



Research at a glance

Concurrent Validity and Normative Data of the Depression Hopelessness and Suicide Screening Form with Women Offenders

KEY WORDS: *Depression, Hopelessness, Suicide, Mental Health Screening, Women Offenders*

Why we did this study

The recently implemented Computerised Mental Health Screening System (CoMHISS) includes the Depression Hopelessness and Suicide Screening form. While this measure has been validated for use on men, research was required to determine its validity for women. The purpose of this study was to examine the concurrent validity and establish a normative range for scores on the Depression Hopelessness and Suicide Screening Form (DHS; Mills & Kroner, 2003) among federally incarcerated women offenders.

What we did

The study examined data collected from two samples of federally incarcerated women offenders. The first sample of 100 offenders was comprised of volunteers from Grand Valley Institution in the Ontario Region and from Joliette Institution in the Quebec Region who took part in a broader study of suicide and mental health/emotional functioning. The second sample of 122 offenders was drawn from admissions to three federal institutions (Edmonton Institution for Women, Grand Valley Institution, and Nova Institution) and collected as part of the Computerized Mental Health Intake Screening System (CoMHISS).

What we found

The findings confirmed the concurrent validity of the DHS. The measure produced strong correlations with well known validated measures of depression, hopelessness and affective functioning. Further, the study found that the mean scores on the DHS for new recent admissions were greater than for women offenders who had been incarcerated for some time. This was not unexpected given the deterioration in emotional functioning associated with periods of significant adjustment, but it did confirm that these differences should be accommodated through different normative ranges.

Finally, the study confirmed previous findings that showed that women offenders have higher rates of endorsing suicide risk factors than do male offenders.

What it means

The findings confirm that the measure will provide valid estimates of depression and suicide risk for women offenders within CSC and is suitable for use as a mental health screening tool.

For more information

Mills, J. & Kroner, D. (2010). *Concurrent Validity and Normative Data of the Depression Hopelessness and Suicide Screening Form with Women Offenders*. Research Brief, Ottawa, Correctional Services Canada.

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