Essen Climate Evaluation Schema - Basic Information

Concern and history

The Essen Climate Evaluation Schema – Essen CES© - is a short questionnaire, originally developed for assessing essential traits of the social and therapeutic atmosphere of forensic psychiatric wards. Within a series of studies beginning in 1993, different sets of questionnaire items were evaluated. The aim was to identify a number of somewhat independent climate traits stable in different settings and samples. The questionnaire was intended to be shorter and more economic as the well known Ward Atmosphere Scale WAS (Rudolf Moos et al.), its trait structure more simple and stable. The outcome of this process is a 15 item instrument (plus 2: item 1 and 17 are not scored). Climate dimensions measured are Therapeutic Hold, Patients’ Cohesion and Mutual Support and Experienced Safety (vs. threat of aggression and violence).

Research and publications

In Germany, a comprehensive validation study was conducted in 2007, including 17 forensic mental hospitals and 46 wards. Patients and staff completed the Essen CES© and other questionnaires, among them the WAS and a ‘Good Milieu Index’. Problematic occurrences were listed and counted over a period of 3 weeks on each ward. The intended 3 factor structure of the instrument was clearly confirmed. High coefficients of correlation supported the subscales’ validity. The coefficients were somewhat lower for "Safety", but this scale correlated strongly with the number of problematic occurrences and displays strong face validity.

A German project report can be downloaded from this homepage.

Findings were published in these articles:


Another handbook paper (only German) presents findings in German prison settings:


A broad validation study is being conducted in the National Health Service in England by Kewin Howells, Matthew Tonkin and colleagues. They present preliminary findings in the following paper:


Versions, translations, normative data

The scale is protected by copyright law, but it is available free of charge in the public domain. English, German, Dutch, Danish, Japanese, Korean and Finnish versions are currently available, as well as English and German versions for correctional (prison) settings. Please use the standard layout version of the instrument. A revision of the layout was conducted in 2010.

Representative normative data for non-German versions are currently not yet available. Kevin Howells, Matt Tonkin and colleagues (Rampton Hospital, University of Nottingham and Leicesters University) are conducting the broad English validation study mentioned above in forensic hospitals and correctional settings. A manual and statistical norms are an anticipated outcome of this project. For further information you may contact:

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Norbert Schalast