Reviewer’s report

Title: Psychometric properties of the Dutch version of the Evidence-Based Practice Attitude Scale (EBPAS)

Version: 1 Date: 11 August 2015

Reviewer: Eugene Maguin

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
I do not think any revisions of this type are required.

Minor Essential Revisions
Paragraph 4 of Analyses 14 ("Commonly accepted …") is inconsistent in that sentence 1 says CFA greater than .90 and RMSEA less than .10 but sentence 2 says CFI (and TLI) of .95 or greater and RMSEA of .06 or less. I think the most recent recommendations for relative fit thresholds are Hu and Bentler (1998) and these match sentence 2, not sentence 1. One or the other set of thresholds needs to be stated as used.

Discretionary Revisions
This article is a well-executed replication of prior analyses. That said, my comments focus on how the article could be made better and advance our understanding of the validity of the EBPAS-15, which, I suspect, will remain popular because of its compact size.

My strongest criticism is that the article is less innovative than it could be. One innovation is the Dutch sample. Another is the settings where the participant-subjects worked. So far as I know the views of persons working in youth care have not been assessed. As the authors note, they followed the general analytical structure used in the Aarons (2004) article and, specifically, the Aarons et al. (2010) article of doing an exploratory factor analysis on one-half of the sample followed by a confirmatory factor analysis on the other one-half. Except for the 2014 article by David Patterson et al. in Social Work Research, the consistent finding has been the four factors that Aarons intended. The unexpected prior finding was a residual covariance between items 9 and 10. Given this track record, I think the decision to split the sample was a waste of N, which was only moderate to begin with. I think the authors, based on prior work, could make strong case for beginning with a four factor confirmatory model. The 9-10 residual covariance has previously been noted and well might fix up the less than ideal fit noted for the confirmatory model, as it apparently did in second order model.

An additional innovation in this paper could take at least two different directions. One would be to establish the uniqueness of the four factors by testing a bi-factor
Another, arguably more important, would be to investigate measurement invariance. For example, using just this sample, differential item functioning of item intercepts could be investigated.

The most recent citations are to articles published in 2012. I understand that there will always be an interval between a relevant article being published and that article being cited in a submitted manuscript. However, that interval seems to be too large here because the authors miss several relevant articles on the EBPAS structure. The articles I have in mind are one by Christos Melas, appearing in Psychological Assessment, and one by David Patterson, appearing in Social Work Research (on which I am an author). Both of these articles have large samples (one Greek and one US).

This study has five sites. The authors used Type=Complex to adjust the SEs for clustering. I would like to see a sentence noting the range in ICC values that recommend a Type=Complex analysis. The study utilizes two different data collection methods: a group-administered paper copy format and an internet survey. Any site effects were confounded with any data collection method effects. Although I cannot offer example references and am not familiar with this literature, I’m sure the effects on responses of these different methods have been investigated. I think that depending on what the literature on this topic says, a sentence to acknowledge the possible existence of method effects or to refute their possible presence might fit well in the Procedure paragraph. Lastly, and because of my involvement with the Patterson et al. paper, I am curious about the item correlations, generally, and about the Divergence scale item correlations, in particular. Although I’d like to see the correlation matrix, I defer to the authors’ decision to not present it.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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.