Author’s response to reviews


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Dear reviewers of BMC Psychology,

Thanks a lot for your reviews. I add a short reply below:

1. Reviewers comments:

REVIEWER COMMENT

RESPONSE

Gian Marco Marzocchi (Reviewer 1): The manuscript presents an interesting study concerning the self-report version of the SDQ in a large sample of adolescents in Ecuador.

The Author tested different factorial models, but none of these were satisfactory, therefore more caution is suggested in the clinical use of the SDQ.

The statistical analysis are very accurate and the conclusions are clear.

In my opinion, the main problem of this manuscript is the inclusion of the entire sample in the EFA and CFA, because children and adolescents have a different self-perception of their behaviors.


I suggest to the Author to run the factor analysis splitting the sample in two: 7-11 years old and 12-17 years old, before drawing any conclusion about the poor psychometric properties of the instrument.
RESPONSE: Thanks a lot for pointing out this study, I was not aware of it. After reading it I concluded that its finding is relevant for my manuscript. I, therefore, accepted the suggestion of the reviewer.

Besides testing several models on the whole sample (7 to 17 years old), I stratified the data into two groups. First, since the readability problems might be an issue for children under 13, the first dataset includes only children from 7 to 12 years old. Second, I performed all the analysis again in a dataset that includes children whose ages range from 13 to 17 years old. Therefore, you will find reliability and validity coefficients for three datasets: i) whole sample (7-17 years old) ii) children 7-12 years old and iii) children 13-17 years old. Additionally, I have performed a new analysis of psychometric equivalence (measurement invariance), this time comparing group 1 (7 to 12 years old) to group 2 (13-17 years old).

Clarification requested by email by editor Dr Sam Harris:

“Specifically, I wished to ask you whether you might justify your methodology in which you examined the use of the SDQ in students with ages ranging from 7 to 17 years old, in light of the possibility that children and adolescents might have a different self-perception of their behaviors. For example, see Patalay et al., 2018 (doi:10.1192/bjo.2017.13). In your response, please also outline if you considered stratifying the data, and the reasons for employing the final analytical methodology described in the manuscript with the above in mind.”

RESPONSE: Despite the SDQ was designed for children from 11 to 17 years old, the instrument has been validated in children as young as 6 years old. I have included this information in the manuscript. I have stratified the data to take into account what you have pointed out.

Changes made in the manuscript:

- I have made minor corrections of style and format across the manuscript (e.g. replace words by synonyms)
- All changes to the manuscript are indicated in the text using the track changes function.
- Since I have stratified the data to comply with the reviewer’s comments, I have updated the abstract section (Methods, Results, and Conclusions)
- In the background section I have included the following text “Despite the self-respondent version was designed to be answered by children and adolescents ages 11 to 17 years old, other research has validated the SDQ in children as young as 6 years old [5–7]. However, other research has also suggested that the readability of the questionnaire is deficient in children under 13 [8].”
- In the data analysis section, I have included the following text: “Additionally, all four models were tested in three age groups: i) the whole sample of children with ages ranging
from 7 to 17 years old, ii) children from 7 to 12 years old, and, iii) children from 13 to 17 years old. Despite the SDQ has been validated in children as young as 6 years old, those under 13 might have limited reading abilities [7, 8].”

- I have updated the content of tables 4-9.

- In the discussion section, I have included the following text: “Furthermore, the analysis reveals that there is indeed a difference between children that are below 13 years old and those who are older than 13, but psychometric properties remain poor when the data is stratified suggesting that the poor psychometric properties might not only be a result of insufficient reading abilities as suggested in other research.”

- In the conclusions section, I have updated the last paragraph: “The prosocial behavior and the internalizing problems subscale reported in Model C has barely acceptable internal consistency. Consequently, only these subscales of the SDQ should be used but interpreted with caution when screening for psychopathological symptoms and jointly with other scales.”