

Speight J, Barendse S and Bradley C (2000) Impact of positively- versus negatively-worded items on the factor structure of three psychological measures: W-BQ22, W-BQ12 and HADS. *Proceedings of the British Psychological Society*, 8 (1) 21.

Poster presented at British Psychological Society. Division of Health Psychology Annual Conference. 1-3 September 1999: University of Leeds.

Impact of positively- vs negatively-worded items on the factor structure of three psychosocial measures: W-BQ22, W-BQ12 & HADS

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Background: The 22-item Well-being Questionnaire (W-BQ22) (Bradley, 1994) includes Anxiety Depression, Energy and Positive Well-being subscales. W-BQ12 resolves overlap problems with depression/anxiety items in W-BQ22 structure. The Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) (Zigmond and Snaith, 1983) successfully differentiated between depression and anxiety.

Method: Factor structures of W-BQ22, W-BQ12 and HADS were compared in responses from 789 outpatients with diabetes.

Results: W-BQ22 factor analysis showed negatively-worded depression and anxiety items loading together, separately from positively-worded items. W-BQ12 showed 3 intended factors: Positive Well-being, Energy and Negative Well-being (negatively-worded depression/anxiety items loading together). Analysis of HADS showed 2 factors, depression and anxiety, which can also be defined in terms of wording: positive (5/7 depression items) or negative (6/7 anxiety items).

Conclusion: The ability of the HADS to differentiate depression and anxiety may be an artefact of wording, which was more influential than depression/anxiety constructs in determining structure in W-BQ22.