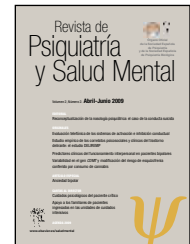


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ORIGINAL

Evaluation of behavioural activation and inhibition systems by telephone

Alejandra Pinto-Meza,^{a,b,*} David Suárez,^a Xavier Caseras,^b Josep Maria Haro,^a
Antoni Serrano-Blanco^a and Rafael Torrubia^b

^aSant Joan de Déu Foundation, Research and Development Unit, Sant Joan de Déu-SSM, Barcelona, Spain

^bMedical Psychology Unit and Neuroscience Institute, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

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Abstract

Introduction and objectives: The activity of behavioral inhibition and activation systems (BIS and BAS) has been related to several mental disorders. The availability of a validated questionnaire to assess BIS and BAS over the telephone could aid research. The objective of the present study was to evaluate the procedural validity of telephone administration of the sensitivity to punishment/sensitivity to reward questionnaire (SPSRQ) as a measure of BIS and BAS activity (by means of its two scales: the sensitivity to punishment [SP] scale and the sensitivity to reward [SR] scale).

Methods: A total of 231 participants were assessed with the SPSRQ twice (over the telephone and in a self-administered format). Intraclass correlation coefficients and kappa indices were calculated. Additionally, possible differences between the mean scores obtained with the two assessment procedures and internal consistency were explored.

Results: Telephone and self-assessment of BIS and BAS, by means of the SPSRQ, provided similar results, supporting the procedural validity of telephone administration. A slight but statistically significant tendency (estimated betha = 0.62; 95% CI, 0.33-0.92; $p < 0.001$) toward lower scores was observed for the telephone-administered SP scale and for the interaction "first or second assessment/telephone or self-administered SPSRQ" for the SR scale ($p = 0.023$).

Conclusions: The results of the present study support the reliability of telephone assessment of BIS and BAS by means of the SPSRQ.

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*Corresponding author.

E-mail: apinto@sjd-ssm.com (A. Pinto-Meza).

PALABRAS CLAVE

Evaluación telefónica;
Sistema de activación
conductual;
Sistema de inhibición
conductual;
CSCSR

Evaluación telefónica de los sistemas de activación e inhibición conductual**Resumen**

Introducción y objetivos: La actividad de los sistemas de activación e inhibición conductual (SAC y SIC) se ha relacionado con diversos trastornos mentales. Tener un instrumento que permita evaluar telefónicamente la actividad del SAC y el SIC podría facilitar la investigación. El objetivo del presente estudio fue evaluar la validez del procedimiento de administración telefónica del cuestionario sensibilidad al castigo y sensibilidad a la recompensa (CSCSR) como medida de la actividad del SAC y el SIC, mediante sus dos escalas: la escala sensibilidad al castigo (SC) y la escala sensibilidad a la recompensa (SR). **Métodos:** Un total de 231 sujetos fueron evaluados en dos oportunidades con el CSCSR (una vez por teléfono y otra en formato autoadministrado). Se calcularon el coeficiente de correlación intraclase y el índice kappa. Además, se exploraron posibles diferencias entre la media de las puntuaciones obtenidas en ambas modalidades y la consistencia interna.

Resultados: Los resultados permiten establecer que la evaluación telefónica y en formato autoadministrado del SIC y el SAC, mediante el CSCSR, ofrece resultados similares, lo que avala una adecuada validez del procedimiento de la administración telefónica del cuestionario. Hay una tendencia pequeña pero estadísticamente significativa (beta estimada = 0,62; intervalo de confianza del 95%, 0,33-0,92; $p < 0,001$) a puntuaciones menores para la administración telefónica de la escala SC y para la interacción "primera o segunda evaluación/CSCSR aplicado por teléfono o en formato autoadministrado" para la escala SR ($p = 0,023$).

Conclusiones: Los resultados de este estudio avalan la fiabilidad de la evaluación telefónica del SIC y el SAC mediante el CSCSR.

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Introduction

From a neurobehavioural perspective, personality traits arise from individual differences in the activity of certain brain systems or circuits. According to Gray,¹ the behavioural inhibition system (BIS) and the behavioural activation system (BAS) are two (out of a total of three) general systems, which underlie two orthogonal personality dimensions. The third system proposed by the author, the fight/flight system, mediates emotions such as anger or panic. It has been proposed that different constellations of BIS and BAS activity might be related to various mental disorders. For example, it has been suggested that BIS hyperactivity is related to anxiety disorders,¹ BIS hypoactivity to psychopathy^{2,3}; BIS hypoactivity and BAS hyperactivity to problems resulting from substance abuse, and histrionic and anti-social personality disorders,⁴ and BAS hypoactivity and BIS hyperactivity to depression.⁵⁻⁷

Traditionally, BAS and BIS activity have been evaluated using self-administered questionnaires. However, when epidemiological studies or studies involving large samples distributed over extensive geographical areas are conducted, the administration of the instruments which are used by telephone is a great advantage, in particular because it reduces geographical barriers, which facilitates contact with interview candidates. In fact, several structured interviews and symptom scales have shown the validity of their procedures to be adequate in versions administered by telephone, given that a reasonable level of similitude

has been established between face-to-face evaluations and evaluations conducted by telephone (for example, the Personality Disorder Examination,⁸ the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-III axis I Disorders SCID⁹ or the Patient Health Questionnaire 9-item Depression Module PHQ-9¹⁰). The concept of procedure validity refers to the extent to which a new procedure (for example, the administration of a specific scale or questionnaire by telephone) offers similar results to those for an established procedure which is used as a criterion (for example, the self-administered application). The validity of the procedure refers exclusively to the question of the validity of the evaluation procedure and not to the validity of the instrument as such.¹¹

The principal aim of this study was to determine the validity of the procedure for the administration of the sensitivity to punishment/sensitivity to reward questionnaire (SPSRQ) by telephone in a primary care (PC) subject sample. The SPSRQ is a self-administered questionnaire designed to evaluate individual differences in BAS and BIS activity (a detailed description of this instrument can be consulted in other articles).^{12,13} In addition, two other aspects were evaluated: a) the extent to which differences in the score average obtained between the two evaluation procedures might be related to the difference in the mode of administration of the instrument or to the fact that the subjects responded to the same instrument on two occasions, and b) the internal consistency of the questionnaire administered by telephone compared to the internal consistency of the questionnaire applied in a self-administered format.

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