A new German Scale for Assessing Parental Stress after Preterm Birth (PSS:NICU_German/2-scales)

Background Worldwide 11.1% of all live births are preterm births; in 2013 in Germany and Austria the preterm birth rate was to 8.7% and 8.2 respectively [1, 2]. Numerous studies confirm that preterm birth is a stressful and anxious situation for parents and the acute stress might persist well after hospital discharge [3–5]. The experience of premature birth has a potential long-term impact on the psychological health of mothers and even on the development of their preterm infants [6–9]. Since preterm birth is a psychological strain for parents it is important to assess parental stress in an every day hospital routine. The Parental Stressor Scale: Neonatal Intensive Care Unit was developed to assess parental stress after preterm birth [10]. The PSS:NICU consists of 26 items divided into 3 subscales: Sounds and Sights, Looks and Behave of the child and Parental Role Alteration. The subscale Sounds and Sights quantifies stress regarding the environment and routine of a neonatal intensive care unit. The subscale Looks and Behave of the child measures stressors associated with the appearance and behaviour of the preterm infant, the subscale Parental Role Alteration stressors associated with changes in the parental role that differ for the parents of a sick child. The PSS:NICU has been translated into many different languages and is in use all over the world. So far there was no German translation of the PSS:NICU. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to examine the psychometric properties and the dimensionality of a german translated PSS:NICU.

Method For the development (exploratory factor analysis) 100 parents of preterm infants born at the University Hospital Graz participated in this study within 72 h after birth. 50 mothers and 50 fathers answered the German version of the PSS:NICU, the PSS:NICU/2-scales, plus a demographic questionnaire.

Results The German PSS:NICU_German/2-scales had good reliability and good item statistics. The principal axis analysis revealed a 3-dimensional structure comparable to the original English version of the PSS:NICU. The subscale Sights and Sounds consisted of only four Items and with regard to content and test theoretical considerations this subscale was eliminated in the German version of the questionnaire. Therefore, a PSS:NICU_German/2-scales consisting of the 2 subscales Looks and Behave of the child (7 Items, Cronbach’s α = 0.82) and Parental Role Alteration (6 Items, Cronbach’s α = 0.87), was developed with reduced items to improve reliability.

Conclusions The PSS:NICU_German/2-scales is a reliable and economic scale for the assessment of parental stress after preterm birth. It is well suited for use in every day hospital routine as well as for study purposes.

References


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