Italian norms for the harvard group scale of hypnotic susceptibility, form a

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ITALIAN NORMS FOR THE HARVARD GROUP SCALE OF HYPNOTIC SUSCEPTIBILITY, FORM A

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Abstract: Norms for an Italian translation of the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form A (HGSHS:A) by Shor and Orne (1962) are presented. Subjects recruited from 1986 to 1989 were pooled, resulting in a sample of 376 participants (297 women and 79 men). The normative data were generally congruent with earlier normative studies in score distribution, item difficulty levels, and reliability. Women had significantly higher hypnotizability scores and item pass rates than men. The reliability scores of the Italian adaptation of the HGSHS:A were the same as a previously reported Danish sample and higher than a German sample, but lower than those of the Australian, Canadian, and original American samples. These results suggest that the Italian version of the HGSHS:A is an efficient tool for initial hypnotizability screening in an Italian context.

Among the tests developed to measure hypnotic susceptibility, the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form A (HGSHS:A) of Shor and Orne (1962) is regarded as the most appropriate for the initial screening of subjects for experimental hypnosis research and is widely used. This scale is an adaptation of the individually administered Stanford Hypnotic Susceptibility Scale, Form A (SHSS:A; Weitzenhoffer & Hilgard, 1959). The reasons for the wide use of the HGSHS:A are most likely: (a) the time-saving achieved through group administration is considerable, and yet the HGSHS:A yields a measure of hypnotizability comparable to that obtained with the individually administered SHSS:A; and (b) the measure’s of psychometric properties are well-suited for initial screening.

Comparisons among the available normative studies indicate that the psychometric properties of HGSHS:A are comparable across different sociocultural and linguistic contexts (for American samples, see Coe,
ITALIAN NORMS FOR HGSHS:A

1964; and Shor & Orne, 1963; for Australian samples, Sheehan & McConkey, 1979; for Canadian samples, Laurence & Perry, 1982; for German samples, Bongartz, 1985; for Spanish samples, Lamas, del Valle-Inclan, Blanco, & Diaz, 1989; and for Danish samples, Zachariae, Sommerlund, & Molay, 1996). More than 20 years ago, the HGSHS:A was translated into Italian (Misiti, 1976). However, the psychometric properties of this Italian version are unknown. The Italian adaptation has been used in a number of studies carried out in our laboratories, beginning in 1985 (De Pascalis, Marucci, & Penna, 1989; De Pascalis, Marucci, Penna, & Pessa, 1987; De Pascalis & Palumbo, 1986; De Pascalis, Silveri, & Palumbo, 1988). The present study analyzes this substantial archival data set to determine norms for the Italian adaptation of the HGSHS:A. The psychometric properties of the Italian adaptation are compared with those of adaptations developed in other countries: (a) the Spanish sample (Lamas et al., 1989); (b) the Danish sample (Zachariae et al., 1996); (c) the German sample (Bongartz, 1985); (d) the Australian sample (Sheehan & McConkey, 1979); (e) the Canadian sample (Laurence & Perry, 1982); and finally (f) the original American sample (Shor & Orne, 1963).

METHOD

Subjects

The HGSHS:A was administered to 376 volunteer psychology students, 297 women and 79 men. The age range was 19 to 26 years with a mean of 20.5 (SD = 2.83). The participants were recruited from an introductory psychology course at the Department of Psychology, University of Rome, “La Sapienza,” during four consecutive academic years (1985-1989).

The subjects were strictly volunteers, as they were not required to participate in the hypnosis study as part of a course, and they did not receive course credit in return for their participation. The size of the group sessions ranged from 15 to 35 participants over the 4-year period of testing.

Instruments

The Italian version of the HGSHS:A (Shor & Orne, 1962) was used (Misiti, 1976). This is a back-translated Italian version of the original American protocol. The Italian translation by Raffaello Misiti, like the original scale, consists of a standard hypnotic procedure with 12 standard suggestions that are administered in the same order as the original scale. The only relevant difference between the Italian and the original scale is that subjects are required to report a judgement of their subjective experience in a response sheet at the end of the session.

In order to test the predictive validity of the HGSHS:A, the Italian version of the Stanford Hypnotic Susceptibility Scale, Form C (SHSS:C) was also administered (Traina, 1976). This is a back-translated version of the original American scale.
Procedure

During the experimental session, subjects were correctly informed that they were to be administered a standard tape-recorded procedure for assessing their level of hypnotizability, using an Italian translation of the HGSHS:A. They were told that if they did not wish to receive the hypnosis induction, they were free to leave. The Italian translation of the HGSHS:A was administered orally to groups of 10 to 20 subjects. They were also invited to volunteer to participate in further sessions for an individual assessment of hypnotizability and for physiological recording. Following termination of hypnosis, subjects were required to report their experience in a response booklet. After completing the response booklet, subjects were invited to discuss their experiences with the experimenter. Details of the procedures are given in the original (Shor & Orne, 1962) and Italian (Misiti, 1976) test manuals. To avoid undesired suggestive effects, subjects were requested to avoid discussing their hypnosis experience with other students after each hypnosis session.

RESULTS

The scoring of the Italian HGSHS:A responses followed the standard procedure described by Shor & Orne (1962). For each of the first 11 items, a score of 1 was given if the subject indicated in the booklet that he or she had experienced the suggested response. Otherwise, a score of 0 was given. For the posthypnotic amnesia item, a score of 1 was given if there were less than four items noted in the booklet before amnesia was lifted and 0 if there were four or more items noted.

Score Distributions

To evaluate if women and men were members of the same population in terms of their score distributions, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov two-sample test was used. This nonparametric test was chosen, rather than a parametric test, because it is sensitive to any type of difference in the distributions of two samples and has less restrictions in its use (see Siegel, 1978, pp. 15-27). The test revealed that there were significant differences between the score distributions as a function of gender ($Z = 1.42$, two-tail $p = .036$). Women had significantly higher total scores than men (Women, $M = 6.6, SD = 3.02$; Men, $M = 5.6, SD = 2.73$; $t = 2.68, p = .013$).

In order to compare the present results with those obtained in other reference samples, the responses of women and men were pooled for further analysis. The means and standard deviations of the Italian and reference samples are reported in Table 1.

To determine if the mean of the Italian aggregate sample differed from those of the six reference samples, a series of two-tailed $t$ tests for independent samples was carried out, with alphas set at .008 (.05/6).

The mean score of the Italian aggregate sample ($M = 6.41$) was not significantly different from the mean score reported in the German study.
(M = 6.50; \( t = .52, p > .05 \)), but significantly higher than those reported in the Canadian (M = 5.38; \( t = 5.42, p < .008 \)) and Australian (M = 5.45; \( t = 6.30, p < .008 \)) samples. The Italian mean score was significantly lower than the mean scores obtained for the American (M = 7.39; \( t = 3.34, p < .008 \)), Danish (M = 7.64; \( t = 6.06, p < .008 \)), and Spanish (M = 7.13; \( t = 3.08, p < .008 \)) samples. The Italian mean score was significantly lower than the mean scores obtained for the American (M = 7.39; \( t = 3.34, p < .008 \)) and Danish (M = 7.64; \( t = 6.06, p < .008 \)) samples. The variance of HGSHS:A scores in the Italian differed significantly only from that of the German sample (2.80 and 2.40, respectively, \( F = 1.36, df = 375, 373, p < .008 \)).

Item Difficulty

The item pass rate (in percentages) for each of the 12 individual items was calculated for the aggregate sample. The item pass rates for the Italian aggregate sample and for other reference samples are displayed in Table 1. In the aggregate Italian sample, the highest item pass rates were for the Head Falling (70%) and Hand Moving (64%) items. In contrast, the most difficult items were the Hallucination (28%) and Posthypnotic Amnesia (35%) items.

The Italian sample does not show very high or very low pass rates, whereas in each of the reference samples some items seem to be very easy (e.g., the 89% pass rate for Hand Lowering in the American sample), and others seem very difficult (e.g., the 11% pass rate for Posthypnotic Suggestion in the Danish sample).

To compare the consistency of item difficulty level across the Italian aggregate sample and the other reference samples, item difficulty was ranked for each sample, and the rank-order correlation between pairs of samples was computed. The rank-order correlations of item difficulty for the Italian sample with the Spanish, Danish, German, Australian, Canadian, and American samples were, respectively, 0.72, 0.78, 0.73, 0.74, 0.73, and 0.68.

A t test (Blalock, 1983, p. 498) computed between the highest (0.78) and lowest (0.68) correlation coefficients did not indicate significant differences between them (\( t = 0.121, N = 9, p > .05 \)). Because there was no difference across correlation between item difficulty ranked within the Italian and each of the reference samples, we concluded that there was a high consistency of item difficulty for the Italian sample and the six reference samples.

Reliability

The point-biserial correlation coefficients between each of the 12 items and the total score omitting that item (i.e., item reliability coefficients) and the Kuder-Richardson (Formula 20) total-scale reliability (Rubini, 1975) for the Italian sample and each of the reference samples...
Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Item Pass Rates (in Percent) for Italian and Reference Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HGSHS:A Item</th>
<th>ITA</th>
<th>DAN&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>SPA</th>
<th>GER</th>
<th>CAN&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>AUS</th>
<th>USA&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 376</td>
<td>n = 376</td>
<td>n = 230</td>
<td>n = 374</td>
<td>n = 535</td>
<td>n = 194</td>
<td>n = 132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Head Falling</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Eye Closure</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hand Lowering</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Arm Immobilization</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Finger Lock</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Arm Rigidity</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Hand Moving</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Communication Inhibition</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Hallucination</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Eye Catalepsy</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Posthypnotic Suggestion</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Amnesia</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Percentage per Item</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Mean</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>7.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample SD</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Ita = Italian; Dan = Danish; Spa = Spanish; Ger = German; Can = Canadian; Aus = Australian.

<sup>a</sup>Means and standard deviation of the Danish Aggregate Sample are derived from the Zachariae et al. (1996) study, assuming that the variance of the means for women and men are the same within the limits of random sampling.

<sup>b</sup>Laurence and Perry (1982) do not report the mean score or standard deviation for their aggregate sample. These data are taken from Bongartz (1985).

<sup>c</sup>Shor and Orne (1963) do not report the standard deviation of their sample. The value listed here is taken from Hilgard (1965) and refers to Shor and Orne's sample with the addition of 20 subjects.
Table 2
Item-Scale Correlations and Total Scale Reliability for Italian and Reference Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item-Scale Correlations</th>
<th>ITA (n = 376)</th>
<th>DAN (n = 376)</th>
<th>SPA (n = 230)</th>
<th>GER (n = 374)</th>
<th>CAN (n = 535)</th>
<th>AUS (n = 194)</th>
<th>USA (n = 132)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Head Falling</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Eye Closure</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hand Lowering</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Arm Immobilization</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Finger Lock</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.86</td>
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<td>6. Arm Rigidity</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.55</td>
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<td>7. Hand Moving</td>
<td>.34</td>
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<td>.46</td>
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<td>.18</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Scale</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Kuder-Richardson)
are presented in Table 2. Rank order of the point-biserial correlation coefficients for the Italian aggregate sample and the six reference samples are reported in Table 3.

An inspection of these tables indicates that total scale reliability of the Italian instrument, as well as item reliability, is comparable to that of the reference sample, falling roughly in the middle range.

**Predictive Validity**

A subset of 218 subjects from our original sample, which displayed the entire HGSHS:A score range, was retested on the Italian version of the SHSS:C. The Italian SHSS:C was administered within 3 weeks after the administration of the Italian HGSHS:A, following the standard procedure. The correlation coefficient between the total scores of the two tests was 0.86 for the whole sample ($r = 0.91$ for women and $r = 0.74$ for men). This coefficient is the highest among the corresponding values reported for the reference samples: Weitzenhoffer and Hilgard (1962, $r = 0.72$); Coe (1964, $r = 0.60$); Evans and Schmeidler (1966, $r = 0.59$); Sheehan and McConkey (1979, $r = 0.53$ for $n = 50$, and $r = 0.83$ for $n = 25$); Bongartz (1985, $r = 0.57$); Lamas et al. (1989, $r = 0.66$); and Zachariae et al. (1996, $r = 0.69$).

However, this result should be interpreted cautiously due to the lack of normative data on the Italian adaptation of the SHSS:C and the relatively low correlation coefficients reported in the previous studies. More recently, Perry, Nadon, and Button (1992) reexamined the relationship between HGSHS:A and SHSS:C measurements by pooling data from the Register and Kihlstrom (1986) study. They found that, of the 315 subjects, 47% were categorized identically on the HGSHS:A and SHSS:C. The greatest agreement on the two scales was found in the low hypnotizable category, where 71% of subjects scoring low on the HGSHS:A were also classified as low on the SHSS:C. These authors concluded that the investigator who relies upon the HGSHS:A as the sole measure for determining hypnotizability categorizations may have, almost half the time, a different classification from that obtained with the SHSS:C.

In order to seek replication of these findings from our hypnotizability data scores, a joint distribution of hypnotizability as classified by the HGSHS:A and SHSS:C ($n = 218$) was obtained; the results indicate that, of the 218 subjects, 161 (73.8%) were categorized identically on the HGSHS:A and SHSS:C. The greatest agreement on the two scales was in the low hypnotizable category. Of the 67 subjects scoring in this category on the HGSHS:A, 64 (95%) were classified as low in hypnotizability on the SHSS:C. For the remaining three categories, the corresponding percentages were 63% (medium), 63% (medium-high), and 75% (very high), respectively. Another analysis showed that, of these 218 subjects, 73.8% performed identically on the two scales; 4.7% scored lower on the SHSS:C, and 21.5% scored higher on it. These data displayed a stronger
relationship between the two hypnotizability scales than that reported by Perry et al. (1992). The results overall, however, replicated the findings by Perry and colleagues, suggesting that low hypnotizability is the category most consistently measured by the two scales.

Because for at least 26% of the time a subject’s score on the HGSHS:A led to a different classification than that obtained with the SHSS:C, testing for hypnotizability with only the HGSHS:A is not supported by the present data.

**DISCUSSION**

The present findings indicate that the normative data presented for the Italian adaptation of the HGSHS:A in general are similar to those obtained in other normative studies. The mean and variance of the total sample lie well within the range of the mean and variance scores reported by the Spanish, Danish, German, Australian, Canadian, and original American samples. Furthermore, the relative difficulty of the items and the Kuder-Richardson reliability coefficient are comparable to those reported in other studies. The predictive validity of the Italian version also is in sufficient agreement with other published findings. In terms of hypnotizability differences between gender, this study showed a higher hypnotizability for women than for men. This finding is in agreement with that reported in the Danish sample (Zachariae et al., 1996) but differed from those reported in the Spanish, German, Australian, Canadian, and American samples, which found no relationship between gender and hypnotizability.

Interestingly, the Kuder-Richardson coefficient obtained for the Italian sample (0.70) seems comparable to that of other European samples. Moreover, the Kuder-Richardson coefficients for Canadian, Australian, and American samples, which all shared the same language version, are all considerably greater than that of the European versions. This observation suggests that language and cultural differences may play an important role in determining the overall reliability of the translated scales. But one cannot simply infer that mean differences between
national or language samples necessarily reflects linguistic or cultural differences per se. There were also differences across these reference samples regarding subject recruitment and instrument administration. For example, the Australian, Canadian, German, and Spanish versions were administered via audiotape, whereas the American, Danish, and Italian versions were administered in person.

In agreement with previous observations by Bongartz (1985), the results from the present study suggest that the HGSHS:A is valuable for obtaining initial ratings of hypnotizability and is an efficient tool for an initial time-saving selection of subjects suitable for further screening. These data, however, are in agreement with the suggestion of Perry et al. (1992) that using the HGSHS:A as a sole measure for determining hypnotizability categorizations may produce many errors of data classification. In the present study, a subject’s score on the HGSHS:A led to a different classification from that obtained with the SHSS:C in almost 30% of cases.

It is important to note, however, that the correlation coefficient between the total scores of the HGSHS:A and the SHSS:C obtained for the Italian sample is 0.86, a higher value than those obtained in the reference samples. This high correlation may be due to the fact that subjects in our sample were all naive volunteers who were not informed about hypnosis prior to the test session. After each hypnosis session, they were also asked to avoid discussions about hypnosis with their colleagues. This may have reduced “noise” influences in the measures of hypnotizability with the HGSHS:A and SHSS:C scales.

Finally, the present study suggests that the application of HGSHS:A in an Italian linguistic context introduces no significant loss of precision or validity in relation to the original hypnotizability scale. The present data are highly consistent with those obtained from European non-English samples (Bongartz, 1985; Lamas et al., 1989; Zachariae et al., 1996). This validation of HGSHS:A may be seen as another step forward in improving the role of HGSHS:A in Italian research on hypnosis.

REFERENCES


Italienische Normen der Harvard Gruppenskala für Hypnose-Suggestibilität, Form A

Vilfredo De Pascalis, Paolo Russo, und Francesco S. Marucci
Zusammenfassung: Normen für eine italienische Übersetzung der Harvard Gruppenskala für Hypnose-Suggestibilität, Form A (HGS:SA) von Shor

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Les normes italiennes de l'échelle de susceptibilité hypnotique du groupe Harvard, forme A  

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Normas Italianas para la Escala Grupal de Susceptibilidad Hipnótica de Harvard, Forma A  

Vilfredo De Pascalis, Paolo Russo, y Francesco S. Marucci  
Resumen: Presentamos normas de una traducción Italiana de la Escala Grupal de Susceptibilidad Hipnótica de Harvard (HGSHS:A) de Shor y Orne (1962). Juntamos los datos de voluntarios de 1986 a 1989 para obtener una muestra de 376 participantes (297 mujeres y 79 hombres). Los datos normativos, en general, son consistentes con estudios normativos anteriores en cuanto a la distribución de puntuaciones, niveles de dificultad de los reactivos, y confiabilidad. Las mujeres tuvieron puntuaciones significativamente más altas y
pasaron más items que los hombres. Las puntuaciones de confiabilidad de la adaptación Italiana de la Escala Grupal de Susceptibilidad Hipnótica de Harvard:A fueron iguales que las obtenidas anteriormente con una muestra Danesa, más altas que las de una muestra Alemana, pero más bajas que las de las muestras de Australia, Canadá, y la muestra original Estadounidense. Estos resultados sugieren que la versión Italiana de la HGSHS:A es una herramienta eficaz para una diferenciación inicial de hipnotizabilidad dentro de un contexto Italiano.

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