Reviewer’s report

Title: Internal Structure and Reliability of the Attachment Insecurity Screening Inventory (AISI) for Children Age 6 to 12

Version: 0 Date: 13 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Helena Teresa Moreira

Reviewer’s report:

The aim of the current study was to examine the factor structure and internal consistency of the Attachment Insecurity Screening Inventory (AISI). I believe that it is valuable that the authors have tested the middle childhood version of the AISI, so that this measure can be used in research with children in this age stage. It is also a strength that the manuscript tested the measurement by parents’ sex. The manuscript is clearly structured and well written. However, there are some methodological and conceptual issues that need to be carefully addressed and revised. Here are some specific concerns in the order that they appear in the manuscript:

Abstract:

- The authors mention that the study included 390 mother-father-child dyads. It seems that family triads (including the child) participated in the study. However, I believe that only parents completed the questionnaire. This should be clearly stated. Additionally, because biological parents were also collected, the authors should present in the methods section of the abstract the number or % of each subsample.

Introduction

- The authors correctly recognize that there is insufficient research on attachment during middle attachment. They also argue that there is a lack of measures to assess attachment in middle childhood. This is only partially true, since there is at least one self-report measure for this developmental stage, the People in My Life questionnaire (Cook, Greenberg, & Kusche, 1995; Moreira, Fonseca, & Canavarro, 2017; Ridenour, Greenberg, & Cook, 2006).

- Please add "years" after 2-5 or 6-12 in the instrument designation to improve readability.

- pp3, line 51: please keep the reference format (numbered) in Polderman and Kellaert-Knol.

- The authors explain that their study includes a clinical sample of children primarily from adoptive or foster care families because these children are at risk of experiencing attachment-related problems, which is true. However, they also included children of biological parents, which makes the sample highly heterogeneous. In my opinion, the conclusions derived from the current study would be stronger and more robust if the authors had only included adoptive
parents (or biological parents). Being an adoptive or a biological parent has distinctive implications for children's attachment, which, of course, can be reflected in the results obtained with this measure. Therefore, I would advise the authors to examine mean differences between these groups of parents as well as the measurement invariance according to the type of family. This can be a possible approach to avoid delete all the cases from biological parents and repeat all the analyses.

- In the introduction the authors should briefly present the results of the psychometric studies of the original version of the scale (e.g., were the subscales internally consistent? Did the questionnaire present construct validity? Etc.). In addition, it is not clear whether the middle childhood version has been already subject to psychometric evaluation.

- Are there any other published validation studies of this questionnaire? The authors should clarify whether the AISI has been translated into other languages and validated in other cultures.

- In what language was this scale originally developed? I believe it is in Dutch, but this should be clearly stated.

- In the objectives of the study, the authors should clarify that the goal of the study is to examine the internal structure and reliability of the AISI 6-12 years in a clinical sample of Dutch parents (adoptive/foster care and biological). That is, they should explicitly acknowledge that (1) this study validates a Dutch version of the scale and that (2) adoptive parents and biological parents were included. If the authors decide to examine the measurement invariance by type of family, this should be also explained here.

Methods

- In the Participants section the authors explain that 681 parents of 390 children were collected. If both parents of the same child participated in the study, 780 parents should have been collected, which seems to not be the case. However, the authors state in the abstract that 390 mother-father-children dyads participated in the study. The authors should clearly explain how many parents were parents of the same child and how many parents (fathers or mothers) participated alone (i.e., not as a dyad) in the study. This has implications in the analyses.

- The sociodemographic characteristics of mothers and fathers should be presented separately and the number of mothers and fathers should be presented (as it seems that less than 390 mothers and 390 fathers participated in the study). The examination of the invariance by parents' gender underlines this need.

- What was the nationality of the participants? I'm assuming they were Dutch and that the scale was in the Dutch language but this has to be explicit.

- Pp. 5, line 56, please delete N = before 390 children; to improve readability it should be "…aged 6 to 12 years (M = 9.04, SD = 1.89);"
- Pp. 6, line 3, please delete \( M = \) before 2.35; line 10, delete \( M = \) before 44.31; you can delete the word years after the SD and the range (line 10).

- The Procedure should be explained in much more detail. How many sessions did this intervention have? In which moment did the parents complete the questionnaire? At the beginning of the intervention? At the end? Why were these parents referred to the intervention?

- In the description of the AISI:

  (a) Please clarify whether the 6-point Likert scale ranges between 1 and 6 or 0 and 5.

  (b) There is no need to clarify that questions are items, please choose one of the terms.

  (c) Please clarify whether the items were adapted by the authors of the current study or by other authors and in this case present the reference.

  (d) Please clarify whether the subscale scores are the sum or the mean of the items and provide the possible range of punctuations.

- Data analyses: please clarify how many mother-father dyads (complete cases) were used in the analyses.

Results:

- How many parents were included in models 1a and 1b?

- The decision to eliminate 8 items was only based on modification items? The exclusion of so many items should be carefully considered and the decision should not be based solely on statistical criteria. Did the authors examine corrected item-total correlations and Cronbach’s alphas upon the removal of each item, before conducting the CFA? The removal of 8 items modifies the questionnaire and should be better supported.

- A 12-item scale represents a brief version of the original 20-item scale. Are the shorter version subscales significantly correlated with the subscales in the longer version?

- Table 1: please add a note explaining what consists each model.

- Were the reliability coefficients equal for mothers and fathers? Please present these coefficients separately.

- Table 2: please present the descriptive statistics for subscale scores as well.

Discussion
- The authors discuss the removal of some items from the ambivalent scale. However, they did not present any explanation regarding the items excluded from the other subscales. It is worthwhile to discuss these results as well.

- Pp12, line 2 and line 44; pp 14, line 14; pp 15, line 59: please keep the reference formatting consistent

- The implications, namely for the content validity of the scale, of eliminating 8 items should be acknowledged and discussed.

- page 16, lines 17-22: the sentence does not read well, it seems that something is lacking.

References


Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I recommend additional statistical review

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