Reviewer's report

Title: Development of the Tilburg Pregnancy Distress Scale: the TPDS

Version: 1 Date: 6 July 2011

Reviewer: Wai Kai Hou

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Major Compulsory Revisions

This study used a three-stage process to develop the scale: in-depth interviews to generate relevant items, piloting testing, and validation. Several merits worth mentioning. First, the study design enhances relevance and clinical significance of the instrument. Second, the importance of the study is well-articulated. Third, the instrument were pilot-tested and validated in large samples of pregnant women (n=±300).

Several major comments warrant the authors’ attention. First, throughout the text, the authors highlight the importance and advantage of using in-depth interview to generate relevant scale items for further validation. However, the authors did not provide the method of analyzing the qualitative data (e.g., content analysis, grounded theory approach) and the themes or major findings from the analysis. As a result, the audiences might not be convinced that the items generated in this study are more relevant and appropriate than those generated based on practitioners/researchers’ experience. Second, the conceptual underpinning of the confirmatory factor analysis requires further clarification. Relative to EFA, CFA is more concept-driven: researchers have a hypothesized model in mind, test the validity through EFA, and then modify and confirm the model in CFA. The authors did not explain whether they drafted the items with reference to any concepts/frameworks; therefore, the resulting CFA appeared to be an ad-hoc model that was generated based entirely on the EFA data. This mirrors the deficit of information about the major findings in the qualitative analysis: did the qualitative findings reveal that NA and partner involvement are the two major concerns among these ladies? Third, the authors start off with a broad definition of the term emotional distress – stress, depression, anxiety. Then the authors go on to use a even broader term distress to refer to the theme of the scale. However, a close examination of the scale reveals that the items address emotional distress pertinent to the pregnancy or postpartum period, making up a subscale akin to the emotional distress subscale in the Revised Illness Perception Questionnaire (Moss-Morris et al., 2002). The authors might consider revising the terms that were used to refer to the theme of the scale or the factor in the EFA and CFA.

Page 5, Lines 1-6

The authors need to provide the inclusion and exclusion criteria for recruiting the participants.
Combined PCA and varimax rotation are used for data reduction, testing instruments that are constructed without a prior conceptual frameworks or prior information (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, 2007). This contradicts the availability of in-depth qualitative findings in the study. The authors need to explain why the alternative methods such as factor analysis and direct oblimin rotation (assuming/allowing correlations between factors) were not used. In fact, NA and partner involvement are hardly uncorrelated among pregnant women.

Predictive validity refers to the extent to which the scores on an instrument are associated with the scores on a criterion measure that will be obtained at a later time. Therefore, the analysis did not address predictive validity of the TPDS. The authors need to revise the title and clarify the validity that they are testing.

The five items that loaded on neither factors were discarded without further investigation. The authors need to discuss the content of the five items and provide reasons for the possible irrelevance or inappropriateness of the five items.

The authors need to provide other commonly used conventional fit indices including incremental fit index (IFI) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), or explain why IFI and SRMR are not used. In addition, the authors need to explain why the model is accepted though some of the reported indices are below the conventional cutoff (NFI <.90 and that for RMSEA >.05).

The authors need to provide the findings of previous studies on the impact of partner involvement on psychological functioning in pregnant women.

The authors need to provide the theoretical and empirical literature supporting the hypothesis that TPDS is trimester specific.

Reference(s) is needed to support the definition of the term emotional distress.

Should be Statistical Package, not Social Package
Unclear what “other dimensions” means.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.