

NURSING RESEARCH REVIEW FORM

1st Review – Practice review

Manuscript # 2005/027
Manuscript title: Use of situation-specific Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire (NSSQ) items
Manuscript type: Brief Report
Number of text pgs.: 8
Number of figures: 1
Number of tables: 4
Reviewer: Sharon Dormire
Stat reviewer assigned?: Yes -- a stat reviewer has been assigned

Please evaluate the following with these choices: (1) adequate, (2) inadequate (describe in written review) or (3) not appropriate (describe in written review)

Problem statement: 1
Attention to relevant literature: 1
Theoretical framework: 1
Research design: 1
Data analysis: 1
Discussion of results: 2
Organization: 1
Writing style: 1

Please rate the following topics 1-5 (with 5 being the highest rating):

Value of topic: 5
Probable reader interest in topic: 4
Importance of present contribution to nursing: 4
Priority of topic for publication: 5
Rank this manuscript for its value: 5

Reviewer's Recommendation (please type "X" after your choice):

Accept without revisions
Accept with revisions X
Maybe accept with revisions
Do not accept

Comments for Editor only:

**Please provide a comprehensive and integrated review of this manuscript.
Be sure to present a balanced view of the manuscript's strengths and weaknesses.**

Review: Use of situation-specific Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire (NSSQ) Items.

This paper argues that situation specific social support questions should be incorporated into the Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire (NSSQ) when appropriate. The paper is well written using the data with literature incorporated to support both the analytic approaches and the findings. The limitations are few and largely correctable.

The findings reported here represent analysis of a subset of data from a larger descriptive study of maternal-student role stress. Data were collected from a volunteer sample of undergraduate women at a northeastern university. The steps of the data collection process are clearly described with materials distributed in class and participants completing the forms independently, returning them to the research via U.S. mail.

The author clearly identified the significance of the problem identifying the increase in measurement error if situation specific items are not included in evaluation of social support. The author also argues that important findings related to social support may be missed without such specific items; the argument is supported by examples provided. The purpose of this study (to explore the statistical parameters of situation-specific affect affirmation and aid NSSQ items) is clearly stated. Theoretical foundations of the NSSQ are reviewed as the basis of the work. The methods used are appropriate to meet the objectives of the study.

The author provides convincing evidence for exploring situation specific support from both a theoretical perspective. The literature review highlighted a lack of research efforts in this area and postulated reasons why efforts in this area have been limited. The variables (affect, affirmation and aid) are defined by the NSSQ itself. The study adds a situation specific variable for each of these three major dimensions of support. Although the added items appear to have face validity and to be related to the dimensions of the NSSQ, it is not clear how the added items were theoretically relevant. Hypotheses are not stated but they would not be appropriate in this paper. The design is not clearly identified. The procedure was identified that data collection occurred "as part of a larger study." The author indicates that the data collection for this study was concurrent; the data presented here is not a secondary analysis. The author does not describe how the situation specific questions were developed. A pilot study of the revisions to the NSSQ was not described. While the sample characteristics are adequately described, it is not clear that the sample size is adequate for the statistical analyses conducted. A power analysis is not presented. Institutional approval for the study was obtained. Participation in this study was voluntary. The researcher described the study, distributed the research materials, and received completed forms via mail. The instruments used in this study are adequately described. A table detailing the questions used in this version of the NSSQ was provided. Data analysis is described clearly, including progress of analytic decisions based on data characteristics, such as skewness. This analysis was appropriate for the purposes of the study. A factor analysis model adds clarity to interpreting the findings.

This study builds on previous research and adds an important dimension for researchers interested in using the NSSQ to examine situation specific social support. One item is

not clear. In the results and discussion section, paragraph 3, line 19 through 23. SSAid and Affirm2 are identified as having similarly low scores; the reader is referred to Table 3. In Table 3, however, low scores are associated with SSAid and Aid2. The author should reevaluate the discussion in this section. The author directs other researchers to use this approach to understanding social support when it is theoretically meaningful. Directions for future research are provided.

This manuscript is well written. It is organized and logical in presentation of the evidence. More attention could be focused on readability related to use of jargon. The NSSQ terminology can be difficult to follow with the frequent shift between affect2, SSaffect, Aid1, for example. However, the information presented here adds to the literature regarding social support and directs researchers using this instrument to consider new dimensions of situation specific information. For these reasons I recommend acceptance of this publication with revision to the issues identified in this review.