or theoretical bias
- Also, self-report measures can be administered easily by someone with relatively little formal training.
- Self-report tests have greater reliability than do other assessment techniques.
- Finally, multi-dimensional inventories allow for measurement of several different personality traits at once.

Apart from the aforesaid, strengths, self report tests have some weaknesses.

The major limitations of self report tests are given below:

- They are susceptible to deliberate deception,
- There is considerable influence of social desirability,
- There is the influence of the response set (Kleinmuntz, 1982).
- Deliberate deception is most likely to occur when the person believes there is something to be gained from fraudulent responding (Furnham, 1990).

2.2.4 Faking in Personality Inventories

Let us understand how faking can occur.

A job applicant might “fake good” by intentionally agreeing with those items she/he believes will create favourable impression in an employment situation.

As well as, a person might also “fake bad” by intentionally answering items that she/he believes will create the impression of being more psychologically disturbed than is actually true.

This might occur in a situation where a person is being assessed to determine competency to face charges for a criminal offence.

Another way to fake is to respond to items in ways that make “look good”. This tendency is called *social desirability* and it is a problem that can occur in all assessment techniques, not only self-reports. In this, people who display social desirability bias may be unaware of their tendency to slant answers in a favourable direction as opposed to giving frank answers. They unintentionally present themselves in a favourable light that probably does not correspond to reality.

There are many strategies to detect or reduce the problem of social desirability response bias. For instance, MMPI includes questions intended to assess the likelihood that a respondent is giving socially desirable answers. Other tests are constructed to directly measure the extent to which people give self-flattering responses. For instance, Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) is designed to measure the tendency of people to present themselves in a favourable light .

2.2.5 Measures to Avoid Faking

To overcome this problem, safeguards are to be built into tests to detect deliberate deception.

The MMPI, for instance, includes validity scales designed to indicate whether respondents are lying, defensive, or evasive when answering the test items.

Another option is to include filler items which can make the purpose of a test less obvious to a person. But these efforts may be only partially successful in detecting the extent to which a respondent is engaging in conscious deception. If possible, important decisions about a person should not be based on self-report data alone.

Another way to deal with the problem is to carefully evaluate the social desirability of each item before it is included in a test.

Lastly, in self-report measures, people have a tendency to respond in a particular way regardless of the content of the items. For instance, some people are more likely than others to agree with virtually every question on a test.

This *acquiescence response set* is a major problem on self-report measures that require a true- false or a yes- no answer (E.g.,MMPI).

If this response set is not counteracted in some way, the scores of highly acquiescent people will be distorted and not accurately reflect the personality traits. This problem is comparatively easy to counteract. Many test makers phrase the items so that true or false or yes or no responses are equally likely to be indicative of the trait being measured. Therefore, any bias coming from the tendency to respond “true” or “yes” is balanced when the test is scored.

2.2.6 Methods to Overcome Weaknesses in Self-report Tests

Distortions in the actual responses of self-report measures of personality are major problems for users of personality tests. Thus, it is essential that attempts

be made to overcome these distortions and make the self-report responses more representatives of the true responses. The following methods may be adopted for the purpose:

Method 1. Establishment of rapport

Distortions occur when the testees feel discomfort and find themselves in an unfriendly environment. It is essential that before actual administration of an inventory, the tester should make every effort to establish a warm and cooperative relationship called “rapport” with the testees. This relationship is dependent upon the skill of the testers skill and their ability to bring about a subtle modification of the testing situation. This will help in expressing the truth in an unhesitant way and thereby reducing the major proportion of distortion.

Method 2. Use of forced-choice technique

This technique has been used in controlling faking good or socially desirable response sets. In forced-choice items the subject is forced to choose between two or more than two equally desirable or undesirable terms or phrases or statements. The subject who wants to give socially desirable responses is out-witted by the forced choice between equally desirable statements.

Method 3. Concealing the main purpose of the test:

When the subjects do not know the real purpose of the test it becomes difficult for them to fake although in such a situation they may be more suspicious and defensive in their responses. Subjects may guess from the nature of the items, but they may be not definite that some inferences about their tendencies or traits are to be made and this will lessen the probability to fake.

There can be two ways to conceal the purpose. One method is to state such a plausible purpose of the test which is not the real purpose. For instance a personality test may be described as a test of ability, and if it appears so to the subject the faking is likely to be reduced to a great extent.

Another method of concealment is to insert information which is actually false among items of information which are actually true. For instance the subjects may be asked to endorse those titles of the book in the booklist which they have gone through. This list of titles will also contain some fictitious titles. The greater the number of endorsements of such fictitious titles, the higher the deceit.

Method 4. Use of verification and correction keys

Use of various kinds of correction and verification keys gives an indication whether or not the subject is projecting the true picture of the self. For instance MMPI uses four validity scores which aims at checking carelessness, evasiveness, misunderstanding and operation of other response sets.

2.3 SOME IMPORTANT PERSONALITY INVENTORIES

As mentioned earlier, the first attempt to measure personality through a questionnaire was made by Galton in 1880. He developed a questionnaire for studying mental imagery, that is inner world of perception and feeling.

Thereafter, the first systematic effort to develop a personality inventory was made by Woodworth in 1918. This inventory was known as Woodworth Personal Data Sheet and consists of 116 questions all relating to neurotic tendencies. The purpose was to screen out emotionally unfit men before they were sent overseas during the World War I. Since then a number of inventories have come into practice.

Using a statistical technique, called *factor analysis* that looks for groupings and commonalities in numerical data, Cattell discovered 16 source traits, and although he later determined there might be another seven source traits to make a total of 23 (Cattell & Kline, 1977), He developed his assessment questionnaire, namely,

2.3.1 The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16 PF)

Cattell, (1995) devised a personality inventory based on just 16 source traits. These 16 source traits are seen as trait dimensions or continuums, in which there are two opposite traits at each end with many possible degrees of the traits possible along the dimension. For example, someone scoring near the reserved end of the reserved\ outgoing dimension would be more introverted than someone scoring in the middle or at the opposite end.

2.3.2 Neuroticism\Extraversion\ Openness Personality Inventory (NEO- PI)

This inventory is based on the five- factor model of personality traits that has been developed by Costa & McCrae.

2.3.3 Myers Briggs Type Indicator

Another inventory in common use is the *Myers- Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)*.

This inventory is based on the ideas of Carl Jung and looks at four personality dimensions, that is (i) Sensing/ intuition, (ii) Thinking/feeling, (iii) Introversion/ Extraversion (iv) Perceiving / Judging.

The sensing\ intuition(S\I) dimension includes people who prefer to rely on what they can see, hear, and so on through their physical senses (sensing) and, on its opposite end those who look for patterns and trust their hunches(intuition).

Sensing people are considered to be detail oriented, preferring to work only with the known facts, whereas intuitive people are more willing to use metaphors, analogies, and look for possibilities.

The Thinking\feeling (T\F) dimension runs from those who prefer to use logic, analysis, and experiences that can be verified as facts (thinkers) to those who tend to make decisions based on their personal values and emotional reactions(feeling).

Introversion\extraversion (I\E) is the same classic dimension that began with Jung, and is represented in nearly all personality theories.

Perceiving\ judging (P/J) describes those who are willing to adapt and modify decisions, be spontaneous, and who are naturally curious and to put off making a final decision so that all possibilities are covered (perceiving) as well those who are the opposite : the action- oriented, decisive, get the task done and look back type (judging).

These four dimensions can differ for each individual, resulting in 16(4 x 4) possible personality types: ISTJ, ISTP, ISFP, ISFJ, and so on (Myers- Briggs) is often used to assess personality to help people know the kinds of careers for which they may best be suited.

ISTJ (Introverted, Sensing, Thinking, Judgemental). ISTP (Introversion, Sensing, Thinking and Perceiving). ISFP (Introversion, Sensing, Feeling and Perceiving). ISFJ (Introversion, Sensing, Feeling and Judgemental).

2.3.4 Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventoryh (MMPI)

By far the most common personality inventory is the *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Version II, or MMPI 2*, which specifically tests abnormal behaviour patterns in personality (Butcher & Rouse, 1996; Butcher et al., 2000, 2001).

This questionnaire consists of 567 statements such as “I am very often tense”. The person taking the test must answer “true”, “false”, or “cannot say”.

The MMPI has 10 clinical scales and 8 validity scales in addition to numerous subscales. Each scale tests for a particular kind of behaviour.

The behaviour patterns include relatively mild personality problems such as excessive worrying and shyness as well as more serious disorders such as schizophrenia and depression.

Validity scales, which are built into any well designed psychological inventory, are intended to indicate whether or not a person taking the inventory is responding honestly. Responses to certain items on the test will indicate if people are trying to make themselves look better or worse than they are, for example, certain items are repeated throughout the test in a slightly different form, so that anyone trying to “fake” the test will have difficulty in responding to those items consistently(Butcher et al.,2001). For example, if one of the statements is “ I am always very happy” and a person responds “true” to that statement , the suspicion would be that this person is trying to look better s\he really is. If several of the validity scale questions are answered in this way, the conclusion is that the person is not being honest.

There are also inventories in India. For example, Bengalee(1964) developed Multiphasic Personality Inventory, known as Youth Adjustment Analyser (YAA).The purpose of the inventory was to screen out maladjusted students from the college going students. Mohsin & Hussain (1981) adapted the Bell Adjustment Inventory in Hindi.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What do you mean by the term personality inventory?

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2) Describe Self Report Personality Tests

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3) What are single trait and Multidimensional tests?

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4) What are the various types of faking possible? Discuss the measures to overcome the same

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5) What are the weaknesses in self report inventories ? How are these overcome?

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6) What are the different kinds of personality inventories used to measure personality?

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7) Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of self- report measures.

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2.4 PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES

Projective tests of personality are mainly designed to assist the clinical psychologist in diagnosing the nature and severity of a particular person's emotional disturbance. The rationale for these tests is based on Freud's theory that unconscious processes are important for understanding psychopathology.

The purpose of projective personality assessment is to uncover the person's unconscious conflicts, fears, and concerns. Frank (1939) coined the term *projective technique* to describe assessment methods that present people with ambiguous stimuli for which there is no obvious culturally defined to personality assessment, allow people to "project" upon ambiguous material their feelings, needs, attitudes, and ways of viewing life.

The responses elicited by the test stimuli (such as inkblots, vague pictures) reveal signs of pent up impulses, "ego defenses" and other "interior" aspects of the personality. All projective techniques have a set of common important features. They are as follows:

- They all use ambiguous or unstructured test stimuli.
- The test taker is never told the purpose of the test or how responses will be scored or interpreted.
- Instructions emphasise that there is no correct or incorrect answers and that the test taker is free to respond in any manner s\he sees fit.
- Scoring and interpretation rely heavily on subjective clinical judgements.

2.4.1 Classification of Projective Techniques

The classification of projective techniques has been recently provided by Lindzay (1959). Based upon the responses of the examinees, he has divided projective techniques into the following five categories, iz., (i) Association technique (ii) Construction technique (iii) Completion technique (iv) Expressive technique (v) Choice technique. These are being explained below.

Association Technique

This category includes all those situations where the examinee is required to respond with the associations which are evoked in mind after seeing or listening to stimulus materials. E.g., the Rorschach test, the Holtzman Inkblot test and the Word Association test. The reaction time (the time elapsing between the presentation of the stimulus word and the response word) and the responses are analysed for studying personality.

Construction Technique

This category includes all those situations where the examinees are required to construct a story after seeing the stimulus materials (usually the picture) within certain specified time. No record is generally kept of time but the examinee's themes and mode of responding are considered relevant. For example, Thematic Apperception test, Children's Apperception test. Rosenzweig Picture Frustration test. The Blacky Pictures, The Object Relations test, etc. In all these tests the examinee is required to construct or produce simple statement or complex statements in the form of a story.

Completion Technique

These techniques include those situations where the examinee is presented with some incomplete sentences with the construction to complete them in any way he desires.

E.g., My sex life is
 I feel tense
 My ambition in life is
 I often get nervous when

Responses are given by the examinee are interpreted and analysed to find some aspect of the personality. But these methods lack a uniform and standard mode of analysis. E.g., Sack's Sentence Completion test, Madeline Thomas Completion Stories test.

Expressive Technique

This technique includes those situations where the examinee expresses his personality through some manipulative tasks, which usually involve some interaction with given materials. For example, play, drawing role- playing painting finger painting, etc. An important feature is that examiner pays much attention to the way or process by which the examinee manipulates the given materials. For example, the examiner may ask the examinee to play with a given set of dolls; he may pay attention to the process by which dolls are selected and handled during the play.

Also, in such techniques, significance is given to the process or way of handling the test materials rather than upon the end product of the process (such as the content or theme of the stories, etc.).

Choice Technique

Choice technique, also known as ordering technique, is not a projective in its true sense; rather may be regarded as a step towards objectifying the projective techniques (Kerlinger, 1973). The examinee is presented with some sets of pictures or items (which convey the different degrees of a trait) with the instruction to choose the most relevant and appropriate picture. Sometimes, he may be asked to order or rank those pictures in terms of his preferences, and thus, the name *ordering technique*. The choice of the items, becomes the basis for inference regarding one's personality. The Szondi test is an example of ordering technique because the examinees are required to rank set of pictures along a like-dislike dimension.

2.4.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of Projective Techniques

There are two unique strengths of projective tests. First, the testing stimuli are relatively ambiguous to people. As such, the person does not know how the test provides information to the examiner. This indirect method helps in disguising the real purpose of the test and it reduces the possibility that people will engage in intentional deception. Second, the indirect method used in projective tests allows circumventing conscious defenses, thus making them sensitive to aspects of personality that are hidden.

However some of the disadvantages include that projective tests are poorly standardised, in large part because there are no established methods of administration, scoring, and interpretation. In particular, the scoring of these tests often relies on the skill and clinical intuition of the examiner, thus making their reliability quite low.

Evidence suggests that extensive training in a specific scoring system leads to satisfactory levels of inter judge agreement(Goldfried, et al., 1971;Exner, 1986). A more serious problem concerns the interpretation of a person's scored responses to a projective test. Interpretation of such tests depends all too often on the personal insights and intuition of the clinician. There is also little convincing evidence to support the validity of projective tests (Aiken, 1984; Peterson, 1978). Therefore, psychologists are well advised not to base an entire diagnosis solely on projective tests. Projective tests should be considered in the context of other information obtained through interviews, case histories, and self- report tests.

Despite the aforesaid problems, many clinical psychologists continue to apply these methods as a means to explore a person's unconscious conflicts, fantasies and motives(Singer & Kolligian, 1987). They are more capable of revealing human personality in greater depth and detail than some of the personality inventories where considerable faking is possible. People have more faith in interpreting projective tests than personality inventories. A survey of the member of the Society for Personality Assessment found that Rorschach and TAT were ranked as second and fourth, respectively, in terms of usage among all psychometric instruments.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What do you mean by a projective test? Describe the same

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2) How are Projective tests classified?

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3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of projective techniques?

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4) Name some of the projective tests that are commonly used.

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2.5 BEHAVIOURAL ASSESSMENTS

Behaviourists do not want to typically “look into the mind” of an individual, because they assume that personality is merely habitually learned responses to stimuli in the environment, the preferred method for a behaviourist would be to watch that behaviour unfold in the real world.

2.5.1 Observation Technique

In direct observation, the psychologist observes the client engaging in ordinary, everyday behaviour, preferably in the natural setting of home, school, or workplace, for example. A therapist who goes to the classroom and observes that tantrum behaviour only happens when a child is asked to do something involving fine motor abilities (like drawing or writing) might be able to conclude that the child has difficulty with those skills and throws a tantrum to avoid the task.

Observation is the sine qua non of any approach to personality study. In some cases, hunches for research begin unsystematic observation. Personal observations often pave the way for more refined study of people’s behaviour.

Another way to learn about behaviour is to observe and record it as it naturally occurs (in real-life settings), but in a more systematic and rigorous manner than is evident in unsystematic behaviour. This is called *observation naturalistic*. The play and friendship patterns of children, antisocial behaviour in adolescents, eating behaviours of obese and non-obese people, leadership styles of effective business managers, and many clinical phenomena have been investigated through naturalistic observation. Such naturalistic observation does not explain behaviour, but they are a rich source of information about what people do in their natural environments.

Naturalistic observation has some limitations also.

- 1) The main problem is that observers are often at the mercy of unpredictable events over which they have little or no control.
- 2) There are problems of observer bias and expectations influencing those aspects and events that are attended to and remembered.
- 3) The generalisation of observation based on a few people and situations, is questionable in regard to reliability and validity.
- 4) Finally, observers may unwittingly interfere with the actual events they wish to observe or record (Kazdin, 1982). Despite this problem, the advantage of naturalistic observation is obvious.

2.5.2 Situational Tests

One gets a sample of how people respond to their day-to-day situations amid friends and families without the contrived atmosphere of a laboratory or interview.

A situational test is a kind of compromise between a standardised test and observational methods of assessing personality. Personality traits are measured on the basis of observations of ratings of what a person thinks and does in a given situation, which resembles a real situation of everyday life. The subject has usually no idea that he is being studied. The situation represented by such tests is a social situation having opportunities for interaction with other individuals and especially designed to emphasise those aspects of personality which are under study.

The first situational test of personality was developed by United States Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II to screen out men for military several reassignments. Situational tests are more suited to the measurement of traits like leadership, dominance, responsibility, extroversion-introversion, and the like.

Sometimes these tests utilise directly observable units of behaviour as the basis of assessment of the traits. Such situational tests are called *behavioural tests* because they are directly concerned with observable behaviour. For instance, honesty, self-control, and co-operation are such traits, related to character.

One of the first attempts to study these traits was made by Hartshorne, May & Shuttleworth (1930) in their Character Educational Inquiry (CEI). In general, CEI behavioural tests utilised natural situations lying within the day to day routine of a school child such as games, class room examination, etc. Children placed in these situations were not aware of the fact that they were being studied. The CEI tests were principally designed to measure behavioural traits like, altruism, honesty, and self control.

However, most of the CEI tests were concerned with measuring honesty among children by providing opportunity for cheating. These tests utilised different modes or techniques for studying honesty.

In one such technique called the *duplicating technique* the children were administered one of the classroom tests like the arithmetical reasoning test or the vocabulary test. A set of children's responses was duplicated, unknown to them. In the subsequent administration the original test is again given with a request to score their own responses with the help of a scoring technique. A simple comparison of the responses scored with the duplicated responses revealed whether or not the children had changed their responses in scoring, that is, whether they had cheated or not. Other CEI tests intended to measure honesty provided situations in which the person had an opportunity to lie or to steal something.

Situational tests represent real-life situations and therefore, their findings can be easily generalised to natural life situations, even though they have several important limitations.

Limitations

- 1) The situational tests are extremely time consuming, costly, and laborious techniques. They are time-consuming because ordinarily observations in

contrived situations last for several hours; they are costly because they demand the services of trained observers and they are laborious techniques because creating a real –life situation involves a good deal of labour on the part of the observers.

- 2) Subjectivity and bias may operate in the observation of a situational test. Observers, even if professionally trained, may not make a fair and objective observation because of certain bias towards the individuals to be observed. Likewise, other subjective elements may enter into the observation process. Although, an attempt is made to control such subjective elements, they cannot be completely eliminated because the observer is always a human being.
- 3) For increasing the reliability and validity of the observation made under situational tests, the experimenter gives emphasis on studying an isolated bit of behaviour. The problem arises as to what significance or meaning to such an isolated bit of behaviour can be attached.
- 4) Another limitation is concerned with ‘What to observe’. This is a problem in situational tests, which cannot be planned to study all behaviours of the individual. Only the limited behaviour should be selected for observation. In such a situation determination and selection of a meaningful set of behaviours to be observed is always an important problem.
- 5) Lastly, whether the observer should be kept visible or invisible is also a problem in most situational tests. If the group is small, the physical presence of the observer in the group may change what actually takes place in the group. How the observer can be fitted into such a setting is always a problem.

Other methods often used by behavioural therapists and other assessors are rating scale and frequency counts.

In a rating scale, a numerical rating is assigned, either by the assessor or the client, for specific behaviours (Nadeau et al., 2001). In a frequency count, the assessor literally counts the frequency of certain behaviours within a specified time limit. Educators make use of both rating scales and frequency counts to diagnose behavioural problems such as attention deficit disorder and aspects of personality such as social skill level through the various grade levels.

2.5.3 Weaknesses in the Behavioural Assessment Tests

Problems with these assessments can include the observer effect (when a person’s behaviour is affected by being watched) and observer bias, which can be controlled by having multiple observers and correlating their observations with each other.

As with any kind of observational method, there is no control over the external environment.

A person observing a client for a particular behaviour may not see that behaviour occur within the observation time.

All of the above described methods convey the full meaning about the traits to be assessed only when they are followed by other standardised tests. Merely on the basis of behavioural methods it is difficult to arrive at a particular conclusion.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What are the different behavioural assessment methods in assessing personality?

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2) Briefly discuss some of the weaknesses of behavioural assessments techniques.

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3) Discuss the observational tests and the situational tests.

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4) What are the advantages and disadvantages of observation and situation tests.

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

There are three most common tools or methods of personality assessment.

These tools are self-report inventories, projective techniques, and behavioural assessment method that include observation, rating scale, frequency count, and situational tests.

Personality inventories are typically developed by trait theorists and provide a detailed description of certain personality traits. They are objective tests rather than subjective tests.

The NEO-PI is based on five-factor model of personality, whereas Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is based on Jung's theory of personality types.

The MMPI- 2 is designed to detect abnormal personality.

Personality inventories include validity scales to prevent cheating, but such measures are not perfect and cheating is sometimes possible. Projective tests are based on the defense mechanism of projection and are used by psychoanalysts.

Projective tests include the Rorschach inkblot test and Thematic Apperception test. Projective tests can be helpful in finding starting points to open a dialogue between therapist and client but have been criticized for poor reliability and validity. Behavioural assessments are primarily used by behaviourists and include direct observation of behaviour rating scales of specific behaviour, and frequency counts of behaviour.

Behavioural assessments have the disadvantage of the observer effect, which causes an observed person's behaviour to change, and observer bias on the part of the person doing the assessment.

2.7 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Self-report measures are commonly used in personality assessment. Discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses accompanying self-report measures. Is it possible to overcome the weaknesses?
- 2) How do projective techniques differ from self-report test in the assessment of personality? Do projective tests have any advantage or disadvantage in comparison to self-report measures?
- 3) How can behavioural assessments be used in measuring personality?

2.8 GLOSSARY

Acquiescence	: A response set of tending to say "yes" or "no" to test item regardless of their content.
Direct observation	: Assessment in which the professional observes the client engaged in ordinary day-to-day behaviour in either a clinical or natural setting.
Frequency count	: Assessment in which a numerical value is assigned to specific behaviour that is listed in the scale.
Multidimensional tests	: Self-report personality that provide measures of several aspects of the respondents personality at once (e.g., MMPI).
Naturalistic observation	: Careful observation of behaviour as it occurs in real-life settings without direct intervention by the investigation.

- Projective techniques** : A class of psychological tests that ask people to respond to ambiguous stimuli in ways that may reveal their needs, feelings, and conflicts.
- Rating scale** : Assessment in which the frequency of a particular behaviour is counted.
- Self-report techniques** : Self-report tests in which the response format, administration, and scoring features are standardised.
- Single-trait tests** : Self-report tests that measure a specific trait of the respondent's personality.
- Situational test** : Personality traits are measured on the basis of observations of ratings of what a person thinks and does in a given situation, which resembles a real situation of everyday life.
- Social desirability** : A tendency seen in some people to give socially acceptable answers to test items.

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