THE YOUNG SCHEMA QUESTIONNAIRE-REVISED (YSQ-R): RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ASSESSMENT OF EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS

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Abstract

Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS), arising from unmet childhood needs, are central to Schema Therapy. The Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ) is the primary tool for assessing EMS, yet its psychometric properties have been subject to debate. This presentation highlights recent advancements in understanding and assessing EMS through rigorous psychometric evaluation of the YSQ and the development of the Young Schema Questionnaire-Revised (YSQ-R).

Initial factor analysis of the YSQ-Long Form (YSQ-L3) using a large sample (N=838) supported 20 rather than the originally proposed 18. This analysis found that the original Emotional Inhibition schema is better understood as two separate schemas: Emotional Constriction and Fear of Losing Control. Similarly, Punitiveness was better represented by two constructs: Punitiveness (Self) and Punitiveness (Other).

A subsequent study marked the first item-level psychometric assessment of the YSQ-L3 using Rasch analysis on a large clinical sample, providing further support for these findings. Findings revealed that 116 of 232 items showed poor fit. Removing the poorly fitting items resulted in a more psychometrically robust, revised version, the YSQ-R. This study also confirmed 20 rather than 18 EMS. This rigorous approach highlighted the need for a revised conceptualisation of specific EMS.

Finally, a study compared the predictive validity of the YSQ-L3, YSQ-Short Form (YSQ-S3), and the Rasch-derived YSQ-R in predicting psychological distress across three psychiatric groups and a non-clinical group. Test equating ensured comparability between versions. Results indicated that the YSQ-R and YSQ-L3 demonstrated similar predictive power, while the YSQ-S3 showed limitations in predicting EMS and symptom severity in PTSD and Substance Use groups.

These findings have important theoretical and practical implications. They suggest refining the conceptualisation of specific EMS and highlighting the YSQ-R as a more reliable and efficient tool for assessing schemas in both research and clinical settings. The YSQ-R offers the breadth of the long form with the brevity of the short form, making it a valuable instrument for advancing the assessment of EMS in Schema Therapy.

Keywords: *Schema Therapy, YSQ-R, Rasch analysis, assessment, Early Maladaptive Schemas.*

1. Introduction

The series of investigations presented in this paper focus on the assessment of Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS) using the Young Schema Questionnaire-Revised (YSQ-R). The first study involves a factor analysis of the YSQ-Long Form (YSQ-L3), which supports the existence of 20 EMS rather than the originally proposed 18. The second study marks the first item-level psychometric assessment of the YSQ-L3 using Rasch analysis, resulting in a more clinically and statistically robust revised version, the YSQ-R. The final study compares the predictive validity of the YSQ-L3, YSQ-Short Form (YSQ-S3), and the YSQ-R in predicting psychological distress across different groups, highlighting the YSQ-R as a reliable and efficient tool for assessing EMS.

2. Study 1: Factor structure of the Young Schema Questionnaire (Long Form-3)

2.1. Introduction

Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS) are transdiagnostic and have been found to underlie several chronic psychological disorders. The Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ) is the most widely used tool to assess EMS, however findings of the primary and higher order factor structures of EMS have yielded mixed findings. The aim of this study was to assess the factor structure of the English version of the Young Schema Questionnaire Long Form-3 (YSQ-L3) using a large clinical sample and smaller non-clinical population. The items in the YSQ-L3 were evaluated as to how well they assess the underlying theoretical constructs of schema and schema domains.

2.2. Method

A primary and a higher order factor (HOF) analysis was undertaken on a large heterogeneous clinical sample (N = 574) and the total sample (N = 838) that included a small non-clinical population (N = 264).

2.3. Results

The primary factor analysis revealed 20 EMS. Of the 232 items, 182 loaded above .4 and were retained for the final analysis. The original Emotional Inhibition schema separated into Emotional Constriction and Fear of Losing Control, and Punitiveness likewise separated into Punitiveness (Self) and Punitiveness (Other). The HOF analysis indicated four domains: Emotional Dysregulation, Disconnection, Impaired Autonomy/ Underdeveloped Self, and Excessive Responsibility/Overcontrol. These overlap with the domains proposed by Young et al. (2003) but with some differences. The Emotion Dysregulation domain was unique to the current study. The mean item loading for each factor ranged from .52 to .82. The revised scale showed excellent overall internal consistency (a = .91).

2.4. Conclusions

This was the first study that investigated the psychometric properties of the English version of the YSQ-L3. The resultant domains fitted with existing literature of meaningful clinical phenomenon such as attachment and emotion dysregulation and their role in maintaining chronic psychological disorders.

3. Study 2

3.1. Introduction

Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS) are transdiagnostic constructs that arise from unmet needs in childhood and become self-perpetuating through destructive patterns of interacting with the self, others, and the world. The Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ) is the primary assessment tool used to assess 18 EMS, usually as part of Schema Therapy which is designed to treat complex and chronic psychological disorders. Psychometric evaluations of the YSQ have primarily focused on factor structure and assessing the higher-order schema domains and have consistently yielded mixed findings across all versions. The aim of this study was to refine the YSQ-L3 by identifying the most statistically and clinically appropriate items for each EMS using Rasch analysis.

3.2. Method

A Rasch analysis was undertaken on a large sample (N = 838) that included a heterogeneous clinical sample (N = 574) and a smaller non-clinical group (N = 264).

3.3. Results

Overall, 116 out of 232 items showed misfit across a number of statistical indicators. After the removal of these items, the fit improved for all subscales and showed good (.74) to excellent (.86) reliability with the exception of Enmeshment (.57). In line with previous research, items originally measuring Punitiveness were found to better fit two separate subscales, Punitiveness (Self) and Punitiveness (Other). Similarly, items assessing Emotional Inhibition fit better as two different constructs; Emotional Constriction, reflecting an over-control related to shame/embarrassment of showing emotions, and Fear of Losing Control, related to anxiety of the consequences if emotions are not contained.

3.4. Conclusions

This is the first study to apply a rigorous methodological process to item selection from the YSQ -L3. The findings of this study are significant given the wide use of this scale cross culturally in both clinical and research settings and offer a possible alternative to the current short form.

4. Study 3: The YSQ-R: Predictive validity and comparison to the Short and Long Form Young Schema Questionnaire

4.1. Introduction

The capacity of the Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ) to predict psychopathology in specific clinical groups has consistently produced mixed findings. This study assessed three versions of the Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ), including the long form (YSQ-L3), short form (YSQ-S3), and the recent Rasch-derived version, the YSQ-R, and their subscales, in predicting psychological distress in three different psychiatric groups and a non-clinical group.

4.2. Method

Test equating techniques were first applied to derive a common metric to ensure that each YSQ version was directly comparable. In the second stage, multiple regression analyses were employed to assess the predictive validity of each YSQ version and their subscales. The YSQ-R and YQ-L3 and their respective subscales were similar in their predictive power across all groups and conditions.

4.3. Results

The YSQ-R and YSQ-L3 and their respective subscales were similar in their predictive power across all groups and conditions. In contrast, the YSQ-S3 could not predict pre-treatment EMS and global symptom severity in the PTSD group, nor could it predict pre-treatment EMS and changes in global symptom severity in the Alcohol and Substance use group.

4.4. Conclusions

This was the first study to assess the predictive validity of three different versions of the YSQ. It was also the first study to apply modern test theory to the assessment of EMS and the YSQ. Our findings suggest that YSQ-R has the breadth of the YSQ-L3 and the shortness of the YSQ-S3, making it an ideal tool for assessing EMS across research and clinical settings.

References

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