



The EPPP: An Examination of Criterion Validity

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Background

- The Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP) is maintained by the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) Examination Committee, which is a non-profit association comprised of psychology licensing boards in the United States and Canada.
- EPPP test development has focused extensively on content validity, but concern has been raised that there may be a lack of attention to the need for broader validation (Callahan et al., 2020; Sharpless & Barber, 2009).
- As described by the American Educational Research Association (2014), "Sound testing practice involves careful monitoring of all aspects of the assessment process and appropriate action when needed to prevent undue disadvantages or advantages for some candidates caused by factors unrelated to the construct being assessed" (p. 169).

Aim

The current study sought to examine whether candidates' scores on the EPPP are systematically influenced by non-competency factors such as demographics or generalized test-taking abilities.

Hypotheses

1. Pre-internship competency, as documented by ratings on the Practicum Evaluation Form (PEF), will be significantly positively correlated with EPPP scores.
2. Competency ratings at the end of internship, as documented by ratings on the Internship Evaluation Form (IEF), will be significantly positively correlated with EPPP scores.
3. Early career post-licensure self-appraisals of competency will be significantly positively correlated with EPPP scores.
4. EPPP scores will be more strongly associated with measures of emotional intelligence and ratings of professional competencies than measures of more general neurocognitive functioning (nonverbal reasoning skills, working memory, attention, task switching ability, cognitive flexibility, verbal memory, and episodic memory).

Methods and Materials

Participants: Early career alumni of a doctoral program in clinical psychology ($N = 36$).

Measures: In addition to demographic information, the following measures were obtained:

- EPPP scores (scale of 200 to 800)
- Theoretically Convergent Measures:
 - Archival Practicum Evaluation Form (PEF) ratings of competency by doctoral practicum supervisors, Intern Evaluation Form (IEF) ratings of competency from internship supervisors, & post-licensure self-appraisals of competency.
 - Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) scores.
- Theoretically Discriminant Measures
 - Scores on the following TMB Neuropsychology Toolkit subtests: Matrix Reasoning (abstract reasoning), Digit Span (span of apprehension/working memory), Trail Making (processing speed/working memory) and Verbal Paired Associates (memory)
 - Openness to Experience as measured by the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP).
- Costs associated with use of the study measures were funded via a gift from the Lupe Murchison Foundation to the second author.

Results

- EPPP scores were significantly associated with ethnicity, with White individuals scoring higher than all others.
- Emotional intelligence and PEF ratings were found to be significantly related, as expected of convergent measures of competency.
- However, neither competency evaluations nor emotional intelligence scores were significantly associated with EPPP scores.

- Performance on neurocognitive measures, which are known to influence broad and general test-tasking skill, were significantly positively correlated EPPP scores.

Correlation Coefficients Among EPPP scores and TMB Measures

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. EPPP Scores	640.39	67.47	--					
2. Matrix Reasoning	54.97	5.06	.52**	--				
3. Trail Making Test A	55.17	4.79	.37*	.33*	--			
4. Trail Making Test B	55.24	8.72	.33*	.39*	.62**	--		
5. Digit Span Forward	54.57	8.73	-.05	.09	.14	.23	--	
6. Digit Span Backward	55.55	8.90	.28	.49**	.09	.36*	.46**	--
7. Verbal Paired Associates	52.19	7.98	.36*	.42*	.21	.22	.07	.47**

Note: M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

- The strength of association between EPPP scores and discriminant measures was found to be greater than the associations between EPPP scores and convergent measures.

Conclusions

- Taken together, results suggest race/ethnicity and general test taking abilities may be more strongly associated with EPPP scores than profession-salient abilities and competencies.
- The current study challenges the relevance of the EPPP to the professional practice of psychology. Findings offer evidence that the EPPP exhibits low discriminant validity, as indicated by significant positive relationship to multiple neurocognitive tests, and low convergent validity, as indicated by lack of correlation with competency ratings.
- Further validation of the EPPP is necessary. Ecological validity (e.g., client outcomes and client attrition) may be particularly important given the purpose of the exam is protection of the public from incompetent care.
- The study highlights the need for better licensure exam development processes to uphold the principles of the field and thwart diversity constriction in the workforce.

References & Contact Information

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