

GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICALS IN PSYCHOLOGY

Psychological tools and techniques help to uncover the latent aspects of an individual's behaviour. Thus they aid in understanding, predicting, and controlling the human behaviour, which is the fundamental aim of psychology. Practicals in psychology are intended to provide students with requisite knowledge and skills in psychological tools and techniques to gain an understanding of human behaviour. They attempt to provide hands-on experience to the students with both quantitative tools of measurement, such as standardised psychological tests and qualitative tools, such as interview and observation. Practicals are based on the principle of learning by doing and thus they provide an opportunity to the students to put into practice whatever psychological principles and theories they have learnt in the classroom.

Before undertaking practical work, it is important to ensure that the students have knowledge about various methods of research in psychology and their merits and demerits, the behavioural characteristics being assessed, the nature and uses of psychological tests, and the ethical guidelines so as to avoid their misuse. Keeping in view the syllabus of psychology for Class XII, the students would undertake practicals in psychological testing which would involve using standardised psychological tests in different domains, i.e. intelligence, personality, aptitude, adjustment, attitude, self-concept, and anxiety. They would also prepare one case profile which will include developmental history of the individual (*case*), using both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

I. PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

Practical work in use of psychological tests must be carried out under the guidance and supervision of the teacher. As you have already

studied in Class XI, a psychological test is essentially an objective and standardised measure of a sample of behaviour. In Class XII, you will be learning about the concepts of intelligence and aptitude (Chapter 1), personality and self-concept (Chapter 2), adjustment and anxiety (Chapter 3), and attitude (Chapter 6). You are also required to undertake practical training in order to develop the ability to conduct, score and interpret data generated by the administration of the psychological tests in these areas. In other words, practical training would help you in assessing various dimensions of human behaviour, such as intellectual ability, overall personality profile, specific aptitudes, potential for adjustment, attitudinal profile, self-concept, and level of anxiety.

Test Administration

The accuracy of psychological testing comes from standardisation of testing conditions, materials, procedures, and norms which form an integral part of test development, its administration and interpretation. In this process, it is expected that students will develop skills to establish rapport with the test takers to make them comfortable in a relatively new and different context. **Establishing Rapport** involves the test administrator's efforts to arouse the test takers' interest in the test, elicit their cooperation, and encourage them to respond in a manner appropriate to the objectives of the test. The main objective of establishing rapport is to *motivate* the respondents to follow the instructions as fully and meticulously as they can. It may be noted that the nature of the test (e.g., individual or group, verbal or non-verbal, etc.), and the age and other characteristics of the test takers determine the use of specific techniques for the establishment of rapport. For example, while testing children from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, the test

administrator cannot assume that they will be motivated to do well on academic tasks, therefore, in such conditions, the test administrator makes special efforts to establish rapport to motivate them.

When establishing rapport, the test administrator also informs the test takers about the confidentiality of test data. The test taker is informed about the purpose of the test, and how the test results will be used. The test taker is assured that such results would be kept strictly confidential and be made available to a third person (the other two being test administrator and test taker) only after knowledge and consent of the test taker.

The test administration, therefore, is the task of a professionally trained and skilful person under controlled conditions. The following points may be kept in mind while using a test :

- *Uniform testing conditions* : Basically, the function of psychological tests is to measure differences between individuals or between the responses of the same individual on different occasions. If the scores obtained by different individuals are to be compared, testing conditions must obviously be the same for all. Attention should be given to the selection of a suitable testing room, which should be free from undue noise and distraction. This room should provide adequate lighting, ventilation, seating facilities, etc. for test takers.
- *Standardised instructions* : In order to secure uniformity of testing conditions, the test constructor provides detailed directions for administering the test. Standardised instructions include the exact materials used, time limit (if any), oral instructions to subjects, preliminary demonstrations, ways of handling queries from subjects, and other possible details of the testing situation.
- *Training of test administrator* : The test administrator is the person who administers and scores the test. The importance of a trained test administrator is evident. For instance, if the test

administrator is not adequately qualified, incorrect or inaccurate scoring may render the test scores worthless.

Any standardised test is accompanied by a **manual** which includes the psychometric properties of the test, norms, and references. This gives a clear indication regarding the procedures of the test administration, the scoring methods, and time limits, if any, of the test. The manual also includes instructions to be given to the test takers.

A thorough understanding of the test, the test taker, and the testing conditions is essential for the proper interpretation of test scores. Some information about the test given in the manual like its reliability, validity, norms, etc. are relevant in interpreting any test score. Similarly, some background data about the individual being tested (test taker) are also essential. For example, the same score may be obtained by different individuals for different reasons. Therefore, the conclusions to be drawn from such scores may not be similar. Finally, some consideration must also be given to special factors that may have influenced a particular score, such as unusual testing conditions, temporary emotional or physical state of the subject, the extent of the test taker's previous experience with tests, etc.

The test administrator also provides test takers with appropriate and understandable explanations of test results and of any recommendations stemming from them. It may be noted here that even when a test has been accurately administered, scored, and interpreted, providing merely specific numerical scores (e.g., IQ score, aptitude score, etc.) without the opportunity to discuss it further may be harmful to the test taker.

Procedure for Test Administration

A psychological test can be administered only by a professionally qualified person. A student of psychology at +2 level would not have reached the stage of a professionally qualified person. Therefore, s/he is not fully equipped to interpret the scores of a psychological test

for any conclusive purpose, e.g. selection, prediction, diagnosis, etc. For this purpose, the test administration may be broken into small components/activities. The emphasis should be on learning skills for understanding the concepts on which the test is based, developing rapport with the participant, administration of the test including giving instructions, maintaining optimum testing conditions, taking precautions, and doing scoring of the test.

The following steps and guidelines are suggested to carry out practical work in psychological testing :

1. The teacher would introduce the test to the students along with the manual and the scoring key. The teacher would demonstrate the test to her/his class laying stress upon rapport building, imparting instructions, and the precautions that need to be taken care of. The test may then be taken by the entire class.
2. The students may be instructed not to write their names or to use fictitious names on the response/scoring sheets. The response sheets of the students may be collected by the teacher. In order to maintain confidentiality, it is desirable that the response sheets are reshuffled and/or fictitious numbers are given to each response sheet.
3. One response sheet each may then be given back by the teacher to students in the class for scoring. As per the instructions given in the manual, the students would be guided to do the scoring.
4. The response/scoring sheets should be kept with the teacher to be used later as hypothetical data for providing hands-on experience in interpretation of test scores.
5. The students will then be required to conduct the same test on the selected participants with the teacher examining their rapport building skills, instruction imparting skills, etc.

6. The teacher may use the scores of the hypothetical data and demonstrate how to use the manual to interpret the raw scores with the help of norms.
7. The students are also told how to draw conclusions based on the analysis of data.
8. Based on the above guidelines, the students will be required to prepare a report of the testing undertaken.

Suggested Format for Writing a Psychological Testing Report

1. *Problem/Title of the Study* (e.g., to study the level of adjustment/personality/apptitude of Class X students).
2. *Introduction*
 - Basic Concepts
 - Variables
3. *Method*
 - Subject
 - Name
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Class

(Note : As the data is to be kept confidential, the details of the subject may be given under a fictitious number.)

- Material
 - Brief description of the test (name of the test, author, year, psychometric properties, etc.).
 - Other materials (e.g., stop watch, screen, etc.).
 - Procedure
 - Process of test administration, such as rapport formation, instructions, precautions, actual conduct of test, etc.
 - Scoring of the test
 - Preparation of graph, psychogram, etc. (if required).
4. *Results and Conclusions*
 - Describing subject's scores in terms of norms and drawing conclusions.
 5. *References*
 - List the books, manuals and materials consulted on the topic.

II. CASE PROFILE

Developing a case profile would primarily involve the use of qualitative techniques, such as observation, interview, survey, etc. During the course of preparing a case profile, the students would gain a first-hand experience in the use of these qualitative techniques. The main objective of preparing a case profile is to understand the individual in totality. This would further help in establishing the cause and effect relationship more accurately. The students may prepare a case profile of an individual who has excelled in areas like sports, academics, music, etc. or having special needs like learning disability, autism, Down's syndrome, etc. or those with interpersonal social problems, i.e. poor body image, obesity, temper tantrums, substance abuse, not getting along with peers, withdrawn, etc. They may be encouraged to find out the background information and developmental history of the individual. The students are required to identify the method of inquiry, i.e. interview or observation that they would like to undertake to get complete information of the case. A case profile may be prepared based on the suggested format. The students may be encouraged to reflect on the causes to draw some preliminary conclusions.

Suggested Format for Preparing a Case Profile

A format for case presentation covering broad aspects is given below. It is suggested that the case be developed in a narrative format along the following points:

1. *Introduction*

- A brief introduction of about one or two pages presenting the nature of the problem, its incidence, likely causes, and possible counselling outcomes.
- A half page (brief) summary of the case.

2. *Identification of Data*

- Name (may be fictitious)
- Diagnosed Problem
- Voluntary or Referral (i.e., by whom referred — such as teacher, parent, sibling, etc.)

3. *Case History*

- A paragraph giving age, gender, school attended, class (grade) presently enrolled in, etc.
- Information about socio-economic status (SES) consisting of information about mother's/father's education and occupation, family income, house type, number of members in the family—brothers, sisters and their birth order, adjustment in the family, etc.
- Information about physical health, physical characteristics (e.g., height and weight), any disability/illness (in the past and present), etc.
- Any professional help taken (past and present), giving a brief history of the problem, attitude towards counselling (indicating the motivation to seek help, etc.).
- Recording signs (i.e., what is observed in terms of facial expressions, mannerisms, etc.) and symptoms (i.e., what the subject reports, for example, fears, worry, tension, sleeplessness, etc.).

4. *Concluding Comments*