



Measuring social desirability amongst men with intellectual disabilities: The psychometric properties of the Self- and Other-Deception Questionnaire—Intellectual Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social desirability has been construed as either inaccurately attributing positive characteristics to oneself (self-deception), or inaccurately denying that one possesses undesirable characteristics to others (other-deception or impression management). These conceptualisations of social desirability have not been considered in relation to people with intellectual disabilities (IDs), but they are important constructs to consider when undertaking a psychological assessment of an individual, especially within forensic contexts. Therefore, we revised two existing measures of self- and other-deception and considered their psychometric properties.

Methods: Thirty-two men with mild IDs and 28 men without IDs completed the Self- and Other-Deception Questionnaires—Intellectual Disabilities (SDQ-ID and ODQ-ID) on two occasions, two weeks apart.

Results: Men with IDs scored significantly higher on the SDQ-ID and the ODQ-ID than men without IDs. However, these differences disappeared when Full Scale IQ, Verbal IQ and Performance IQ were controlled in relation to the SDQ-ID, and partially disappeared in relation to the ODQ-ID. The SDQ-ID and the ODQ-ID had substantial internal consistency in relation to men with IDs ($k = 0.82$ and 0.84 respectively). The test-retest reliability of the SDQ-ID was good ($r_t = 0.68$), while the test-retest reliability of the ODQ-ID was moderate ($r_t = 0.56$), for men with IDs. The SDQ-ID had moderate ($k = 0.60$) and the ODQ-ID had substantial ($k = 0.70$) internal consistency in relation to men without IDs, while the test-retest reliability of the SDQ-ID was excellent ($r_t = 0.87$) as was the case for the ODQ-ID ($r_t = 0.85$).

Conclusions: The SDQ-ID and the ODQ-ID have satisfactory psychometric properties in relation to men with and without IDs. Future research using these instruments is proposed.

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1. Introduction

Little attention has been paid to the assessment of social desirability when conducting psychological assessments with people who have intellectual disabilities (IDs), especially within forensic contexts. This is a relevant construct to consider, as a person may potentially augment their answers to questions in an attempt to present in a favourable manner leading to an inaccurate assessment. Clinicians undertaking psychological assessments with people with IDs are likely to be aware of potential problems with acquiescence, suggestibility, confabulation and compliance (Clare & Gudjonsson, 1993, 1995; Gudjonsson & Clare, 1995; Gudjonsson, Clare, & Rutter, 1994), as well as the tendency for people with ID to concur with closed questions (Heal & Sigelman, 1995), but little attention appears to have been paid to issues associated with social desirability.

Paulhus (1984, 1986) argues that social desirability may take the form of inappropriately attributing positive characteristics to oneself when responding to assessment material (self-deception), or inappropriately denying that one possesses undesirable characteristics (impression management). Paulhus (1998) went on to develop the Paulhus Deception Scales (PDS), previously called the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding, which aimed to assess impression management and self-deception. The PDS is theoretically driven and is often considered to be the most appropriate measure of social desirability. However, the instrument contains a variety of items that relate to employment, and the language is complex, meaning that the questionnaire is inappropriate for use with people who have IDs.

Attempting to source an existing measure of social desirability, which is theoretically driven, and is appropriate for use with people who have IDs, is problematic. However, Sackeim and Gur (1979) previously developed a measure of self- and other-deception which relates to the theoretical division of Paulhus (1984, 1986) regarding social desirability. The Self-Deception Questionnaire (SDQ) aims to assess a person's tendency to attribute positive characteristics to him or herself, or in other words, to engage in self-deception, while the Other-Deception Questionnaire (ODQ) aims to assess a person's tendency to present him or herself in a favourable manner. The questionnaires have previously been used in the United Kingdom with adults without IDs undergoing forensic assessment (Gudjonsson, 1990), detained within maximum and medium secure hospitals (Gudjonsson & Moore, 2001), and they have been used with adults who have depression (Roth & Ingram, 1985). Gudjonsson and Sigurdsson (2004) also employed these questionnaires in a study involving Icelandic prisoners. They compared the Self- and Other-Deception Questionnaires with the Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale (Gudjonsson, 1997), the Gudjonsson Compliance Scale (Gudjonsson, 1997), and the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). They found no significant relationship between deception and suggestibility or compliance, but there was a relationship between psychoticism and neuroticism and the measures of deception.

Social desirability is a relevant construct in psychological assessments of individuals, and perhaps more so with those who have mild IDs within forensic contexts. Given the lack of standardised questionnaires that can be used with people who have IDs, the aim of this study was to modify the Self- and Other-Deception questionnaires and present these new questionnaires to a group of men with and without IDs on two occasions in order to explore their psychometric properties.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Thirty-two men (M age = 45.88, SD = 15.01; M Full Scale IQ = 59.35; SD = 6.16) were recruited from services for people with IDs and 28 men (M age = 40.64, SD = 10.41; M Full Scale IQ = 102.29; SD = 8.05) without IDs were recruited from the community in Norfolk, UK. All the participants included in this study reported their ethnic origin as White British. All participants with IDs attended schools for pupils with special educational needs. None had a known history of charges, cautions or convictions relating to illegal behaviour as they were taking part in another study where the inclusion criteria necessitated no known history of illegal behaviour. The current study was embedded within this larger study.

2.2. Design and procedure

A 2 (Group: IDs or No IDs) \times 2 (Time: 1 or 2) mixed design was used to investigate the Self- and Other-Deception Questionnaires in relation to men with and without ID. "Group" formed a between-participants factor, while "Time" was a repeated measures factor. Participants were recruited and completed a set of measures at one time point, and then completed the measures again following a two-week interval. This two-week time interval allowed for the examination of the test-retest reliability.

Following a favourable ethical opinion from the Suffolk NHS Research Ethics Committee, information about the project was disseminated to men with IDs by distributing a poster and a leaflet to intellectual disabilities services in Norfolk. Managers of day services and community learning disabilities teams were contacted directly, and informed of the project. They were asked to distribute information to men with IDs using their services. They were specifically directed not to share the information regarding the study with anyone using their service whom they knew to have a history of engaging in illegal behaviour. Any man who expressed an interest in taking part was asked to alert his key-worker who then informed their manager. The manager then contacted the researcher to inform him of the number of possible participants at a site, and a mutually convenient time was arranged to attend the site and speak to potential participants. Once someone indicated that they would like to take part in the study, he was asked to provide signed consent.

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