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Urdu Translation and Preliminary Validation of the Assessment of Sadistic Personality (ASP-8) in Pakistan

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: May 19, 2026 Revised: May 30, 2026 Accepted: June 16, 2026 Available Online: June 26, 2026 Keywords: <i>Sadism, Urdu Translated Tool of Sadism, Sadism's Translated Measure</i> Corresponding author: Irsa Eman Email: fatimairsa2026@gmail.com	Sadism is a personality trait that is considered socially undesirable as it involves the pleasure of inflicting pain and suffering on others. In this study, the objective was to adapt the Assessment of Sadistic Personality (ASP-8; Plouffe et al., 2021) scale into Urdu and evaluate its psychometric properties. The study was designed using quantitative methodology and data collection was done through purposive sampling technique. The study sample included 547 participants, out of which 107 belonged to the clinical sample and 440 to the non-clinical sample. ASP-8 was translated into Urdu by the method of forward translation, expert review, back-translation, reconciliation and pre-test. The data was analyzed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), reliability analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation for divergent validity. EFA was performed using principal axis factoring with Promax rotation. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was used to confirm the sampling adequacy ($KMO = .900$) and the result of Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant. Internal consistency for the Urdu ASP-8 was very good ($\alpha = .90$), with corrected item-total correlations being between .59 and .74. Divergent validity was tested using the correlation with Coolidge Axis II Inventory Self-Defeating Personality Disorder Scale (SDPDS; Coolidge & Merwin, 1992) with a small positive correlation found ($r = .23$, $p < .01$). Generally, the results show initial evidence of the reliability and psychometric value of the translated Urdu ASP-8.

Introduction

Personality refers to relatively stable psychological qualities that help differentiate individuals from one another. In modern personality psychology, there has been an increasing interest in studying socially undesirable personality qualities such as sadism due to their connections to aggression, interpersonal victimization, and maladaptive behavior. Research done recently in Pakistan has shown how sadism is related to criminal thinking and aggression; this research indicates that sadism can be demonstrated through damaging interpersonal behavior (Fatima et al., 2025). Sadism is primarily distinguished by getting pleasure from torturing and humiliating other people. This behavior pattern may include inflicting physical and psychological pain, humiliating somebody, and getting a kick out of the suffering of others. In other words, there are various ways for sadistic behavior to manifest through interactions with others such as cruel acts, aggression, humiliation, bullying, and provocation. Notably, it is

essential to draw the distinction between sadistic personality traits and Sexual Sadism Disorder since sadism does not necessarily imply a sexual response and cannot be considered a mental illness (Foulkes, 2019; Krueger, 2010; Lobbetael et al., 2023). Traditionally, sadism was associated with psychopathology and sexuality. Sadism was discussed in the context of psychiatry and sexology in the works of Krafft-Ebing, whereas a psychoanalytic approach described sadism in terms of aggression and aggressive drives. Sadism was explained in the works of Freud (1915) as part of his theory of instincts with regard to aggression against others. The later theories have broadened the term to include dominance, control, aggression toward other people, and the pleasure that one can derive from the other's pain. Therefore, the idea of sadism evolved from a sexually-oriented and pathological concept into one which encompasses a broader range of aspects including personality-based features (Foulkes, 2019; Lobbetael et al., 2023). A critical distinction to make in current literature is between the clinical condition of sexual sadism and every day or subclinical sadism as a personality trait. Sexual Sadism Disorder is a paraphilic disorder and entails a sexual attraction characterized by either physical or psychological harm to an individual. The clinical relevance of the condition is based on the diagnostic criteria that are distressing, dysfunctional or involve the non-consenting individual (American Psychiatric Association, 2022; Krueger, 2010). Conversely, every day or subclinical sadism is defined as an individual variability in the experience of deriving pleasure from cruelty or suffering of other individuals but does not entail a psychiatric diagnosis (Foulkes, 2019). From the dimensional approach of study, this condition has been explored among the community populations.

Broadly speaking, sadism may be defined as a behavioral inclination in which one derives pleasure, gratification, or positive affective state out of the pain or humiliation caused to another individual. In this case, either direct physical or psychological torture or deriving pleasure by watching the pain inflicted on other individuals is meant. Current psychological literature draws a distinction between sadism and pure instrumental aggression, since the former involves using the pain of another individual as a source of gratification (Buckels et al., 2013; Foulkes, 2019). Further evidence that helps to differentiate personality attributes from the mental illnesses is the diagnostic history of sadism. The condition called Sadistic Personality Disorder was listed in the appendix of the DSM-III-R as one of the proposed personality disorders, which is characterized by a pervasive pattern of cruel, abusive, and aggressive actions towards other people, even when such actions are done with the intent of inflicting pain on others (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1987). However, Sadistic Personality Disorder was not included into the list of personality disorders in the later versions of DSM. On the contrary, the diagnosis of Sexual Sadism Disorder is listed under the paraphilic disorders in the DSM-5-TR and is associated with sexual arousal caused by the infliction of pain to another individual (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). This difference became very significant due to the fact that sadistic traits may exist on the spectrum. Subclinical sadism means that sadistic features are found in people who do not have any psychopathology and thus cannot be called clinically sick. This can be realized through interpersonal cruelty, humiliation, bullying, aggression, pleasure from others' suffering, and other forms of destructive behavior. This is why the dimensional research of sadism allowed scientists to study this construct among ordinary people instead of only in forensic or clinical settings (Foulkes, 2019; Lobbetael et al., 2023). An important discovery that has been made about the everyday sadism from an empirical perspective is by Buckels et al. (2013), where they have attempted to examine whether sadism is a personality trait which is socially aversive other than being a part of the Dark Triad consisting of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. The results showed that people who possess the personality trait of sadism were more prone to take up opportunities that are cruel. As per the experimental bug-killing task, people who had high levels of sadism personality were more prone to volunteer for killing bugs, whereas another experimental task established a connection between sadism and willingness to hurt the victim. It is also common to refer to sadism as the fourth part of the so-called Dark Tetrad, comprising narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. Although all these psychological traits have social aversion, they still differ from each other conceptually. Narcissism consists of grandiosity and entitlement, Machiavellianism is defined by manipulation, psychopathy consists of callousness and antisocial features, while sadism is mostly characterized by pleasure from torturing others (Buckels et al., 2013; Foulkes, 2019). Sadism is related to the psychopathic nature and other antagonistic personality traits, but they are not the same constructs. Psychopathy is the more extensive construct in terms of its personality characteristics, while sadism includes only pleasure from being cruel. In this way, sadistic traits cannot necessarily imply psychopathy and antisocial personality disorders (Foulkes, 2019; Lobbetael et al., 2023). The onset of sadism has been found to be multifactorial, incorporating personality factors, affective components, interpersonal dynamics, and environmental aspects. Sadistic behaviors have been related to aggression, low empathy, antagonism, and affective problems, but no one biological or environmental factor can be singled out as the source of sadism (Foulkes, 2019; Lobbetael et al., 2023).

The perpetuation of sadism may be explained by the mechanism of positive reinforcement, as people with greater sadistic tendencies get some pleasure from being cruel and aggressive. Therefore, as opposed to instrumental aggression, cruelty can serve as a reward in itself for people who demonstrate high sadistic behaviors (Buckels et al., 2013).

Sadistic traits can be manifested in the form of aggressiveness, bullying, interpersonal hostility, cruelty, and other negative behaviors. Notably, these features do not need to manifest in the context of extremely violent or sexual behaviors but can be demonstrated in regular interactions between people (Foulkes, 2019; Lobbestael et al., 2023).

In general, current literature describes sadism as a personality trait dimension that goes far beyond its traditional understanding in terms of sexuality and pathology. It is important to differentiate Sexual Sadism Disorder as a paraphilic disorder from subclinical or everyday sadism, which is determined by interindividual differences in experiencing pleasure from cruelty. The creation of the ASP and ASP-8 has been a crucial step towards further investigation of sadistic personality traits (Buckels et al., 2013; Foulkes, 2019; Lobbestael et al., 2023; Plouffe et al., 2017; Plouffe et al., 2023).

Rationale

The importance of sadism as a socially undesirable personality trait has been highlighted through empirical work on every day and subclinical sadism. The development of the Assessment of Sadistic Personality (ASP) and the abbreviated ASP containing just eight items, namely, Assessment of Sadistic Personality (ASP-8) has made it easier to measure individual differences in terms of sadistic personality traits (Buckels et al., 2013; Plouffe et al., 2017, 2023).

Although a lot of studies have been conducted to understand sadism as a personality trait, there is no validated Urdu version of the ASP-8 available to date. It is indeed a gap in the field of research within the Pakistani culture, as psychological measures cannot be administered in English language and need to be translated into Urdu language due to language barriers. Psychological instruments also do not maintain their meaning after being translated directly from one language into another (Brislin, 1970; Hambleton & Patsula, 1998). Thus, a systematic translation and psychometric evaluation of the ASP-8 in Urdu is needed. This research has attempted to translate and conduct preliminary validation of the ASP-8 in Urdu by employing procedures such as forward translation, expert review, back translation, and pre-testing of the translated scale. Later, the translated scale was evaluated by conducting exploratory factor analysis, reliability, item total correlations, and divergent validity.

This study is important in that it makes an Urdu scale available to measure sadistic personality characteristics for those whose primary language is Urdu like Pakistan. With this instrument, researchers will be able to investigate everyday sadism and its connections with other psychological and personality constructs in the future. This may provide an opportunity for future studies on further psychometric properties, cross-cultural comparisons, and the evaluation of other sadistic personality characteristics.

Method

Research Design

A quantitative research design was used to examine the factor structure, reliability and validity of the Urdu Translation of Assessment of Sadistic Personality.

Sampling strategy and sampling characteristics

Purposive sampling was used for data collection. A total of $N = 555$ individuals were approached, of whom $n = 547$ (clinical = 107; non-clinical = 440) provided complete data and were included in the final analyses. All participants were aged between 18 and 40 years ($M = 25.2$, $SD = 7.0$), with a mean monthly income of PKR 54,165.8 ($SD = 102,911.1$). The clinical sample was taken from public hospitals, and the non-clinical sample was taken from the general community and universities. The clinical sample consisted of men and women diagnosed with depression or anxiety-related disorders by a psychiatrist and were reconfirmed by the DSM-5-TR checklist. Individuals with other mental disorders (e.g., schizophrenia-spectrum disorders, bipolar I disorder) and those with other disorders that significantly affected cognitive functioning or ability to complete self-report measures were excluded. The non-clinical sample included those individuals who reported identifying with the brief description of self-defeating personality patterns, while those with any diagnosed psychological disorder were excluded from the study. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency and Percentage of Demographic Variables (N=547)

Characteristics	F	%
Gender		
Men	255	46.4
Women	292	53.4

Education		
Illiterate – under matric	21	3.8
Matric – Intermediate	129	23.6
Undergraduate – Graduate	373	68.2
Diploma	14	2.6
Doctorate	10	1.8
Occupation		
Student	316	57.8
Housekeeping	81	14.8
Employed	150	27.4
Birth Order		
First Born	235	43.0
Middle Born	251	45.9
Last Born	61	11.1
Marital Status		
Married	164	30.0
Unmarried	377	68.9
Divorced	2	.4
Widowed	4	.7
Family System		
Nuclear	241	44.1
Joint	306	55.9

Note. f = Frequency, % = Percentage

Assessment Measures

Demographic Sheet

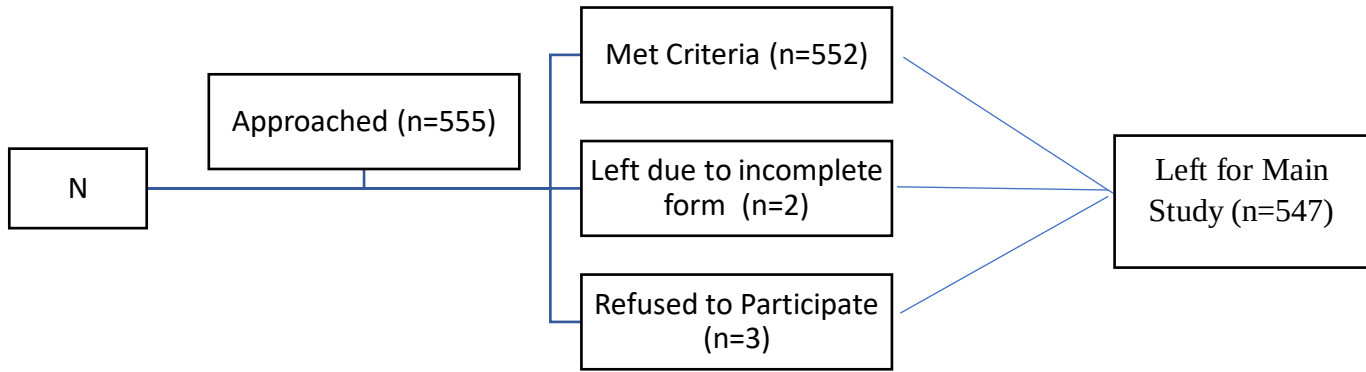
Information on age, gender, marital status, family system, birth order, income, educational level, and occupation of participants was collected using the demographic sheet. A diagnostic checklist based on the DSM-5-TR criteria to confirm the diagnosis in the clinical sample was also added. In addition, it also included a participant information sheet outlining the nature of the study, its purpose as well as an informed consent form to obtain written consent of the participants.

Assessment of Sadistic Personality (Plouffe et al., 2021)

The Assessment of Sadistic Personality by Plouffe et al. (2021) contains eight items that assess sadistic tendencies. It is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. High scores on the scale mean higher levels of sadistic tendencies. There are no reversed scored items in the scale. Although it was designed primarily for non-clinical settings, the scale has also been utilized in clinical samples. For the current study, the internal consistency of the scale is high (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90). The reliability of ASP-8 in a validity study conducted among community samples in four countries was 0.84 in the UK and 0.91 in Russia, while Greece and Serbia exhibited reliability scores that fell between these two figures (Plouffe et al., 2023).

Coolidge Axis II Inventory Self-Defeating Personality Disorder Scale (Coolidge & Merwin, 1992)

The CATI Self-Defeating Personality Disorder Scale (Coolidge & Merwin, 1992) is composed of 15 items that are rated on a 4 point Likert-type scale, ranging from SF= Strongly False (1) to ST= Strongly True (4). The scale was intended to assess maladaptive interpersonal behaviors including seeking rejection, sabotaging interpersonal relationships and behaviors that are detrimental to one's well-being. The value of reliability for Western community population was reported to be 0.61 (Coolidge et al., 2010). The reliability of this scale on the current sample was 0.87. In the present study, it was used for divergent validity



Procedure

With the proper approval of the original scale developers, both the Assessment of Sadistic Personality (ASP-8) and CATI Self-Defeating Personality Disorder Scale (SDPDS) were translated into Urdu according to the guidelines of World Health Organization (WHO, 2019). The steps taken during the translation of these scales are described below: (1) Forward Translation: Involves the independent translation of both scales into Urdu language by bilingual experts focusing more on conceptual and cultural equivalence than direct translation. (2) Expert Panel Evaluation: This step involves comparing the two forward translations done by bilingual experts and reaching a consensus on the most appropriate wording of the items. (3) Backward Translation: It includes translating the reconciled Urdu version of the scales back into English by independent bilingual experts without being informed about the original scales. (4) Comparison and Reconciliation: This step involves comparing back-translated versions of the scales with the original scales and resolving the discrepancies in terms of meaning and wording of the items through discussions among the experts. (5) Pre-Testing: Three clinical and five non-clinical individuals were selected to pre-test the Urdu versions of the scales.) Finalization and Data Collection: After the pre-test, the Urdu final version was administered to 547 subjects (107 clinical and 440 non-clinical) after receiving their informed consent and relevant permissions from institutions. The data thus collected was entered into and analyzed via SPSS. Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed using principal axis factoring with Promax rotation for determining the factor structure. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and item total correlations. Divergent validity was tested through Pearson product-moment correlation between ASP-8 and SDPDS.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical codes and standards established for the conduct of research involving human subjects were adhered to thoroughly. These ethical considerations encompassed the following key aspects: informed consent, participation information sheet, data were accurately entered in SPSS, and results were appropriately analyzed and reported.

Result

The exploratory factor analysis, reliability analysis and divergent validity of the Urdu translated Assessment of Sadistic Personality (ASP-8) are presented below.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted on the 8 items of the Assessment of Sadistic Personality scale using principal axis factoring method with Promax rotation.

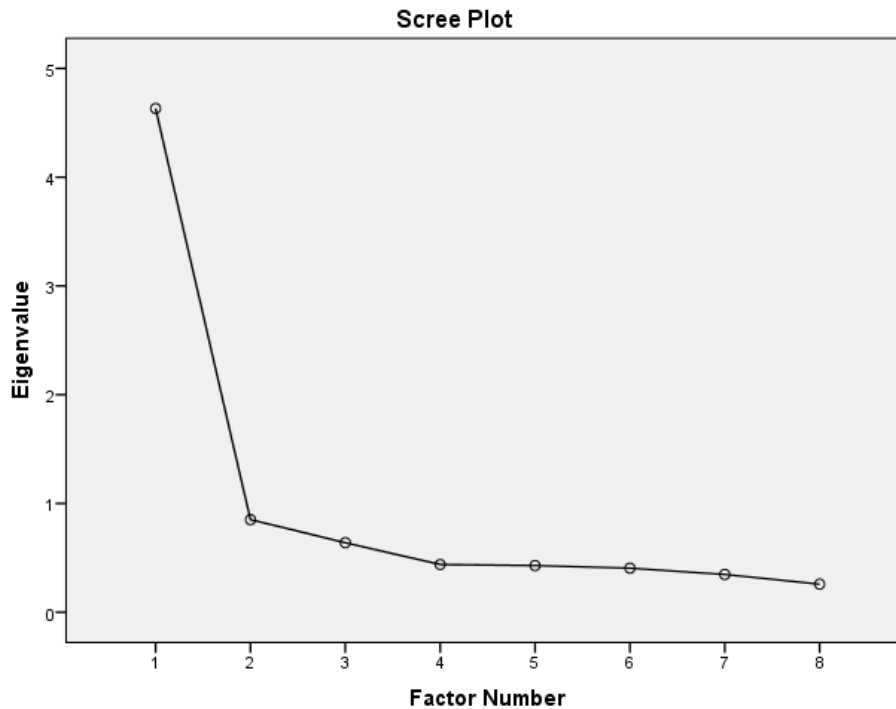
Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test Results of the Urdu Translated ASP-8

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.900
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi- Square	2203.63
	Df	28
	Sig.	.000

The results reveal that value of KMO was .900 which is considered excellent suggesting that the sample was highly appropriate for factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant, indicating that the correlation matrix was significant

Figure 1: Scree Plot of Eigenvalues from Principal Axis Factoring Analysis of the Urdu Translated Assessment of Sadistic Personality (ASP-8; N = 547)

The scree plot shows a sharp drop after the first factor, with subsequent eigenvalues flattening out. This clearly supports a



unidimensional structure, consistent with the original ASP8.

Table 2: Factor loading of the Urdu-Translated Assessment of Sadistic Personality (ASP-8; N=547)

Item	Factor Loading
ASP item1	.622
ASP item2	.667
ASP item3	.723
ASP item4	.791
ASP item5	.773
ASP item6	.790
ASP item7	.713
ASP item8	.673

Note. ASP = Assessment of Sadistic Personality

The results reveal that each of the eight items loaded significantly on one factor, ranging from .62 to .79, which indicates that all items measure the same underlying construct. These results support the one-dimensional structure of ASP-8 translated in Urdu.

Reliability

Table 3 shows the internal consistency reliability of the Urdu Translated Assessment of Sadistic Personality using the Cronbach's alpha.

Table 3: Reliability of the Urdu-Translated Assessment of Sadistic Personality (N=547)

Measures	N	Mean	SD	α	Actual Range	Potential Range
Assessment of Sadistic Personality	8	16.4	50.5	.90	8-40	8-40

Note. N= no. of items, α = Cronbach's alpha, Range = Minimum-Maximum possible score

The results reveal that the Urdu translation of Assessment of Sadistic Personality has excellent reliability meaning that all items consistently measure the same construct.

Table 4: Showing the Mean, Standard Deviation, Corrected Item-Total Correlation, and Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted N = (547)

Item	M	SD	ritc	α_{iid}
ASP Item 1	2.2	1.1	.59	.89
ASP Item 2	2.2	1.2	.63	.88
ASP Item 3	2.0	1.2	.68	.88
ASP Item 4	1.9	1.1	.74	.88
ASP Item 5	1.9	1.1	.72	.88
ASP Item 6	1.9	1.2	.74	.88
ASP Item 7	2.1	1.2	.67	.88
ASP Item 8	2.3	1.3	.64	.89

Note. ritc = Corrected Item-Total Correlation, α_{iid} = Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted

All corrected item-total correlation coefficients were satisfactory ranging from .59 to .74. Removal of any single item did not significantly affect the overall reliability of the scale. This means that each item made a meaningful contribution to the overall score.

Divergent Validity

To establish the divergent validity, CATI Self-Defeating Personality Disorder scale was used. Table 5 shows the correlation of CATI Self-Defeating Personality Disorder scale with the Assessment of Sadistic Personality.

Table 5: Divergent Validity of the Urdu translated ASP-8 with SDPDS.

Variables	1	2
1) CATI Self-defeating Personality Disorder Scale (SDPDS)	1	.23**
2) Assessment of Sadistic Personality (ASP-8)		1

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, N= 547

The findings reveal that there is a significant weak relation between Self-defeating personality and Sadistic personality. This shows that these two constructs are distinct from each other and thus support divergent validity.

Discussion

The results obtained in the current study constitute early psychometric validation evidence of the ASP-8 translated in Urdu and are in line with current research efforts that conceptualize sadism as an independent aspect of the Dark Tetrad. Sadism as part of the Dark Tetrad has been further studied in recent research as an independent construct, emphasizing the significance of measuring sadistic personality independently of other dark personality traits (Plouffe & Trahair, 2025). This study had the objective of translating the ASP-8 scale in the Urdu language and evaluating its psychometric properties. The results showed a one-factor structure, strong reliability, and distinctiveness of the construct. The exploratory factor analysis proved that there is one factor in the Urdu version of the ASP-8 questionnaire. High KMO value of .90 and significance of the Bartlett's test showed

that the data were appropriate for performing factor analysis. All the eight items were grouped under one factor with their loadings from .62 to .79; none of the items needed elimination. These findings were in line with previous studies proving the same structure of the ASP-8 across various nations (Plouffe et al., 2023). In terms of the divergent validity of the scale, the correlation between the ASP-8 and the CATI Self-Defeating Personality Disorder Scale proved to be small and statistically significant positive ($r = .23, p < .01$). As such, even though the magnitude of the correlation shows low similarity between the two constructs, the direction of the link contradicted the hypothesis of the relationship, and hence the findings provide some support for the hypothesis of construct distinctiveness, but not for the divergent validity. These results could be seen in light of the existing literature on the relationships between sadism and other maladaptive personality characteristics but at the same time distinction between these constructs (Lobbestael et al., 2023).

Also, the findings could be viewed against the backdrop of the etiology of sadism. At the moment, the available literature does not offer any unambiguous answers concerning the causes of sadism and discusses the problem through the prism of interacting interpersonal, affective, and behavioral characteristics (among which there are antagonistic and psychopathic personality characteristics) (Foulkes, 2019; Lobbestael et al., 2023). In particular, the strong association between sadism and psychopathy was highlighted by Lobbestael et al. (2023). The current result of the presence of a distinct and separate factor is therefore consistent with the idea of perceiving sadism as a specific personality feature among other pathological features rather than the effect of one particular cause. With respect to the cultural and linguistic factors, the satisfactory factor structure and validity provide the indication that the translation of the ASP-8 into Urdu has been successful in maintaining the meaning of the original ASP-8. It is important due to the fact that previous studies conducted across countries have shown that the ASP-8 is capable of retaining its psychometric characteristics among different samples. Thus, the Urdu adaptation of the ASP-8 has provided some evidence for the good fit of its unidimensional structure, performance of items, and internal consistency. However, since the correlation between the scale and the self-defeating personality features is relatively low, there is some evidence of poor convergent validity, but since the correlation is in the reverse direction, the evidence of divergent validity is preliminary.

Implications

The Urdu translation of the ASP-8 offers a concise and psychometrically promising assessment of features of sadistic personality among speakers of the Urdu language. It can help to conduct psychological research into sadism and the Dark Tetrad among people who speak Urdu as their native or first language, as well as those beyond Pakistan. The instrument may assist in future cross-cultural research due to the possibility of comparison with the original English form of the test and its other language versions. Nevertheless, as this study has conducted only initial validation, more psychometric work is needed.

Limitations and Suggestions

In this study, there is preliminary evidence found for the Urdu ASP-8. However, CFA and test-retest reliability have not been performed in this study, while divergent validity has only been assessed through one measure. Future research must determine the factor structure of the Urdu ASP-8 through CFA and must also determine its test-retest reliability. In addition to this, convergent and divergent validity must be assessed in the form of multiple constructs. Furthermore, there could be limited generalization of the present study because of the clinical and community samples used in this study.

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