Manual

**Semi-structured Interview for Personality Functioning DSM-5
(STiP 5.1)**

Abbreviated version*

Kenniscentrum Persoonlijksheidsstoornissen (Center of Expertise for Personality Disorders)
Podium DMS-5
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What?

The Semi-structured Interview for Personality Functioning DSM-5 (STiP 5.1) has been developed by the Center of Expertise for Personality Disorders to determine the severity of personality impairment using the Level of Personality Functioning Scale, which is included in part III of the DSM-5. For each of the 12 facets of the Level of Personality Functioning scale, the STiP-5.1 allows you to determine the level of functioning.

Background

The DSM5 includes, in addition to the classic classification system for personality disorders in Part II, an Alternative Model for Personality Disorders (AMPD) in Part III. The AMPD has introduced two new criteria for the classification of personality disorders: Criterion A requires that one can speak of moderate or greater impairment of personality (self/interpersonal) functioning. Criterion B requires that one or more pathological personality traits be present. To assess for Criterion A, the AMPD makes use of the Level of Personality Functioning Scale. This scale encompasses 12 facets of personality functioning, which cluster into four elements that fall, in turn, into two domains. The Level of Personality Functioning Scale describes five levels of severity for each of the 12 facets of personality functioning, ranging from healthy, little or no impairment (0), mild (1), moderate (2), severe (3) or extreme (4) impairment. The application of the scale is twofold. First, an estimate of severity is needed to determine the category of diagnosis for the personality disorders in the alternative model. Second, a profile of disturbances and resilience is created for each individual — with or without a personality disorder — on the basis of detected, specific limitations on the individual's self and interpersonal functioning. Such a profile can inform treatment.

Level of Personality Functioning Scale

The Level of Personality Functioning Scale (LPFS) is divided into two core domains: self and interpersonal functioning. The two domains are divided into four elements, each of which encompass three facets of personality functioning. Table 1 provides an overview of the LPFS. For each of the 12 facets, 5 levels of severity can be distinguished. The scale thus encompasses 60 descriptors for assessing severity of personality impairment.

Aims of the STiP 5.1

The STiP 5.1 was developed to obtain a multi-item assessment of each of the 12 facets of personality functioning. The instrument is intended for use within the framework of an intake or diagnostic assessment aimed at obtaining, for among other purposes, a systematic estimate of the severity of personality pathology. Administration of the interview takes between 45 and 60 minutes. It is recommended that some brief training on the administration and use of the instrument be obtained before actual use.

Psychometric properties

A published study of the STiP 5.1 shows it to be a reliable scoring instrument (Hutsebaut et al., 2016). The STiP 5.1 is capable of distinguishing not only between "normal" and "clinical" respondents but also, within a sample of clients seeking treatment for personality problems, it is capable of distinguishing between clients with and without a DMS-5 Part II classification for a personality disorder or personality disorders. Moreover, STiP-5.1 scores for self and interpersonal functioning correlate, as expected, with comparable self-report measures. The STiP 5.1 thus appears

to be a reliable measure of the severity of personality impairment with sufficient constructive validity.

Table 1: Overview of core domains, elements, and facets as measured by the Level of Personality Functioning Scale

Core domains	Elements	Facets
Self-functioning	Identity	Experience of oneself as unique, with clear boundaries between self and others
		Stability of self-esteem and accuracy of self-appraisal
		Capacity for, and ability to regulate, a range of emotional experience
	Self-direction	Pursuit of coherent and meaningful short-term and life goals
		Utilization of constructive and prosocial internal standards of behavior
		Ability to self-reflect productively
Interpersonal functioning	Empathy	Comprehension and appreciation of others' experiences and motivations
		Tolerance of differing perspectives
		Understanding the effects of one's own behavior on others
	Intimacy	Depth and duration of connection with others
		Desire and capacity for closeness
		Mutuality of regard reflected in interpersonal behavior

Design of the interview

The STiP 5.1 consists of 12 sections corresponding to the 12 facets of the Level of Personality Functioning Scale from Part III of the DSM-5. Each section of the STiP 5.1 is composed of three columns, which encompass the following.

- Left column: scoring criteria for the relevant facet
- Middle column: questions to be posed by the interviewer
- Right column: essential information to be collected for scoring of the relevant facet

For the development of the interview, the authors started with the criteria for the DSM Level of Personality Functioning Scale (LPFS). From this information, they distilled what is essential to differentiate between five levels of severity for personality impairment. The information identified as essential is presented in the right column of the STiP-5.1. For example, to identify the five levels of functioning for the first facet of personality functioning, namely "experiencing oneself as unique, with clear boundaries between self and others," the interviewer must obtain information with regard to: 1) the extent to which the respondent has a clear sense of self and 2) the extent to which the respondent can maintain this sense of self under conditions, for example, of stress or in contact with others. In the middle columns of the STiP-5.1, the relevant questions to be posed by the interviewer are listed. Four types of questions can be distinguished. Two of these are already explicitly formulated for the interviewer and presented in the middle column of the STiP-5.1.

1) *Open questions*. For each essential aspect of personality functioning for which a score must be obtained, an open question has been formulated. For the first facet of personality

functioning, for example, this is as follows: (1) How would you describe yourself? And (2) to what extent are you capable of really being yourself and staying yourself? The interviewer is expected to pose, in principle, every open question given that the information provided in response to the question is needed to score the level of functioning. (An exception, of course, is if the respondent, for instance, already provides an answer to the second question in his or her response to the first question.)

2) *Help questions*. These questions follow up on the open questions. They re-formulate the question or further investigate a specific aspect. The help questions are often more focused on a specific level of a scale and therefore more closed than the open questions. The interviewer poses them to clarify certain information. The help questions need not be used, however. And, in fact, we recommend that *not* all help questions be used as the interview will otherwise become a barrage of questions.

On the basis of the open and help questions, the interviewer obtains a great deal of information that is needed to assign a score for a specific facet of personality functioning. In some cases, this information will be enough to allow a score to be assigned. In most cases, however, some uncertainty may still exist and the interviewer has some additional interview tools that can be used to clarify things. These are the third and fourth types of questions constituting the STiP 5.1.

3) When the interviewer has a fairly clear picture of the respondent's level of functioning, it is possible to pose a *check question*. Using this question, the interviewer checks that his or her picture of how the respondent functions on a particular facet of personality is accurate and thus recognized by the respondent. The interviewer summarizes and reformulates the information provided by the respondent in such a manner that a bridge is formed to the description of the relevant level of functioning from the LPFS. For example: If I understand things correctly, you are saying that you are very much busy with what others expect of you and very much inclined to want to meet these expectations, which makes it hard for you to really know who you are (example of a check question for Level 2 functioning on "experiencing oneself as unique, with clear boundaries between self and others").

4) Alternatively, the interviewer may be having trouble deciding between two scores for a specific facet of personality functioning. In this case, the interviewer can formulate a *test question*. Using such a question, the interviewer presents two options to the respondent and asks the respondent to indicate which of the two options reflects him (or her) the most. In the formulation of such a test question, the interviewer polarizes the options in order to make the two possible levels of functioning clearly distinguishable from each other. Further for the formulation of the two options for a test question, the interviewer does the same as for the formulation of check questions: summarizes and reformulates the information provided by the respondent to build a bridge to the descriptions of the levels of functioning presented in the LPFS. For example: Do you mean that you are often busy with what others expect of you and trying to meet these expectations but still have some idea of who you are and what you yourself think do you mean that you really have no idea of who you are and therefore, given this, constantly trying to adapt to (or oppose) what others expect of you (Testing for level 2 or level 3 functioning on "experiencing oneself as unique, with clear boundaries between self and others").

For effective administration of the STiP-5.1, the reformulation of the information provided by the respondent should be natural but nevertheless in terms that are close to those used in the descriptions for the different criteria. Experience has shown that interviewers must be very familiar with the interview and thoroughly comprehend the underlying concepts.

Guidelines for administration

The interviewer is *not* expected to adopt a neutral, business-like attitude during the conduct of the interview. The interview is, rather, intended to elicit a process of "joint seeking" and jointly working to understand how things are for the respondent, where the respondent's strengths and weaknesses lie, and how these strengths and weaknesses can best be understood. The interviewer should be open and transparent about the objective of the interview and the topics being addressed. The interviewer should approach things collaboratively, inviting the respondent to undertake a joint exploration. If and when the interviewer is open and cooperative, the chances of the respondent being open and cooperative are considerably higher than otherwise.

In the ideal interview, both the interviewer and respondent should experience the interview as a natural conversation. The interviewer will sometimes spend more time on one section of the interview than another — particularly when it is difficult to gain insight into the exact level of functioning. Asking the respondent to provide a concrete example can help. Sometimes the interviewer will be able to move quickly on to the next section of the interview when, on the basis of the information provided by the respondent, the level of functioning is abundantly clear. It is thus not necessary or the intention of the STiP-5.1 that all of the questions supplied be posed.

Scoring guidelines

It is critical that the interviewer scores each facet of the interview independent of the other facets and approach each section of the interview independent of the other sections. If this is not done, the risk arises that the interviewer's initial impression will influence the thoroughness of subsequent questioning and the scoring of the information provided by the respondent later in the interview. It is also critical that the interviewer assign one single, clear score per facet and not leave an ambiguous score of, for example, 2-3 behind.

The LPFS does not provide instructions on how to aggregate the scores per element or how the element scores should be combined to attain domain scores. We therefore suggest that the interviewer him/herself make this judgment. Often the most frequently assigned scores will be decisive for a particular element, but the interviewer can deviate from this when he or she sees a specific facet of the respondent's personality functioning to be more critical for the functioning of the respondent on a particular element. The same holds for the determination of the domain scores and the total score.

Training

A short training of 6 hours is available and recommended for research groups and clinicians wanting to make use of the STiP-5.1. Information on this training can be obtained from the authors.

Reference study

Hutsebaut, J., Kamphuis, J.H., Feenstra, D.J., Weekers, L. & de Saeger, H. (2016). Assessing DSM–5-Oriented Level of Personality Functioning: Development and Psychometric Evaluation of the Semi-Structured Interview for Personality Functioning DSM–5 (STiP-5.1). *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research and Treatment*, 7 (2), 192-7. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/per0000197.