Reviewer's report

Title: Exploratory Analysis of Obsessive-Compulsive Dimensions in Children and Adolescents: A Prospective Follow-up Study

Version: 1 Date: 29 June 2005

Reviewer: David Mataix-Cols

Reviewer's report:

General

This is an interesting and timely manuscript that replicates the results of factor analytical studies of the YBOCS checklist in an OCD paediatric sample. Furthermore, it provides data on the temporal stability of the identified symptom dimensions, again replicating the only existing study in adults. The results are important as they provide further support for a multidimensional model of OCD. The manuscript has a number of problems that need to be carefully addressed.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The sample size may be insufficient for factor analysis. A statistician will have to confirm this but my understanding was that at least 15 subjects per item are needed. This is a critical issue.

2. Another important issue is the use of the adult version of the YBOCS rather than the Children’s version. The 2 versions are similar but not identical. For example the CYBOCS includes categories about magical thinking/superstitions and excessive games that aren’t present in the adult version. It is surprising that the authors decided to use the adult version! Has the adult YBOCS been validated in paediatric populations? Having said this, the authors could turn this into their advantage since their choice (intentional or not) makes it easier to compare the results of adult and paediatric studies!!

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. Introduction, middle 1st paragraph. “Indeed the correlation between the theme of obsessions with other clinical variables is weak”. This is inaccurate. CATEGORICAL studies who used mutually exclusive subgroups of patients (e.g. checkers vs washers) were relatively uninformative but correlational studies (like the current study) have been more successful. Please reword accordingly.

2. Intro, bottom 1st paragraph (and throughout the ms). Rettew et al did NOT use symptom categories but INDIVIDUAL ITEMS of the YBOCS. Please amend.

3. Data analysis, page 7. Surely the authors mean DIVIDING by the number of items in each of the 13 symptom categories, not multiplying!!! Same in 2nd paragraph.

4. Page 9 & table 3. The partial correlations ranged from 0.24 to 0.59. These were considerably weaker than those reported by Mataix-Cols et al in adults. Are the symptoms less stable in children than in adults? Or perhaps the follow-up was longer in this study? Please discuss.
5. Page 9. Say that the cross-dimensional correlations were in fact of NEGATIVE sign.


7. Page 13, 1st para. Rather than “Between comparisons”, this para could more efficiently start with “Multiple regression analyses also…”

8. Page 13, 2nd para. Again, Rettew studied individual items not categories of the YBOCS.

9. Limitations. Sample size! The authors should convince the reader that they have enough sample size to run their factor analysis.


11. Figure 1. Why are the hoarding values negative? Did the authors use the values directly derived from the factor analysis? I.e. “save as variables” option in SPSS? Rather, they should use their own calculations, i.e. nr of items endorsed in each category divided by the nr of items in that category. If they do it this way, the values should then be positive.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Title. This would be clearer if they could add “symptom” between “obsessive-compulsive” and “dimensions”.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests