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The Development and Validation of a Cognitive-Behavioural
Measure of Psychological Mindedness

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Abstract

Empirical research examining the construct of psychological mindedness has typically been conducted from a psychodynamic perspective. According to Conte and Ratto (1997), clinicians often view psychological mindedness as a pre-requisite for successful engagement in psychodynamic therapy, although there is limited empirical research to support this assumption. While the construct of psychological mindedness has received attention in the psychodynamic literature, it has received very little interest from a cognitive-behavioural perspective. Examination of various definitions of psychological mindedness (Appelbaum, 1973; Baekeland & Lundwall, 1975) suggests the construct may be clinically useful and applicable to the processes and outcomes of cognitive-behaviour therapy.

The current work provided a new cognitive-behavioural conceptualisation of the construct, defining psychological mindedness as ‘the ability to identify one’s thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, and see connections between them’. As such, this new definition was adopted for the purposes of developing and validating a new Cognitive-Behavioural measure of Psychological Mindedness (CB-PM). This dissertation examined the psychometric properties of the CB-PM by conducting three empirical investigations to assess the clinical utility of the measure.

The first study explored the factor structure, reliability, and validity of the CB-PM, comparing the instrument with established self-report measures, in 100 undergraduate students. A factor analysis of the CB-PM revealed a two-factor structure, labelled ‘ability to identify thoughts, emotions, and behaviours’, and ‘ability

to see connections between thoughts, emotions, and behaviours'. The CB-PM demonstrated high internal, test-retest, and inter-rater reliability. Demonstrating some evidence for its convergent validity, the CB-PM significantly correlated with the theoretically related construct of alexithymia (measured by the Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20; Bagby, Taylor, & Parker, 1994), and with a self-report measure of psychological mindedness derived from a psychodynamic framework (the Psychological Mindedness Scale; Conte & Ratto, 1997), although the CB-PM did not correlate significantly with self-reflection or insight (measured by the Self-Reflection and Insight Scale; Grant, Franklin, & Langford, 2002). In summary, results from the first study provided support for the reliability and validity of the CB-PM.

The second study aimed to address two limitations of the first study, namely, the use of (1) self-report and (2) atheoretical or psychodynamic measures, to establish the convergent validity of the CB-PM. To overcome these two limitations, the second study tested the validity of the CB-PM in 108 undergraduate students, using three ability-based cognitive-behavioural measures that were theoretically expected to be associated with psychological mindedness. These measures were (1) The Thought Record Skills Assessment (TRSA; Neimeyer & Feixas, 1990), designed to measure an individual's competence in completing a thought record consistent with Beck's cognitive-behavioural theory of psychopathology, (2) the D-TEBBS, a measure of the ability to discriminate between thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and bodily sensations, and (3) the C-TEBBS, a measure of the ability to see connections between thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and bodily sensations. The latter two measures were developed by the current author to validate the CB-PM. Results indicated that the CB-PM

correlated positively with each of the three ability-based, cognitive-behavioural measures.

The third study extended the first and second studies by providing further validation for the CB-PM in a depressed population, before and after cognitive-behaviour therapy (and in a depressed waiting-list control group), while also exploring important hypotheses about the role of psychological mindedness in therapeutic practice. The main findings of the third study were that higher levels of psychological mindedness (measured by the CB-PM) before cognitive-behavioural treatment predicted lower post-treatment depression severity. In addition, the therapy group demonstrated increased psychological mindedness scores from pre- to post-treatment, suggesting that cognitive-behaviour therapy improves psychological mindedness, with the CB-PM being sensitive to such change.

Results of the three empirical investigations were integrated and their strengths and limitations outlined. The potential clinical utility of the CB-PM as a tool in therapeutic practice was described and areas for future research were discussed. It was concluded that the findings of the three investigations provide support for the applicability of the CB-PM to the processes, outcomes, and practice of cognitive-behaviour therapy.