

Role Stress and Existential Stress in Adolescents: Relationship with Emotional Intelligence and Wellbeing - A Pilot Study

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Abstract— A pilot study is a small sample study and a crucial part of a research project. This paper aims to describe and discuss the pilot study conducted in a research project involves sensitive issue of studying role stress and existential stress in relation to emotional intelligence and wellbeing among adolescents by using same methods and procedure to the main study. The purpose of conducting pilot study was to test the feasibility of main study as mentioned in research proposal, and to test the data collection instruments both survey questions and interview questions, without involving any rigorous statistical calculations. It was found that pilot study was necessary for this research project as it helped the researcher to conduct main study effectively and efficiently by anticipating in advance the challenges involved in studying sensitive issues and how to overcome these challenges.

Key words: Adolescents, Emotional Intelligence, Existential Stress, Pilot Study, Role Stress, Wellbeing

I. OVERVIEW OF PILOT STUDY

To trial and support the particular research instrument such as a questionnaire or follow up interview without involving any rigorous statistical calculations, a pilot study was conducted with 11 adolescents (Teijlingen van et.al, 2002).

Many researchers identify the importance of a pilot study particularly in studies that explore sensitive issues as it not only helps researcher assess the research instruments or techniques but also helps to identify the potential problem areas and appropriateness of research instruments (Connelly, 2008). Thus, to avoid risk or to identify measures to manage risks in the final study, a pilot study was conducted (De Vaus, 1993 as cited in Teijlingen van et.al, 2002).

In the current research, pilot study was conducted to verify the suitability and validity of the online survey and follow up interview to use as data collection instruments. The factors to consider against suitability are participants' responses to the questionnaire, time taken by the participants to complete the questionnaire and to identify the risks involved in studying such sensitive issue of role stress and existential stress in adolescents (Hassan et al, 2006).

II. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

In this study ethical considerations are of foremost importance as the study involves in-depth understandings of role stress and existential stress in adolescents and the potential relationship of these stressors with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Written approval was sought from the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee prior to participants being approached. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Australian Research Council 2007). To obtain this consent, participants were fully informed about the procedures and risk/benefits involved in research. Confidentiality of

participants was maintained and assured throughout the study. No personal information such as name, contact details etc. was collected in pilot study.

It was unlikely that any of the items on the questionnaires or semi-structured interview made students feel uncomfortable, but students were advised that they are free to decline to answer any question or postpone the survey and interview to their convenient time and place. If the research participant is under 18, informed consent from parents or of those legally designated as caregivers was obtained. Once the consent is obtained, assent was obtained from minor (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p.136). Thus, ethical issues were considered and employed throughout the study.

III. RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS FOR PILOT STUDY

Convenient sampling was used to select participants for the pilot study; members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria such as accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study (Etikan et.al.,2016, p.3). Appropriate selection criteria were followed while selecting participants for the pilot study such as students from years 8-12 or aged between 13-19 years

Students were provided with information sheets describing the nature and purpose of the pilot study and their role. Students were told that their participation is purely voluntary. Consent forms were signed by both students and their parent/caregiver.

Email ID was provided by students through which the online survey link was sent to them. Entry was directly into the 'Qualtrics software' The online survey and follow up interview in the pilot study contained two additional questions than the survey used in the final study. These were: 'How much time it took you to complete this survey?' and a request to provide their feedback regarding challenges or difficulties faced with the survey, with the content or any question. Similar, time was noted for the follow up interview and participants were requested to provide their feedback regarding challenges or difficulties faced with the follow up interview.

IV. TESTING THE MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

On average, respondents took about 10-15 minutes to complete the survey and 15-20 minutes for follow up interview. Regarding the online survey some of the participants reported that they attempted to respond to all question but some questions they missed because they clicked the 'next button' by mistake. This appeared to be because there was no back button. To overcome this issue 'Back button' was added in the online survey for the final study.

No participant reported problems with the content or language of the questions, or any other challenges related to answering any question during the online survey or the follow

up interview. Participants reported positively about the online survey and follow up interview with most saying that the questions were very simple to answer, interesting and very informative.

V. DISCUSSION

This pilot study has demonstrated the present research project is feasible. Research instruments were also found to be appropriate for collecting data regarding sensitive issues such as role and existential stress in adolescents. The pilot study also demonstrated that the number of questions asked in the survey and follow up interview did not exceed the time limit of 20-25 minutes as mentioned in the information sheets.

This study also demonstrated the effectiveness of a pilot study in identifying flaws in conducting an online survey that after appropriate amendments utilised in a final study. The information gained and understood from the pilot study was used to prepare information sheets, consent forms and many other purposes for main study. It also provided a better understanding of how to implement the online survey and follow up interview; how to arrange time and setting for follow up interviews etc.

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