
UNIT 3 ASSESSMENT OF PERSONALITY

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
 - 3.1 Objectives
 - 3.2 Needs and Aims of Assessment
 - 3.3 Methods of Personality Assessment
 - 3.3.1 Interviews
 - 3.3.2 Projective Techniques
 - 3.3.3 Classification of Projective Techniques
 - 3.3.4 Association Technique
 - 3.4 Ink Blot Technique
 - 3.4.1 Construction Technique
 - 3.4.2 Completion Technique
 - 3.4.3 Expressive Techniques
 - 3.4.4 The Rorschach Inkblot Technique
 - 3.4.5 The Holtzman Inkblot Test
 - 3.4.6 The TAT
 - 3.4.7 The Sentence Completion Tests
 - 3.4.8 Limitations of the Projective Tests
 - 3.5 Behavioural Assessment
 - 3.5.1 Limitations of Behavioural Assessment
 - 3.6 Personality Inventories
 - 3.6.1 The Mmpi – 2
 - 3.6.2 Limitations of Personality Inventories
 - 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
 - 3.8 Unit End Questions
 - 3.9 Glossary
 - 3.10 Suggested Readings and References
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3.0 INTRODUCTION

Personality assessment refers to the estimation of one's personality make up, that is the person's characteristic behaviour patterns and salient and stable characteristics. As there are different theoretical accounts of personality, and the question is how do people find out what kind of personality they have? The methods of estimating or measuring or assessing personality vary according to the theory of personality used to develop those methods.

However, most of the psychological professionals doing personality assessment do not necessarily tie themselves to one theoretical view point only, rather they prefer to take an eclectic view of personality. The eclectic view is a way of choosing the parts of different theories that seem to best fit a particular situation, rather than using only one theory to explain a phenomenon.

In fact, looking at behaviour from different perspectives can often bring insights into a person's behaviour that would not easily come from taking only one

perspective (Ciccarelli and Meyer, 2006). Therefore, many of the professionals doing personality assessment use different perspectives and also take on different techniques for its assessment.

It is also important to note here that personality assessment may also differ with respect to the purposes for which it is done. For example, if the purpose is self-understanding, the person may select different tests/inventories, if the purpose is to classify person's as per their personality traits a different set of tests may be useful. Finally, if the purpose is diagnostic (clinical psychologist, counselors etc.) an entirely different set of tests may be more useful.

There are several tests/inventories which are available for the assessment of personality. Broadly, these can be grasped into one of the three categories. These are the subjective, objective and projective methods. The subjective approach incorporates the assessment of one's personality taking his/her work into account e.g. what he or she had done throughout his/her life. It may also consider his/her autobiographical accounts and biographies etc. But there is a major limitation of it that there are possibilities that the person may exaggerate his/her strengths and may minimise the account of his/her limitations and therefore we may be devoid of the true picture of personality. In personality assessment the effort is to make the assessment free from bias of any sort both from the subject/participant (whose personality is to be assessed) and from that of the assessor. It presents that there are so many such test/inventories whereby we can assess personality of a person objectively and these are the important tools for the purpose. While some tests assess the surface characteristics, others uncover the underlying aspects of personality. Among the major procedures that are in use currently, the important ones are those based on content relevance, empirical criterion keying, factor analyses, and personality theory. Personality assessment may differ in the purposes for which they are conducted. Personality assessment is used in the diagnosis of personality disorders by clinical and counseling psychologists, psychiatrists; and other psychological professionals.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define personality assessment;
- Explain the prominent features of personality assessment;
- Explain the aims of personality assessment;
- Explain the various methods used in the assessment of personality;
- Differentiate between different types of tools of personality assessment;
- Explain projective techniques in detail; and
- Explain objective techniques in detail.

3.2 NEEDS AND AIMS OF ASSESSMENT

Testing is becoming more and more important with each growing area of psychology. Traditionally, tests were employed only to measure individual differences or intraindividual reactions under different circumstances. The nature and extent of individual differences, their possessed psychological traits,

differences among various groups etc. are becoming some of the major components demanding assessment as an aid of measurement.

Personality testing is an essential pre-requisite for identifying the various constituents of personality. Testing in personality provides measures of emotional and motivational traits of personality.

3.3 METHODS OF PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT

Some of the important tests and techniques measuring personality include (i) Interviews (ii) Projective techniques (iii) Association techniques (iv) Expressive techniques

3.3.1 Interviews

Interview is a method of personality assessment in which the interviewee has to answer the questions asked by the professional, in a structured or unstructured fashion. Some therapists note down the answers of the interviewee in a survey process. This type of interview is unstructured in manner and moves naturally.

Limitations of Interviews

Interview by the psychologist demands the report of innermost feeling, concerns and urges on the part of client. This is something that can be known directly by the client/interviewee and thus, the problems encountered with self report data like survey are faced with interviewing also. Interviewees/Clients can misinform, lie, distort the actual facts or reality and hide the true information for social desirability. Also, biases can occur on the part of the interviewers as their personal belief system or prejudices may put obstacles in the interpretation of the information given by the interviewee.

Halo effect is the other problem with interviews. Halo effect is a tendency to form a favorable or unfavorable impression of someone at the first meeting and after that first impression all of the comments and behaviour of that person are interpreted in agreement with the impression. Those who make a good first impression due to clothing, physical appearance or some other characteristic seem to have a “halo” for everything they do in a positive light.

3.3.2 Projective Techniques

These techniques are assumed to reveal those central aspects of personality that lie in the unconscious mind of an individual. Unconscious motivations, hidden desires, inner fears and complexes are presumed to be elicited by their unstructured nature that affect the client's conscious behaviour. The assignment of a relatively unstructured task is a major distinguishing feature of projective techniques.

An unstructured task is one that permits an endless range of possible responses. The underlying hypothesis of projective techniques is that the way the test material or “structures” are perceived and interpreted by the individual, reflects the fundamental aspects of her or his psychological functioning. In other words, the test material serves as a sort of screen on which respondents “project” their characteristic thought processes, anxieties, conflicts and needs .

Clients are shown ambiguous visual stimuli by the psychologist and are asked to tell what they see in that stimuli. It is presumed that the client will project the unconscious concerns and fears onto the visual stimulus and thus the psychologist can interpret the responses and understand the psychodynamic underlying the problem of the client. Tests that utilise this method are called projective tests. These tests, besides their function of exploring one's personality, also serve as a diagnostic tool to uncover the hidden personality issues.

The history of projective techniques began in the beginning of the 15th century when Leonardo da Vinci selected pupils on the basis of their attempt to find shapes and patterns in ambiguous form (Piotrowski, 1972). In 1879, a Word association test was constructed by Gallon. Similar tests were used in clinical settings by Carl Jung. Later, Frank (1939, 1948) introduced the term projective method to describe a range of tests which could be used to study personality with unstructured stimuli.

This way, the individual has enough opportunity to project his own personality attributes which in the course of normal interview or conversation the person would not reveal. More specifically, projective instruments also represent disguised testing procedures in the sense that the test takers are not aware of the psychological interpretation to be made of their responses.

Rather than measuring the traits separately the attention is focused on the composite picture. Finally, projective techniques are an effective tool to reveal the latent or hidden aspects of personality that remain embedded in the unconscious until uncovered. These techniques are based on the assumption that if the stimulus structure is weak in nature, it allows the individual to project his/her feelings, desires and needs that are further interpreted by the experts.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) What is the need for Personality Assessment?

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- 2) How can personality assessment prove to be an aid in understanding human behaviour?

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- 3) What is the underlying approach behind personality testing?

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- 4) What is projective technique?

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3.3.3 Classification of Projective Techniques

Various types of projective techniques have been classified into several categories by psychologists.

- i) **Constructive:** It includes all those tests and situations where the construction of some specific task is to be done by the examinee. The subject needs to frame a structure upon the situation presented by the examiner, and be asked to draw a human figure allowing the person to freely express the examiner's inclination.
- ii) **Constitutive:** This category includes those tests which require the examinee to constitute structures upon some given unstructured materials, as for example, The Rorschach Ink Blot technique. In this test the examinee imposes own structure upon the unstructured ink blots (Zubin, Eros and Schumer, 1965) and the subject's responses are scored and interpreted.
- iii) **Cathartic:** It includes those situations where the examinee can release his wishes, inner demands, conflicts etc. through some manipulative tasks.
- iv) **Interpretative:** It includes those test situations where the examinee has to add a detailed meaning to the given situation. For example, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) and the Word Association Test.
- v) **Refractive:** This category includes all those techniques through which the examinee gets the opportunity to depict his personality in the form of drawing, painting etc. Frank cited that graphology is the best example of this category.

If we evaluate Frank's classification, it is obvious that it consists of several limitations. The biggest one is that according to his classification, same test can be included in two or more categories, causing considerable overlap. This way, Frank's classification is not a popular classification of projective methods.

3.3.4 Association Techniques

This category includes all those situations where responses are to be given by the examinee in the form of associations which he makes after seeing or listening to the stimulus material . E.g. The Word Association Test etc. In the Word-Association test, the examinee is provided with a number of words in the form of a list and he is required to utter the very first word that comes to his mind on listening the stimulus word. The responses in accordance with the reaction time are used for the analysis of personality of the individual.

3.4 INK BLOT TECHNIQUES

The Ink blot techniques consist of two popular techniques, that is, The Rorschach Test and The Holtzman Ink blot test. In these tests the examinee has to respond to an unstructured situation composed of some ink blots.

3.4.1 Construction Techniques

All those situations are included here in which a story is constructed by the examinee on seeing the stimulus material within some given time limit. The themes and mode of responding are considered relevant in such tests. The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), the Object Relations Test are some of the examples of construction techniques. Some other tests like Draw-A-Person test are also included in this category. In all these tests, the examinee constructs or produces simple/complex statements in a story form or draws some picture or person.

3.4.2 Completion Techniques

These include the situations where some incomplete sentences are presented to the examinee and he can complete them in the form he desires. For example

I want,

I feel excited about.....

The subject has to fill up the blanks and the responses given by the examinee are recorded and analysed to get a picture of the individual's personality. For example, Rotter's Incomplete Sentences Blank. Some people consider it as a semi projective technique.

3.4.3 Expressive Techniques

These include those tests where some manipulative tasks are used by the examinee to depict his or her personality. Some interaction with the given material is the theme of these techniques. Some of the common expressive techniques include role playing, finger painting, play, drawing etc. The characteristic feature of expressive techniques is that the examiner pays much attention to the manner in which the given materials are manipulated by the examinee.

3.4.4 The Rorschach Inkblot Test

Rorschach inkblot test was developed in 1921 by Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach. It consists of 10 inkblots, five in black ink on a white background and five in colored inks on a white background. The Rorschach test is a measure of both the intellectual and non intellectual personality traits. While developing

this technique, Rorschach experimented with a large number of ink blots which were administered to different psychiatric groups. On the basis of such clinical observations various psychiatric syndromes that differentiate response characteristics were taken up in the scoring system.

In the test , the subjects are asked to simply state whatever each inkblot looks like to them. Responses are scored by the psychologists using predetermined categories, on key factors such as color and shape, movement, whether the whole or part blot has been seen, and whether the response is given in content to the whole or to peculiar details in the blot.

These blots are frequently used for personality description, diagnosis of mental disorders and for behaviour predictions (Watkins et al, 1995; Wiener, 1997). The whole procedure of The Rorschach Test is a combined set of three components, viz., performance proper, inquiry, and scoring. Let us deal with each of these one by one.

Administration of Rorschach test

The administration of the Rorschach test can be put be up in two stages as given below.

- a) Performance proper

The examinee is asked to get seated and rapport is established with him. First plate is then handled to the client with the question “What do you think this could be?” During the process the examinee needs to be careful about the following things:

- 1) Reaction time which means the time gap between the card presentation and examinee’s response. Exclamations and comments are excluded from scoring.
- 2) The position of the card is also taken account of while examinee is responding and are scored as v, ^, <, >.depending on the direction in which the card is turned.
- 3) The responses are recorded verbatim for the reason that the examiner can read it and analyse the same effectively.
- 4) The total time for which the card is kept by the subject is also recorded. The time lapsed between the presentation of the card and the first response the subject gives is called the reaction time.

On completion of the first plate, the second plate is given to the examinee and similarly all the 10 plates are presented in a sequential manner. The total number of responses is also termed as response productivity ratio and is coded as R. On a Rorschach protocol, for most adults the score varies from 15 to 30. Vague and uncertain response by the examinee is noted down to be clarified in the second stage of administration, that is, the inquiry stage.

Inquiry

It is the second stage of administration of the Rorschach test. It is taken up after obtaining responses on all the ten cards during “performance proper”. The basic purpose of conducting inquiry is to collect all the necessary information for the accurate scoring of the responses. Here, a location sheet is presented before the

examinee and he is asked to locate the part on the basis of which he has responded, so as to maintain a permanent record of the area of the blot used by the subject in responding. The questions framed for the inquiry stage are based on the examiner's skill and expertise.

Scoring of Rorschach test

The major differences among the various scoring systems of the Rorschach test flourished in 1930s to the 1960s. There is also the focus of concern for Rorschach interpretation based either on the content of the responses or on their formal characteristics, such as location, determinants, form quality, and the various quantitative summaries derived from the responses, that is, the content.

Scoring of location is important. *Location* refers to that part of the plot with which each response of the subject is associated. For example, whether the whole blot or a common detail or a usual detail has been used by the respondent and are scored as *W, D, d, Dd etc.* The determinants of the response include form, color shading and "movement" and are coded as *F,C,S,M etc.* The respondent's perception of the blot as a moving object is scored in context of "movement". The various types of movement include human movement, animal movement etc.

The form quality of responses may depict the precision with which the response match the location used, to their originality.

The treatment of content also varies from one Rorschach system to another except some major regularly employed categories. Some of the main categories are human figures, human details, animal details etc. and are coded as *H, A, Hd, Ad etc.* Some other broad scoring categories may include art objects, plants, maps, landscapes, clothing etc. For each of the 10 cards, certain specific responses are scored as popular because of their common occurrence and thus, constitute the popularity score.

Qualitative interpretations of the Rorschach scores include the association of "whole" responses with conceptual thinking. The colour responses given by the subject are indicative of the subject's emotionality and fantasy life. The entire response for all the 10 cards including the enquiry are integrated together to interpret the psychodynamics underlying the problem and also decide upon the diagnostic issues.

However, after a prolonged use of the Rorschach test as a psychometric instrument, some of the researchers found a number of difficulties inherent in the method itself, such as the variability in the total number of responses, examiner effects and interdependence of scores etc. The five major Rorschach systems in use developed in the United States show vast differences which were documented by John E. Exner, Jr. (1969). He, with his extensive investigations of clinical use of the Rorschach Test came up with a single, distilled system encompassing all the useful features being possessed by the method. Questions are also asked about the reliability and validity of the assessment done through the Rorschach Test.

In this context, it is pertinent to mention here that the Rorschach Ink blot test was never developed as a psychometric tool, rather, it was developed as an instrument to aid in the clinical diagnosis.

To briefly state about this test, it can be concluded that more research still needs to be conducted to invent a standard method of administration and scoring of the Rorschach Test.

3.4.5 The Holtzman Inkblot Test

Holtzman et. Al. (1961) developed an inkblot test known as the Holtzman Inkblot Test (HIT). This test was developed by Holtzman in order to remove the inherent technical difficulties of the Rorschach like unlimited number of responses, poor scorer reliability etc. There are two parallel forms (A and B) having 45 cards, both colored and achromatic and markedly asymmetric. One response per card is taken by the respondent. Each response is followed by a two fold simple question : where was the percept represented in the blot and what the percept suggests about the blot ? All the responses are then classified under 22 response variables.

It has been found by many researchers that Holtzman test appears to be better standardised than the Rorschach test. Also the scorer reliability of the HIT is highly satisfactory validity data on HIT have also yielded satisfactory results. It has also overcome the problem of productivity ratio by specifying the number of responses.

Recently, Holtzman (1988) has also developed a variant of HIT called HIT 25. Consisting of 25 cards. It has been found to be successful in diagnosing schizophrenia.

3.4.6 The TAT

This test was developed by Henry Murray and his colleagues (Morgan and Murray, 1935). The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) consists of 20 pictures which are all black and white. The people depicted in the picture are deliberately drawn in ambiguous situations. After showing the picture, a story is to be told by the client about the person or people in the picture. They have to say what is happening in the picture, what has caused the event and what could have taken place in the past and what would happen in the future. The story narrated by the client is interpreted by the psychologist, who tries to look for revealing statements and projection of the client's hidden emotions onto the characters in the pictures. In the original interpretation method of TAT scores, the examiner first determines who is the "hero", the character of either sex with whom the respondent presumably identifies himself or herself. The content of the stories is then analysed in reference to Murray's list of "needs" and "press". Achievement, affiliation and aggression are the examples of needs whereas "press" refers to environmental forces that may facilitate or interfere with need satisfaction.

However, TAT has been used extensively in the research of personality but the high variations in administration and scoring procedures associated with TAT has made it quite difficult to investigate the psychometric properties of the TAT. Nevertheless, the value of Thematic Apperception Techniques has been confirmed and also the clinical utility of various versions of the TAT both for traditional and specific applications have been established.

3.4.7 The Sentence Completion Tests

Other than these two well-known projective tests, there are some other types of projective tests which include Sentence Completion test, Draw-A-Person test,

and House-Tree-Person Test. In the sentence completion test, verbal material is used. Various incomplete sentences are given to the subject to complete them. Some of the incomplete sentences are like example given below:

I feel very,

I wish my mother....

The subject is asked to complete the sentence the way he/she desires. In the Draw-A-Person and House-Tree-Person, the client is supposed to draw the named items on a white sheet.

3.4.8 Limitations of the Projective Tests

Projective tests are basically subjective in nature and the interpretation of the answers of clients needs deep analytic and artistic traits. Reliability and validity related problems always exist in projective tests. There are no standard grading scales for projective tests. Person's varying mood may decide the person's answer which may vary considerably from one day to another.

Some situational variables like the examiner's physical characteristics are likely to influence the responses on projective techniques. It has also been seen that the changed instructions on the part of examiner also influence the examinee's scores on projective techniques to a great extent.

Finally, in the words of Eysenck (1959), projective techniques can be summarised as those in which the relationship between projective indicators and personality traits have not been demonstrated by any empirical evidences.

A number of evidences show that most studies of projective techniques are guided by methodological flaws and are ill designed.

Projective techniques are not guided by any consistent, meaningful and testable theories.

There is no evidence showing a relationship between global interpretation of projective techniques by experts and psychiatrists.

Generally, projective techniques have poor predictive ability regarding failure or success in various walks of life.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Define Projective techniques as a tool of assessment.

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- 2) Explain various projective techniques in detail.

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- 3) Discuss the classification of projective techniques according to various researchers.

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- 4) Critically evaluate various personality testing procedures.

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3.5 BEHAVIOURAL ASSESSMENT

Behaviorists assume that personality is a composite set of learned responses to stimuli in the environment, they undertake to watch such behaviour as a preferred method to study.

One of the methods is direct observation, that requires the psychologist to observe the client while engaged in ordinary, daily-routine behaviour, at home, school, workplace or any other natural setting.

Among other methods often used by behavioural therapists are rating scales and frequency counts. In a rating scale, either the psychologist or the client assigns a numeric rating or some specific behaviour. On the other hand, in a frequency count, the frequency of certain behaviours in a specified time limit is counted.

Both rating scales and frequency counts are being used by educators in the diagnosis of various behavioural problems like attention deficit disorder etc.

3.5.1 Limitations of Behavioural Assessment

Observer bias is the major limitation of behavioural assessments.

In observational method, there is no control over the external environment and this may lead to interpret the events in fruitless direction.

3.6 PERSONALITY INVENTORIES

Personality inventory is a printed form that consists of a set of statements or questions applying to human behaviour. The list of questions is a standard one and requires specific answers such as “yes”, “no” and “cannot decide”. As the questions demand close-ended answers, these assessments are quite objective in nature.

Cattell's 16PF is one such personality inventory. NEO-PI by Costa and McCrae (2000) has been revised, which is based on the five factor model of personality traits. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is another commonly used inventory.

Introversion, Extraversion (I/E) is a classic dimension that began with Jung and is represented in nearly every personality theory, including the Big Five. The sensing / intuition (S/I), thinking / feeling T/P), Introversion / Extroversion (I/E) and Perceiving/Judging (P/J) are the four dimensions that can differ for each individual resulting in ISTJ, ISTP, ISFP, ISFJ personality types possibly (Briggs and Myers, 1998). For example, an ESTJ is an organiser, practical in nature and energetic in activity, an ESTJ is also a good school administrator.

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1993), the California Psychological Inventory (Gough, 1995) and the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (Cattell, 1994) are some other common personality tests.

3.6.1 The MMPI-2

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Version-II or MMPI-2 is the most common personality inventory. It tests specifically, the abnormality inventory. It tests specifically, the abnormal behaviour patterns in personality. MMPI-2 consists of 567 statements such as “I believe I am being plotted against”. The answers to the statements must be in “true”, “false”, or “cannot say”. It has 10 clinical scales and eight validity scales besides various subscales. Each scale tests a particular kind of behaviour. Ranging from mild to more serious disorders such as schizophrenia and depression, are assessed using this inventory.

Validity scales ascertain that whether the person taking the inventory is responding honestly or not. For example, if one of the statements is “I am contended with whatever I have” and a person responds “true” to that statement, gets into suspicion that the person is lying. If several of validity scale questions are answered in this manner, it clearly depicts that the person is not being honest.

3.6.2 Limitations of Personality Inventories

Personality inventories have certain advantages over projective tests and interviews in the sense that inventories are standardised. Also, observer bias and interpretation bias are not possible due to their objective frame. Inventories are also superior to projective tests in terms of validity and reliability (Anastasi & Orbina, 1997).

However, there are some problems with inventories too. Even though, good at validity end, some people still fake their answers and respond in socially acceptable ways. Also, some people follow a regular course of answering the statements without actually considering them, whereas others may pick statements to answer at random rather than answering each and every statement.

Though, the tasks of personality assessment and measurement is a skilled and sophisticated one, today predictions of behaviour are based on measurement of personality.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Explain the meaning of personality inventories.

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- 2) Discuss the nature of personality inventories.

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- 3) Critically evaluate different personality inventories.

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- 4) Critically evaluate behavioural assessment method.

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3.7 LET US SUM UP

All types of personality tests available possess certain difficulties which are both of theoretical and practical in nature. Every approach comes up with certain advantages and disadvantages. However, personality measurement research has gained enough importance. Still various devices are in the process of improvement.

Some upcoming trends in personality testing include increasing evidence of mutual influence between emotional and cognitive traits. Second, development of a comprehensive model relating to human activity subsuming all sorts of basic research on both emotional and cognitive traits.

3.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What are the advantages and limitations of using interviews as a tool of personality assessment?
 - 2) How can projective tests be used to explore personality?
 - 3) What are the problems encountered in using projective tests?
 - 4) How can behavioural assessments be used in personality testing?
 - 5) What are the different kinds of personality inventories used in personality assessment?
 - 5) How can further research in personality testing prove useful in enriching the existing personality assessment procedures?
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3.9 GLOSSARY

Method	: Procedures of gathering information in any field of study.
Interview	: A method of personality assessment in which the interviewer asks questions to the clients and the client is allowed to answer either in a structured or an unstructured fashion.
Halo effect	: Tendency of an interviewer to allow positive characteristics of a client to influence the assessments of client behaviour and statements.
Projective tests	: Assessment of personality that presents ambiguous visual stimuli to the client and ask the client to respond with whatever comes to his mind.
Rorschach ink blot test	: Projective test that uses 10 ink blots as the ambiguous stimuli.
Thematic Apperception test	: Projective test that uses 20 pictures of persons in ambiguous situations as the visual stimuli.
Personality Inventory	: Paper and pencil tests that consist of statements requiring a specific and standardised response from the person taking the test.

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