Assessment of false self-presentation by psychological tests and techniques

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Criminal and civil trials, and investigations related to them, are situations that can have very important and (un)desired consequences for the accused and other people involved in these trials, who often attend them against their will. Such circumstances tend to increase the risk of deceitful behaviour and conscious self-presentation in a false light in order to influence the trial in the desired way. A tendency of intentional self-presentation in a wrong light and the falsification of test results have been often observed in clinical and forensic psychological assessment. Psychological instruments are based on the assumption that an individual who participates in a process of assessment, is motivated to cooperate, that he is honest and ready for self-disclosure. Disregarding the possibility of manipulations and lies can lead to wrong conclusions and psychological assessments, which can have a detrimental effect on the outcome of a trial.

Much attention has therefore been recently paid to the development of reliable control tests, which would reduce the possibility of such deceptions. They include various control scales, which are part of existing psychological diagnostic instruments, but also the development of new tests and questionnaires designed exclusively for the detection of deception. It is necessary, however, to distinguish different forms of intentional deceitful self-presentation, which depend on the goal. The paper presents the basic types of psychological tests and techniques, which have proved to be most applied in the detection of deception in different areas of assessment and in different situations. The success of detecting such deceptions depends on the efficiency of individual measurement techniques and the skill of the person trying to manipulate the abilities of the assessor. The latter can considerably improve the effectiveness of the detection of false self-representation by integrating independent sources of information and results of various measurement techniques.