Methodological Guidelines and Diagnostic Methods for Assessment of Drivers’ Psychological Eligibility in the Czech Republic

When defining the baseline assumptions for a valid diagnosis, traffic psychology reflects the developments in the traffic environment, as well as those in research and diagnostic tools. As the demands on drivers increase, however, the process starts with the testing and review of factors that are considered relevant in terms of psychological eligibility. This step involves the assessment of psychological risk factors, functions, and processes that are involved in defining and analyzing driver behavior and assessing the risk of traffic accidents. The process concludes with a validity analysis that addresses the question of which psychological qualities, functions, and processes are involved in defining and analyzing the risk of traffic accidents. The legal basis for the assessment of psychological eligibility for driving in the Czech Republic is outlined at the beginning.

A. Legal Background

Laws
- Act No. 561/2000 Coll., on road traffic, as amended (133/2011 Coll)
- Act No. 247/2000 Coll., on obtaining and improving professional competence for the driving of motor vehicles
- Decree No. 11/2001 Coll., as amended (27/2012 Coll)

A traffic psychological assessment is obligatory for
1. Holders of driver’s licences C, C+E, D, D+E, and drivers of lorry over 7500 kg of maximum authorized weight (Section 87 of Act No. 561/2000 Coll)
2. Drivers who apply for the renewal of their licences after they had them suspended as a result of too many penalty points (Section 123 of Act No. 133/2011 Coll)
3. Driving school instructors (Section 21 of Act No. 247/2000 Coll)

B. Traffic Psychology Assessment

The resources necessary for the due performance of traffic psychological assessment include:
- a room in which to carry out the assessment using a psychological diagnostic technique,
- a waiting room, reception, or a similar suitable facility,
- a psychological diagnostic technique and standardised testing systems making it possible to:
  1. assess the personality traits of the individual being assessed;
  2. measure the level and quality of attention, coordination, and speed and accuracy of sensorimotor reactivity to simple and complex visual and acoustic stimuli under time pressure, using various devices.

The rooms have to be separated from each other by structural elements. (Section 18 of Act No. 27/2012 Coll)

A traffic psychological assessment is executed in writing and is reflected in the physical and mental health competency report.

C. Drivers’ Personality

I. Personality trait characteristics:
- dominance, the need to assert oneself, egocentricity,
- emotional stability (anxiety, phobias, irrational fears),
- level of confidence, self-concept,
- extraversion × introversion,
- self-control, self-discipline, respect for traffic regulations,
- conscientiousness,
- tolerance of stress and stress resistance, psychological resilience, and fatigue.

II. Other aspects of personality with an impact on driving:
- type A behavior,
- seeking of situational excitement and adventure,
- emotional stability and identity of affects, sensitivity,
- LOC – internal locus of control with reduced anticipation,
- ambivalence.

II. Aggressive tendencies:
- aggressiveness,
- anger,
- hostility.

Special attention should be paid to the above characteristics in the psychological testing and selection of drivers.

Conclusion

The personality of a problem-free driver features a well-balanced structure, emotional stability, adaptability, self-control, reasonable self-confidence, resilience to stress, conscientiousness, and reliability. Social qualities, such as altruism, expressed through the effort to think of others and predict their behavior, should not be disregarded either. On the contrary, drivers who cause traffic accidents are often driven by emotions, aggression, and emotional and have reduced self-regulation, a disharmoniously structured personality, and impaired self-esteem, but show reasonable psychological performance. Untidely individuals are efficient, adaptable, responsible, and emotionally stable, and can control themselves and cope with difficulties and stress.

Literature


Author:
Matus Sucha, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology, Palacky University, Olomouc, Czech Republic

Address:
Kasatkova 10, 771 80 Olomouc, Czech Republic
Tel.: +420 585 633 302 / Fax: +420 585 633 700
Email: matus.sucha@upol.cz
Web: www.psych.upol.cz