Applying the House-Tree-Person Test in Haiti: Measuring Children's Resilience and Vulnerability

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**Purpose**

The purpose of the study was to explore and illuminate the configuration between five scales by means of classical multidimensional scaling (MDS). The scales were the HTP Resilience and Vulnerability indexes, Hare Self-Esteem Scale (HSS), Child Self-Concept Scale (SC), and Child Report of Posttraumatic Symptoms (CROPS).

**Participants**

Children from three urban settings and an orphanage around Port-au-Prince, Haiti, were assessed in 2013 (n=34) and 2014 (n=54). For 2013, there 19 boys and 15 girls (Damien M age = 8.15, Canaan M age = 8.13, Blanchard M age = 8.15, Providence Orphanage M age = 8.89); and for 2014, there were 24 boys and 30 girls (Damien M age = 9.00; Canaan M age = 9.00, Blanchard M age = 9.00, Providence Orphanage M age = 8.70).

**Procedures**

An NGO in Blanchard that served the children’s communities did the recruitment. Data collection occurred in the NGO’s primary care clinic in Blanchard, its Canaan community center, and The Providence orphanage, also served by the NGO. A group administration of the HTP was conducted with small groups of 4-6 children. A trained Haitian translator gave the drawing directions to each group. The children were given a piece of paper for each drawing and colored crayons. The translators told the children in Créole “Draw a house. Draw a tree. Draw a person. There is no right or wrong house, tree, and person. We want to look at the picture of any house [any tree, any person]”. The other measures, the self-reports CROPS, HSS, and SC were administered individually by the translator after a child had completed the HT drawings. The translator read aloud each item and wrote next to an item the child’s stated level of endorsement.

**Measures**

The HTP is a culturally adapted pictorial assessment for use with Haitian children (Roysircar et al., 2016) that measures quantitatively Resilience (RES) and Vulnerability (VUL) with 31 items that rate for the present (1) or absence (0) of certain drawing features. The CROPS, a 22-item self-report, assesses the detrimental effect of traumatic events on children. The HSS asks children about their concentration ability, somatic symptoms (e.g., stomach aches, headaches), worries that bad things will occur, sad feelings, low energy, bad dreams, etc.) The Child Self-Concept Scale (HSS) is a 15-item self-report of peer and family esteem of the child. The Child Self-Concept Scale (SC), a 21-item self-report, uses adjectives to assess children’s self-beliefs, e.g., “I am friendly,” “I am bashful,” “I am helpful,” etc.

**Results**

- The reliability for SC was the highest with α = .93, and for HTP Resilience the reliability was α = .85.
- HSS, CROPS and HTP Vulnerability reliabilities were adequate at α = .73, .70, and .75, respectively. See Table 1.
- The total scale alpha as a unitary measure encompassing all five measures was very good, α = .87. Very good or high reliability indicates that as a body of measures, there is consistency in results derived from the various instruments’ methodology.
- MDS analyses allowed further understanding or judgments of similarities or dissimilarities between the scales. MDS does not provide reasons or suggest causal-effects. It maps a visual presentation of the proximities and allows for informed judgments about dimensions. See Table 2.

**Conclusion**

Based on the data provided for five measures completed for 74-86 children in Haiti, several statistical procedures (descriptive, item analysis, reliability, multi-dimensional scaling, and confirmatory factor analysis) were used to assess the relationships between the observed variables and theoretical constructs. It is most likely that collectively the HTP Resilience and Vulnerability indexes, Hare Self-esteem Scale (HSS), Child Self-Concept Scale (SC), Child Report of Posttraumatic Symptom scale (CROPS) measure two latent structures or dimensions relevant to the overarching content or constructs.

**Discussion**

Informed selection or interpretations should be grounded in theory and contextual knowledge of the instruments, the participants, and the extenuating circumstances or conditions.