

The Inventory of Cognitive Distortions – Youth Version:

The Development and Validation of a Psychometric Test for the Measurement of Cognitive Distortions

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INTRODUCTION

•Cognitive Theory, which was originally postulated by Dr. Aaron Beck, underscores the substantial influence that thoughts have on emotions and behavior (Leung & Wong, 1998).

•Beck proposed the Cognitive Theory of Depression, which discusses that a negative cognitive triad, cognitive errors and negative schema contribute to the development of depression (Beck et al., 1979)

•Cognitive Errors, also discussed as cognitive distortions, are systematic, negative biases in thinking that help to maintain a person's negative view of the self, others and future, even in the presence of contradictory evidence (Beck et al., 1979)

•Dysfunctional and distorted thinking has been documented in both adult and youth psychopathology (e.g., Bathina et al., 2020; Leitenberg et al., 1986; Rosenfield, 2004; Stevanovic, 2016)

•The way distortions are measured within youth is limited by the current measures available for this concept

•Current measures do not assess the range of distorted thinking patterns as proposed by Beck and colleagues (1979), Burns (1980, 1980, 1999), Freeman and DeWolf (1992) and Freeman and Oster (1999) (See Table 1).

Purpose: Create & validate a new measure of cognitive distortions for youth ages 11 to 17

METHOD

•**Design:** Mixed Design (Correlational & Between Subjects)

•Participants

- **Inclusion Criteria:** Youth ages 11 to 17 with self-reported ability to read and understand English
- **Exclusion Criteria:** Youth formally diagnosed with a reading or comprehension disability; Failure to complete all study measures
- **Recruitment & Screening**
 - 4 mediums: social media, ResearchMatch.org, local school & community organizations, and local university & business listservs
 - 3 Screening questions to ensure inclusion / exclusion criteria are followed

•**Measures** (will be uploaded to REDCap)

- **Demographic Questionnaire** (age, gender, race/ethnicity, grade level)
- **Inventory of Cognitive Distortions – Youth Version (ICD-YV)**
 - 70-item questionnaire measuring 14 distortion categories
 - Items are on a 5-point Likert scale
- **Dysfunctional Attitudes Scale for Children (DAS-C; D'Alessandro & Burton)**
 - 22-item measure that provides a general understanding of dysfunctional attitudes in children
 - Items are on a 6-point Likert scale

•Procedure

- **Inventory Development**
 - Started with 118-items measuring 17 cognitive distortions
 - Through Expert Review, measure was reduced to current form
- Consent obtained from Parents and Assent obtained from children
- **Distribution Plan:** Social Media, ResearchMatch.org, School & Community Organizations, and University and Business Listservs

Distortion Category	Definition
Externalization of Self-Worth	Refers to the development and maintenance of self-worth based almost exclusively on how the external world views one (Freeman & DeWolf, 1992; Freeman & Oster, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Fortune-Telling	The process of foretelling or predicting the negative outcome of a future event or events and believing this prediction is absolutely true for oneself (Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Magnification	Refers to the tendency to exaggerate or magnify either the positive or negative importance or consequence of some personal trait, event or circumstance (Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Labeling	The cognitive process of labeling oneself using derogatory names (Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Freeman & DeWolf, 1992; Yurica, 2002)
Perfectionism	Refers to a constant striving to live up to some internal or external representation of perfection without examining the evidence for the reasonableness of these perfect standards, often in an attempt to avoid a subjective experience of failure (Freeman & DeWolf, 1992; Freeman & Oster, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Comparison to Others	The tendency to compare oneself whereby the outcome typically results in the conclusion that is one is inferior or worse off than others (Freeman & DeWolf, 1992; Freeman & Oster, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Emotional Reasoning	Refers to the predominant use of an emotional state to form conclusions about oneself, others or situations (Beck et al., 1979; Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Freeman & Oster, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Arbitrary Inference / Jumping to Conclusions	Refers to the process of drawing negative conclusions, in the absence of specific evidence to support that conclusion (Beck et al., 1979; Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Minimization	Refers to the process of minimizing the importance of some event, trait or circumstance (Burns 1980, 1989, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Mind Reading	Refers to one's arbitrary conclusion that someone is reacting negatively, or thinking negatively toward him/her, without specific evidence to support that conclusion (Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Discounting the Positive	Occurs when one rejects or discounts positive experiences (Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Personalization	Refers to the process of assuming personal causality for situations, events and reactions of others when there is no evidence supporting that conclusion (Beck et al., 1979; Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Freeman & DeWolf, 1992; Yurica, 2002)
Absolutist or Dichotomous Thinking	Refers to the tendency to view all experiences as fitting into one of two categories (e.g. positive or negative; good or bad) without the ability to place oneself, others and experiences along a continuum (Beck et al., 1979; Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Freeman & DeWolf, 1992; Yurica, 2002)
Should Statements	Consists of a pattern of internal expectations or demands on oneself, without examination of the reasonableness of these expectations in the context of one's life, abilities, and other resources (Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Freeman & DeWolf, 1992; Yurica, 2002)
Catastrophizing	Process of evaluating, whereby one believes the worst possible outcome will or did occur (Beck et al., 1979; Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Selective Abstraction	Refers to the process of exclusively focusing on one negative aspect or detail of a situation, magnifying the importance of that detail, thereby casting the whole situation in a negative context (Beck et al., 1979; Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Yurica, 2002)
Overgeneralization	Refers to the process of formulating rules or conclusions on the basis of limited experience and applying these rules across broad and unrelated situations (Beck et al., 1979; Burns, 1980, 1989, 1999; Yurica, 2002)

Table 1. Definitions proposed by Yurica (2002) in her dissertation, which created and validated the Inventory of Cognitive Distortions (ICD). These definitions provided the basis for item generation for a youth model.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

•Proposed Statistical Analyses:

- **Content Validity:** Table to compare expert review ratings
- **Factor Structure:** Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with Varimax Rotation
- **Convergent Validity:** Pearson correlation
- **Internal Reliability:** Cronbach's alpha

•Summary of Possible Findings:

- Confirm the presence of this concept in youth
- Provide a more comprehensive measure of cognitive distortions for youth
- Understand which cognitive distortions are most prevalent in this age range

•Significance:

- Could provide continued evidence of a key concept in cognitive theory's presence in youth
- Better able to understand the presentation of cognitive distortions in youth

•Implications:

- Current measures of cognitive distortions in youth assess a maximum of 5 distorted thinking patterns in youth → ICD-YV could widen the assessed distortions if significant results are indicated
- If all 14 distortions are not adequately differentiated in factor analysis, this would still provide helpful information in understanding how this concept presents in youth (as these distortions were created based on adult thinking patterns)

•Advocacy Implications:

- Assist with more competent practice for youth practitioners

•Limitations:

- Differentiation between a few distortion categories during the expert review process
- Inventory length – 70 items may be too long for youth
- Recruitment methods – Cannot directly solicit youth, who may be interested in participating but this is inhibited by the need for parental consent

•Future Directions:

- Shortening the inventory to provide for greater accessibility
- Application with a clinical population to understand the relationship with psychological diagnoses
- Application with youth with chronic illness to provide a greater understanding of the relationship between physical and emotional health

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