Comparing the predictive validity of five cigarette dependence questionnaires

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Abstract

To determine whether the long and short versions of the Cigarette Dependence Scale (CDS), the Fagerström Test for Nicotine Dependence (FTND), the Heaviness of Smoking Index (HSI) and the Nicotine Dependence Syndrome Scale (NDSS) predicted smoking abstinence.

Reference


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Comparing the predictive validity of five cigarette dependence questionnaires

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A B S T R A C T

Background: To determine whether the long and short versions of the Cigarette Dependence Scale (CDS), the Fagerström Test for Nicotine Dependence (FTND), the Heaviness of Smoking Index (HSI) and the Nicotine Dependence Syndrome Scale (NDSS) predicted smoking abstinence.

Method: We collected data via Internet in 2004–2007 in 2343 current smokers. Follow-up surveys were conducted after 8 days (N = 456) and 31 days (N = 486). We assessed the ability of dependence ratings to predict smoking abstinence, controlling for confidence and intention to quit smoking.

Results: All dependence scales were significant predictors of smoking abstinence at the 8-day follow-up, with the CDS being the best predictor (OR: 3.98 per SD unit, 15% of variance explained). Results were similar but stronger among respondents intending to quit (OR: 6.68, 26% of variance explained). At the 31-day follow-up, only the FTND, HSI and NDSS Continuity subscale were still significant, albeit weak, predictors of abstinence (OR: 1.56, 2% of variance explained).

Conclusion: Among the scales under scrutiny, the CDS had the best predictive validity after 8 days. None of the scales explained more than 2% of the variance in abstinence after 31 days.

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1. Introduction

Valid and reliable measures of cigarette dependence are needed for research and clinical purposes. Several brief, self-report questionnaires measuring cigarette dependence are available, and at least four of them have already been extensively studied and validated. The best known and oldest is the Fagerström Tolerance Questionnaire (FTQ; Fagerstrom, 1978; Fagerstrom and Schneider, 1989), and its revised version, the Fagerström Test for Nicotine Dependence (FTND; Heatherton et al., 1991). Both were developed to provide short and practical self-report measures of dependence on nicotine, for use in clinical practice. The internal consistency of the FTND is below the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Even though FTND predicts smoking cessation, it is usually a weak predictor (Baker et al., 2007; Etter et al., 2003; Kozlowski et al., 1994; Sledjeski et al., 2007), and it is modestly correlated with biochemical indicators of exposure to cigarette smoke (e.g., plasma cotinine; \( r = 0.33-0.46 \); Pomerleau et al., 1990). Two items of the FTND are included in the Heaviness of Smoking Index (HSI). This index has adequate reliability (0.72) and good test–retest validity (0.87; Etter et al., 1999). Several studies have found that the HSI is the best predictor of smoking cessation among the dependence scales (Chaiton et al., 2007; Etter, 2005; Hughes et al., 2004; John et al., 2004; Kozlowski et al., 1994; Uysal et al., 2004).

The Cigarette Dependence Scale (CDS) was developed more recently (Etter, 2005; Etter et al., 2003; Okuyemi et al., 2007). There are a 5-item (CDS-5) and a 12-item versions of this scale (CDS-12), both are reliable (Cronbach’s \( \alpha > 0.85 \) and test–retest \( r > 0.83 \) for both versions). This scale was designed to assess the criteria listed in the DSM-IV and the ICD-10 definitions of dependence. Both versions of CDS are associated with saliva cotinine levels and predict urge to smoke during a quit attempt, but lower levels of dependence, as measured by CDS, have not reliably predicted smoking abstinence (Etter, 2005; Etter et al., 2003). A third questionnaire is the Nicotine Dependence Syndrome Scale (NDSS; Shiffman and Sayette, 2005; Shiffman et al., 2004). The NDSS was based on Edwards’ multidimensional model of dependence (Edwards, 1986; Edwards and Gross, 1976). Five facets were found empirically, using exploratory factor analysis. A linear combination of 14 of its 19 items (the NDSS-T) is used as a general measure of dependence. The internal reliability of the NDSS-T is high, around 0.85 (Shiffman and Sayette, 2005; Shiffman et al., 2004), but the NDSS-T has not reliably predicted smoking cessation (Sledjeski et al., 2007).

According to the DSM-IV (American Psychiatry Association, 1994), dependence is related to unsuccessful efforts to cut down on substance use. Thus, in theory, dependence scales should predict smoking cessation. However, studies on the prediction of abstinence by dependence levels show contradicting results. Two
Table 1
Baseline characteristics of the participants according to which surveys they answered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Modalities</th>
<th>Answered only survey 1 (N=1742)</th>
<th>Answered survey 1 and 2 (N=456)</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Answered survey 1 and 3 (N=486)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (mean)</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smokes</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cpd</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decided to quit in the next 30 days</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence to quit</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDS-12</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDS-5</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTND</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDSS-T</td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.11</td>
<td>−0.12</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>−0.12</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.51</td>
<td>−0.56</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>−0.59</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity</td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.27</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>−0.14</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypy</td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.42</td>
<td>−0.43</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>−0.45</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
metric properties (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.71–0.83$; Shiffman et al., 2004). Items overlap and are weighted to compute five standardized scores ($\text{mean} = 0$, $\text{SD} = 1$). A single overall score composed of 14 items, the NDSS-T, is based on the first principal factor. We computed the NDSS overall score and subscales according to the directions given in Shiffman et al. (2004).

### 2.3. Procedure

We posted on the Internet a questionnaire comprised of the CDS, NDSS and FTND, as well as several questions on smoking behavior, intention to quit and confidence in ability to quit. To avoid halo effects, participants were randomly allocated to one of two survey forms, counterbalancing the order of scales. In the first form, the scale order was FTND-CDSS-NDSS, and in the second form, the scale order was NDSS-FTND-CDS. Responses differed significantly between forms for three questions only. Since testing these differences represented 37 tests (one test for each question), these differences can be attributed to chance. Participants were also asked to provide their email address for the follow-up surveys. Independently of their decision to participate in the follow-up, they received a feedback report assessing their dependence level.

Intention to quit in the next 30 days was measured by the following question: “Which of the following statements best describes your current situation?" 1: I am an Ex-smoker, and I: A. Have no intention to quit in the next 6 months; B. Seriously consider quitting in the next 6 months; C. Decided to quit in the next 30 days; I am an EX-smoker and stopped D. less than 6 months ago; E. more than 6 months ago.” Ex-smokers were discarded and answers A and B were recoded to 0 and answer C to 1. Confidence in ability to quit was assessed by the question: "Is it likely that in one month from now, you will be an EX-smoker?", answered on a 6-point scale: 1, unlikely; 2, more or less likely; 3, rather likely; 4, very likely; 5, extremely likely; 6, absolutely sure.

Smoking abstinence was assessed by a single question at the 8-day (respectively 31-day) follow-up: “Have you smoked any tobacco (even one puff of cigarette, cigar, pipe, etc.) in the past 24 h (respectively past 7 days)?”

### 2.4. Analyses

We estimated the test–retest reliability of the scales among smokers who did not make a quit attempt between baseline and the 8-day survey. For each dependence scale, we used binary logistic regression models to predict the occurrence of smoking abstinence, and we report odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals. The logistic regressions of smoking abstinence on confidence to quit and level of dependence were ran separately on all respondents and on respondents who intended to quit. Each analysis included only one addiction scale as the independent variable. Effect sizes were computed using pseudo R-square (computed with the Stata 10 software). Effect sizes are bounded by zero and one: zero indicating no prediction of the independent variables on the dependent variable and 1 indicating a perfect prediction. We did not apply a correction for the number of tests since our goal was to compare the scales, and p-values were not the main interest.

We used the Area under the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curves (AUCs) as criteria to compare the ability of dependence scales to predict abstinence at follow-up. The ROC curve plots 1–specificity against sensitivity, and the area under this curve quantifies the predictive ability of a test (Hanley and MacNeil, 1982). We first tested differences between AUC for the general scales (CDS-12, CDS-5, FTND, NDSS, HSI), and for all 10 scales (DeLong et al., 1988).

It is important to note that odds ratio's values cannot be compared across dependence measures since the different scales had different number of points. However, AUC and pseudo $R^2$ can be compared across measures.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Study population

At baseline, the sample included 2206 daily smokers (91%) and 137 occasional (non-daily) smokers (6%). The mean number of cigarettes per day was 19.6 (SD: 11.8). Participants who indicated a country of residence (91%) lived in the USA (54%), the UK (10%), Denmark (9%), Canada (8%) and other countries (19%). Participants were on average 37.5 years old and most (62%) were women. Half (52%) had decided to quit smoking in the next 30 days, and half (53%) had made a serious attempt to quit in the previous year.

Table 1 presents the baseline characteristics of the participants who answered only the first survey, answered the first and second survey ($N = 456$), or answered the first and third survey ($N = 486$). Respondents who participated in the second or third follow-up were slightly older and more of them were females. Moreover, they were less likely to have decided to quit and have less confidence that, if they did try to quit, they would succeed. However, they were not different in their smoking habits (cigarettes/day, depen-


3.2. Test–retest reliability

The test–retest reliability of each scale or subscale between baseline and the 8-day follow-up, among smokers who did not make a quit attempt in this interval (Table 2) are very close to those obtained in previous studies (Etter et al., 2003; Pomerleau et al., 1994; Shiffman et al., 2004) except for the Stereotypy subscale of the NDSS \((r = 0.61)\), which test–retest reliability was lower than the usually recommended threshold of 0.7.

4. Discussion

We assessed and compared the test–retest reliability and the predictive validity of the Cigarette Dependence Scale (CDS), the Fagerström Test for Nicotine Dependence (FTND), the Heaviness of Smoking Index (HSI), and the Nicotine Dependence Syndrome Scale (NDSS), adjusting for intention to quit and confidence in ability to quit.

4.1. Test–retest reliability

Test–retest reliability was adequate to good for all scales and subscales except for the Stereotypy subscale of the NDSS. The difference in the test–retest reliability of the Stereotypy subscale between this and previous studies may be due to the fact that the participants in Shiffman et al. (2004) were highly dependent and were required to quit smoking for 3 days starting just after the second testing. Knowing that the 14-day retest was to be followed by 3 days of abstinence may have made their smoking behavior more invariant, since they were sure that they would not try to quit during the 14 days. This may have increased the test–retest reliability of the Stereotypy scale. On the contrary, the participants of this study were more motivated to quit than smokers in general (Etter and Perneger, 2001) and may have been trying to change their smoking behavior, leading to an underestimation of the test–retest reliability of Stereotypy.

4.2. Predictive validity

All dependence scales (but not all NDSS subscales) were significant predictors of smoking abstinence at the 8-day follow-up, either when considering the whole sample or only respondents who intended to quit. In both cases, the best predictor (i.e., the one that explained the most variance and whose AUC was highest) was the CDS.

At the 31-day follow-up, only the FTND, HSI, and Continuity subscale were significant predictors of smoking abstinence at the 8-day follow-up when only respondents intending to quit were considered. However, this increase in predictive power was not found for the abstinence at the 31-day follow-up outcome. Thus, intending to quit seems to have an impact on the short-term but not on the longer-term, either because intentions are temporary states of mind or because longer-term outcomes depend on relapse risk factors rather than on dependence levels.
The literature contains mixed results about the prediction of smoking abstinence by strength of dependence, with studies showing that dependence predicts abstinence (Baker et al., 2007; Hyland et al., 2006, 2004; Hymowitz et al., 1997), and other finding no evidence of a relation between some scales measuring dependence and subsequent quitting (Chaiton et al., 2007; Etter, 2005, 2008; Etter et al., 2003; Sledlyski et al., 2007). These contradictory results may be explained in part by differences in the interval between baseline and follow-up, or by the different composition of the samples (e.g., volunteers in clinical trials who received smoking cessation treatments, population surveys, visitors of a website).

4.3. Study limitations

The present study was conducted in a self-selected sample of Internet users, who differ from smokers in the general population (Etter and Perneger, 2001). In addition, the response rates at follow-up were relatively low, but this is a problem inherent to all e-mail surveys (Cook et al., 2000). The self-selection of participants and the low response rates may limit the generalizability of these results, but this should not be a problem for the comparison of scales, which was the main goal in this study, because the scales should appropriately predict smoking behaviors for all types of cigarette smokers.

There were only 16 baseline smokers who were abstinent at the 8-day follow-up. This low sample size may have caused important parameters to be estimated as non-significant. However, this limitation applies to all scales and thus does not bias the comparison between scales.

5. Conclusion

This is one of very few studies comparing the predictive validity of widely cited scales such as FTND and NDSS. The five dependence scales showed similar patterns of predictive validity: significant prediction of quitting at 8-day but not at 31-day follow-up. The Cigarette Dependence Scale was the best predictor of smoking cessation at the 8-day follow-up and the Continuity scale and HSI were the best, albeit weak, predictors at the 31-day follow-up.

Role of the funding source

This study received no funding.

Contributors

Etter designed the study and wrote the protocol. Courvoisier and Etter managed the literature searches and summaries of previous related work. Courvoisier undertook the statistical analysis, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. All authors contributed to and have approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of interest

None of the authors have any conflict of interest in this study.

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Vincent Baujard, from the HON Foundation (www.hon.ch), developed the software for data collection.

References


