Reviewer's report

Title: Revisiting the dimensional validity of the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS): an empirical evidence for a possible higher-order factor

Version: 1 Date: 21 January 2011

Reviewer: Rhonda Small

Reviewer's report:

As a researcher long interested in the psychometric properties of the EPDS, I very much enjoyed reading this manuscript. It makes a really valuable contribution to the evidence about the dimensionality of the EPDS and offers a satisfactory account of the multi-dimensionality found in previous studies. The three underlying factors often found (sometimes labelled anhedonia, anxiety and depression) have led some researchers to question exactly what the EPDS is measuring. Yet the high correlations found between the factors suggest that the EPDS may not in fact contain usable independent sub-scales. The authors here argue for a unifying higher order factor and provide sound evidence from their study to support this.

Major Compulsory Revisions

I do not see any need for major compulsory revisions to this report of what is an important study. While it is quite a technical paper, it is nonetheless very clearly and carefully described. The question addressed is well defined, the relevant literature is addressed coherently and the methods are sound.

Minor Essential Revisions

Please add a new section headed ‘Ethics Approval’ containing the last paragraph currently placed in the Data Analysis section.

Change the last sentence of this same paragraph to read: ‘Written informed consent was given by study participants after having the informed consent form read to them.’

Figure 3: It is not clear to me what the figures (factor loadings, correlations??) on the very right-hand side of Figure 3, with arrows to the items (i1, i2, etc), represent. This needs to be labelled I think.

Other Minor issues (eg typographical errors) not for publication

The title should be edited to remove ‘an’ before the word ‘empirical’.
Abstract, Background, third sentence: add ‘the’ before ‘EPDS.
Abstract, Methods: add ‘e’ to sequentially’ in third line
Background, first paragraph, line 5: remove ' from 1980s
Background, first paragraph, line 10: add 'is' between 'which' and 'easy'
Background, first paragraph, line 12: change 'became' to 'has become'
Background, second paragraph, line 1: add 'have' between 'studies' and 'evaluated'
Background, second paragraph, line 2: change 'narrowed down' to 'focused'
Background, third paragraph, last line: add 'a' before 'few'
Background, fourth paragraph, line 6: change 'would' to 'is'
Background, fourth paragraph, line 10: change 'evidences' to 'evidence'
Background, fifth paragraph, line 2: change 'discriminating' to 'discriminatory'
Background, fifth paragraph, line 10: change 'proceeds' to 'proceed'
Method, Data Analysis, second paragraph, line 7: change 'to test' to 'testing'
Method, Data Analysis, fourth paragraph, last line: change 'indicates' to 'indicate'
Results, first paragraph, line 5: change 'latest' to 'most recent'
Results, fourth paragraph, line 6: remove ' from CRs
Discussion, first paragraph, line 8: change 'along' to 'over'
Discussion, second paragraph, line 3: change 'step sided' to 'side-stepped'
Discussion, second paragraph, line 3: add 'a' before 'proxy'
Discussion, second paragraph, line 13: change 'comes in hand with' to 'is in line with'
Discussion, third paragraph, line 9: change 'has apparently such a support' to 'apparently has such support'
Discussion, fourth paragraph, line 9: change 'to also trigger' to 'also to trigger'
Discussion, fourth paragraph, line 12: remove 'a' before 'cogent'
Discussion, sixth paragraph, line 1: change first phrase in this sentence to 'Given cautious acceptance of the second-order factor…'
Discussion, sixth paragraph, line 5: change 'identifying' to 'identify' and 'that' to 'who'
Conclusion, line 2: change 'suggests' to 'suggest'
Conclusion, line 5: change 'evidences' to 'studies'; and 'domains' to 'settings'

Discretionary Revisions

Abstract, Background, second sentence: I would suggest re-wording the first phrase to read: 'This might be considered questionable since repeated…'

Background, fourth paragraph, line 1: I would suggest the word 'congruence' instead of 'regularities'
Method, Data Analysis, second paragraph, second last line: I would suggest adding “Assessment of theoretical meaningfulness…” at the beginning of the sentence.

I think it would be useful to include a Figure in the Results plotting the EPDS scores of participants, in addition to mentioning the mean score and the proportion scoring above the cut-off for depression in the text.

Table 1: It would be helpful to readers if the text for each of the 10 EPDS Item statements was provided at the foot of the table.

As Figure 1 essentially repeats the information in Table 2, I would suggest removing it.

Conclusion, line 1: The first sentence should perhaps read better as: ‘This study has attempted to take the debate about the dimensional validity of the EPDS forward.’

Acknowledgements: It would be very appropriate I believe also to acknowledge the women who gave up their time to participate in the study.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.