The Frequency of Self-Reinforcement Questionnaire: Factor Structure and Implications for Psychopathology

Meagan B. MacKenzie, Melody K. Sorenson, & Peter G. Mezo

INTRODUCTION

- Theories of self-management have been empirically demonstrated to be relevant for emotional disorders, such as depression (Rehm, 1977).
- Research on the factor structure of the dichotomous version of the FSQ has resulted in a five-factor model (Wagner, Holden, & Jannarone, 1988), however no such analysis has been conducted using the Likert version of this measure.
- The objective of the current research is to examine and evaluate the factor structure of the FSQ in both a dichotomous and a Likert version, and to examine its components in relation to emotional disorder symptoms.

METHOD

- The Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979) is a 21-item instrument which measures depression symptoms and attitudes indicative of depressed mood. Higher scores indicate greater depressive symptom severity.
- The Clinical Anxiety Scale (Westhuis & Thyer, 1989) consists of 25 items assessing how often individuals experience symptoms of anxiety, particularly those of phobias and panic. Higher scores indicate greater anxiety.

RESULTS

- A number of factor analyses were performed for both versions of the FSQ, both orthogonal and oblique. The most interpretable was using principal axis factoring with Promax rotation for four factors. The cutoff for factor loadings was established at .32 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).
- Using the Likert version in Sample 1, an examination of the scree plot clearly indicated four factors.

DISCUSSION

- The factor structure found by Wagner, et al. (1988) was not replicated using these three samples. This may be due to several issues, namely dichotomous scales being problematic for factor analyses, and how the previous authors split their data by gender.
- A dichotomous measure may lack sufficient response variability necessary for yielding a factor structure which can be readily interpreted and replicated. Previous literature has suggested refraining from such analyses, or interpreting results with a great deal of caution (e.g. Polit, 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).
- The examination of the two Likert versions indicated that this version has a more consistent factor structure, therefore the availability and use of the Likert version of the FSQ may have more utility and may serve to address the issues inherent with using a dichotomous measure.
- Both the constructs of self-punishment and self-reward were associated with anxiety and depression, which is consistent with theoretical underpinnings (Rehm, 1977).
- Future directions include further examination of this measure, and adapting the two-factor, nine-item solution as an abbreviated version of the FSQ.