

**EMPATHY AND JOB PERFORMANCE OF U.S. ARMY  
HOSPITAL PSYCHIATRIC CORPSMAN**

**BY**

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EMPATHY AND JOB PERFORMANCE  
OF U.S. ARMY HOSPITAL  
PSYCHIATRIC CORPSMAN

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A Research Paper  
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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Paul Leroy Dillinger

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Paul Leroy Dillinger entitled "Empathy and Job Performance of U.S. Army Hospital Psychiatric Corpsman." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

Garland E. Blair  
Major Professor

Accepted for the Council.

Wayne E. Kemp  
Dean of the Graduate School

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Empathy, due to its importance in the client-therapist relationship, has become of increasing interest and study. Rogers (1951) emphasizes empathic understanding as a main requirement for therapy to take place. He defines empathy as the ability of one person to take the role of another (Rogers, 1951). In a later work (Rogers, 1961) he broadens his definition to include a very deep understanding of the person involved in therapy:

It is only as I understand the feelings and thoughts which seem so horrible to you, or so weak, or so sentimental, or so bizarre--it is only as I see them as you see them and accept them and you, that you really feel free to explore the hidden nooks and frightening crannies of your inner and often buried experience (p. 34).

Truax (1963) and Carkhuff (1969) also support the emphasis on empathy as a psychotherapeutic technique. Carkhuff (1969) says that there is a direct relationship between the degree of empathic understanding offered by the therapist, and the degree to which the client will be able to understand himself and others.

Chandler (1971) describes empathy as involving three distinct components. They are (1) the perceived accuracy of the therapist's understanding of the patient, (2) a close warm relationship, and (3) confidence and respect in the therapist's skill. In a validation study of the concept of accurate empathy he concluded that "accurate empathy is a

reliable operationalization of a group of variables which are associated in the minds of naive and therapeutically experienced raters, with good therapists." Heilman (1972) defines empathy as the factor responsible for the accurate prediction of another person's responses or moods.

Norton (1972) in a study of 151 married couples discovered that there was a significant relationship between the spouse's ability to empathize with each other, and marital harmony. Condiff (1972) discovered that empathy was used by psychotherapists as a positive reinforcer. The therapists observed tended to be more "empathic" when the client talked about subjects acceptable to the therapist.

Carkhuff (1973) in his new book attempts to teach people how to empathize by teaching them the correct physical motions. He teaches attending and supportive behaviors. McKenzie (1973) developed a programed text that was effective in teaching school administrators and counselor trainees to understand and communicate empathically. Empathy is apparently a trait which can be learned. Kalisch (1971) discovered that nursing students scored significantly higher on patient situational questions after they had received a ten hour block of instructions in empathic communication. They also perceived themselves in a more confident manner than did the control group which received a ten hour block of didactic instruction in nursing techniques.

Anthony and Wain (1971) using twenty hospital corpsman



(ten trained and ten control) discovered that individuals trained in empathy techniques functioned at a significantly higher level of empathy after the training period than did the control group which met during the same time periods but had no instruction. They also discovered that the work behavior of the individuals trained in empathy was rated significantly higher by their supervisors. This is a very interesting phenomenon which could indicate the necessity of a much more comprehensive application of empathy training for individuals in helping relationships.

The purpose of this study is to determine if empathic ability has any significant relationship to job performance. More specifically, the null hypothesis is that there is no significant relationship between job performance and empathic ability.



## Chapter 2

### METHOD

The Ss observed in this research were fourteen psychiatric corpsmen, and one psychiatric corpswoman with the military occupational specialty (M.O.S.) of 91F stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. This M.O.S. is awarded after a twelve week training period in medical and psychiatric technology. They all worked on inpatient psychiatric service, and had psychiatric experience ranging from three months to two and one-half years. Each S completed The Empathy Test form B which is published by Psychometric Affiliates of Munster, Indiana. The test was written and validated by W. A. Kerr and B. J. Speroff. Each S was read the printed instructions and was asked to complete the forms for some research the author was doing. The scores were then ranked from highest to lowest.

Two registered nurses were then asked to rank the Ss according to job performance. The nurses were both Army officers who had worked with and observed each of the Ss. One nurse had seven years of psychiatric experience, and one nurse had one year of psychiatric experience. These nurses shall be referred to as nurse A and nurse B, nurse A being the least experienced.

Criteria for these evaluations was obtained from the official job description of the M.O.S. 91F. This description lists approximately twenty duties a person with a psychiatric specialist rating is trained to do. These duties were divided into two lists of tasks. One list was of those tasks involving

the use of technical or mechanical skills. The other list was of the tasks involving interpersonal skills.

Each nurse was asked to rate the 15 Ss from one to fifteen according to their estimation of the Ss performance in these areas. Each was then asked to make an additional ranking of the Ss according to their estimation of best overall performance.

## Chapter 3

### RESULTS

In order to establish whether or not a relationship between job performance and empathic ability existed, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient statistic was employed to obtain correlation coefficients between the rankings of the Ss by the nurses, and the Ss ranking according to The Empathy Test scores. Table 1 presents a summary of these findings.

Table 1

Summary of Job Performance and Empathy Score Correlation

	Technical Skills	Interpersonal Skills	Best Over All Corpsman
Nurse A	$r=.124$	$r=.131$	$r=.165$
Nurse B	$r=.324$	$r=.428^*$	$r=.263$
Correlation of Nurses Ratings	$r=.832^{**}$	$r=.710^{**}$	$r=.875^{**}$

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .005$



## Chapter 4

### DISCUSSION

According to these evaluations job performance and empathy scores correlate significantly only in one nurse's rankings, and then only in the interpersonal skills area. It is noted that there is a small positive correlation in all areas, and that there is a high positive correlation between the nurses ratings in all areas.

While reviewing the rankings of the nurses the author noted that Nurse B ranked two individuals markedly different than Nurse A on the interpersonal skills ranking. Since this was the only area where a significant correlation ( $p < .05$ ) was obtained, the author re-evaluated the information without the scores or rankings of these Ss (M and H). The results of this re-evaluation are on Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Job Performance and Empathy  
Score Correlation Without Ss M and H

	Technical Skills	Interpersonal Skills	Best Over All Corpsman
Nurse A	$r = .545^*$	$r = .598^*$	$r = .537^*$
Nurse B	$r = .672^*$	$r = .669^*$	$r = .515^*$
Correlation of Nurses Ratings	$r = .769^{**}$	$r = .731^{**}$	$r = .852^{**}$

\*  $p < .025$

\*\*  $p < .005$

It is noted that with individuals M and H removed from the study, Significance ( $p < .025$ ) is reached in all areas. It is also noted that Nurse B, with the most experience, correlated all areas of job performance more closely with empathy scored than did Nurse A.

It is possible that S M who functions very rigidly, scored low in empathic ability, but performs well, and S H who has had attitudinal problems about his induction into the Army and poor job performance may have disrupted this study.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY

This paper dealt with an attempt to determine whether or not empathic ability might be correlated with job performance in an inpatient psychiatric ability might be correlated with job performance in an inpatient psychiatric setting. Fifteen Ss, one female and fourteen male, each took The Empathy Test by Kerr and Speroff, and were ranked according to their scores. Two Army nurses who supervised these Ss were asked to rank them according to their performance in each of two areas (technical and interpersonal skills), a third ranking was made with the criteria of best over all performance. Each of these rankings were correlated with the empathy scores. Low positive correlations were obtained in all areas. Job performance and empathy scores correlated significantly ( $p < .05$ ) only according to the interpersonal skills ranking of Nurse B. All other areas failed to reject the Null hypothesis. It is noteworthy that significant correlations ( $p < .025$ ) were obtained when two Ss scores were removed from this data.

Apparently little research has been done in this area. If it could be positively determined that empathic ability does effect job performance, or that individuals of high empathic ability tend to make better psychiatric technicians, an empathy test could be a valuable tool for screening job applicants for psychiatric institutions. In the military setting it might be of great value to give empathy training



as a block of instruction at the 91F M.O.S. school. Screening of individuals applying for these schools with an empathy test might keep individuals out of psychiatry who would be more effective and happier in another field. The author believes this study should be repeated, and on a broader basis if possible. It is suggested that the information obtained could have a very practical application.

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