Chapter 15
Measures for Generalized Anxiety Disorder

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CONSEQUENCES OF WORRYING SCALE (COWS)

Original Citation


Purpose

To measure the degree to which individuals hold various beliefs about the consequences of worry.

Description

The COWS is a relatively recent, 29-item, factor analytically derived, self-report questionnaire that assesses the degree to which individuals believe a range of consequences apply to their worry. It contains three negative consequences subscales (disrupting performance, exaggerating the problem, and causing emotional distress) as well as two positive consequences subscales (motivational influence and helping analytical thinking). Each item presents a possible consequence of worry and is followed by a five-point Likert-type response scale.

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scale representing how much that consequence describes the individual when he or she worries.

Administration and Scoring

The COWS can be administered in 5 to 10 minutes. A score for each subscale is obtained by summing responses to items comprising that scale. The disrupting performance subscale is comprised of items 1, 4–6, 12, 16, 23, 27; the exaggerating the problem subscale is comprised of items 11, 15, 18, 20, 26; the causes emotional distress subscale is comprised of items 7, 10, 14, 19; the motivates scale consists of items 8, 9, 13, 22, 24, 29; the helps analytical thinking subscale consists of items 2, 3, 17, 21, 25, 28. Total negative consequences and total positive consequences scores can be derived by summing the subscales within each factor (listed in the description).

Psychometric Properties

All psychometric data for the COWS to date have been derived from an unselected undergraduate sample (Davey et al., 1996).

Sample Means and Norms. No published norms are available.

Reliability. All scales have good to acceptable internal consistency (as ranging from .72 to .87). Internal consistency of the larger factors (negative and positive consequences) is indicated by significant correlation among the subscales within each factor (rs ranging from .71 to .82). Test–retest reliability has not been reported.

Validity. Convergent validity for the COWS is suggested by the finding of significant moderate correlations between all three negative consequences subscales and several measures of psychopathology, e.g., the State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (rs between .55 and .58), Penn State Worry Questionnaire (rs between .44 and .57), Worry Domains Questionnaire (rs between .46 and .50), and Beck Depression Inventory (rs between .46 and .50). Further support for the utility of both the negative and positive subscales is evident from the finding that high scores on both higher-order factor scales were associated with significantly greater levels of pathological worry as assessed by the PSWQ. The scale has yet to be validated on a clinical sample.

Source

The COWS is reprinted in the original article and in Appendix B. For more information, contact Graham C. L. Davey, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, School of Cognitive and Computing Sciences, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9RH, United Kingdom; (tel): 44 1273 678485; (fax) 44 1273 671320; (e-mail) grahamda@cogs.susx.ac.uk.