

Research report

Factor structure and internal consistency of the Young Schema Questionnaire (Short Form) in Korean and Australian samples

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Abstract

We investigated cross-cultural differences in the factor structure and psychometric properties of the 75-item Young Schema Questionnaire-Short Form (YSQ-SF). Participants were 833 South Korean and 271 Australian undergraduate students. The South Korean sample was randomly divided into two sub-samples. Sample A was used for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and sample B was used for Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). EFA for the South Korean sample revealed a 13-factor solution to be the best fit for the data, and CFA on the data from sample B confirmed this result. CFA on the data from the Australian sample also revealed a 13-factor solution. The overall scale of the YSQ-SF demonstrated a high level of internal consistency in the South Korean and Australian groups. Furthermore, adequate internal consistencies for all subscales in the South Korean and Australian samples were demonstrated. In conclusion, the results showed that YSQ-SF with 13 factors has good psychometric properties and reliability for South Korean and Australian University students. Korean samples had significantly higher YSD scores on most of the 13 subscales than the Australian sample. However, limitations of the current study preclude the generalisability of the findings to beyond undergraduate student populations.

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1. Introduction

Since its conception, Beck's Cognitive Theory of depression (Beck, 1967) has been extensively researched (e.g. Clark and Beck, 1999; Kwon and Oei, 1994; Oei et al., in press), and has been successfully used as the basis for the psychological approach to the treatment of depression (e.g. Oei and

Free, 1995). The central tenets of the model suggest that depression is underpinned by a triad of cognitive distortions that include a negative view of the self, the world, and the future (Beck, 1967). The model suggests that maladaptive cognitive schemas support these distorted cognitions, which involve inflexible and unattainable self-expectations. Although research on depression has paid considerable attention to the influence of cognitive distortions (e.g., Beck et al., 1979; Clark and Beck, 1999; Kwon and Oei, 1994), empirical investigations into the role of schemas have been somewhat limited. One plausible explanation for the lack of research on schemas is that their role in

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depression has been difficult to evaluate because they are thought to operate at an unconscious level within the cognitive system.

However, Young (1990, 1994) extended Beck's original model by identifying maladaptive schemas, which are assumed to encompass deeply entrenched patterns of distorted thinking about the world, oneself, and one's relationship with others. Originally, Young (1990) proposed 16 schemas based on clinical experiences. They were Abandonment, Mistrust/Abuse, Emotional Deprivation, Dependence/Incompetence, Vulnerability to Harm/Illness, Enmeshment, Defectiveness/Shame, Social Undesirability, Failure to Achieve, Subjugation, Emotional Inhibition, Unrelenting Standards, Entitlement, Insufficient Self-Control, Social Isolation/Alienation and Self-Sacrifice. He argues that these maladaptive schemas result from the interaction between the individual's emotional temperament and deleterious early life experiences, and that subsequent adult psychopathology arises from the initiation and maintenance of these established core beliefs (Young, 1990, 1994; Young et al., 2003). A more comprehensive evaluation of Young's schema theory has been undertaken in a review by Oei and Baranoff (submitted for publication).

Young's contribution to the recent progress in the assessment and influence of maladaptive schemas in depression has been made through the development the Young Schema Questionnaire-Long Form (YSQ-LF; Young, 1990, 1994). The YSQ-LF is a 205-item inventory that assesses the presence of 15 maladaptive schemas. A considerable body of literature has established the reliability and validity of this measure (e.g., Lee et al., 1999; Schmidt et al., 1995). More recently, a short form (75 items) of the instrument has been developed (Young Schema Questionnaire-Short Form; YSQ-SF; Young, 1998). At this time the psychometric properties of the YSQ-SF have received less empirical psychometric evaluation.

The available research suggests that the YSQ-LF and the YSQ-SF have comparable discriminant validity in assessing unconditional, schema-level cognitions, or core beliefs. For example, Waller et al. (2001) found that the false positive rate in a group of women with eating disorders (i.e., non-clinical women assigned to the clinical group) was 7% for the short form and 10% for the long form. Similarly, false negative rates (i.e., clinical women assigned to the non-clinical group) were 18% and 12% respectively. Research has also shown no discernable difference in the pattern of alpha scores between the long and short forms of the schema questionnaire, which suggests that the short form of the

scale has good internal consistency (Waller et al., 2001; Stopa et al., 2001).

Welburn et al. (2000) evaluated the predictive validity of the YSQ-SF for detecting depression. In a sample of 202 psychiatric patients, the instrument accounted for a significant proportion of the variance of depression scores (47%), as measured by the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI; Derogatis, 1993). Two subscales (Abandonment and Insufficient Self-Control) accounted for a unique proportion of the variance in depression scores (12.5% and 5.5%, respectively). Welburn et al. (2000) noted that conceptually there might be some overlap between the Insufficient Self-Control schema and the symptoms of depression such as lack of energy and motivation. Similarly, Glaser et al. (2002) found that YSQ-SF total scores accounted for 54% of the variance of scores on the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck et al., 1979). Glaser et al. (2002) also revealed that the Abandonment/Instability subscale contributed to the total variance at a level significantly above that of the remaining 14 subscales.

Although limited, the available evidence suggests that the YSQ-SF has good internal consistency as well as good predictive and discriminant validity. A limitation of the available data concerning the psychometric properties of the YSQ-SF is that research has been conducted exclusively on Western samples, and as such, the generality of the instrument to non-Western populations is not known. In fact, researchers have raised the possibility that the current factor structure of the YSQ-LF might be bound by similarities across Western samples only (Lee et al., 1999; Schmidt et al., 1995). It seems plausible to suggest that differences between Eastern and Western cultures might produce differences in factor structures for the measure. For example, research into psychopathology in Asian cultures suggests that participants responded differently on a large number of items relating to social behaviour and interpersonal relationships, attitudes of nonchalance and stoicism, acceptance of low arousal and low activity level, emphasis on hard work and careful planning, admission of physical illness, fears and psychological problems, religion, and inclination towards modesty (Cheung et al., 1991, 1996). It was also argued that these elevations were attributed to cultural differences in beliefs, values and practices rather than deviance.

The aim of the present study was to investigate cross-national differences in the psychometric properties and factor structure of the 75-item YSQ-SF (Young, 1998), and to compare these findings across South Korean and Australian samples. It was

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