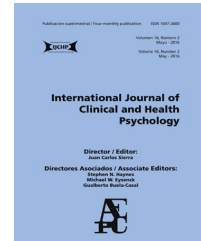




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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Short Form of the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents among community and institutionalized Portuguese youths

Cristina Nunes^{a,*}, Lara Ayala-Nunes^b, Pedro Pechorro^c, Annette M. La Greca^d

^a Psychology Research Centre (CIP) & University of Algarve, Portugal

^b Department of Psychology, University of Warwick, United Kingdom

^c School of Psychology, University of Minho & University of Coimbra, Portugal

^d Department of Psychology, University of Miami, USA

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KEYWORDS

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Abstract *Background/Objective:* Social anxiety is a common issue arising in adolescence that can cause significant impairment and have detrimental consequences for development in the absence of treatment. In this study we examined the factor structure and the psychometric properties of a 12-item short form of the Portuguese-Language Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A-SF). *Method:* A community adolescent sample ($N = 835$) and a young offender sample ($N = 244$) completed the SAS-A, the Basic Empathy Scale and the Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire. Confirmatory factor analysis, internal consistency, cross gender and cross sample invariance, convergent and discriminant validity of the SAS-A-SF were analyzed. *Results:* The confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the 3-factor second-order model obtained the best fit. The results provided evidence that the SAS-A-SF is a psychometrically sound instrument that shows measurement invariance across genders and across samples, good reliability and positive correlations with empathy. *Conclusions:* The Portuguese version of SAS-A-SF is a useful, time-efficient tool for both researchers and practitioners who need to assess social anxiety, a relevant construct in adolescent psychopathology.

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* Corresponding author: Departamento de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação, Universidade do Algarve, Campus de Gambelas, Edifício 1, 8005-139 Faro, Portugal
E-mail address: csnunes@ualg.pt (C. Nunes).

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Adolescencia;
ansiedad social;
empatía;
validación;
estudio instrumental

Versión abreviada de la *Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents* en una población comunitaria e institucionalizada de jóvenes portugueses

Resumen *Antecedentes/Objetivo:* La ansiedad social es un problema común con inicio en la adolescencia que puede causar impedimentos y consecuencias negativas en el desarrollo en ausencia de tratamiento. En el presente estudio analizamos la estructura factorial y las propiedades psicométricas de una forma abreviada de 12 ítems de la versión portuguesa de la *Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents* (SAS-A-SF). *Método:* Una muestra de adolescentes de la población general ($N = 835$) y de infractores institucionalizados ($N = 244$) completó el SAS-A, la *Basic Empathy Scale* y el *Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire*. Realizamos un análisis factorial confirmatorio y analizamos la consistencia interna, la invariancia entre sexos y muestras, la validez convergente y discriminante de la SAS-A-SF. *Resultados:* El análisis factorial confirmatorio mostró que el modelo de segundo orden con tres factores era el que mejor se ajustaba a los datos. Los resultados apuntan a que la SAS-A-SF es un instrumento con buenas propiedades psicométricas que muestra invariancia de medida entre sexos y muestras, una buena fiabilidad y correlaciones positivas con la empatía. *Conclusiones:* La versión portuguesa de la SAS-A-SF es una herramienta útil y eficiente para investigadores y terapeutas que necesiten evaluar la ansiedad social, un constructo relevante en la psicopatología adolescente.

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Social anxiety disorder (SAD), one of the most common forms of adolescent psychopathology, can cause significant impairment in different life domains, such as academic functioning and interpersonal relationships (Ranta, La Greca, Kaltiala-Heino, & Marttunen, 2016). It involves persistent and excessive fear of unfamiliar social or performance situations, which are frequently avoided. This avoidance is likely to hinder adolescents' development, as they may have a more restricted social world and engage in fewer extra-curricular activities (Nelemans et al., 2016), even presenting a higher risk of early school dropout (Van Ameringen, Mancini, & Farvolden, 2003).

SAD has an early onset (Fehm, Beesdo, Jacobi, & Fiedler, 2008), a relatively high prevalence in adolescents (with estimated rates between 5.0% and 9.1%; Costello, Egger, Copeland, Erkanli, & Angold, 2011; Merikangas et al., 2010), and a negative prognosis in the absence of treatment (Bornas, de la Torre-Luque, Fiol-Veny, & Balle, 2017). These findings suggest that having time and cost-effective, valid, and reliable screening tools available to accurately detect this disorder and monitor treatment progress is crucial (Buela-Casal, & Guillén-Riquelme, 2017).

Furthermore, SAD in adolescence is longitudinally associated with several negative outcomes: it substantially increases the risk for subsequent depression (Beesdo et al., 2007), on- and off-line victimization of bullying (Álvarez-García, Nuñez, Dobarro, & Rodríguez, 2015; Jiménez & Estévez, 2017), internet addiction (Stavropoulos et al., 2017) and alcohol use (Black et al., 2015).

Although SAD has been linked to poorer social functioning (e.g., Keller, 2006), there are intriguing findings in the literature that point in opposite directions, suggesting that socially anxious youths may have increased empathy levels (Tibi-Elhanany & Shamay-Tsoory, 2011) and be less prone

to exhibit aggressive and delinquent behaviours (DeWall, Buckner, Lambert, Cohen, & Fincham, 2010).

The existence of gender differences in SAD prevalence is well established, with female youths typically reporting more social anxiety (SA) than males (Merikangas et al., 2010), which emphasizes the importance of ensuring that measures are gender invariant. Cultural variations in the experience and expression of SAD, however, remain largely unexplored. The extant research on this topic supports the existence of cultural differences, with individuals from collectivistic countries being generally more accepting toward socially withdrawn and reticent behaviors, and reporting higher levels of SA and more fear of blushing than participants from individualistic countries (Heinrichs et al., 2006). Thus, it is important to validate SA measures in non Anglo-Saxon cultures to ensure that the instrument is able to capture accurately the meaning of this construct in different societies. Portuguese adolescents lead, to some extent, lives that are similar to youths in other Western nations (WHO Europe, 2016). Although we could categorize Portugal as an individualistic society in the Eastern vs. Western axis, the country's Catholic tradition and its alignment with Mediterranean cultures mean that a strong emphasis is placed on family relationships and the family unit, as well as belongingness and social interdependence (Guerreiro, 2014). In this study, we will attempt to validate a golden standard measure of SA with Portuguese youths.

Among the most used and empirically supported questionnaires for measuring SA is the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A, La Greca & López, 1998). It contains three subscales: Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Social Avoidance and Distress-New (SAD-New) and Social Avoidance and Distress-General (SAD-Gen). This instrument has received consistent empirical support demonstrating its reliability as a screening tool (Tulbure, Szentagotai, Dobrea, &

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