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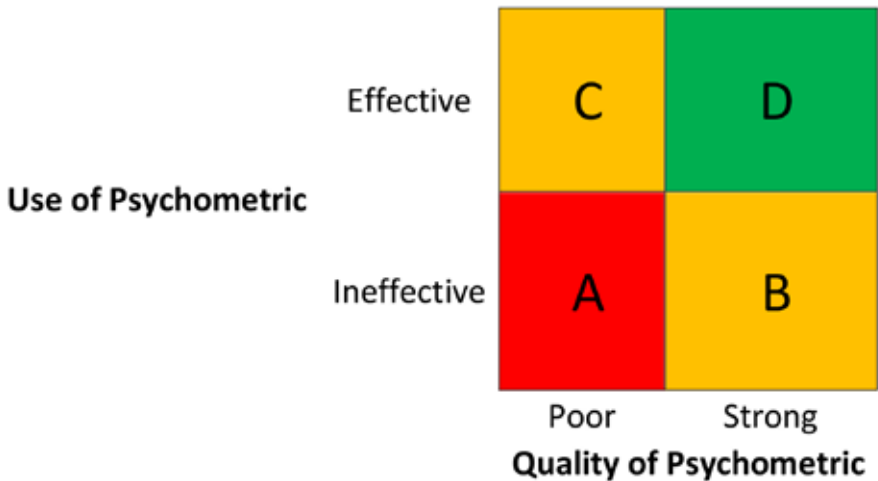
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What to consider when using psychometrics

Simon Toms

DISCUSSIONS on the topic of psychometrics have typically focused upon the quality of the tools themselves, yet often fail to consider the context of the process or role of the consultant. This blog piece is designed to address this oversight by providing a brief overview of effective psychometric usage using a simple model.



A – Poor quality of psychometric/ineffective use of psychometric

Oh dear! A recipe for trouble, and more likely to do harm than good. Using a low-quality psychometric in an ineffective manner could influence important decisions with flawed evidence and undermine the confidence of future clients. Often a symptom of poor training and/or understanding in psychometrics from all involved, this situation may also arise from unrealistic expectations from the client *and* the consultant.

B – Strong quality of psychometric/ineffective use of psychometric

A psychometric assessment’s reliability and validity are essential components of successful implementation, but sole focus upon these areas can lead to blind spots when recognising pitfalls in implementation.

The assessment may be solid, but its strengths may be oversold or under-utilised. It may have been billed as ‘the answer to all problems’ when it would be better suited to

use in combination with other tools and/or methods. The desire to cut costs or meet tight deadlines may also be a factor, as well as a consultant's over-reliance on a specific assessment. Even if the tool provides valuable insight, poor implementation may prevent this from being communicated or acted upon.

C – Poor quality of psychometric/effective use of psychometric

If you ask Lewis Hamilton to drive round a track in a mid-range SUV, he will demonstrate amazing skill, but you'd still want him in a Formula One car. In the case of skilled consultants, flawed psychometrics can still generate valuable insight, but results will always be hampered by low validity/reliability of the tool. Despite these limitations, lesser-quality psychometrics can still generate interesting and useful discussions between individuals on the topic of interpersonal differences, resulting in greater awareness of the self and colleagues.

D – Strong quality of psychometric/effective use of psychometric

The sweet spot! Strengths of the psychometric are exploited, whilst context-specific weaknesses of the tool are identified, clarified, and offset when required. Psychometric properties of the tool are solid, and expectations of its implementation are realistic. The tool sits within a clear process that draws upon other tools and methods as and when appropriate. Lessons that emerge from use of the tool are communicated, and subsequent actions are fulfilled and reviewed.

Points to consider:

- Does the publisher provide an accessible technical manual to the public?
- Has the assessment been independently reviewed by the British Psychological Society's Psychological Testing Centre?
- Does the publisher provide content to help guide use and understand the assessment's psychometric properties and applications?
- Does the distributor train users and conduct consultancy using the psychometric they are selling?