Reviewer's report

Title: The Brief version of the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE): translation and validation study of the Iranian version

Version: 1 Date: 23 December 2008

Reviewer: Nick Carleton

Reviewer's report:


The manuscript presents data from a subset of an undergraduate sample of participants who completed an Iranian translation of the brief fear of negative evaluation. The data are analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlations. Overall, I feel this type of investigation is extremely important and can provide clinical and theoretical insights of value. The manuscript has positive traits and presents some new information; however, as with all manuscripts there are a few areas that might yet be improved. Accordingly, I have included comments/suggestions to that effect. These comments and suggestions are broken down into Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Minor Style Issues. In line with BioMed’s explicit request, I have also responded to each of the template questions and placed my comments into the categories described by BioMed.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Introduction

Perhaps of greatest concern here is that the authors do not discuss any of the recent literature describing highly related research associated with their topic that has begun to ratify the use of only the straightforward items (i.e., Carleton, McCreary, & Asmundson, 2006). The same group of researchers has also recommended additional scoring strategies for the BFNE. In their more recent paper (Carleton, Collimore, & Asmundson, 2007), the same researcher team cited work done by Taylor (1993) that introduced an entirely straightforwardly worded BFNE to resolve the issues with the reverse worded items. This becomes important because the item content, once straightforwardly worded, appears to become relatively more important to the measure of the construct as a whole. I recommend the authors review and comment on these additional studies, both to be thorough in their introduction and because of the possible implications these alternatives have on whether the reverse worded items should be translated at all. It may be more appropriate at this time, given growing consensus that the BFNE reverse worded items should not be used (e.g., Carleton et al., 2007; Weeks et al. 2005) – indeed that reverse worded items not be used at all for social phobia questions (Rodebaugh, Woods, & Heimberg, 2007) – to translate
and use the BFNE-II (Carleton et al., 2007) instead. If the authors do not agree with the existing research, I would recommend they include an argument as to why the BFNE should continue to be used and indeed further used via providing a translation. I recognize that I am implying the authors may need to e-translate items and collect new data; however, that would be the most appropriate course of action, given the existing research. At the very least, the authors should acknowledge the precedent work with the BFNE on this issue.

Methods and Results

The translation methods appear to be consistent with established norms. The sample size appears to be sufficient, though a bit small relative to precedent work.

The reference to the SIAS is incorrect, or the item count is incorrect, or both. The 20-item SIAS was presented by Mattick and Clarke in 1989; in 1998 they presented a 19-item version but they did discuss the precedent 1989 20-item version. The authors should use both references if they are working with the 20-item version and only the 1998 if they are working with the 19-item version.

Given that this study is focusing on socially-related constructs, frequency statistics on marital status might be useful. Were there any significant differences between the two sexes? What were the descriptive statistics for the clinical sample? What were the item and total differences between the clinical and non-clinical samples? The authors might consider a confirmatory factor analysis to compare individual item loadings from an English-speaking response set to the Iranian response set to provide additional validity for the translated measure or provide interesting avenues for future research if differences emerge. In the convergent reliability analysis with the SPIN and the SIAS, the authors should include precedent correlations between these and therein demonstrate comparability for the reader.

The authors note good reliability for the nonclinical but less so the clinical sample – it may be that the reverse worded items coupled with the relatively small sample size (n=33) is to blame. If the authors take my suggestion and collect new data using the BFNE-II, this may resolve itself. Alternatively, they should consider running the reliability on only the straight-forwardly worded items. Also, the range of test-retest is quite large; can the authors explain why the range is so large? A correlation for .71 for test-retest reliability of such a concise measure seems a bit small; however, this may again be the result of the reverse-worded items.

I would strongly recommend the authors include a confirmatory factor analysis in the presentation of this data or the data collected as per my previous suggestions.

For all comparisons the authors should include effect sizes.

Minor Essential Revisions
Abstract

The abstract is generally concise and clear. The authors should consider including the percentage of women in the participant descriptive statistics. Also, the wording of the conclusion is stronger than is appropriate given the preliminary nature of the study.

Discussion

Changes to the Discussion section are likely to follow directly from changes to the previous sections.

Minor Style Issues

I recognize English is not likely the first language for all of the authors and I applaud their efforts and currently level of mastery of the English language. Nevertheless, the document would benefit from a careful proof reading and polishing (editorial refinement) of the language used. Specifically, there are run-on sentences, grammatical errors, and punctuation issues that need revision. These editorial concerns are relatively minor.

Human participants should be referred to as men and women throughout the document.

The authors should consider rewording sentences such that the sentences never begin with a number, even when written out in text.

Throughout the results the authors use R when I am quite certain they mean r; they use P when I am quite certain the mean p; similarly, the authors are inconsistent about using a zero before a decimal place (e.g., 0.90 should be presented as .90).

Tables

None of the tables provide information beyond that presented in the text; accordingly, I recommend deleting all tables.

Concluding Notes

Despite my significant concerns about the authors having translated a now out-dated measure, I want to underscore for them how important I feel translation research is to the field. I believe that if the authors collected similar data using the BFNE-II this would be another very important publication; however, I am concerned about the limited applicability of the BFNE given the current state of understanding regarding the reverse-worded items. I would also like to point out that the new data would be relatively easy to collect from a new undergraduate sample.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   a. Yes
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
a. I have addressed the Methods above.

3. Are the data sound?
a. I believe the data as collected is out dated

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
a. Additional information is required and additional analyses would be beneficial.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
a. I believe the final conclusion is premature, given the data and the precedent research.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
a. The limitations are clearly stated; however, I believe the manuscript as presented has more limitations than presented by the authors (reflected throughout my detailed comments).

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
a. The authors clearly acknowledge the work they are building on; however, the authors are missing substantial portions of recent work.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
a. Yes.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
a. The writing will require moderate levels of editorial work before it can be presented – keeping in mind that this is to be expected given that the author’s first language is different from the language in which they are presenting.

References in the Review


**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

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

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I am one member of three independent research teams who have suggested that the BFNE with the reverse-worded items no longer be used, in favour of using either only the straightforwardly worded items, or more preferably, using the revised items found in the BFNE-II. I have included the appropriate references for the authors within the review.