The Future of Psychodiagnostic Methods

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

at the last year's IAMPS I presented the paper about the system of psychological selection for various functions and positions in the Army of the Czech Republic. In this year's presentation I would like to partly keep the theme of psychological selections. At the beginning I would therefore like to briefly repeat how do the psychological selections performed in the Military Hospitals look like. We do select the soldiers for various stress duties (soldiers intended for abroad missions, bomb disposal officers, military drivers, guarding duty, etc.) In the initiative phase of the assessment each candidate passes the battery (designed according to the requested duty) of psychodiagnostic methods (IQ tests, stress and achievement tests and the personality questionnaires) administrated in the CBT system. The testing is followed by the diagnostic interview with the psychologist. Based on the results of the psychodiagnostic methods and the interview – the psychologist decides whether to recommend or not to recommend the candidate for the given duty. In case of the achievement or IQ tests we can discuss their prediction validity in the framework of the selection process, but we do not have any doubts about their reliability. But completely different situation comes up with the personality questionnaires. All of us are familiar with the fact that for good psychological selection process we must (at least to some level) describe the personality of our clients. And we have to do it quickly, because – in contrast to the clinical psychology practice – in this case our time is limited very considerably. Even in the very construction of the personality questionnaires the authors count with the fact that the questionnaires do not recognize what kind of human being our client is, but how he(she) sees or wants to see himself (herself). For this reason, in order to indicate possibly distorted results, various lie-scores are inserted into the questionnaires. This is unfortunately not very helpful – we need to have the valid data and not to know that the ones we have are useless. In the military selection practice we do face almost entirely people who do not visit the psychologist in order to get any help. On contrary we see people who try

to open themselves as little as possible and to "pass" the assessment with as few troubles as possible. They do not answer our questionnaires according to the reality, but according to what they think we would like to hear. I do not know what are your experiences from your workplaces, but we see the distorted questionnaires very often. For this reason we have learned to take this into the account while interpreting the results.

However, till now we understood these phenomenons as the given reality and have not tried to verify this empiric experience through the experiment. In order to prove it – and because of this presentation as well – we decided to perform a little experiment which should tell us how serious the mentioned distortion is. For the experimental purposes we intended to choose some originally foreign questionnaire (just for the case that somebody of you would like to perform such a verification in his (her) conditions), but officially translated into Czech language and with the norms standardized for the Czech population. For all these reasons we have chosen the NEO – FFI. We use it currently within our test batteries, it is internationally known and it had been standardized for our population. However, for the purposes of the experiment we have modified the way of its administration and we have changed the instruction. The assessed people were told that this particular method did not belong to he testing, but it was a part of experiment and the results would not come to their files. Moreover, they were told not to answer according the reality, but according to their image about the ideal themselves – so that the results would tell what they wanted to be like. Our original hypothesis assumed that there would be no differences between the data gained during the "normal" and experimental administrations. So we assessed group of 100 people and as the control group we randomly chosen from our database 430 people assessed under standard conditions.

Here is the descriptive statistics:

Neuroticism:

	Standard	Experiment
Mean	23,36	28,22
SD	6,08	7,46

Extraversion:

	Standard	Experiment
Mean	46,90	43,32
SD	6,02	7,93

Openness:

	Standard	Experiment
Mean	33,15	33,88
SD	5,1	4,59

Agreeableness:

	standard	Experiment
Mean	48	41,94
SD	4,93	7,00

Conscientiousness:

	standard	Experiment
Mean	44,29	40,57
SD	4,20	7,77

Both of the data groups were compared using the t-test. The result can be found in the following table:

	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
t-test	6,038**	4,215**	1,388	8,161**	4,618**

From the above mentioned statistical calculations we can assume that our presumption about no significant differences between the data gained through standard and experimental procedures was not correct. There are the significant differences between both groups, which finding is for our practice even worse. It shows, that the rate of dissimulative distortion in considerably higher than we thought. This fact is even more evident if we compare the gained data with the official norms standardized for the Czech population:
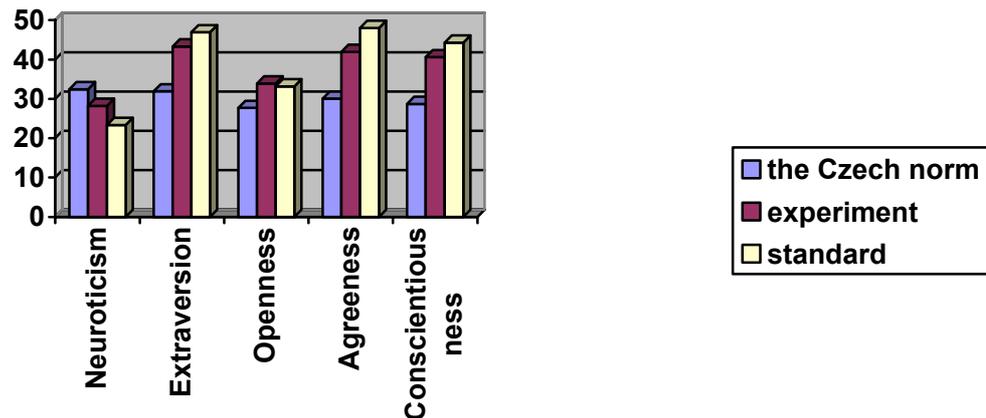
Based on these results we can assume that also the other questionnaire methods used in our selection practice will be distorted by our clients in the same way.

So, at this point I have finally reached the keystone of my presentation – the future of the psychodiagnostic methods. For the psychological selections purposes (in the framework of armed forces) we do need to reliably and rapidly recognize the personality characteristics of the assessed people. It seems that the most available and at the same time easiest methods – the questionnaires are not also the most appropriate tools. It is obvious that it is necessary to develop the completely new methods, much more robust and reliable.

These methods should be:
- Administrated in CBT systems (the computer enables us to describe the client's behavior within the framework of the test)
- adaptive (their scenario should change according to the assessed person achievement)
- partly demanding
- projective (so that the assessed person would not be able to distort the results easily)
- perhaps based on the principle similar to the one of today's computer strategy games.

I am conscious of the fact that these suggestions are (at least for the present) only preliminary and vague. However, according to my opinion, the development of such a methods is above the possibilities of the individual and it requires a

team cooperation. Maybe some of you have already thought about similar project. I would like to initiate the establishment of something like the workgroup, which would consider the construction of such a methods as its goal. Unfortunately this is not the grant program proposal, at this moment I speak only about the vision which I hope will come to the reality.