Development and psychometric properties of the Avoidance Questionnaire for Adolescents (AQA)

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Most questionnaires construe avoidance as resulting from a problem-solving process and analyse only a few, single-factor and mostly non-adequate, forms of avoidance. The aim of the present study was to develop a multi-dimensional questionnaire to measure avoidance among adolescents. We tested the Avoidance Questionnaire for Adolescents (AQA) with 12-, 15- and 18-year-olds to measure most forms of avoidance in social problem-solving as well as to shed light on the relationships between the sub-processes of social problem-solving. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed to examine the measure’s factor structure, while confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) were used to support the theoretical process model of avoidance. The convergent and discriminative validity of the AQA was tested in relation to the Social Problem-Solving Inventory–Revised (SPSI–R). Two versions (a long version of 42 items and a short version of 23 items) of the 11-factor AQA were developed in accordance with the results. The long and short versions were found to be valid measures of problem-solving with regards to negative thoughts, feelings and physical symptoms; negative self-efficacy/insolvability; prevention; annulation; ignoring the problem; expectation/diversion; mulling; procrastination/rethink; stopping/subordination; external pressure; and asking for help. The factors show positive or negative correlations with the SPSI–R factors. The results of the SEM support the original process model. Based on earlier Hungarian research carried out with the SPSI–R, avoidance shows a tendency to increase in adolescence. In contrast, the results of the AQA show that the earliest age differences occur in the ignoring the problem, procrastination, stopping, diversion and expectation factors.

Keywords: avoidance, adolescents, questionnaire, problem-solving, validity