DEVELOPMENT OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTIVENESS SCALE

Iowa State University

CHARLES A. POE

SUMMARY

The present study provided evidence to support the hypothesized trait of psychological effectiveness. The findings indicated that psychological effectiveness can be assessed psychometrically. The Psychological Effectiveness Scale which was developed was observed to have high internal consistency reliability, and to have discriminated among concepts of personality which represented distinctive levels of effective behavior. The results of the present study indicate that the scale has sufficient preliminary reliability and validity evidence to warrant further study and development.

A. INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been growing interest in the study of normal and optimal personality (e.g., 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25). Though the intensity of interest has been increasing, the focus of the study has been somewhat diffuse as reflected by the numerous concepts utilized: e.g., competence (23), integration (16), positive mental health (8), psychological effectiveness (10), and optimally adjusted person (19). Similarly, a number of variables thought to characterize the normal or optimal personality have been hypothesized: e.g., capacity for interpersonal relationships (17), effective organization of work (3), extension of self (1), inner-directedness (18), and openness to experiences and realistic perceptions (15). The present author, in accord with these previous authors, hypothesized a trait, or traits, of psychological effectiveness. It was further hypothesized that this trait, or

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1 This report is based on the following paper: Poe, C. A., & Matias, R. A comparison of conceptions of normal, optimal, and abnormal personality. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D. C., September, 1969. Financial support for the study was provided by the Student Counseling Service, Iowa State University.

2 The author is now at the Psychology Service, Veterans Administration Center, Hampton, Virginia 23667. Copies of the Psychological Effectiveness Scale may be obtained from the author at this address. Appreciation is expressed to John Menne for statistical consultation.
traits, could be assessed psychometrically: i.e., would meet minimal pre-
liminary criteria of reliability and validity.

B. Method

The technique selected for the measurement of psychological effectiveness
was the semantic differential (13). However, to obtain specific item content
judged more relevant to the measurement of psychological effectiveness than
the original semantic differential items, trait names and behavioral phrases
were selected from the literature on normal and optimal personality; the
sources of the items are illustrated by the selected references at the end of
this article. A second source of items was the responses by psychologists to
incomplete sentence stems (e.g., a mentally healthy person feels . . . , a
person who is normal believes . . . , etc.). From the trait names and behavioral
phrases selected from the literature and responses of psychologists, the
author constructed 50 semantic differential items. This method of scale
construction meets minimal criteria for content validity (2, 12).

Utilizing the 50-item scale, 93 college students were instructed to assign
meanings to selected personality concepts on the nine-point semantic differen-
tial items. Four concepts frequently encountered in the literature—abnormal,
typical, mentally healthy, and ideal person—were selected because of their
representation of different levels of effective functioning. Responses to the
50 items were summed to a single total score for each concept per subject,
and the differences of the total scale scores for the personality concepts were
compared by $t$ tests.

To determine the internal consistency reliability of the items, coefficient
alpha was computed for ratings of each of the four concepts.

To specify in a limited manner the content of the Psychological Effectiveness
Scale, five items which correlated most highly with the total score
ratings for the four personality concepts were selected for tabular presenta-
tion.

C. Results

The means of the 50-item Psychological Effectiveness Scale were com-
puted for the four concepts and are presented in Table 1, along with standard
deviations. All four concept means were significantly different from each
other ($p < .005$). Even by inspection, there appeared to be large differences
between the mean ratings of the concepts.

The internal consistency reliability of the Psychological Effectiveness
Scale was indicated by coefficient alpha which across the four concepts—
TABLE 1
PERSONALITY CONCEPT DIFFERENCES IN PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTIVENESS RATINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Abnormal</th>
<th>Typical</th>
<th>Mentally Healthy</th>
<th>Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meana</td>
<td>160.73</td>
<td>295.13</td>
<td>353.95</td>
<td>395.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>41.43</td>
<td>48.27</td>
<td>48.06</td>
<td>37.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a All means differ significantly with $p < .005$.

abnormal, typical, mentally healthy, and ideal person—was .92, .97, .95, and .95, respectively.

The five most discriminatory items across the four personality concepts are presented in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Mean Concept Rating^2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39. profits from experience</td>
<td>I M T A repeats mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. regrets his decisions</td>
<td>A T M I makes his decisions &quot;work out&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. denies mistakes</td>
<td>A T M I profits from mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. makes good choices</td>
<td>I M T A makes poor choices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^2"A" indicates mean item response for abnormal person, "T" for typical, "M" for mentally healthy, and "I" for ideal.

FIGURE 1
ITEMS MOST DISCRIMINATORY BETWEEN PERSONALITY CONCEPTS
D. DISCUSSION

The 50-item Psychological Effectiveness Scale was observed to have high internal consistency reliability in the rating of the personality concepts—abnormal person, typical person, mentally healthy person, and ideal person. Coefficient alpha was equally high when each of the four concepts was rated. Subsequently, a shorter 40-item form of the Psychological Effectiveness Scale was observed to be highly reliable also: Nowacki and Poe (11) reported that the ratings of concepts of mentally healthy males and females were high (alpha equaled .91). More recently, Poe (14) found alpha to be .91 in self-ratings.

As stated earlier, the method of constructing the Psychological Effectiveness Scale met minimal criteria for content validity (2, 12). Further support for the validity of the Psychological Effectiveness Scale was found in the differential ratings on the Scale, as expected, of the personality concepts, which represented distinctive levels of effective behavior—abnormal, typical, mentally healthy, and ideal personality.

In conclusion, the present study provided preliminary evidence to support the hypothesized trait of psychological effectiveness. The findings indicated that psychological effectiveness can be assessed psychometrically. These preliminary results suggest that the scale has sufficient reliability and validity to warrant further study and development.

REFERENCES


*Psychology Service
Veterans Administration Center
Hampton, Virginia 23667*