

Development and Initial Validation of the CAR Romantic Relationships and Intimacy Scale

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Background: Whilst participants with a disfiguring or appearance altering condition have expressed distress, fear, and anxiety in relation to their capacity to engage in physical intimacy and romantic relationships, there exists no measure of the perceived impact of visible difference upon this important domain of human relationships and functioning. This study sought to redress this through the development of a parsimonious CAR Romantic Relationships and Intimacy Scale.

Methods: Building upon earlier qualitative research an initial pool of items relating to the affective, cognitive and behavioural impact of visible difference upon romantic relationships and physical intimacy was generated. These were assessed for face and content validity and the resultant 74 items administered to an on-line sample of 275 participants with a visible difference who were informed of the research through relevant support groups and via the Prolific Academic portal. Participants completed a series of related measures with which it was hypothesised the new scale would correlate. These included measures of: appearance distress; fear of intimacy; social intimacy; fear of negative evaluation; and bodily self-consciousness during physical intimacy. An hysteria scale was administered to establish discriminant validity. Data were analysed by Principal Axis Factoring and subjected to Promax rotation in order to determine the scale's underlying multidimensional structure and further refine it.

Findings: After screening the data a combined scree test and parallel analysis revealed a five factor structure which demonstrated good internal reliability ($\alpha=.959$). An examination of the items, their factor loadings, their conceptual importance, and the desire for brevity informed further analyses. Consequently, a refined 17 item, three factor scale ($\alpha=.908$) which accounted for 60% of the total variance was proposed. Evidence of construct validity was revealed in patterns of highly significant correlations with the convergent measures and no significant correlation with the divergent measure.

Discussion: The CAR Romantic Relationships and Intimacy Scale demonstrated good face validity, content validity, internal reliability and convergent and divergent construct validity. The structure and reliability of the refined version should now be further validated by the collection of data that may be subjected to confirmatory factor analysis and used to establish test-retest reliability.