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The French version of the Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking: Internal and predictive validity

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Abstract

In this study we examine the psychometric characteristics and the predictive validity of the AISS-17, the French version of the Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking. Two samples were used, one of which enabled us to carry out prospective monitoring over a period of six months. Our study provides data that support the validity of the AISS-17. This inventory includes the same two factors as the AISS (Novelty and Intensity). It has good concurrent and convergent validity, and its nomological network is comparable to that of the AISS and to the SSS of Zuckerman. However, our study confirms the low reliability of the AISS. We also showed that the AISS-17 has good predictive validity. We observed a significant cross-lagged effect of the AISS-17 at T1 on risk taking at T2, when controlled for age, gender and risk-taking at T1.
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Keywords: Sensation seeking; Risk-behavior; Adolescent

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1. Introduction

Zuckerman (1979) described sensation seeking as "the need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences." Several studies have shown that this trait can describe and explain why people undertake risky behaviors. A lot of research into sensation seeking has been done using the Sensation Seeking Scale Form V (SSS-V) published by Zuckerman, Eysenck, and Eysenck (1978). However, Arnett (1994) has pointed out some weak points of the SSS-V, and constructed his Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking (AISS). It consists of 20 items, none of them related to age or illegal or norm breaking behavior. The AISS consists of a total score and two subscales, Intensity and Novelty seeking. The Intensity subscale assesses the preference for intensive stimulation of the senses, while the Novelty scale refers to openness to experiences.

As there is not yet a French version of this tool, the goal of this paper is to present a validation of the French translation of the AISS. Our second aim was to evaluate the predictive validity of the AISS. Arnett (1994) and Andrew and Cronin (1997) found that the AISS had higher predictive validity than the SSS-V. However, previous studies of the predictive validity of the AISS all used a transversal design. In this study we assessed the predictive validity of the AISS using a test–retest design.

2. Method

2.1. Adaptation of the AISS

The original version of the AISS was translated into French by two different people. The differences in translation were discussed until a consensus was found between the two translators. The French version was then backtranslated into English by a third person. The backtranslated version was approved by J. Arnett, (the author of the original).

2.2. Samples

The French version of the AISS was examined using two separate samples.

Sample 1. All the participants were students from the third to the sixth year of high school. As parts of the questionnaire involved sensitive questions (e.g. related to sexuality or to deviancy), the participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the questionnaire. As a first stage (T1), 568 respondents completed the questionnaire. All the participants were between 14 and 19 years old ($M = 16$, SD $= .95$). The participants filled in the questionnaire in their classrooms during school time. Conditions were the same than those used for exams and kept participants from watching the responses of others. Six months later, we asked 507 participants from the same school to complete the same questionnaire (T2). Most of these participants had also taken part in T1. As the questionnaires were anonymous, it was impossible to make a direct correspondence between responses by the same subject at T1 and at T2. This difficulty was overcome by including a series of seven personal questions (What color are your mother's eyes? etc.) in both questionnaires (T1 and T2). The answers to these questions were used to create a code, to which was added the age, gender and school year (final year, 5th year of high school, 4th year of high school). The answers to these questions could be expected to remain stable between T1 and T2 for the majority of the

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