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The Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED) and traditional childhood anxiety measures

Peter Muris*, Harald Merckelbach, Birgit Mayer, Anneke van Brakel, Sandra Thissen, Véronique Moulart, Björn Gadet

Department of Psychology, Maastricht University, P.O. Box 616, 6200 MD Maastricht, The Netherlands

Abstract

The Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED) is a self-report questionnaire that measures symptoms of DSM-IV linked anxiety disorders in children. This article presents two studies that investigated the relationship between the SCARED, on the one hand, and two other widely used anxiety measures for children, namely the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS) and the Fear Survey Schedule for Children-Revised (FSSC-R), on the other hand. Results indicate that SCARED scores are positively and in a theoretically meaningful way related to RCMAS and FSSC-R scores, and thus provide evidence for the concurrent validity of the SCARED. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Pathological anxiety in children is not rare. Prevalence rates of anxiety disorders in children range between 5.7 and 17.7%, with half of the rates above 10% (Costello & Angold, 1995). The latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1994) recognizes the following anxiety disorders in youths: separation anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social phobia, specific phobia, obsessive-compulsive

*Corresponding author. Tel.: 0031 43 3881908; Fax: 0031 43 3615735; E-mail: p.muris@psychology.unimaas.nl.

disorder, and post-traumatic or acute stress disorder. There is evidence to suggest that symptoms of these disorders also occur in normal children (e.g., Bell-Dolan, Last & Strauss, 1990). In addition, a factor analytic study by Spence (1997) recently showed that anxiety symptoms among normal children cluster into subtypes of anxiety problems which are largely consistent with the anxiety disorders that can be classified with the DSM-IV.

The majority of the questionnaires that have been developed for assessing anxiety symptoms in children are global and unidimensional, and not keyed to the separate anxiety disorders as listed in the DSM. An exception is the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED; Birmaher, Khetarpal, Brent, Cully, Balach, Kaufman & McKenzie Neer, 1997; Muris, Merckelbach, Schmidt & Mayer, in press a). The SCARED is a self-report instrument that has been construed to reliably determine anxiety disorders and related symptomatology.

Research has found support for the discriminant validity of the SCARED. First of all, the scale differentiates between anxiety disordered children, children with depression, and children with disruptive disorders (Birmaher et al., 1997). Second, the SCARED satisfactorily discriminates children with a specific anxiety disorder from children without that particular anxiety disorder (Muris, Merckelbach, Mayer & Prins, submitted). Furthermore, Muris, Merckelbach, Van Brakel, Mayer and Van Dongen (1998d) have provided evidence for the concurrent validity of the SCARED. These authors demonstrated that SCARED scores are positively related to levels of anxiety as indexed by the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAIC; Spielberger, 1973).

The present study further examined the concurrent validity of the SCARED. More specifically, the relationship between the SCARED and two other widely used anxiety measures, namely the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS; Reynolds & Richmond, 1978) and the Fear Survey Schedule for Children-Revised (FSSC-R; Ollendick, 1983) was investigated.

2. Study 1. SCARED and RCMAS

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Children

Seventy-five children (42 boys and 33 girls) of primary school "School met de Bijbel" in Venlo, The Netherlands, completed the SCARED and the RCMAS in their classrooms. Children had a mean age of 10.4 years ($SD = 0.9$; range 9–12 years). Boys and girls did not differ with respect to age: mean ages were 10.4 ($SD = 0.9$) and 10.3 ($SD = 0.9$) years, respectively [$t(73) < 1.0$]. Percentages of children with low, middle, and upper socio-economic background were 10, 55, and 35%, respectively. Most children were Caucasian (97%), and 8% of the children came from broken families.

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