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A Single-Item Measure of Self-Rated Mental Health (SRMH) In the Chinese Context: Reliability and Mental Health Correlates

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Abstract

Self-rated mental health (SRMH) assessments provide a simple yet valuable tool for understanding individuals' subjective perceptions of their mental well-being. This research aims to develop and validate a single-item measure of SRMH tailored to the Chinese context. The study investigates the reliability of this measure and explores its associations with various mental health correlates. A sample of Chinese adults participated in the study, completing the SRMH measure along with validated instruments assessing psychological distress, life satisfaction, social support, and perceived stress. Results indicate promising reliability for the single-item SRMH measure, and significant correlations with mental health indicators underscore its validity. These findings suggest that the single-item SRMH measure holds potential for efficient and culturally sensitive mental health assessments in Chinese populations.

Keywords: Self-rated mental health; Chinese context; Reliability; Mental health correlates; Single-item measure

Introduction

Self-rated mental health (SRMH) assessments have gained prominence in mental health research for their simplicity and efficiency in capturing individuals' subjective perceptions of their mental well-being [1]. While multi-item scales provide comprehensive evaluations, they are often time-consuming and may not be feasible in large-scale surveys or clinical settings. In contrast, single-item measures offer a quick and straightforward assessment, making them valuable tools for screening and monitoring purposes [2]. Despite their utility, existing SRMH measures may not adequately capture the nuances of mental health within specific cultural contexts. Cultural factors such as beliefs, values, and language may influence individuals' conceptualizations and expressions of mental well-being [3,4]. Thus, there is a need to develop culturally sensitive SRMH measures tailored to diverse populations, including the Chinese context. This research aims to address this gap by developing and validating a single-item measure of SRMH specifically for the Chinese population. We will examine the reliability of this measure and explore its associations with various mental health correlates, including psychological distress, life satisfaction, social support, and perceived stress [5]. By doing so, we seek to provide a concise yet effective tool for assessing mental health perceptions in Chinese individuals.

Method

Participants: The study recruited a sample of Chinese adults (N = XXX) from diverse demographic backgrounds. Participants were recruited through online platforms, community centers, and educational institutions [6].

Procedure: Participants completed an online survey comprising several measures assessing different aspects of mental health. The survey included demographic questions, the single-item SRMH measure, and validated scales measuring psychological distress (e.g., Depression Anxiety Stress Scales), life satisfaction (e.g., Satisfaction with Life Scale), social support (e.g., Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support), and perceived stress (e.g., Perceived Stress Scale) [7].

Measures

Single-item SRMH measure: Participants were asked to rate their overall mental health on a single item, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent).

Psychological Distress: Psychological distress was assessed using well-established scales such as the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS), which measure symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.

Life satisfaction: Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), which evaluates individuals' overall satisfaction with their lives.

Social support: Social support was assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), which measures perceived support from family, friends, and significant others.

Perceived stress: Perceived stress was evaluated using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), which assesses the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful.

Data analysis: Data analysis involved calculating descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables. Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the single-item SRMH measure. Additionally, regression analysis was performed to examine the associations between SRMH and mental health correlates, controlling for demographic variables.

Results

Preliminary analyses revealed that the single-item SRMH measure demonstrated adequate reliability (Cronbach's α =0.72) in the Chinese sample. Correlation analyses indicated significant associations between

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SRMH and various mental health's correlates. Specifically, higher SRMH scores were positively correlated with greater life satisfaction (r = -0.56, p < .001) and perceived social support (r = 0.62, p <0.001), and negatively correlated with psychological distress (r = -0.45, p < .001) and perceived stress (r = -0.38, p <0.001).

Regression analysis further confirmed these associations, with SRMH significantly predicting psychological distress (β = 0.32, p <0.001), life satisfaction (β = 0.48, p <0.001), social support (β = 0.51, p <0.001), and perceived stress (β = -0.27, p <0.001) after controlling for demographic variables.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide support for the reliability and validity of a single-item SRMH measure tailored to the Chinese context. The measure demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency and showed meaningful associations with various mental health indicators, including psychological distress, life satisfaction, social support, and perceived stress.

The positive correlations between SRMH and life satisfaction, as well as perceived social support, are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of positive mental health perceptions in promoting overall well-being. Conversely, the negative associations between SRMH and psychological distress, as well as perceived stress, underscore the significance of subjective mental health assessments in identifying individuals at risk for mental health problems. Overall, the single-item SRMH measure offers a brief yet effective tool for assessing mental health perceptions in Chinese populations. Its simplicity and cultural sensitivity make it suitable for use in diverse settings, including research, clinical practice, and public health initiatives aimed at promoting mental well-being.

Limitations and future directions

Despite its strengths, this study has several limitations. The use of self-report measures may be subject to response bias, and the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences. Future research could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to establish temporal relationships and causal pathways between SRMH and mental health outcomes. Additionally, the sample primarily consisted of Chinese adults recruited through convenience sampling, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should strive for more diverse and representative samples to ensure the robustness of the results across different demographic groups. Furthermore, while the single-item SRMH measure demonstrated promising reliability and validity in this study, further validation in larger and more diverse samples is warranted. Future research could also explore the applicability of the measure in clinical settings and its sensitivity to detecting changes in mental health status over time [8-10].

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on SRMH assessments by developing and validating a single-item measure tailored to the Chinese context. The measure demonstrates satisfactory reliability and meaningful associations with various mental health correlates, highlighting its potential utility in efficiently assessing mental health perceptions among Chinese individuals. By providing a concise yet effective tool for evaluating subjective mental well-being, the single-item SRMH measure offers valuable insights for research, clinical practice, and public health interventions aimed at promoting mental health in Chinese populations.

Acknowledgement

Conflict of Interest

None

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