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Abstract

There is a need for instruments that can be used in correctional settings to measure changes in aggressive behaviors over a limited time period. This study aimed to validate an instrument (the Prison Adjusted Measure of Aggression, PAMA) that assesses specifically the past month's aggressive *behaviors* and is adapted for use in correctional facilities. The psychometric properties of the self-rated and interview versions of the PAMA were explored and compared to those of two well-established measures of aggression: The Staff Observation Aggression Scale (SOAS); and the self-rate Aggression Questionnaire-Revised Swedish Version (AQ-RSV). The study group comprised 93 male and 59 female inmates, who were followed for two months. During the study, the prevalence of aggressive acts was observed and reported by SOAS. On two occasions, at monthly intervals, subjects reported their own aggressive behaviors using AQ-RSV and the self-report version of the PAMA; also, a psychologist conducted interviews according to PAMA. This study's main finding was that the self-rated version of PAMA is a valid measure of different types and dimensions of aggression (physical and verbal aggression, hostility) and has acceptable psychometric properties. Therefore, PAMA could potentially be of value for use in correctional services evaluating aggression managing treatment interventions.

Keywords: Aggression, Prison, Psychometric, the PAMA

1. Introduction

In studies of aggressive behavior, offender populations are particularly interesting. The costs and consequences of violent crime have warranted a significant amount of research on offender populations, in which the relationship between aggressive behavior, mental disorders, neurological factors, and criminality has been extensively investigated (e.g., Falk et al., 2013; Gilbert et al., 2013; Golden et al., 1996). As the understanding of risk factors for aggressive behavior and criminality is evolving, the focus in this area should shift toward developing and evaluating relevant treatment strategies that lead to evidence-based intervention programs.

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