

Psychological Examination Techniques in the Context of Digital Transformation

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Abstract

To understand and assess an individual's mental health, the clinical psychologist must master the techniques of psychological examination, because a sound and in-depth psychological examination leads to an accurate and appropriate diagnosis. This, of course, depends on techniques including observation, the interview, tests, and psychological scales, with each technique playing an important and complementary role in the diagnostic process in order to provide effective and successful treatment for psychological disorders. Through this research paper, we address psychological examination, its importance and techniques, and the clinical psychologist in the context of digital transformation.

Keywords: psychological examination, psychological examination techniques, clinical psychologist, digital transformation

Introduction

The profession of the clinical psychologist is one of the most difficult professions because it is connected with the human being, especially the psychological aspect, which in turn affects the physical aspect. Psychological examination represents an important stage in diagnosis, as it searches for signs and symptoms that allow the clinical psychologist to infer the presence of psychological disorders, enabling an accurate diagnosis and an appropriate assessment of the case, together with the proposal of an effective and successful treatment plan.

The art of psychological examination lies in the examiner learning when to remain silent, when to intervene, and when to encourage the examinee to speak, as well as how to gain the examinee's trust above all. This is in addition to complying with the conditions of professional ethics in order to establish credibility. Therefore, the psychologist has a very important role in working to help the individual reach the highest possible degree of personal and social adjustment. In the context of globalization, the issue of reconciling global diagnostic standards with local cultural specificities arises. The psychologist thus faces a dual challenge: understanding the patient's cultural complexities and keeping pace with the effects of the digital environment on behavior. Globalization can contribute to the aggravation or alleviation of disorders through the use of modern technologies.

First: Psychological Examination

Definition

According to C. Chiland, psychological examination is the in-depth examination conducted exclusively by the psychologist. It seeks not only to identify pathological signs in the person's psychological and mental functioning, but also to examine its normal aspects, with the aim of understanding the individual rather than merely diagnosing disorders, through clinical and psychometric techniques and tools, most notably psychological tests (Lebovici, Diatkine, Soulé, 2004).

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Hodges (2004) also defined psychological examination as a method for revealing the individual's mental state and psychological functioning by means of specific tools, "psychological tests"; it is appropriate to clinical work and enables the planning and formulation of purposeful therapeutic interventions.

The "American Psychological Association" (1996) also defines it as "the missing link between problem analysis and the plans established for its treatment."

It is also "a set of technical steps leading to the determination of the extent of personality balance and the degree of disturbance affecting that balance." Thus, these are steps that help identify five variables in the examinee's personality, namely:

- Identifying personality disorders, if present.
- Determining these disorders and classifying them within the table of pathological indicators.
- Determining the origin of these disorders.
- Understanding the dimensions of personality and the degree of its maturity.
- Comparing the correspondence between personality maturity and the examinee's chronological age.

If psychological examination is able to help us determine these variables, then it has helped us reach an objective diagnosis of the disorder (Al-Nabulsi, 1997, p. 141).

2- Definition of the Clinical Psychologist

A clinical psychologist is a person who is academically and professionally qualified to diagnose, study, and treat psychological and behavioral problems. The clinical psychologist provides psychological support through assessment, interviewing, the application of psychological assessment tools, and the design of individualized treatment plans.

Their tasks include:

- Diagnosing, studying, and treating the psychological problems experienced by individuals.
- Assessing mental health using different tools and methods.
- Applying psychological scales and designing specialized treatment plans for each case.
- Providing psychological counseling and psychotherapy.

Daniel Lagache defines the clinical psychologist as "the person concerned with human behavior, relying primarily on observation and in-depth analysis of normal or pathological individual cases; the psychologist seeks to identify the meaning (le sens) or the structure (la structure) of the disorder or illness" (LAGACHE, 2004, pp. 16–17).

3- Errors Made by the Specialist with the Examinee During the Interview

1- Interrupting the examinee while speaking and speaking on their behalf, without allowing the examinee to express what is within them. The examinee should speak more than the specialist, because the latter's role in the interview is to listen attentively and open several avenues that allow the examinee to speak about their psychological and family situation, understand themselves, and recognize their problem.

2- Being distracted from the examinee by side conversations or looking at the watch, which may make the examinee feel that the specialist is not interested in the case and may diminish the specialist's standing in the client's view.

3- Interviewing the client in the presence of others, in which case the examinee may be unable to disclose private matters to the specialist.

4- Embarrassing the examinee with personal questions that may lead to silence and resistance and may result in failure of the interview.

5- The specialist appearing before the examinee in inappropriate clothing, which may undermine the specialist's authority in the examinee's view.

6- Making a rapid and premature judgment about the patient and the nature of the problem.

7- The specialist should not exchange jokes with the patient or be excessively cheerful, but should treat the situation seriously, remain concerned with the client's best interest, and avoid becoming distracted during the interview.

4- Psychological Examination Techniques

Psychological examination techniques refer to the tools used by the clinical psychologist or researcher to collect information about the case in order to achieve an accurate diagnosis and reach the appropriate treatment for that case. For the researcher, these techniques relate to the research objectives and to answering the research questions. These techniques are numerous, including the following:

Observation

Observation is one of the important tools on which the examiner relies to monitor the examinee's behavior across different situations, circumstances, and times. It is also used to study behavior in situations in which other information-gathering tools are employed.

Observation is the first building block on which scientific research is based. It is the first and most important approach to which the researcher resorts, even when choosing a research topic. Observation is considered one of the most important methodological means and tools and cannot be dispensed with. It is "a means used by the clinical researcher in acquiring experience and information, whereby the researcher observes by following a specific method and makes the observations the basis for conscious knowledge or a more precise examination of a particular phenomenon" (Dhouqan Obeidat, translated by Souhaila Abu Al-Samid, 2002, p. 33).

Kohn and Niger consider clinical observation to be the observation of the case and the basis of psychological examination. It is characterized by recording the signs and symptoms displayed by the client, such that organizing them within a syndromic framework makes it possible to determine the type of disorder and name it by referring to classifications such as DSM-4 and CIM-10. It is also an important tool on which the psychological counselor relies to monitor behavior across different situations, circumstances, and times. Clinical observation may also be implicit within the interview.

Clinical Interview

The clinical interview is defined as "a series of questions from which the researcher hopes to obtain answers from the examinee. It is understood, of course, that this method does not take a rigid form; rather, a set of topics necessary for the study is introduced during a conversation that ensures a considerable degree of freedom, while the researcher takes care not to suggest any answers, either directly or indirectly" (Ghanem, 2000, p. 17).

Conditions for a Successful and Effective Interview

- 1- The interview is inquiry, not interrogation.
- 2- Elicit emotions rather than suppressing them or changing their course.
- 3- Observe emotional changes and deal with them cautiously.
- 4- Work to establish a friendly relationship with the examinee without affectation or artificiality.
- 5- Manage periods of silence.
- 6- Manage anxiety and arousal.
- 7- Pay attention to the non-verbal aspects of visual communication (facial expressions, involuntary movements, and gestures).
- 8- Choose the appropriate language that the examinee understands.
- 9- Respect the examinee's reservations, especially concerning distressing or embarrassing topics.
- 10- Prepare for ending the interview.
- 11- End the interview without frustration or negative effects.
- 12- Show understanding and instill hope in a successful solution.
- 13- Summarize and interpret.
- 14- Plan future sessions.
- 15- Understand all circumstances surrounding the patient.

16- Record the interview in writing, audio, and video, if possible, and with the examinee's consent.

Foundations of the Interview

- 1- Listening: careful listening by the specialist to every word spoken by the patient.
- 2- Questions: specific questions often address a specific objective and direct the interview toward a useful direction.
- 3- Motives: unconscious motives are hidden; however, the specialist notices them through the patient's facial expressions, words, and behavioral patterns, which helps in understanding the case at hand.
- 4- Acceptance: accepting the patient as they are. This means accepting attitudes and emotions without blindly agreeing with them; respecting the patient does not conflict with gradually clarifying errors in attitudes and opinions.
- 5- Interview atmosphere: since the outcome of the interview is a shared responsibility between the specialist conducting the interview and the patient, the conversation should take place in an atmosphere of harmony.
- 6- Suggestions: the interview is based on several suggestions, and the specialist plays an important role in confirming their validity or modifying some of their points.

Psychological Tests

Psychological tests are among the most important means used by the clinical psychologist in professional practice to estimate an individual's capacities and for diagnosis, prediction, guidance, and psychological counseling.

Psychological tests emerged as a result of the interaction between society's needs and demands, and they have spread throughout most countries of the world since Wundt (wondt) established the first laboratory of experimental psychology in Germany in 1879.

Definition

A psychological test is an objective standardized measure of a sample of behavior that is carefully tested so that it accurately represents the behavior to be assessed. The examinee is asked to perform a specific task in this situation, and the result is then estimated on the basis of the response and its magnitude (Al-Khatib, Muhammad Ahmad, 2011, p. 27).

Pichot defines psychological tests as a set of standardized experimental situations used as stimuli for behavior. Psychological tests are divided into three groups: personality tests, projective tests, and performance tests.

Examples of Psychological Tests

- 1- General intelligence tests: such as the Stanford–Binet Test, the Wechsler Scale for intelligence, and Piaget's test of mental development.
- 2- Personality measurement tests: the psychopathic deviation scale, depression scale, hysteria scale, and schizophrenia scale.
- 3- Interest and attitude tests: the Strong Vocational Interest Test and the Likert attitude scale.
- 4- Projective tests: the Rorschach and the Thematic Apperception Test.
- 5- Special aptitude tests: mechanical aptitude tests and musical aptitude tests.
- 6- Creativity tests: Guilford tests of creative thinking and Guilford–Christensen fluency tests.
- 7- Achievement tests: oral tests, essay tests, and objective tests.

5- Clinical Examination of the Child and Adolescent

Given the specificity of this stage and the exceptional care it requires, the clinical examination of children and adolescents is conducted in the presence of the parents, especially during the diagnostic interview, so that the examiner can learn the developmental history of the functional structure, including the symptoms.

Before conducting the psychological examination, the clinician refers to a test manual such as that presented by Bernard Jumel (2008). After the examination, the clinician uses classifications specific to this group, such as the

French Classification of Mental Disorders of Children and Adolescents (CFTMA) for 2012, in order to establish the diagnosis.

Among the tests applied to children and adolescents are the following:

Table 01. Main Performance Tests and Personality Tests

Age	Performance Tests	Personality Tests
From 0 to 2 years	Brunet-Lézine psychomotor development scale for early childhood	Autistic Behavior Rating Scale by Lelord and Barthélémy, ECAR, Algerian edition CREAPSY
From 2 to 6 years	Wechsler scale for preschool children	Children's Apperception Test (CAT) by Bellak and the CAT'S version for children suffering from physical illnesses; the Blacky Pictures Test (PN) by Corman, Algerian edition (CREAPSY), using rams instead of pigs in order to avoid the possibility of non-identification with the pig image for religious reasons; Family Apperception Test (FAT); Scéno-Test by Staabs; Family Drawing Test by Ionescu-Jourdan and Lachance
From 6 to 16 years	Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC IV); the New Metric Scale of Intelligence (NEMI 2) by Cognet, Algerian edition (CREAPSY); Differential Scales of Intellectual Efficiency (EDEI-R) by Michèle Borelli-Peyron; Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC II); Rey Complex Figure (FCR) with the modern approach of Philippe Wallon and Claude Mesmin	The same tests mentioned above, together with the following additional tests: the Rorschach test according to the Paris School (V) by Nina Rausch de Traubenberg with Boizou and Janine Beizmann, and John Exner's American Comprehensive System; Murray's Thematic Apperception Test using the University of Paris (V) School approach—the sorting sheet of Vica Shentoub, Rosine Debray, Françoise Brelet, and Catherine Chabert

(Haddadi, 2014, p. 10)

Second: Digital Transformation

The digital age in which we live represents an existential turning point, as cyberspace has shifted from being an auxiliary tool to becoming a distinct environment for human, social, and cultural life. This has moved the individual from the real world to the virtual world and has affected mental and behavioral health and social adjustment, calling for the adoption of a new approach to dealing with this sweeping technological momentum in order to build a psychologically and socially well-adjusted society.

Since an individual's personality is the sum of predispositions, motives, acquisitions, and other outcomes of the interaction between hereditary and environmental factors, technological means have become a space for raising questions and seeking diagnoses for psychological or physical symptoms that appear in the individual, as well as searching for treatment for them.

1- Integrating Artificial Intelligence into Psychotherapy

Potential: supporting diagnosis through the analysis of tone of voice, facial expression, and records; providing virtual assistants for cognitive-behavioral interventions; and offering an environment free from social stigma.

The Three Ethical Safeguards

- 1- Strict legislation to give patients full control over their data.
- 2- Conditional transparency and independent testing of algorithms to detect bias.
- 3- Emphasizing that artificial intelligence is an assistive tool and not a substitute for the therapist's clinical and human judgment.

2- The Issue of Informed Consent in Remote Psychotherapy

Informed consent is a fundamental pillar of ethical practice. It consists of enabling the patient to make a free and informed decision based on a clear understanding of the nature of the treatment, its benefits, risks, and alternatives.

3- Challenges of the Digital Environment

- The absence of non-verbal communication cues (body language, tone of voice, eye contact) makes it difficult to assess the extent to which the patient understands the information or feels psychologically comfortable.
- Increasing technical risks, such as the possibility of data breaches, limits of online confidentiality, and technical failure during sessions.
- Greater difficulty with complex cases (such as post-traumatic stress disorder with a personality disorder), where the patient's understanding and ability to make decisions are affected.

Proposed Solutions and Practices

- Consider informed consent to be a dynamic and continuous process rather than a one-time procedure.
- Adopt a flexible and individualized approach using multiple media (explanatory videos, interactive graphics, simplified texts). Document consent through secure digital methods and renew it periodically when the treatment plan changes.

4- Ethical Governance of Mental Health Data

Data as a Double-Edged Sword

Positive aspect: providing opportunities for a deeper understanding of psychological disorders, developing more accurate diagnostic tools, and designing individualized and continuous therapeutic interventions.

Negative aspect: existential violations of individuals' privacy and their safe psychological space if data are leaked or misused.

Risk of algorithmic bias: training artificial intelligence algorithms on data that do not represent all groups (in terms of race, sex, and social status) leads to inaccurate diagnoses or biases that aggravate health disparities.

Challenges of technologies and applications: the continuous and passive collection of data (such as sleep patterns and heart rate) raises questions about the limits of informed consent and the determination of data ownership (whether it belongs to the patient, the developer, or the service provider).

Basic principles of governance: complete transparency, minimizing the collection of necessary data, strong anonymization, and enabling the patient to control and withdraw their data (Alaa Abd Al-Khaliq, 2025, pp. 197–204).

Conclusion

Despite the importance of the profession of the clinical psychologist and of psychological examination in our society, given the spread of many social phenomena and disorders at both the family and school levels, such as addiction, self-harm behavior, school dropout, unmarried mothers, and others, the clinical psychologist must be familiar with everything new in the field of psychology and keep pace with globalization.

Globalization is a double-edged sword. On the positive side, it helps both the psychologist and the client to diagnose psychological disorders and develop treatment plans. At the same time, it can negatively affect mental health through the emergence of anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, especially with repeated viewing of traumatic scenes, as well as sleep disturbances. Therefore, the psychologist—particularly because the profession requires experience and skill—must deal with digital tools without neglecting the human essence and while taking the environment and cultural diversity into account in order to help the client.

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