

SUMMARY

Research study on the Sense of Humour. Validation of a sense of humour scale, questionnaire analysis and the relationship between humour with stress.

Introduction

Humour is a rich and fascinating topic of study with great research potential, as it has been relatively unexplored by science. Current research suggests wide avenues of analysis, applications and uses –therapeutic, educational and social. Positive psychology, the new current within psychology developed by M. Seligman, considers the sense of humour as one of the human strengths, and this has stimulated a great deal of scientific interest in this topic.

Methodology

The general aim of this research project is to verify if the adaptation of the Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale (MSHS, Thorson y Powell, 1991) is a valid and trustworthy scale for measuring sense of humour. From this perspective, a secondary aim is to contribute to the design of evaluations of humour in order to verify the success of intervention programs related to Sense of Humour within the Regional Community of Madrid, mainly within health and educational contexts.

Sample

In the process of translating and adapting the questionnaire, a sample of 539 people was used, belonging to educational and health environments. In relation to the objective of validating the questionnaire, 81 subjects from the general sample were selected, all of which are health professionals, those most exposed to professional stress, who work at a general hospital of the Regional Community of Madrid.

Results

The results do not confirm the initial hypothesis that the questionnaire should be structured on the basis of the four original dimensions of the questionnaire. A different survey method must be used that is adapted more precisely to the criteria of humour in our culture and that fits with the descriptions made in the theoretical sections. In the end, Sense of Humour in our culture will be structured along three dimensions.

The Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale, MSHS, translated and adapted, shows an average score of 64,45, with a standard deviation of 11,83. The Alpha Level is between .87 and .88 (standardized).

On the other hand, the results do support the hypothesis that average sense of humour as measured by the Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale, MSHS, is negatively and significantly correlated with the variable of Professional Stress or Burnout Syndrome as measured by the Maslach MBI Scale.

Finally, the results partially support the hypotheses related to gender and age variables. On the one hand there are no significant gender differences, but on the other, significant differences were found between the age groups analysed.

Conclusions

According to the results obtained, the adapted Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale is a faithful and valid scale that allows the researcher to measure sense of humour as a personality trait.

The characteristics of the sample studied can explain that the dimensional structure consists of three dimensions described as: 1. Competency or ability in using humour; 2. Humour as a mechanism for controlling the situation; 3. Social value and attitudes towards humour.

Humour, according to the Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale and in this sample, is inversely related with Emotional Fatigue and with Depersonalization

measures from the (Maslach Burnout Inventory), supporting the divergent validity of the scale, and is positively related with Personal Realization, supporting its convergent validity.

According to the characteristics of the sample, there were no significant gender differences in sense of humour.

Members of the sample who were 60 years of age or older scored significantly lower than other age groups.

The dimensionality of the sense of humour shown by the three factors of the scale adapted for this study allow for the design of intervention activities aimed at optimizing the sense of humour.

Research lines need to be established that allow for an improved comprehension of the sense of humour and its dimensions, as well as a deeper understanding of the components of humour.