

In presenting the psychological factors and techniques in selection we shall limit ourselves to general aspects and illustrative examples.

1. Interview

The interview will always remain an important part of employment procedures. The interview technique²⁵ serves particularly well in the evaluation of those personality traits for which the present tests and inventories are inadequate. The traditional employment interview was apt to be a disconnected discussion, without direction and definite content. The procedure differed from interviewer to interviewer and resulted in a general, vague impression of the candidate. Such circumstances considerably impeded a systematic statistical validation of this selection technique.

With only a short time available for individual interviews, attempts have been made to increase the efficiency of this widely used selective procedure. Although the "free" or undirected interview may be essential for interviewing men for positions involving social contacts and requiring verbal facility, for most jobs some degree of standardization of the interview is desirable. The interview usually covers three distinct areas: (1) personal history, including family background, education, and work experience; (2) job knowledge; and (3) personality characteristics, in the broad sense, from appearance and manner to intelligence and leadership capacity.

In order to overcome some of the inadequacies of the traditional employment interviews, Hovland and Wonderlic²⁶ developed a set of standardized interview questions, the responses to which are evaluated by means of ratings that add up to give a total score. The items are marked "plus" when considered as indicating success on the job and "minus" when prognosticating failure. The Diagnostic Interviewer's Guide, as the instrument is referred to by its authors, covers the following four points:

(1) Work history — employment stability, job satisfaction, ability to comprehend the assigned tasks, ability to profit by previous work experience. (2) Family history and social, economic, and educational background. (3) Social history — ability to get along with people, avocational interests. (4) Personal history — life goals, reasons for applying for this particular job.

When twenty-three individuals were interviewed locally by one interviewer and subsequently at the headquarters of the company by another interviewer, the total scores obtained in the two interviews correlated 0.71. As the interview was given only to applicants who had passed a preliminary interview and the psychological tests, the range of scores is restricted and thus the correlation coefficient between the two sets of scores reduced. In validating the instrument, stability on the job was used as the criterion of job success. In a group of 100 individuals who were still on the job a year after their interview the average score was 24.6; in a group of 100 employees who were hired and dismissed within a year the average score was

²⁵ W. V. Bingham and B. V. Moore, *How to Interview*. Harper, New York, 1941.

²⁶ C. I. Hovland and E. F. Wonderlic, *J. Applied Psychol.*, 23, 537 (1939).

24.3. The difference is statistically significant. The dismissed group had a lower average score in each of the four subsections. The differences in the category of work history were most marked.

In another group of 300 hired individuals a progressive decrease in the percentage of dismissals with increasing scores was observed (see Fig. 1). The company in which the instrument was developed and validated was a large personal loan organization. The jobs involved to a large degree contacts with the public, a situation in which the use of employment interviews may be particularly fruitful.

Whenever possible, the interview should be supplemented by measurements of the applicant's knowledge of the job, of the proficiency of men with previous specific training, and of work capacities—intellective, sensory, motor, emotional—of men without experience with work on which they are hired.

2. Tests

Job knowledge and work proficiency. Among the measures of occupational proficiency of men doing skilled (and some semiskilled) work an important place is occupied by the standardized oral questions determining the applicant's trade knowledge. Most systematic work in this area has been done by the Worker Analysis Section under the Occupational Research Program of the United States Employment Service in their attempts to develop better means for estimating the essential characteristics of job applicants.²⁷

Standardized objective tests of work proficiency were developed only for a limited number of jobs, particularly clerical. Such tests, for example, the tests of typing proficiency, can be used not only as an aid for selecting new employees from among a larger number of applicants, but also in the process of training and in the upgrading of the workers who are already on the job and are considered for more responsible typing work.

An attempt to construct a realistic test of typing ability that could be used for the different purposes just mentioned has been made by Jurgensen.²⁸ The current typing tests, measuring the speed and accuracy of copying a printed text, appeared to fail to predict job success satisfactorily. Reasons for this failure were seen in the fact that the test situation was too abstract and that a number of factors essential in the actual job of typing were omitted, such as following instructions, noting and correcting errors, typing of different kinds of materials, as well as the mechanics of

²⁷ H. F. Osborne, in *Occupational Counseling Techniques*. American Book, New York 1940.

²⁸ C. E. Jurgensen, *Educ. Psychol. Measurement*, 2, 409 (1942).

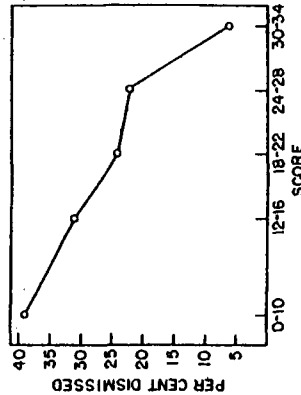


Fig. 1. Scores in a standardized pre-employment interview and the labor turnover. Turnover was expressed as percentage of individuals who were dismissed within a year.