

Conceptualizing the borderline personality scale

Psychology



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Conceptualizing the Borderline Personality Scale

I) The personality trait I will be attempting to measure is borderline personality disorder.

II) Construct domains under study: impulsive, and sometimes self-destructive, behavior; intense, unstable personal relationships; chronic fear of abandonment; distorted thoughts; difficulty controlling emotions.

III) To test the reliability and validity of this test, a replication of the study would need to be conducted. The results of this test would also need to be compared to similar measures to determine if the questions presented were, in fact, predicting borderline personality.

IV) I will be using a 5-point Likert scale for my personality assessment.

V)

1) I hate being by myself. 1 2 3 4 5

2) I find it hard to trust people. 1 2 3 4 5

3) I frequently exhibit self-destructive behaviors (excessive drinking; drug abuse; unprotected sex). 1 2 3 4 5

4) When a relationship ends, I am usually the one who gets hurt the most.
1 2 3 4 5

5) I often have suicidal thoughts. 1 2 3 4 5

6) I find it difficult to try to control my emotions. 1 2 3 4 5

7) I find it easy to lie. 1 2 3 4 5

8) When something upsets me, someone else is usually to blame. 1 2 3 4 5

9) I tend to do things on impulse. 1 2 3 4 5

10) I often have trouble concentrating or remembering things. 1 2 3 4 5

VI) This test will be administered to white males and females between the ages of 18 and 38.

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VII) Instructions for test: Please read each statement very carefully, and put an X in front of the number that best fits your agreement with each, where a score of 1 indicates strong disagreement, and a score of 5 equals strong agreement.

VIII) Each item will be scored according to the number circled. A response of 1 equals 1 point; 2 equals 2 points; etc. A score of 36-50 indicates borderline personality disorder. A score between 21 and 35 indicates that there may be some traits consistent with BPD, but there is not enough evidence to say whether the disorder truly exists. A score of 20 or less indicates that the person does not have BPD.

IX) Test administration will be explained in the Method section of the report.

X) The median score was 34. The mean score was 32.4. The standard deviation was 9.18. All five participants had college educations. All the participants were single, with no children.

Introduction

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is a relatively new and controversial clinical diagnosis. It is estimated that nearly 6 million people suffer from the disorder, and yet it is not widely discussed within the psychological community (Roth and Freidman 2003). Why the silence surrounding BPD? Perhaps it is because there is no easy treatment. As Roth and Friedman so colourfully put it, “it’s difficult to explain BPD in snappy headlines and sound bites to a restless audience wont to channel surf” (2003). So then, why even study BPD? Surely, it is just some imaginary psychological problem created to make a certain group of people feel better about themselves. It is just an opportunity for weak-minded individuals to throw the blame for their own interpersonal problems onto someone else. Or is it?

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Mason and Kreger, in their ground-breaking 1998 book, explain borderline personality disorder in great detail. They list the DSM-IV criteria for classifying BPD, which include: “frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment ... a pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships ... impulsivity ... self-damaging behavior ... suicidal thoughts ... affective instability ... [and] chronic feelings of emptiness” (Mason and Kreger 1998). On her web site, Deb Martinson (2002) lists some of these constructs, and it is her list that forms the basis of the present questionnaire. Specifically, the constructs I seek to analyse in this study are: impulsive, and sometimes self-destructive, behavior; intense, unstable personal relationships; chronic fear of abandonment; distorted thoughts; difficulty controlling emotions.

Method

A 10-question survey was given to each of five participants. The questionnaires were administered individually by email. The exact text of the survey can be found in the appendix. The participants were three females and two males, ages 18-38. All were white, college-educated individuals living in a suburban area.

Since I was studying the same constructs that were mentioned in the DSM-IV, I chose to use the theoretical strategy approach to test construction (Belchier 2005). All questions were formulated so that each one would address an important construct used to diagnose BPD. Each item was scored according to the number circled. A response of 1 equaled 1 point; 2 equaled 2 points; etc. A score of 36-50 indicated borderline personality disorder. A score between 21 and 35 indicated that there may be some traits consistent

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with BPD, but there was not enough evidence to say whether the disorder truly exists. A score of 20 or less indicated that the person does not have BPD.

Results

Every number marked was tallied, and the total score for each participant was written on the bottom of their copy of their printed out questionnaire. Then all the totals were lined up in numeric order. The middle score, 34, was found to be the median. Then all the scores were added and divided by the sample size, 5, to find the mean of 31. The standard deviation, 9.95, was calculated by taking the square root of the average squared deviation from the mean.

The scores ranged from 18 to 43, with the higher scores representing a greater degree of borderline personality. Two of the people tested had scores within the BPD range, two people scored in the middle range, and one person scored in the lowest range, showing no evidence of borderline personality disorder.

Discussion

One issue of concern with the data that was obtained is the large standard deviation. This could be due, in part, to the small sample size. I believe it would be beneficial to replicate this study with a larger number of participants. Perhaps it would also be a good idea to increase the number of questions dealing with each item of interest, in the hopes of increasing construct validity. Replicating the study – either in part or in whole – would increase the validity of the study (Johnston and Pennypacker 1993).

Another issue of concern is that fact that so many of the characteristics of
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BPD mirror characteristics of other disorders, such as depression. A replication, with some minor changes to the measurement instrument to eliminate duplicate factors, would ensure the validity of future surveys. While I do believe that the questionnaire I created measures what it was supposed to, I believe that the above changes will bring results that are far more successful in explaining the intricacies of BPD and how they are played out in individuals' lives.

References

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childhood wounds & build trust, boundaries, and self-esteem. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Appendix: Borderline Personality Disorder Assessment

Please read each statement very carefully, and put an X in front of the

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number that best fits your agreement with each, where a score of 1 = strongly disagree, and a score of 5 = strongly agree.

11) I hate being by myself. 1 2 3 4 5

12) I find it hard to trust people. 1 2 3 4 5

13) I frequently exhibit self-destructive behaviors (excessive smoking or drinking; drug abuse; unprotected sex, etc.). 1 2 3 4 5

14) When a relationship ends, I am usually the one who gets hurt the most.
1 2 3 4 5

15) I often have suicidal thoughts. 1 2 3 4 5

16) I find it difficult to try to control my emotions.
1 2 3 4 5

17) I find it easy to lie. 1 2 3 4 5

18) When something upsets me, someone else is usually to blame.
1 2 3 4 5

19) I tend to do things on impulse. 1 2 3 4 5

20) I often have trouble concentrating or remembering things.
1 2 3 4 5

Demographic Variables

Age:

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Highest Level of Education Attained: