

UNCONTROLLED VS. CONTROLLED ADMINISTRATION OF THE SSHA

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ABSTRACT. A group of 250 undergraduate and graduate students at St. Mary's University participated in an investigation of the practicability of administering the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (Brown & Holtzman, 1967), under uncontrolled conditions. A control group of 122 students completed the SSHA under standard testing conditions and an experimental group of 128 students was given the testing packet and asked to return it upon completion. No significant difference was found between the SSHA scores of the control group and the 48 experimental group members who returned completed forms. It is suggested that the SSHA may be used with some confidence under conditions where it is inconvenient to administer it in the usual manner.

RESUMEN. Un grupo de 250 estudiantes universitarios de St. Mary's University participaron en una investigación sobre la practicabilidad de administrar el Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (Brown & Holtzman, 1967) bajo condiciones no controladas. Un grupo control de 122 estudiantes completaron el SSHA bajo condiciones de pruebas standard y un grupo experimental de 128 estudiantes se les entregaron las pruebas y se les suplico que las devolviesen al completarlas. No se encontró diferencia significante entre los resultados del SSHA en el grupo control y de los 48 miembros del grupo experimental que devolvieron las formas completas. Se opina que el SSHA puede usarse con cierta confianza cuando sea inconveniente administrarlo en la manera standard.

The Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (Brown & Holtzmann, 1967) has been rigorously standardized for administration under controlled conditions. The college level version (SSHA, Form C) is a 100-item questionnaire requiring approximately 30 to 45 minutes for completion by the average college student. In addition to the full scale score, SO, the SSHA yields part- or sub-scale scores for Delay Avoidance (DA), Work Methods (WM), Teacher Approval (TA), and Education Acceptance (EA).

As an expedient, one investigator (Mote, 1970) allowed some subjects to complete the SSHA under uncontrolled conditions. The question arose as to whether or not there were significant differences in SSHA scores between the controlled and uncontrolled administrations of the test. The present investigation was undertaken in order to make that determination.

METHOD

Subjects

A group of 250 undergraduate and graduate students at St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas participated as subjects,

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with 122 completing the SSHA under controlled conditions. Of the 128 students given the testing packet and asked to return it at their own convenience, 48 completed and returned all materials. No record was made of those returning partially completed packets; neither was it recorded which instruments were omitted.

Measuring Instruments

Each subject was asked to complete, in addition to the SSHA, the Trait Anxiety portion of the Spielberger (1969) State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), the Facilitating Anxiety (AAT+) and Debilitating Anxiety (AAT-) scales of the Achievement Anxiety Test (Alpert & Haber, 1960), and a scale designed to measure the student's attitude toward grades (DPG) (Mote, 1970). In addition, the GPA's for the preceding semester were obtained from the university registrar.

Procedure

The standardized instructions for the instruments were read to the control group who then completed the various questionnaires in a formal classroom setting. The experimental subjects were given envelopes containing the measuring instruments and standardized instructions and were asked to complete the questionnaires and to return them at their own convenience. All subjects were informed that participation was desirable but not compulsory.

Data

Complete sets of data were obtained from 122 control subjects and 48 members of the experimental group. The data were subjected to a discriminant analysis (Cooley & Lohnes, 1962) using the Veldman (1968) DISCRIM program for the CDC 6600 computer.

RESULTS

The Wilks' lambda test for inequality of population centroids yielded a value of .852, which with 16 and 153 degrees of freedom failed to reach the $p = .05$ level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. As a further check, univariate F ratios for each of the variables were tested and only one, that for AAT-, significantly discriminated between the control and experimental groups. The SSHA sub-tests yielded F ratios with p values ranging between .25 and .65.

DISCUSSION

Failure of the F -tests associated with the SSHA to indicate significant differences between subjects who completed the SSHA under controlled conditions and those who completed the instrument under uncontrolled conditions suggests that the SSHA may be used with some confidence under conditions where it is inconvenient to

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administer it in the usual manner. It may be advantageous, for example, to make the SSHA available in this way to clients at the time a counseling appointment is made and to ask that the instrument be completed and returned at the time of the appointment. Persons using the instrument for research purposes, however, are cautioned to anticipate considerable attrition of subjects unless some strong motivation is provided to induce the completion and return of the instrument.

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