

A PILOT STUDY ON THE USE OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION SELF REPORTING QUESTIONNAIRES (S.R.Q.) ON A MALAYSIAN POPULATION

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SYNOPSIS

The W.H.O. self reporting questionnaires were distributed to 50 psychiatric outpatients with neurotic disorders and 50 medical staff as controls. This pilot study shows that it can differentiate between normal and neurotic patients and that if a cut off point of 3 is taken, there is a very good chance that no psychiatric case in any epidemiological study will be missed. This study also picked up the 10 most sensitive items in the S.R.Q. which will be validated in future studies.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to assess the applicability of the W.H.O. S.R.Q. (1) in establishing an appropriate cut off point sensitive enough to pick up psychiatric cases in Malaysia. In various epidemiological studies done by Harding et. al (2), the S.R.Q. has been used quite successfully to identify psychiatric cases.

In Malaysia, very little work has been done on the prevalence of mental disorders in the community. For future epidemiological studies a need is present for a Psychiatric Screening questionnaire suitable for the Malaysian population. The aim of this study is to use the W.H.O. (Bahasa Malaysia translated and non-translated form) for this population and to establish its validity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To 50 known neurotic cases attending the General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur, UKM Psychiatric Outpatient clinics, were given the translated and original forms of S.R.Q. (Appendix I).

The controls were 50 general medical staff who were only included if they were:

- (1) not on any regular hypnotic drug or night sedation.
- (2) not having continuous physical illness over the last one month.
- (3) not having any past history of psychiatric illness.

Age, race and sex were also recorded. For those who could not understand the questionnaires help was given in clarifying the questions.

RESULTS

As can be seen from the table 1, there are 30 males and 20 females in the neurotic group and 21 males and 29 females in the normal control group. Mean age of the neurotics and the normals is 32.38 and 32.42 respectively. There is no significant difference between the two groups.

TABLE 1
AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTIONS OF THE SUBJECTS

	Neurotic Group (N = 50)	Normal Group (N = 50)
MALE	30	21
FEMALE	20	29
Age Below		
25	10	1
26-44	34	44
45-64	6	5
Over 65	—	—
MEAN AGE	32.38	32.42

Table 2. Shows the means and standard deviations of the total scores (on the first 20 items of SRQ) for the neurotic and the normal groups. It shows that the difference between the two means is significantly different. ($t = 68.5$, $Df = 98$ $P = 0.0005$).

In this study it was also found that 100% of the neurotic patients scored 3 or more than 3 and 90% of them scored 6 or more than 6. Whereas in normal group 74% scored less than 3 and only 6% score more than 6.

Table 3 shows that neurotic patients responded positively and significantly more than the normal population on all of the items. Out of these items, item no. 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 18, 19, and 20 were scored positively by more than 50% of the neurotic patients.

TABLE 2
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF TOTAL SCORES ON FIRST 20 ITEMS OF SRQ

	Neurotic Patients N = 50	Normal Controls N = 50
Mean	11.98	1.7
S.D.	± 4.9	± 2.2

$t = 68.5$, $Df = 98$, $P < 0.005$

TABLE 3
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS OF POSITIVE RESPONSES ON SRQ QUESTIONS BY NEUROTIC AND NORMAL GROUPS

SRQ Question No.	Neurotic Patients Responded Positively (N = 50)		Normal Controls Responded Positively (N = 50)		Significant Level	
	N	%	N	%	Df = 1	
1	23	46	5	10	$\chi^2 = 16.3$	$P < .001$
2	29	58	2	4	34.8	.001
3	32	64	6	12	28.8	.001
4	25	50	8	16	13.07	.001
5	20	40	2	4	18.9	.001
6	39	78	4	8	49.9	.001
7	11	22	0	0	12.3	.001
8	35	70	3	6	47.7	.001
9	40	80	7	14	43.7	.001
10	22	44	2	4	21.9	.001
11	38	76	3	6	50.4	.001
12	27	54	9	18	14.06	.001
13	20	40	1	2	21.7	.001
14	24	48	1	2	28.2	.001
15	21	42	1	2	23.3	.001
16	15	30	1	2	14.6	.001
17	13	26	0	0	14.9	.001
18	42	84	8	16	46.2	.001
19	25	50	3	6	24.0	.001
20	35	70	7	14	35.5	.001

DISCUSSION

The questionnaires were distributed in both English and Malay translations and in this study all those not conversant with two languages were excluded. There were no back translations made, but our subjects appeared to have no difficulty in understanding the questionnaires. It would be suggested that in future studies involving a larger population, back translation should be done before proceeding.

The cut off point is to delineate the scores at which point a subject becomes a Psychiatric Case, and '3' is the recommended cut off point by WHO (2). However in this study '3' is overinclusive, and would label 26% of the normals as potential psychiatric cases. If 6 is taken as a cut off point only 6% of the normals would be labelled as potential Psychiatric cases. But 10% of the psychiatric cases would be missed in any further epidemiological survey.

From our pilot study 11 items were found to be most sensitive in that more than 50% of the psychiatric out-

patients responded positively. Out of these 11 items, item number 20 was omitted because it was similar to item number 18. The remaining 10 items in the form of a shortened SRQ will be validated in further studies.

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2. Harding TW, de Arango MV, Baltazar J, et al: Mental disorders in primary health care: A study of their frequency and diagnosis in four developing countries. Psychol Med 1980; 10:231-41.

APPENDIX I (IN MALAY)

NAMA:

UMUR: NORMAL/PSIKIATRIK:

JANTINA:

1. Adakah anda selalu mengalami sakit kepala?
 2. Adakah selera anda kurang?
 3. Adakah anda mengalami gangguan tidur?
 4. Biasakah anda merasa takut dengan mudah?
 5. Adakah anda merasa menggeletar (tangan)?
 6. Adakah anda merasa gelisah?
 7. Adakah anda makan dengan kurang baik?
 8. Adakah anda mengalami gangguan fikiran?
 9. Adakah anda merasa susah hati?
 10. Adakah anda menangis lebih dari biasa?
 11. Adakah anda merasa sukar bagi menikmati keselesaan kegiatan setiap hari?
 12. Adakah anda merasa susah untuk membuat apa-apa keputusan?
 13. Adakah kerja sehari anda menyusahkan anda?
 14. Adakah anda merasa tidak boleh memainkan peranan yang berguna dalam kehidupan?
 15. Adakah anda merasa tiada minat pada kehidupan?
 16. Adakah anda merasa tiada berguna?
 17. Pernahkan anda berfikir hendak menamatkan kehidupan anda?
 18. Adakah anda selalu merasa letih?
 19. Adakah anda merasa perut anda kurang sedap/selesa?
 20. Adakah anda merasa letih dengan mudah?
 21. Adakah anda merasa ada orang yang berniat buruk terhadap anda?
 22. Adakah anda seorang yang lebih mustahak daripada apa yang dianggap oleh orang lain?
 23. Adakah anda merasa apa-apa gangguan fikiran atau fikiran yang luar biasa?
 24. Adakah anda pernah mendengar suara yang puncanya tidak diketahui, atau suara yang tidak dapat didengar oleh orang lain?
 25. Pernahkah anda mengalami sawan, pergerakan lengan dan kaki, dan menggigit lidah semasa pengsan?
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APPENDIX I (IN ENGLISH)

1. Do you often have headaches?
2. Is your appetite poor?
3. Do you sleep badly?
4. Are you easily frightened?
5. Do your hands shake?
6. Do you feel nervous, tense or worried?
7. Is your digestion poor?
8. Do you have trouble thinking clearly?
9. Do you feel unhappy?
10. Do you cry more than usual?
11. Do you find it difficult to enjoy your daily activities?
12. Do you find it difficult to make decisions?
13. Is your daily work suffering?
14. Are you unable to play a useful part in life?
15. Have you lost interest in things?
16. Do you feel that you are a worthless person?
17. Has the thought of ending your life been in your mind?
18. Do you feel tired all the time?
19. Do you have uncomfortable feelings in your stomach?
20. Are you easily tired?
21. Do you feel that somebody has been trying to harm you in some way?
22. Are you a much more important person than most people think?
23. Have you noticed any interference or anything else unusual with your thinking?
24. Do you ever hear voices without knowing where they come from or which other people cannot hear?
25. Have you ever had any fits, convulsions or falls to the ground, with movements of the arms and legs, biting of the tongue or loss of consciousness?

APPENDIX II

Proposed Shortened Version of S.R.Q

1. Is your appetite poor?
 2. Do you sleep badly?
 3. Are you easily frightened?
 4. Do you feel nervous, tense or worried?
 5. Do you have trouble thinking clearly?
 6. Do you feel unhappy?
 7. Do you find it difficult to enjoy your daily activities?
 8. Do you find it difficult to make decisions?
 9. Do you feel tired all the time?
 10. Do you have uncomfortable feelings in your stomach?
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