

Evaluation of the psychometric properties of the Social Phobia Inventory in university students

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Abstract

Objective: The aim of the study was to study the psychometric properties of the Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN) in its version for the context of Brazilian adults.

Methods: A sample of Brazilian university students from the general population ($n = 2314$) and a sample of university students identified as cases ($n = 88$) and noncases ($n = 90$) of social phobia were assessed, using as a parameter the Structured Clinical Interview for the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition*. The different instruments were applied individually in the presence of a rater.

Results: The SPIN showed adequate internal consistency (.63-.90) and concurrent validity with different instruments of auto- and hetero-evaluation of social phobia. Discriminative validity showed 0.84 to 0.86 sensitivity and 0.84 to 0.87 specificity for cutoff notes between 19 and 21. Factorial analysis showed the presence of a variable number of factors as a function of the different samples.

Conclusions: The version of the SPIN studied is quite adequate for use in the context of Brazilian university students, favoring the screening of social phobia. However, further studies using more diverse samples are needed.

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1. Introduction

Social phobia (SP) or social anxiety disorder is a highly prevalent psychiatric disorder that courses with significant rates of comorbidity, with a negative influence of several aspects of life such as work and social, family, and affective relations, among others. Although potentially treatable, this condition is poorly recognized, with a consequent difficulty in the application of therapeutic measures that lead to a more reserved prognosis [1-6].

Many instruments of self- and hetero-assessment have been proposed to favor the diagnosis of SP because it was recognized as a psychiatric disorder in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, Third Edition* (DSM-III) in 1980 [6]. Particularly important among these instruments is the Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN) proposed by Connor et al [7]. This instrument, originally elaborated in the English language and consisting of 17 items that assess different aspects related to SP (fear, avoidance, and physiologic symptoms), is being extensively used in

empirical and clinical studies. It has attracted the interest of several groups, with the consequent need to translate, adapt, and evaluate it for use in other contexts and cultures different from the original ones.

The main findings regarding the psychometric qualities of the SPIN in different studies including the original study by Connor et al [7] are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that the SPIN has shown quite acceptable psychometric properties both in validity and reliability in the various samples and contexts in which it has been evaluated.

For use in Brazil, we point out the study of Vilete [8], which, due to the specificity of the sample studied (adolescents), required adaptations to the original version that were incorporated into the version studied. This adapted version, although potentially adequate for use within the specific context of adolescents, still needs better psychometric detailing.

In view of these aspects and of the need for a version to be used for the adult population, with the authorization of the authors of the original instrument, Osório et al [13] proposed a new version of the SPIN to be used for adult Brazilian population. This instrument was evaluated by the authors in technical aspects and considered to be the official version for the Brazilian Portuguese language. A recent study conducted

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Table 1
Psychometric studies conducted with the SPIN in different contexts and on different samples: main results

Aspect evaluated	Study					
	Connor et al [7]	Vilete [8]	Johnson et al [9]	Antony et al [10]	Radomsky et al [11]	Ranta et al [12]
Objective	To investigate psychometric properties—original English version	To investigate psychometric properties—Brazilian version	To investigate psychometric properties—original version	To investigate psychometric properties—original version	To investigate psychometric properties—original and French versions	To investigate psychometric properties—Finnish version
Sample studied	Healthy adults and adults with SP—United States	Healthy adolescents—Brazil	Healthy adolescents—United States	Adults with different anxiety disorders—Canada	General population of college students—Canada	Healthy adolescents—Finland
Internal consistency	$\alpha = .57-.94$	$\alpha = .88$	$\alpha = .69-.92$	$\alpha = .79-.92$	$\alpha = .76-.93$	–
Reliability	T/R = 0.78-0.89*	T/R = 0.32-0.65*	–	T/R = 0.78-0.84**	T/R = 0.71-0.86**	–
Concurrent validity	BSPS = 0.47-0.82** LSAS = 0.55** FQ = 0.42-0.78**	–	SAS-A = 0.57-0.82** SPAI-C = 0.71-0.91**	SPS = 0.61-0.71** SIAS = 0.23-0.68**	FSS-III = 0.56-0.76**	–
Divergent validity	SF-36 = (NS) SDS = (NS)	–	CDI = 0.45-0.58*	DASS = (NS) ASI = (NS)	BDI = 0.43-0.51**	–
Discriminative validity	AUC = 0.83-0.86* Cutoff note 19 S = 0.78 E = 0.84	Cutoff note 19/20 S = 0.75 E = 0.57	SP > control score AUC = 0.81* Cutoff note 21: S = 68.3%; Sp = 81.4%	SP > score OCD/agoraphobia Posttreatment score < pretreatment score	–	SP > non-SP score AUC = 0.92-0.82 Cutoff note 19: S = 0.95; E = 0.70; PPV = 0.40 Cutoff note 24: S = 0.81; Sp = 0.85; PPV = 0.26; NPV = 0.98
Factorial analysis	5 factors Autovalues: 1.06-5.51	–	–	–	–	–

(NS) indicates nonsignificant correlation; S, sensitivity; Sp, specificity; PPV, positive predictive value; NPV, negative predictive value; AUC, area under the ROC curve; T/R, test-retest; LSAS, Liebowitz Social Phobia Scale; FQ, Fear Questionnaire; SF-36, Medical Outcomes Study Short-Form; SDS, Sheehan Disability Scale; SAS-S, Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents; SPAI-C, Social Phobia and Anxiety Inventory for Children; CDI, Children’s Depression Inventory; SPS, Social Phobia Scale; SIAS, Social Interaction Anxiety Scale; DASS, Depression Anxiety Stress Scales; ASI, Anxiety Sensitivity Index; FSS-III, Fear Survey Schedule-III; BDI, Beck Depression Inventory; OCD, obsessive-compulsive disorder.

* $P < .05$.

** $P < .01$.

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