

SENTIA: An Adolescent Suicidal Behavior Assessment Scale

Adriana Díez-Gómez, Alicia Pérez-Albéniz, Javier Ortuño-Sierra, and Eduardo Fonseca-Pedrero
Universidad de La Rioja, España

Abstract

Background: The main objective of this work was to design and validate a new measuring instrument, called SENTIA, for assessing suicidal behavior in Spanish adolescents. **Method:** a total of 1790 randomly selected students participated in the survey. The average age was 15.70 ($SD=1.26$), 53.7% of the sample were girls. **Results:** The results of exploratory factor analyses suggested that the dimensional structure that best explained the SENTIA scores was a bifactor model, specified in a general suicidal behavioral factor plus three specific factors (Ideation, Communication, and Act/Planning). SENTIA scores demonstrated adequate levels of reliability. None of the SENTIA items showed differential functioning by gender. SENTIA scores were positively associated with suicidal ideation, symptoms of depression, emotional and behavioral problems, and psychotic-like experiences. **Conclusions:** SENTIA is a useful, easy, brief measuring instrument that has been specifically constructed and validated for the assessment of suicidal behavior in Spanish adolescents. As a screening tool, SENTIA can help the analysis, evaluation, understanding, and intervention in a the major socio-health problem that is suicide.

Keywords: adolescents, suicidal behavior, evaluation, prevention, SENTIA.

Resumen

SENTIA: Escala para la evaluación de la conducta suicida en adolescentes. **Antecedentes:** el objetivo principal de este trabajo fue construir y validar un instrumento de medida, denominado SENTIA, para la evaluación de la conducta suicida en adolescentes españoles. **Método:** participaron 1.790 estudiantes seleccionados mediante un muestreo estratificado por conglomerados. La media de edad fue 15,70 ($DT= 1,26$), siendo el 53,7% chicas. **Resultados:** los resultados del análisis factorial exploratorio sugirieron que la estructura dimensional que mejor explicaba las puntuaciones de SENTIA consistía en un modelo bifactor, concretado en un factor general de conducta suicida más tres factores específicos (Ideación Suicida, Comunicación Suicida y Acto/Planificación Suicida). Las puntuaciones de SENTIA mostraron adecuados niveles de fiabilidad. Ningún ítem de SENTIA mostró funcionamiento diferencial en función del género. Las puntuaciones de SENTIA se asociaron positivamente con ideación suicida, síntomas de depresión, problemas emocionales y comportamentales y experiencias psicóticas atenuadas. **Conclusiones:** SENTIA es un instrumento de medida sencillo, breve y útil que ha sido construido y validado específicamente para la evaluación de la conducta suicida en jóvenes españoles. SENTIA, como herramienta de cribado, puede ayudar a analizar, evaluar, comprender e intervenir en un problema socio-sanitario de primer orden como es la conducta suicida.

Palabras clave: adolescentes, conducta suicida, evaluación, prevención, SENTIA.

Suicide is a global health problem (WHO, 2014). Consummated suicide is the second most-common cause of death in adolescents and young adults worldwide. It is also one of the main causes of premature death and years of disability associated in life (Catalá-López et al., 2013; WHO, 2014). Suicidal behavior is a multidimensional and multifactorial phenomenon associated with stigma. Its conceptual delimitation, etiology, assessment, prevention, and intervention is a complex task with no easy solution (e.g., O'Connor & Pirkis, 2016). Currently, many questions related to suicidal behavior are still unanswered. One of these questions is related to the lack of conceptual definition and associated taxonomy (Goodfellow et al., 2018), something that also affects assessment, intervention, and prevention.

As a multidimensional construct, suicidal behavior manifests in different ways. Its phenotypic expressions vary from suicidal ideation, through suicidal communication and planning, to suicidal acts and consummation (Anseán, 2014; O'Connor & Nock, 2014; O'Connor & Pirkis, 2016). The level of suicide risk depends on biological underpinnings (e.g. diathesis), psychological factors (e.g., frequency, distress, desire to die), and environmental variables (e.g., life events, cultural factors). Etiological models of suicidal behavior focus on the complex interaction between biological, psychological, and social factors (Klonsky et al., 2016; O'Connor & Pirkis, 2016).

In Spain in 2017, a total of 3679 individuals died by suicide (INE, 2016). The prevalence of suicidal behavior during adolescence is high. In a meta-analysis, Lim et al., (2019) found that the lifetime prevalence and the 12 month prevalence for suicide attempts in adolescents was 6% (95% CI: 4.7-7.7%) and 4.5% (95% CI: 3.4-5.9%), respectively. In addition, for suicidal ideation the lifetime and 12-month prevalence was 18% (95% CI: 14.2-22.7%) and 14.2% (95% CI: 11.6-17.3%), respectively. Gender,

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