

Four Dimensional Symptom Questionnaire (4DSQ)

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Introduction

The 4DSQ is a self-rating questionnaire measuring four dimensions of common psychopathology: distress, depression, anxiety and somatization. The 4DSQ was developed in general practice. The principal aim of the 4DSQ is to distinguish between stress-related syndromes (denoted as 'stress', 'burnout', 'nervous breakdown' or in Dutch 'overspanning' or 'surmenage') and psychiatric disorders (i.e. depression and anxiety disorders).

Content

The Distress scale measures nonspecific symptoms of psychopathology, ranging from worrying and irritability to fatigue and demoralization. As a general nonspecific component distress is always part of the symptomatology of anxiety and depressive disorders, in which case distress accompanies specific symptoms of anxiety or depression. Distress alone, or in combination with somatization, is characteristic of uncomplicated stress-related syndromes that are commonly encountered in general practice. The Distress score is associated with any psychosocial diagnosis as established by general practitioners (GPs) in general practice patients.

The Depression scale measures severe anhedonia and depressive thoughts, including suicidal ideation, symptoms that are characteristic of depressive disorders. The Depression score indicates the probability of having a major depressive disorder.

The Anxiety scale measures free floating anxiety, panic, and phobic anxiety, symptoms that are specific to the anxiety disorders. The Anxiety score indicates the probability of having one or more anxiety disorders.

The Somatization scale measures a range of common physical symptoms, known to be related to distress or psychopathology. Examples are headache, palpitations, nausea, and muscle aches. Moderate levels of somatization commonly accompany psychological distress that is not necessarily pathologic. High levels of somatization reflect pathological neurophysiological and psychological mechanisms such as 'sensitization', illness attributions and health anxiety. The Somatization score is associated with the GP's suspicion of a psychosocial background in patients presenting with physical symptoms.

Psychometric properties

Reliability of the 4DSQ scales is high with alpha-coefficients ranging from 0.84 to 0.94 and test-retest coefficients ranging from 0.89 to 0.94. The correlations between the 4DSQ-scales range from 0.35 to 0.71. The four-factor structure of the 4DSQ has been confirmed.

Measurement equivalence has been established across gender, age and socio-economic status. The 4DSQ can be used from the age of 10 years.

Applications

The 4DSQ can be used both in clinical practice, especially in general practice and occupational medicine, as well as in research.

Distribution

The 4DSQ is managed and distributed by Mapi Research Trust. The 4DSQ is free of charge for non-commercial use, for instance in clinical practice and unfunded research. People who wish to make use of the 4DSQ are referred to Mapi Research Trust (www.mapi-trust.org).

Questions regarding psychometric properties, translations and applications can be directed to the author [b.terluin@amsterdamumc.nl].

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