

Out-of-body experiences: An exploration of phenomenological features and development of an experience screening questionnaire

ABSTRACT:

Background

A key characteristic of OBE research is the ability to accurately state whether or not a reported experience is an OBE. Previous OBE research has typically used a single item for discerning OBEs from non-OBEs. The limitations to this method are that participants can falsely identify or reject themselves as OBEs owing to the few number of features contained in the wording of the item. Instead, a scale of items tapping into the varied phenomenology of the OBE would be a more robust and valid screening tool for assessing OBE occurrence.

Aim

The aim of this study was to develop such a multi-item screening tool.

Method

This study was conducted in 2 phases. Phase 1: A Directed Content Analysis of published OBE cases and interviews with OBEs was conducted. The findings were used to develop a questionnaire. Phase 2: An OBE screening questionnaire was designed, piloted and tested.

Results

An Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted on the pilot questionnaire data. A five-factor model emerged that provided the best statistical and theoretical solution. The five-factor model was then tested and the data subjected to a Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Results showed that the hypothesised model demonstrated a poor overall fit across five of the six goodness-of-fit indicators, except for the Chi Square ratio which indicated an acceptable fit. As a result, the hypothesised model was rejected.

Conclusion

A preliminary version of a multi-item screening scale has been developed to more accurately assess the occurrence of an OBE than using a single item. It is recommended that the final scale should be further validated in a variety of ways with other different samples of OBEs in future longer-term studies.

Keywords

Out-of-Body Experience, Directed Content Analysis, Factor Analysis, Questionnaire Design

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