

VALIDATION OF THE ZULLIGER TEST IN T.A.

Validation of the Zulliger Test  
with Transactional Analysis as  
guiding approach

### **Abstract**

The main objective of this work is to study the validity of the Zulliger Test, using the Transactional Analysis as theoretical approach. Thirty-three patients, undergoing Transaction Analysis therapy, were asked to answer the Zulliger Test collectively applied. The reports were independently and blindly analysed by two specialists in the test. The results obtained in the evaluation of the Zulliger test were compared with the patients' files provided by their psychotherapist with the patients' permission. The data strongly supports the validity of the Zulliger test in the context of Transactional Analysis. The significance level is in the range of 1 to 5%, according to the different items. The study also provides evidence about two theoretical formulations: the so-called basic driver and defensive life position.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this work is the revalidation, in the context of the Transactional Analysis, of the Zulliger prospective test, or Z-test. By publishing it through the "Transactional Analysis Journal" we are aware that our reader has some degree of education in the area of psychology, but even so we consider of interest to review some fundamental notions on the matter.

What does "to validate a test" mean? It means to check if it is valid, i.e. if it allows to evaluate what it is proposed to. To reach this purpose, some scientific procedures and methodologies are necessary. It is not enough, for example, to say that the result of a personality test according to which Mary's personality has such and such characteristics was considered by Mary as OK, because it describes her well. This phenomenon, known as the "Barnum Effect" (reference to the American illusionist P.T. Barnum), occurs frequently with several types of fortune tellers and their "clients". After some vague affirmations, applied to different circumstances and attributable to dozens of people ("You have had problems"; "There will be changes in your life"; "You have recently had a great disappointment" etc..) the clients, very surprised, consider that they are "faithfully described". So, validate means getting a positive answer to the question: does this test really allow measuring or evaluating what it is said to measure or to evaluate?

Now let us come back to our proposal: validation of the Zullinger test, a projective test. And what are projective tests? Projective tests are those on which the individuals are invited to "project" their personality, with personal answers. There are not any "right" or "wrong" answers

as it happens in an objective test. For example, in a test prepared to evaluate the abstract reasoning capacity, as the Numerical Series Test of the Cepa battery of tests (a Brazilian test), in an item as the following one, where it is asked to complete the sequence :

2 - 4 - 6 - 8 - ... - ...

the only right answers would be "10" and "12".

The Zulliger test was developed by Hans Zulliger, based on the Rorschach test, one of the most well known projective tests and consists in showing to the client three standard sheets on which there are spots (the Rorschach test uses ten sheets). The clients are asked to describe what they see, being supposed that by this way they "project themselves", or in other words they project contents of their psyche. It is then asked (Inquiry), which reasons took them to see that images in this or that area of the spots. The results are put together by using the same methodology applied to the Rorschach test, from which the Z-test is a kind of abbreviation.

As known, one of the most important objections to the projective tests refers to the relatively weak data applied to its validation. A great part of the validation studies apply some kind of criterion - normally a second instrument - to evaluate the personality, and finally both results are compared. About this, several questions have arisen which, by their theoretical character, will not be considered herein. It is enough to remember that the problem will not be solved only by saying that the projective test means something else like a "behavior sample" or a "clinical technique" ("Buros", McArthur, Rabin and Reznikoff, 1972). Such position creates a kind of "faithful group" or "devoted people" that confirm their faith and support each other, as commented by Buros ("Buros", Weiner, 1977).

Therefore we would rather prefer to follow Klopfer and his collaborators (1956) when they say that the validation research cannot be completely independent of the basic research that has the personality as the object of its study. So, the validation of the projective tests may be

considered as a continuous process of changes and reformulations of the theory itself, which will be reflected, by its turn, on the used technique.

Starting from these considerations on the importance and difficulties of validating projective tests, we have found out that the more relevant questions to be arisen here with respect to the Z-test are the following: could the Z-test be interpreted by using the Transactional Analysis as a theoretical guideline? Would the results of the protocols (a protocol is a set of answers given by an individual to a test) be valid when interpreted this way? Which constructs and hypothesis would mean a good validity index ? Which of them must be reformulated or even abandoned by the Z-test?

There is another relevant aspect to be discussed: we refer to the theoretical line through which the results of the Z-test and of the Rorschach test are "translated". Another way of presenting this question is : to which theoretical line do the concepts used by these tests belong? The first question send us back to the psychoanalysis, which is the proposal of these authors, but a more detailed examination shows that there are some notions, not belonging to the psychoanalysis, that were not well defined by the authors of the two tests (Zulliger and Rorschach) nor – to our knowledge - by other researchers.

Going through the material related to the validation of the Z-test, we have found out that the author of the test himself, considering the similarity of his instrument with the Rorschach, did not consider necessary to check the basic interpretative hypotheses. Zulliger has simply applied his test collectively, comparing then the results with the collective results of the Rorschach test and of other tests also collectively applied. Based on these data, he concluded that the results of the tests were in agreement with each other and, therefore, the Zulliger test should be valid.

Salomon (1957) compared, by its turn, the Z-test, under its individual form, with the results obtained by applying the Rorschach and the Bero's test (a type of test parallel to the

Rorschach's test) to a group of children, and found some evidences favorable to the validity of the Z-test. Steiner (we mean the German author W.Steiner, not Claude Steiner, the well known specialist in Transactional Analysis) presented opposite conclusions in 1966, after relating the Z-test to three other ones (Koch, MMPI and Maudsley Medical Questionnaire).

Due to the very few validation studies for the Z-test, the importance of performing these studies becomes apparent and it seems highly convenient to us to adopt a complete interpretation line, coherent on itself, which, by its turn, could be improved by the use of the test. Finally, we want to remember that application and interpretation of projective psychological tests are only allowed to psychologists, but it is always possible to call one of them when projective tests are to be applied.

## **2. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### **2.1. The sample**

At the beginning our sample included 48 patients submitted to psychotherapy using the Transactional Analysis approach. These patients met once a month, for sixteen months, to undergo a more intensive psychological work. This consisted of a workshop with life experiences, oriented by a main therapist and two to six auxiliary ones. All life experiences included individual or collective feedback, mainly by the main therapist.

Due to experimental mortality (loss of subjects during the experiment), caused mainly by the fact that some patients have not taken all the tests or did it precariously, thus turning impossible the evaluation of their protocols, the sample was reduced to 33 subjects, on whose protocols the Zulliger test validation was finally performed.

It should be highlighted that all subjects were informed about the research and gave their permission to our use of their respective data during the whole time of this research.

## **2.2. Z -Test Application Procedures**

The Z-test was collectively applied, by projecting three slides on a white screen, using the standard instructions proposed by Canivet and Zulliger. During the inquiry, the following three key-questions were presented: "Where did you see the figure?" "Why did you see it, or in other words, which characteristics of the image led you to this answer?" and "How does the figure look?" or – "What is the figure like?" The aim of this last question is to know if the subject has seen any movement – if he has seen a moving figure or any movement in any part of it. The researchers' notes on the subjects' comments about the test were as usual included in two sheets of paper, one of them being specifically used for the localization of the answers.

## **2.3. Obtaining the Psychotherapy Report**

A list of the main personality dimensions was organized from the point of view of the Transactional Analysis and presented to the therapist responsible for the patients, as follows:

- Ego states (Parent, Adult, Child, subdivisions of the Parent and Child ego states, contamination and exclusion),
- Life Positions
- Drivers
- Psychological Games and roles on the Drama Triangle
- Scripts, main injunctions, and associated script curses.

The cure criteria (intimacy, flexibility and spontaneity) were examined together with the therapist. We have also tried to validate an item that is traditionally considered in Zulliger's evaluation: the Vital Tonus. Finally, diagnosis was investigated under its classical meaning.

Based on these elements, the therapist delivered a psychological profile of each one of the patients, and these descriptions were discussed with the auxiliary therapists, aiming at a higher reliability of the psychotherapeutic report.

#### **2.4. Z -Test Validation Procedures**

The transactional analyst Dr. Alberto Luís da Rocha Tavares, M.D., was contacted by the other two authors of this paper, to whom he gave support for carrying on the research. Dr. Tavares also produced the data about his patients, with their previous permission. The literature related to the Rorschach and Zulliger's psycho-diagnosis was reviewed, including Klopfer ( with Davidson,1977 and with Kelly, 1974), Adrados (1975, 1982), Exner (1980), Vaz (1986), Zulliger and Salomon (1970) and Bohm (1973) works. From this first review, an initial transposition of the test concepts to the Transactional Analysis terminology was reached. This transposition was theoretically discussed by the main therapist, Dr. Tavares, the auxiliary therapists and the other researchers. A preliminary scheme was then prepared to translate the Zulliger Test into the Transactional Analysis guidelines and language. The protocols that were eliminated by experimental mortality due to the already presented reasons were blindly corrected, according to this preliminary scheme. They were then compared with the report delivered by the psychotherapist (Dr. Tavares). Starting from this pilot study, the inadequate concepts and criteria were reformulated.

With the final scheme already in our hands for the correction of the Z-test, the remaining protocols were then corrected by using the traditional way: the answers were divided into categories and the quantitative and qualitative (including sequence and content) analyses were performed. Exner's proposal was adopted aiming at the possible additional data about the personality of the individuals. It is convenient to emphasize that the codification of the subjects' answers to the Z-test was performed independently by two specialists, in order to assure its reliability. A consensus was tried, in case of disagreements among the specialists. In certain cases a third opinion was needed. Besides that, from the division into categories until the elaboration of the final report, the whole Z-test evaluation process was blindly performed, i.e.,

without any kind of information about the tested subjects, in order to avoid possible undesirable biases.

Besides the correction according to traditional rules, the 33 remaining protocols were evaluated according to the above mentioned final scheme, using the Transactional Analysis theory as guideline. These evaluations were compared with the reports delivered by the therapist according to the theoretical line of the Transactional Analysis, with the following results.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

. The results obtained in the Z-test validation are shown in Table 1 below, where the investigated concepts are discriminated. It is also shown the percentage of agreement between the two reports - the Zulliger and Psychotherapist reports - with respect to each one of these concepts.

Table 1: Validity of Transactional Analysis Concepts Obtained by the Z-test (%)

<b>CONCEPT</b>		<b>VALIDITY RATE</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL</b>
Ego States	Parent	67	S. 5%
	Adult	97	S.1%
	Adapted Child	90	S.1%
	Free Child	90	S.1%
	Little professor	93	S.1%
Drivers	Basic	77	S.5%
	Apparent	77	S.5%
Life Position		93	S.1%
Cure Criteria	Intimacy	90	S.1%
	Flexibility	93	S.1%
	Spontaneity	83	S.5%
Vital Tonus		71	S.5%
Diagnosis		51	n.S

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We can observe a good degree of agreement between the evaluations of the therapist and those obtained by the Zulliger test in the characterization of several concepts of the Transactional

Analysis theory. In the concepts of Adult, Adapted Child, Free Child, Little Professor, Life Position, Intimacy, Flexibility and Spontaneity, the obtained rate of validity is very high (over 80%) showing that these are the best elements detected by the test. The concepts Drivers and Vital Tonus presented also a good validity rate (over 70%).

Taking into account the complexity of the study of the Drivers, in number of 5 and with a specific ordering for each individual, we can consider that the test identifies the drivers in a very adequate manner. About Drivers we have two considerations which we think will help to clarify the discussion of the obtained data.

We should firstly emphasize that the Drivers "Hurry Up" and "Try Hard", being highly kinetic, are not easy to identify in collectively applied tests, as it was the case of the Z-test, because the use of this strategy causes the loss of important aspects related to the subjects' verbal and non-verbal behavior. The fact that the test apparently captures the Basic Driver, considered the most important of all as long as it is directly linked to the script, to the basic injunction and to the script curse, is something to which special attention should be given.

The concept of Basic Driver was developed by Dr Alberto Luís da Rocha Tavares, based on his clinical experience. This author proposed that the third driver, in decreasing order of appearance, would be the basic, the one around which the others gravitate. As long as it is the one causing the individuals to go on with their scripts and to intensify their pathologies, it would be of course of the greatest interest, if it could be precociously detected by the therapist. The quick diagnosis (through the Z-test) of the Basic Driver makes it possible to accelerate the therapy and to avoid the evolution of the script.

The importance of this fact is increased by the difficulty found by the therapist to identify the Basic Driver. At this point we would like to emphasize that the most important fact to be

considered, when preparing a psycho-diagnosis, is the access to subjacent data, like the Basic Driver, the basic life position etc.

Also, with respect to the identification of the deepest elements that compose the structure and the dynamics of the personality, another point called the attention of the researchers. This point was found during this work showing again the link between theory and research. We observed that it frequently occurs in the same individual some data that indicate the presence of two life positions. This phenomenon can be explained as long as we accept the hypothesis - already proposed by Berne - that life positions +/- and -/+ are, in reality, defensive with respect to the position -/- (nihilist). This last one would correspond to the primary pain due to the lack of satisfaction of the elementary needs – a satisfaction that depends on the parents. The data support the hypothesis that the life position shown by the individual is reactive to the position -/-. The position -/- (linked to the primal pain) would conduct to a defense position, according to the reaction of the individual, who can surge against (position +/-) or submit to (position -/+) his or her parents' messages.

About the concepts of Parent and Diagnosis, even with validity indexes higher than 50%, it seems that transposition from the Transactional Analysis context to the Zulliger context was not successful. It is possible that the Zulliger test does not evaluate adequately the concept of parent or that the elements chosen to characterize it have not been selected adequately.

About the traditional diagnosis, we consider this element of lower importance to the psychological evaluation of the patients, as it is only a label applied to them. Furthermore, most of the studies about validation of the diagnosis through Rorschach and Zulliger tests, were not very conclusive, showing a general difficulty of validating this aspect.

It was also verified that the Zulliger test captures very well some valuable elements in the context of the Transactional Analysis, making easier the action of the psychotherapy.

We understand that the most important result obtained from this research is that it is possible to validate the Zulliger test - a traditionally used instrument that explores the deepest aspects of the personality - in the context of the Transactional Analysis. The advantage of applying this theoretical approach is that the psychological evaluation based on the Transactional Analysis qualifies the available resources of the personality instead of studying only the negative part of the individual. To this conclusion we have the support of Isabel Adrados who, in her work *Differential Psycho-Diagnosis Manual* (1980), refers to the Transactional Analysis with the following words:

.. this theory, with all its premises and consequences, seems to us to be every day more valid, specially if compared with the Rorschach's technique, i.e., we can perfectly explain a great part of the Rorschach's concepts and variables, dynamically, by using the principles, the premises and the theory of the Transactional Analysis (p.34) .

In this, Adrados agrees with Claude Steiner, disciple and follower of Eric Berne, and condemns the diagnosis and the therapy performed by searching what is wrong in the person "instead of starting from a more healthy position based on what is OK in the person" (Adrados, p.34)

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