Psychometric properties of the Violent Experiences Questionnaire

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ABSTRACT

The Violent Experiences Questionnaire—Revised (VEQ-R) is a brief retrospective self-report inventory which provides estimates of annual frequencies of childhood physical abuse, sibling physical abuse, exposure to parental violence, peer bullying, and corporal punishment as they were experienced from ages 5 to 16. The VEQ-R indices rely on a frequency metric that estimates the number of days on average per year a specified class of behavior occurred over a 12 year retrospective period. All scores range from a frequency of 0 to a high of 104. Scale normative data was generated from both a college (N = 1266) and national (N = 1290) sample to expand the research applicability of this relatively new inventory. Subscales were added to estimate the frequency of victimization during childhood, the pre-teen years, and adolescence. Four “hostility” component indices were derived from perpetrator source (parent, sibling, peer, or domestic). Thresholds were established to for High, Moderate, Low, and No Risk classifications. Subscales dimensions were found to have both adequate internal and temporal consistency. Evidence of concurrent and discriminant validity was generated using the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale-Short-Form©, LONGSCAN Physical Abuse Self-Report scale, and Physical Punishment scale of the Assessing Environments III inventory.

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1. Psychometric properties of the Violent Experiences Questionnaire

The Risk and Prognostic Factors sections of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) identified childhood maltreatment as a likely contributor to more than twenty major psychiatric disorders. Evidentiary support for these task force conclusions can be found in meta-analytic studies showing the adverse impact of physical abuse (Norman, Byambaa, Butchart, Scott, & Vos, 2012), sexual abuse (Chen et al., 2010), exposure to intimate partner violence (Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & Jaffe, 2003), peer bullying (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), and other forms of maltreatment on psychological functioning. Self-report measurement scales have been useful in establishing nexuses between child abuse and its sequelae. The present study describes the psychometric properties of a relatively new and distinctive self-report inventory that has shown value in extending these links between child abuse and adult maladjustment.

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1.1. Violent Experiences Questionnaire—revised

The Violent Experiences Questionnaire (VEQ-R; King, 2012; King, 2014a; Mugge, Chase, & King, 2015; Russell, Veith, & King, 2015; Walter & King, 2013) provides indices of 12 different forms of childhood and adolescent maltreatment. Item content for the VEQ-R is presented in Table 1. The bolded item numbers and lower scale designations would be removed prior to administration in either electronic or hard copy form. SPSS scoring syntax is available upon request. Scores are calculated within four-year recording blocks (ages 5–8, 9–12 & 13–16) using weights based on a frequency index (A = 0, B = 0.25, C = 0.5, D = 0.875, E = 1, F = 2, G = 12, H = 52, I = 104). The score for each scale is interpreted as the number of days on average per year a specified class of behavior occurred during the respective time period. Subscale scores are averaged over the entire 12 year recording period and range from 0 to 104. The predecessor VEQ (King, Tuhy, & Harris, 1989) focused exclusively on parental physical abuse and exposure to intimate partner violence (Green & King, 2009; King, 2016; King, 2014b; Moe, King, & Bailly, 2004; Mugge, King, & Klophaus, 2009) without sampling sibling abuse, peer bullying, or corporal punishment.

Current maltreatment measures differ in their focus on the nature (e.g., general versus specific acts), frequency, severity, age of occurrence, recall timeframe (e.g., lifetime, past year, etc.), and source (e.g., parent, sibling, peer, etc.) of the specified index acts. While item content differs across measures, the targeted acts tend to be similar in gravity and face-validity. The VEQ-R can be contrasted with other measures in some substantive ways. The extent to which these differences represent advantages or disadvantages would depend on researcher or practitioner objectives. Available maltreatment protocols often
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