Reclassification and rescaling of McGill Pain Questionnaire verbal descriptors of pain sensation: a replication.

Towery S, Fernandez E.

Department of Psychology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX 75275, USA.

OBJECTIVES: This study was designed to test the stability of recent findings by the authors showing that 40% of the McGill Pain Questionnaire (MPQ) descriptors of pain sensation were not classifiable in any MPQ subcategory because of incomprehension, underuse, or ambiguity of usage. The study also was intended to determine the pain intensity ratings for the descriptors and how they relate to the original ratings provided by Melzack and Torgerson. METHODS: The sample size was twice that of the previous sample; 140 subjects (whose first language was English) assigned MPQ descriptors to individual sensory subcategories and then rated their implied intensity of pain. As in the first study, data were analyzed by a three-step decision rule incorporating the absolute frequency, relative frequency, and distribution of word assignments to the subcategories. Subjects were undergraduate students in a health psychology class at Southern Methodist University. RESULTS: Twenty-eight of the 32 words retained in the first study also satisfied criteria for inclusion in the present study, and four additional words that were not included in the first study satisfied the decision rule in the present study. As in the first study, intensity ratings of retained words correlated very highly with those reported by Melzack and Torgerson. CONCLUSION: A parsimonious set of 32 words can be adopted from the MPQ for efficient and unambiguous use in the clinical assessment of pain.

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