Reviewer's report

Title: Psychometric properties of Greek versions of the Dental Fear Survey (DFS) and the Modified Coral Dental Anxiety Scale (MDAS)

Version: 1 Date: 16 May 2008

Reviewer: Jason Armfield

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript describes a series of reliability and validity tests of a Greek translation of two dental fear scales, the MDAS and the DFS. It can only be hoped that the availability of psychometrically evaluated Greek-language dental fear scales might encourage more research into dental fear among the Greek population, as little work has been done in this area to date. The paper, overall, is reasonably well written and adequately addresses the issues surrounding testing of a scale translation.

Major compulsory revisions

The lead-in sentence in the final paragraph of the Background section is irrelevant to the hypotheses (and is dubious in any event). Indeed, the whole paragraph is quite awkwardly written and would benefit from a reworking.

More information should be provided on the selection of participants attending the university clinic. Saying merely that they “were identified by one of the senior dentist-researchers” is insufficient. How were they identified? On what basis? Who was excluded? Etc.

The second paragraph in the Results would work better if all the F and p values were put into a table. As it stands, the paragraph is a bit dense with F values. It’s BMC Oral Health so another table is neither here nor there.

Conclusion: This is weak and in any event reiterates just a bit too closely a sentence from the first paragraph in the Discussion, which is quite off-putting. I think the paper deserves to finish on a much stronger note.

Minor essential revisions

On a few occasions you commenced a paragraph with a sentence continuing on from a previous paragraph. For example, in the Results you start a paragraph with “Half of these patients...” and in the Discussion you have one paragraph starting “Thus...” and another paragraph starting “As described previously, the validity of these scales...”. A paragraph should stand alone. If a sentence or section of text follows immediately from a point in a previous paragraph it should be included in that paragraph. Otherwise, the first sentence requires rewriting so that it does not reference the immediately preceding text.

Background:
Paragraph 3, your references to the dental fear scales are a bit awkward – I’d suggest dropping the names preceding the scales as people can get that information from the refs if they don’t already know who cooked up the DAS and DFS. It might also be worthwhile including the 1973 paper by Kleinknecht, Klepac and Alexander when you reference the DFS – more items, I know, but it’s still the first reference to the scale.

Some examples or references to cultural differences in fears and feared stimuli would back up your statement in the last paragraph of the Intro/Background.

Results:

When you present p values you sometimes use a 0 in front of the decimal place, and at other times do not. Consistency. Elsewhere, Chronbach’s alpha is described as both internal reliability and internal consistency. I think it is correctly defined as a measure of internal consistency.

Participant mean age does not need to be reported to two decimal places – one is fine.

In the 2nd last paragraph it should be “There were no statistically significant differences in age, gender, or level of dental fear…”

Discussion

1st paragraph, “we found good evidence for the internal and test-retest reliabilities of Greek translations of both the MDAS and DFS”. Same paragraph “Greek versions of these…”

2nd paragraph, references should be provided in the sentence where it says “As other authors have commented…”

Any evidence out there that men are typically socialized not to display anxiety, compared with women? I know that might be true in some cultures (e.g. Australia and the US) but am not well enough acquainted with Greek culture.

The last paragraph in the Discussion (“We also found evidence for very high test-retest…”) is unrelated to the text which immediately follows it dealing with loss to follow-up.

References

Reference number 2 is now in print (2007, 7:1) and the third author’s name in that reference is “Spencer AJ”, not “Spencer JA”

Correct format is for the next word in the title after a colon to be in lower case, not capitalised.

Discretionary revisions

I would be nice to think that there’s a better reason for conducting, writing, and
publishing this article than “it is desirable to develop questionnaires in the language used in each culture”. Is there a desire by any researchers to study dental fear in Greece? Has research there been hampered to date by the lack of a psychometrically validated translation? Some additional justification for the paper’s existence would be desirable – beyond a perceived necessity of re-establishing psychometric properties when scales are used in new contexts (and for a discussion see Streiner DL, Norman GR: Health measurement scales. A practical guide to their development and use. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press; 2000).

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

**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.