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 ScienceDirect

Journal of Adolescence 30 (2007) 393–416

Journal of
Adolescence

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Profiles of adolescent stress: The development of the adolescent stress questionnaire (ASQ)

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Abstract

The importance of stress in the understanding of adolescent health and well-being is widely documented. The measurement of adolescent stress has however been subjected to sufficient methodological and conceptual criticism in recent times to warrant a concerted re-evaluation of the exercise. This study sought information on the nature of adolescent stressors, building on a previous instrument developed by the first author to ask adolescents themselves to inform the development of a pool of new items reflecting stressor experience and to advise on the wording of these items to comprehensively assess that experience. This pool of items was then administered as a self-reported questionnaire to a large sample of school-age adolescents ($N > 1000$) together with a scale to assess the intensity of distress arising from stressor occurrence. Principal components analysis of the questionnaire yielded 10 internally reliable dimensions of adolescent stress, the nature of which were consistent with the available literature on adolescent stressor experience. Scales constructed from this PCA related positively to measures of anxiety and depression, and negatively to a measure of self-esteem, suggesting that they were valid measures of adolescent stress. Test–retest reliability was good for all scales. The resultant Adolescent Stress Questionnaire (ASQ) is therefore suggested to have potential for the measurement of adolescent stress in both research and clinical contexts.

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Keywords: Adolescent stress; Measurement scale

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