

The Social Readjustment Rating Questionnaire: A study of Egyptians

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ABSTRACT

The life events approach to the Study of social stress, has been the focus of increasing critical attention. The aim of this work is to develop a questionnaire to quantify the degree of adaptation required by diverse life events.

This work allowed us also to make cross-cultural comparisons between the "Egyptian Sample" and the "American Subjects" in rating of life events that require social readjustment.

INTRODUCTION

The "life events" approach to the study of social stress, generally recognized to represent an advance over other approaches based on simple additive models, has been the focus of increasingly critical attention.

Several studies carried out have emphasized psychosocial stress as one of the aetiological factors of psychiatric illness Stenback A. (1954). Rechart E. (1970), Rimón R. A. (1969), Rahe R.H. *et al.* (1973), Rahe *et al.* (1974). The concept of stress initially defined by Selye (1936) (General adaptation Syndrome) has been later extended to include the area of all sociological, psychological and physiological problems with which an individual has been burdened with demands exceeding his potential ability for adaptation (Lazarus R.S. 1971).

Theorell (1970) divided stress into a chronic and an acute form. By the latter he means diverse life changes experienced by an individual.

Holmes and Rahe (1967) have developed a so-called SRE Questionnaire (Schedule of Recent Experience) to quantify the degree of adaptation required by diverse life events. A certain number of scores of LCU value (Life change Unit) has been in this way secured for each event. In numerous retrospective and prospective studies, a gradual build-up in life change intensity has been observed to occur during the course of several months prior to the onset of an illness and observed to remain after the illness for some time at a level higher than normal (Rahe R.H. and McKean I. (1967), Rahe R.H. and Arthur R.J. (1968). Rahe R.H. and Gunderson E.K.E. (1970), Rahe R.H. and Mahan J.L. (1970), Rahe R.H. and Passikivi J. (1971), Heisel J.S. et al. (1973).

AIM :

The object of this study was to administer the Social Readjustment Rating Questionnaire (SRRQ) to a group of Egyptians to quantify the degree of adaptation required by diverse life events so a certain number of scores can be secured for each unit, which becomes specific for Egyptians.

The administration of the SRRQ to a group of Egyptians will allow cross-cultural comparisons between the Egyptian sample and American subjects in rating of life events that require social readjustment.

SUBJECTS

This paper and pencil test was distributed to final year undergraduate psychology students, Faculty of literature, Ain-Shams university (170 students of both sexes). 148 of them completed and returned the test. They were requested to ask their parents to complete the test too. We received 193 responses from the parents. Thus the respondents included : 69 male students, 79 female students, 95 fathers, and 98 mothers.

Table I summarizes the age, occupational status and other descriptive characteristics. A comparison between the Egyptian sample of Okasha et al. and Holmes and Rahe's American is also presented in table I.

TABLE I

Summary of descriptive comparison between the Egyptian
Sample (Okasha et al.) and the American one (Holmes & Rahe).

	Total	Sex		Age 30 > Age > 30		Marital status	
		Male	Female			Single	Married
Egyptians	341	14	177	148	193	143	198
Americans	394	179	215	206	188	171	223

Occupation :

— Professionals	59
— Clerks or Salespersons	54
— Skilled Workers	19
— Semi-skilled workers	4
— Jobless (includes Housewives)	66
— Students	143

PROCEDURE

The SRRQ was presented in writing and each person completed it individually. The questionnaire was translated to Arabic.

This paper and pencil test consists of a list of 43 life happenings to which subjects are asked to assign weights using an open ended scaling procedure with the "massage" item arbitrarily assigned a weight of 500 as an anchor point. From population responses to the SRRQ, a mean weighted score is derived for each item, and the weighted items compose the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS). These SRRS item scores are derived from the SRRQ by dividing each item's arithmetic mean for each group by 10, and sounding off the result to the nearest whole number. This procedure has been used previously by Holmes et al. (1967) to simplify computational tasks and to confine scores to the 10-100

range. The instructions given to subjects were identical to those published by Holmes and Rahe (1967).

RESULTS

A summary of the results of items of ratings is presented in Table II, organized according to the mean values reported by the Egyptian sample. The table also contains the American mean ratings derived from Masuda and Holmes (1967).

A Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was calculated with the following results: $RHA = 0.89$ ($P > 0.01$) between ranks of Egyptian and American mean values, and $RHO = 0.90$ ($P > 0.01$) between ranks of American and Egyptian mean values. Thus while there were some differences in certain item rank orders, the overall sequence of items was highly similar between the two samples.

Differences in rank orders between Okasha et al. sample and Holmes and Rahe sample, appear, for example in such events as: "retirement", "change in health of family member", "son or daughter leaving home", "change in family gatherings" and "troubles with boss" but it can be seen from the table that while the absolute ratings of the two samples are somewhat different, the rank order of the items are similar in most cases.

TABLE II

**Okasha et al. SRRS compared with Holmes and
Rahe SRRS**

Items	Egyptians		Americans	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Death of spouse	1	100	1	100
Divorce	2	81	2	73
Death of close Family member	3	76	5	60
Marital separation	4	75	3	65
Detention in prison	5	74	4	63
Change in health or behaviour of family member	6	62	11	44
Major Personal illness or injury	7	60	6	53
Marital reconciliation	8	59	10	45
Major change in living conditions	9	58	27	25
Being fired from work	10	56	8	47
Major business readjustment	11	52	15	38
Son/daughter leaving home	12	51	23	27
Pregnancy	13	51	12	40
Sexual difficulties	14	50	13	39
Gain new family member	15	50	14	39
Marriage	16	48	7	50
Out standing personal achievement	17	47	24	28
Change in financial state	18	45	16	38
Change in arguments with spouse	19	45	19	35
Death of a close friend	20	44	17	37
Retirement from work	21	42	9	46
Change in residence	22	42	31	20
Begin/end of formal Schooling	23	41	25	26

Items	Egyptians		Americans	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Change in work responsibilities	24	40	21	29
Change to a different line of work	25	40	18	36
Change in family gatherings	26	40	38	15
Wife begins/ends work	27	39	26	26
Mortgage greater than £1000	28	34	20	31
Trouble with in-laws	29	33	22	29
Change in work conditions	30	33	30	20
Change in schools	31	30	32	20
Vacations	32	29	40	13
Changes in religious activities	33	28	34	19
Feasts	34	26	41	11
Change in recreation	35	25	33	19
Troubles with boss	36	25	29	23
Change in Social activities	37	24	35	18
Change in sleeping habits	38	22	37	16
Change in eating habits	39	21	39	15
Change in personal habits	40	18	28	24
Mortgage less than £1000	41	17	36	17
Change in friends gatherings	42	17	42	11
Minor violations of law	43	15	43	11

DISCUSSION

Over the last ten years, psychiatrists in Egypt have become increasingly interested in studying the relationship between psychosocial stresses and the genesis of mental and physical illnesses.

From the experience of most psychiatrists and physicians, a significant increase in a subject's recent life change experience has been shown to precede the clinical onset of both mental and physical illnesses. Thus psychological factors may have predictive validity in studies of such diseases.

Simple additive models were used to identify these life stresses. These models could be criticized due to the absence of standardized values for accurate statistical evaluation.

Standardized scales developed in other countries cannot be used due to cultural differences. Thus we felt the need to secure our own SRRS for the Egyptian population.

Okasha et al. SRRS obtained from this study may be subjected to some modifications in the future, after being applied by us to different sectors of the Egyptian society and after being used by psychiatrists in Egypt in prospective and retro-spective research about the relationship between the psycho-social stress and the aetiology of disease.

The results of item ratings obtained from the Egyptian sample present some differences when compared to those of the American Sample investigated by Holmes and Rahe (1967), but over all the rank orders of the two are highly similar. The hypothesis that psychosocial phenomena can be consistently evaluated across individuals and across cultures, held by Holmes and Rahe (1967) and Masuda and Holmes (1967) was again confirmed.

Similarity of results, however, may influenced by the nature, of the

Egyptian sample which consisted of subjects living in the capital Cairo, where the influence of the western culture is greater, also by the fact that nearly half the sample consisted of university students who are affected more by the western culture and finally there was a predominance of well educated middle class individuals in the sample.

Examination of some of the differences in rank order of items between the Egyptian and the American sample may cast some light on the cultural differences that relate to the phenomenon of readjustment. Rank order differences were found in items related to the family: "Change in health of family member", "son or daughter leaving home", "change in family get-togethers", and "marital reconciliation" Egyptians rated readjustment to these changes as more stressful than Americans did.

Marital readjustment was ranked lower by Egyptians than by Americans. Perhaps, in Egypt, among middle-class people living in the capital, spouses have to close ranks and aid one another in financing the family. This view finds support by the item "wife beginning or ending work outside" that was ranked lower by Egyptians than by Americans, contrary to traditional female role expectations in Egypt.

Problems of relocation in the area of work, income and living conditions were expected to be highly ranked by the sample because of the financial difficulties of many of the Egyptians especially the youth together with the housing problem which is the most stressful nowadays.

Business readjustment and change in finances were ranked higher by Egyptians than by Americans, as expected in line with readjustment problems in Egypt due to the abrupt economical changes.

The item "major change in living conditions" was ranked much higher by Egyptians than by Americans.

The "change of residence" item was likewise ranked higher by Egyptians as expected since traditionally they have a tendency to live in the same place for many years.

Some items were ranked contrary to expectations in view of the rapid changes in our modern society. "Mortgage greater or less than \$ 1000" and "change in work conditions, responsibilities or to a different line of work", were ranked lower by Egyptians than Americans. This may be related to the socio-economic status of our sample. On the other hand, these contradictions may be explained by a cultural attitude that would consider too great concern with money matters as petty materialistic and unacceptable in a society that emphasized kinship rather than competition. This tendency also can be inferred from the lower rank of the item, "retirement" that evidences a less competitive outlook, and perhaps greater respect for old age.

The item "troubles with boss" ranked lower by Egyptians may reflect traditional respect for authority parental and otherwise.

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الموجز

لقد قام هذا البحث بايجاد وسيلة لدراسة الأحداث التي يواجهها الأفراد وتسبب أعراض نفسية .

وقد قام الباحثون بعمل ورقة أسئلة تبحث درجة التكيف لمواجهة الضغوط النفسية والاجتماعية المختلفة التي يواجهها الأفراد .

وقد قام الباحثون كذلك بدراسة مقارنة لنتائج هذا البحث مع أبحاث أخرى أجريت على بعض الأمريكيين .

ABSTRAIT

Cette étude a été entreprise pour trouver un moyen de recherches en vue de trouver les incidents que rencontrent les individus, qui leurs causent des troubles psychiques. Les chercheurs ont dressés un questionnaire contenant les modalités se rapportant aux pressions psychiques et social que rencontrent tes individus.

Les chercheurs ont aussi effectués une étude comparative des résultats avec d'autres études effectives sur certains américains.

