Creating a French Version of the Social Interaction Phobia Scale


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Abstract

Introduction

Social anxiety (SA) typically refers to anxiety or worry experienced in social or evaluative situations. Sufficiency disturbing or impairing levels of SA typically warrant a diagnosis of social anxiety disorder (SAD).

SAD and SAD involve hallmark features including fear of negative evaluation, making a bad impression, or acting in a way that might be embarrassing (Antony & Swinson, 2000). These core elements potentiate pathological fear occurring across several situations (e.g., social interactions, performance situations; Carleton et al., 2009; Thompson & Rapee, 2002).

Researchers exploring SA across cultures have noted differences in the underlying factors associated with presentations of SAD. For example, some cultures consider failure to maintain eye contact a sign of SA, while others may interpret it as a sign of respect (McCarthy, Lee, Latkova, & Muir, 2006). Such differences suggest that SA and SAD may have socially constructed components (Leffren, Boose, Royes, & Ogston, 2008) that warrant investigation.

Within multicultural communities such as North America, there may be important intercultural differences in SA that remain unexplored because of language barriers (Moss & Roberts, 2005). Accordingly, the purpose of the current investigation was to explore the psychometric properties of a French translation of the Social Interaction Phobia Scale (SIPS) in a community sample of French Canadians.

Methods

Participants

Participants included a community sample of 192 participants rating their social and evaluative anxiety and fear of others evaluating them. The SIPS was translated and back translated by professional bilingual translators from the Institut français at the University of Regina.

Measure

Social Interaction Phobia Scale (SIPS; Carleton et al., 2000). The SIPS is a 24-item self-report measure designed to assess symptoms of social anxiety disorder. Each item is rated on a 4-point scale, ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely).

The SIPS is designed to measure three dimensions of SAD symptoms: Social interaction anxiety, fear of overt evaluation, and fear of attracting attention.

For the current sample, the internal consistency of SIPS scores was high (α = .88) and the average inter-item correlation was .60.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics (i.e., minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, skew, and kurtosis) were calculated.

Comparisons were performed to assess differences between the groups. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to calculate fit indices for the preceding 3-factor structure relative to a unity factor.

Results

The descriptive statistics for each of the translated SIPS items as well as the total and subscale scores for the translated SIPS are presented in Table 1.

Comparisons

Several independent t-tests were performed to compare the subscales and total score across the two groups. Statistically significant differences were found wherein women reported elevated levels relative to men on the fear of evaluation subscale, t(230) = 2.08, p < .05, d = .03, but not on the other subscales (i.e., social interaction anxiety, fear of attracting attention) or the total score.

In all cases, the effect sizes were small (Cohen, 1988), suggesting general comparability across men and women.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The 3-factor model of SIPS was superior to a unity solution. The fit indices for each model are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>Skew</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a context social, I feel more to know others.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.30 (1.19)</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
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<td>I feel more to know others.</td>
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Table 1. Continued

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Discussion

Overall, the current results provided initial validity for the French SIPS. The French SIPS demonstrated excellent internal consistency and responses to each of the items, the subscales, and the total score from the community sample approximated normal distributions.

The 3-factor solution found for the English SIPS was replicated for the French SIPS. The three factors can again be conceptualized as social interaction anxiety, fear of overt evaluation, and fear of attracting attention.

Despite substantially outperforming a unity solution, the relatively high reliability, inter-item correlations, and inter-subscale correlations suggest substantial construct overlap. The overlap may be the result of factorial symptoms functioning along a continuum, while maintaining their hierarchically structured (Stain & Chouinard, 1998).

Despite some limitations (e.g., the sample was self-selected, predominantly female participants, translating and providing normative data for the French version of the SIPS should provide clinical utility for therapists working with French clients suffering from SAD).

Future research should assess the French SIPS in a comparison study between those diagnosed with SAD and those without SAD, thereby evaluating the original SIPS cut-off scores for a French-speaking sample while providing sensitivity and specificity norms for the French SIPS.