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Original research article

The reliability of Malay version of parenting stress index-short form (PSI-SF) among caregivers of individuals with learning disabilities



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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Care demands faced by parents of children with learning disabilities (LD) can cause significant stress to them. The parenting stress index-short form (PSI-SF) questionnaire is a widely used instrument to measure parental stress. Cross-cultural translation of PSI-SF takes place to cater the different population around the world. Recently, a cross-cultural translation was implemented in the Malay language. The Malay version of the PSI-SF was developed and tested for psychometric properties among caregivers of individual with LD.

Aim: The main aim of this study was to examine the reliability and internal consistency of the Malay version of PSI-SF.

Material and methods: PSI-SF in English version was translated into Malay language. Back translation, comparison and modification were executed to obtain PSI-SF in Malay version. A total of 30 caregivers who handle individuals with LD were surveyed to evaluate the reliability of PSI-SF in the Malay version.

Results and discussion: The reliability of PSI-SF in the Malay version was good with Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.944$. The internal consistency on subscale of PSI-SF such as parental distress, parent-child dysfunction and difficult child also scored a high internal consistency with value 0.90, 0.82, and 0.87 respectively.

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Conclusions: The Malay version of the PSI-SF is a reliable questionnaire to evaluate the level of stress among the caregivers of children with LD.

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1. Introduction

The identified prevalence of learning disabilities (LD) has increased significantly around the world over the last few decades.¹ Raising a child with LD can be a challengeable experience for caregivers.² Previous studies showed that caregivers of children with LD have higher stress when compared to caregivers of typically-developing children.³ Increased parenting stress is also associated with a lack of positive parenting behavior.³ Parenting stress is shown to play a crucial role in the quality of parenting that parents provide and the subsequent development of social behavior in children with LD.⁴ It is important that researchers and clinicians have valid and reliable instruments to measure parenting stress among caregivers of children with LD. In order to detect the stress level, various questionnaires or measures of self-report have been developed in the English language.⁵ Self-report measures are popular methods of measuring parenting stress because they tend to be inexpensive and consume the least time as a method of measurement.⁵ One such self-report instrument is the parenting stress index (PSI).⁶ PSI is the commonly used instrument to assess parental stress in clinical and research settings.⁷

There are two versions of this instrument designed by Abidin (1983, 1995), the full form and the short form.⁸ Although the full version PSI has been shown to have strong psychometric properties, with 120 items, the length of the PSI can be weighty and difficult for researchers, clinicians, and participants.⁷ The length of the questionnaire and the time required for its administration are the limitations of the full version of PSI.⁷ PSI-short form (PSI-SF) which has 36 items was derived from the full version to solve this limitation.⁷ The PSI-SF can be administered quickly to allow the clinicians to easily identify families needing intervention or follow-up.⁷

The items comprise of three subscales which are parent distress, difficult child, and parent-child dysfunctional interaction.⁷ The parent distress subscale would measure the distress level of feelings of parents about their parenting role apart from their other personal stresses.⁹ The difficult child subscale determines behaviors that children regularly engage that may make parenting easier or more difficult. The parent-child dysfunctional interaction subscale emphasizes on the degree to which the child is reinforcing to the parent and the degree to which the child meets the expectations of the parents.⁹ The sum of these three subscales offers a final overall score which is called 'total stress'.⁷ The score on this variable indicates the degree of stress that parents experience in their role as parents.⁷ PSI also reflects the tension found in the areas

of the parents' personal distress, tensions arising from interaction with the child, and those which origins are from the behavioral characteristics of the child.⁷

PSI-SF is a reliable and valid instrument across cultures such as Turkish and French.⁶ In this study, a Malay version of the PSI-SF is framed to comprehend the parental stress for parents of children with LD in a South-East Asian cultural context in countries such as Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and Singapore where Malay language is commonly spoken. Using a questionnaire in foreign language may influence the outcome of the measurement property due to cultural and language differences.¹⁰ The translation process may instigate errors in syntax and meaning of the items in questionnaire.¹¹ In such cases, it is crucial to test the internal consistency of a tool to ensure the trustworthiness of the instrument and the translation process of the tool.¹⁰

2. Aim

The main aim of this study is to investigate the reliability of the Malay version of PSI-SF.

3. Material and methods

3.1. Participants

This was a cross-sectional study conducted among 30 caregivers who handle children with LD. The participants who brought their children with LD for acquiring health services at an institutional hospital were enlisted for this study using a convenient sampling method. A pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria were used for the recruitment of study participants. The inclusion criteria were parents/caregivers who have children with LD aged between 3 and 16 years old. The definition of caregivers is meant to include biological parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, relatives or guardians of the individual with LD. Parents who reported to be having psychological problems or in habit of any substance abuse were excluded from the study.

3.2. Instruments

The PSI-SF is a questionnaire or a self-reported measure comprising 36 items.⁶ Parents responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale.⁶ It attempted to evaluate stress experienced during paternity and maternity.¹² It is presumed that parental stress can be determined by the characteristics of the parents, certain child behavioral traits and situation variables directly related

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