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An exploration of the psychometric properties of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI Obs-40) with young people

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ABSTRACT

Many young people experience poor mental health, which, if left untreated, can have detrimental effects into adulthood. Person-centered and humanistic therapies are widely used for this population. However, the evidence for their effectiveness is limited, and tools to assess person-centered therapy's 'core conditions' with young people is also lacking. The Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory Observer Form (BLRI Obs-40) assesses the therapist-provided conditions of empathy, congruence, level of regard, and unconditionality of regard. This study assesses the psychometric properties of the BLRI Obs-40 with young people, using data from 136 audio recordings of school-based humanistic counseling. The scale's internal consistency was high and the five-month test-retest reliability was satisfactory. Inter-rater reliability, however, was poor. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) supported the original four-subscale dimensionality of the scale. The BLRI Obs-40 showed good convergent validity with the Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy Scale adapted for young people (PCEPS-YP). The BLRI Obs-40 may be used with young populations for practice, supervision, and research. However, further exploration of, and evidence for, the scale's psychometric properties are recommended to validate its use. Extended training of raters will be essential to enhance the scale's inter-rater reliability.

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Empathy; congruence; unconditional positive regard; reliability; validity; young people

Introduction

Young people's mental health is a significant concern (Department of Health, 2015). It is estimated that 10–20% of 16–24-year-olds experience poor mental health in the UK (McManus et al., 2009; Sadler et al., 2018). Additionally, many mental health difficulties experienced in adulthood originate in younger years (Jones, 2013). Childhood mental illness can affect many areas of life, from education, occupation, and relationships, resulting in overall poor mental and physical wellbeing (Prince et al., 2007). In addition, on a macro level, untreated childhood mental health problems can cause additional costs to health, social, and educational services (Snell et al., 2013; Whiteford et al., 2013).

Person-centered therapy, based on the work of C. R. Rogers (1957), may be beneficial for young people (Nuding, 2017). A recent randomized control trial of *school-based humanistic counseling*, based on competencies for person-centered counseling (Hill et al., 2012), found that young people showed significantly reduced psychological distress, and increased self-esteem, after 12 weeks of counseling (Cooper et al., 2021).

According to C. R. Rogers (1957), there are six necessary and sufficient conditions required for therapeutic change. Three of these conditions (empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard) are referred to as the 'core conditions' that are required for therapeutic personality change (Mearns et al., 2013). Within adult populations, evidence suggests these core conditions are positively associated with therapeutic outcomes (Elliott et al., 2019; Farber et al., 2019; Kolden et al., 2018). Current evidence of the role of the core conditions in therapy with young people, though promising, is less established. Nevertheless, a meta-analysis of 16 studies found that therapist interpersonal skills (including empathy, positive regard, and congruence) strongly related to positive treatment outcomes (Karver et al., 2006).

To develop this evidence base, it is essential to have reliable and valid tools to assess the core conditions in young people. To date, however, these are limited. One measure that might prove helpful in assessing these conditions for young people is the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI). The BLRI was developed and designed to measure the therapist-to-client relationship conditions and is based on C. R. Rogers (1957) core conditions for therapeutic change. Barrett Lennard (1959), like Rogers, hypothesized that therapeutic change occurs according to the degree to which a client experiences these conditions.

The BLRI was initially developed as a 64-item scale comprising four subscales: Empathic Understanding, Level of Regard, Unconditionality of Regard, and Congruence. Example items include, 'I feel that I am genuinely myself with (therapist)' (Congruence Scale) and '(Therapist) is friendly and warm toward (client)' (Level of Regard Scale). Adult respondents used a 6-point Likert Scale to indicate the extent to which they feel the statements are true, ranging from -3 (No, I feel strongly that is not true) to +3 (Yes, I feel strongly that is true) (no midpoint, 0, was provided). The internal consistency of the original development study, as assessed using the split-half method, was satisfactory (Spearman-Brown correlation $r \geq .82$ for each sub-scale) (Barrett Lennard, 1962). Additionally, test-retest reliability indicated good stability of the measure over four weeks (total BLRI score $r = .95$) (Barrett Lennard, 2015).

A summary of psychometric evidence for the BLRI with adults comes from a review by Gurman (1977). High internal reliability ($r = .91$ for total BLRI score) was found across 14 studies. Test-retest reliability across ten studies demonstrates high reliability over time, with mean correlations of .90 for total BLRI score, .83 for Level of Regard, .83 for Empathy, .80 for Unconditionality of Regard, and .85 for Congruence.

Since the BLRI's development, multiple principal component analyses (PCA), conducted across different settings, have supported the scale's construct validity (Gurman, 1977). Most recently, the structural validity of the BLRI with adults was assessed via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Liao et al. (2018) used both PCA and CFA to evaluate the Chinese-Mandarin translated BLRI in a sample of 658 students who measured their relationship with a specific friend. Results supported the original four-subscale dimensionality of the BLRI. Alternative forms of the scale have been created, including a therapist rating of their own attitudes, a shortened 40-item version, and a 40-item

observer-rated form of therapist attitudes (Barrett Lennard, 2015). However, there is limited psychometric evidence for these forms, either with adults or young people.

This study aims to provide an initial exploratory evaluation of the psychometric properties of the 40-item observer-rated Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI Obs-40) for a sample of young people receiving person-centered counseling. Observer measurement, as compared with self-rating, may make a particularly valuable contribution to research with therapy for children and young people, as the validation and use of these measures is not dependent on the young person's developmental age. We chose to examine a shortened version of the scale as it may be more practical for repeated usage. Exploratory research questions for the scale and four subscales were:

- (1) What is the internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha, α) of the BLRI Obs-40, and to what extent do the subscales intercorrelate (Pearson's correlations, r)?
- (2) What is the test-retest reliability (r) of the BLRI Obs-40 when the same recordings were re-rated by the same rater after a five-month interval?
- (3) What is the inter-rater reliability (α and r) of the BLRI Obs-40 across three independent raters?
- (4) To what extent does the BLRI Obs-40 show convergent validity with the Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy Scale adapted for young people (PCEPS-YP)?
- (5) Do BLRI Obs-40 scores support the original four-subscale dimensionality of the scale?

Methods

Design

This is an exploratory psychometric study that aims to initiate an exploration of the psychometric properties of the BLRI Obs-40 in young people. The research project was approved by the ethics committee of [DETAILS ANONYMISED FOR PURPOSE OF BLIND REVIEW].

Session recordings for the present analysis came from the Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness Study of Humanistic Counselling with Young People (ETHOS, Cooper et al., 2021; Stafford et al., 2018). The ETHOS study was a randomized control trial comparing school-based humanistic counseling (SBHC) and pastoral care against pastoral care only. The trial aimed to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of SBHC in reducing psychological distress in young people. The trial was conducted in 19 secondary schools in England, with young people aged 13–16 years old who experienced moderate to severe levels of emotional symptoms.

Participants

In total, we used 136 audio recordings from 19 counselors and 69 young people. Selected audio recordings were 20 minutes long. Recordings were chosen randomly from the first and second half of a counselor's work with their client, excluding the first and final sessions. These were excluded to maximize the chance of recording the therapy relationship 'in action' rather than contracting or endings. For this reason also, we did not select from the session's first and last five minutes.

Table 1. Young people, counsellor, and rater demographics.

	Counselor (N = 19)	Young People (N = 69)	Raters (N = 3)
Gender			
Male	3 (16%)	21 (30.4%)	0 (0%)
Female	16 (84%)	46 (66.7%)	3 (100%)
Other	0 (0%)	2 (2.9%)	0 (0%)
Age (Mean/SD)	45.0 (9.0)	13.7 (0.8)	33 (9.3)
Ethnicity			
White British	14 (74%)	38 (55.1%)	1 (33.3%)
Asian/Asian British	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (66.7%)
African/Caribbean /Black British	5 (26%)	31 (44.9%)	0 (0%)
Years of Practice (Mean/SD)	7.2 (6.6)	N/A	5 (2.2)

The first author (Rater 1) rated the audio segments. The rater was an integrative counseling psychologist with three years of therapeutic practice. Two additional raters were recruited to assess the inter-rater reliability of the scale. The demographic characteristics of the counselors, young people, and raters are presented in [Table 1](#).

Measures

The Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI) Obs-40

The BLRI Obs-40 is an observer-rated scale of 40 items (Barrett Lennard, 2015). This is a shortened version adapted from the original 64-item scale. The instrument has four subscales: Empathic Understanding, Level of Regard, Unconditionality of Regard, and Congruence. Each of the four subscales consists of ten items. Example items include 'S/he evidently feels a responsive personal warmth and liking for B' (Level of Regard Scale), 'S/he senses or realizes how B is feeling' (Empathy Scale), 'Nothing B expresses alters A's basic attitude or felt response to her/him' (Unconditionality of Regard Scale), and 'My sense is that s/he is genuine and honest with B' (Congruence Scale). Twenty items in the scale are negatively worded and placed in random order throughout the scale. Observers rate the extent to which they believe therapists demonstrate interpersonal skills using a 6-point Likert-type scale (see [Appendix A](#)).

Person-Centred Experiential Psychotherapy Scale – Young Person Counselling Version (PCEPS-YP)

The PCEPS-YP is an adapted version of the Person-Centered Experiential Psychotherapy Scale (PCEPS) (Freire et al., 2014) for young people. The PCEPS was developed to measure the competency of, and adherence to, person-centered and experiential practice. The PCEPS-YP consists of nine items measuring the person-centered and experiential process (Ryan et al., 2021). These are (1) Client Frame of Reference, (2) Tracking (the extent a therapist follows the client's expressed story), (3) Empathic Resonance, (4) Accepting Presence, (5) Genuineness, (6) Emotion Focus, (7) Emotion Symbolization, (8) Facilitation of Client Self-Development (how much the therapist actively works to facilitate new client awareness and growth), and (9) Developmental Responsiveness (how skilled the therapist is in adapting to the young person's developmental level). The PCEPS-YP uses a six-point anchored rating scale, from 1, meaning 'no evidence' (e.g. of genuineness); to 6, meaning

‘excellent evidence’ (e.g. of genuineness). The PCEPS-YP has been found to have high internal reliability ($\alpha = .95$) and promising inter-rater reliability (Ryan et al., 2021).

Procedure

In total, 136 recordings were rated by Rater 1 using the BLRI Obs-40 at Time 1 (T1: October 2018). In addition, a random subsample of 50 of these recordings were rated using the PCEPS-YP. Five months after completing the ratings, the subsample of 50 recordings were re-rated using the BLRI Obs-40 (Time 2: February 2019). This was again by Rater 1 to assess test-retest reliability. The subsample of 50 recordings was also rated on the BLRI Obs-40 by Rater 2 and Rater 3 to assess inter-rater reliability.

Each audio segment was listened to once. Scores from completed BLRI Obs-40 forms were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 24.0 for Mac and AMOS Version 25 (Arbuckle, 2006).

Data analysis

Table 2 presents the data that was rated and subsequently analyzed.

Internal reliability

The internal reliability of the BLRI Obs-40 subscales, and full scale, was assessed using Cronbach’s α . A Cronbach’s α between .70 and .95 is considered adequate to excellent (Hair et al., 2010; Terwee et al., 2007). Inter-scale correlations between the four subscales of the BLRI were assessed using Pearson’s r .

Test-retest reliability

The test-retest reliability of the BLRI Obs-40 and the four subscales were examined using Pearson’s r .

Inter-rater reliability

We calculated Cronbach’s α along with 95% confidence intervals for the total BLRI score. Correlations between the three raters of the BLRI were assessed using Pearson’s r .

Convergent validity

We predicted a positive correlation ($r > .5$) between total BLRI score and total PCEPS-YP score. In addition, we predicted a range of specific positive correlations ($r > .5$) between

Table 2. Summary of Analyses Performed.

Psychometric analysis	Reported statistic	Data
Internal Reliability	Cronbach’s alpha and Pearson’s correlations	136 BLRI Obs-40 ratings from Rater 1
Test – Retest Reliability	Pearson’s correlations	50 BLRI Obs-40 ratings from Rater 1 at Time 1 and Time 2
Inter-Rater Reliability	Cronbach’s alpha and Pearson’s correlations	50 BLRI Obs-40 ratings from Raters 1, 2, and 3
Convergent Validity	Pearson’s correlations	50 BLRI Obs-40 and PCEPS-YP ratings from Rater 1
Structural Validity	Confirmatory factor analysis	136 BLRI Obs-40 ratings from Rater 1

BLRI subscales and items on the PCEPS-YP: (a) Level of Regard and Unconditionality of Regard subscales (BLRI) and Accepting Presence (PCEPS-YP), (b) Congruence subscale (BLRI) and Genuineness item (PCEPS-YP), (c) Empathy subscale (BLRI), and (d) Client Frame of Reference, Empathic Resonance, Emotion-Focused, and Emotion-Symbolization (PCEPS-YP).

Structural validity

The structural validity of the BLRI Obs-40 was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Given the small sample size, items were parceled for each subscale. Each of the ten items was split into three parcels using methods of factorial algorithm parcel building (Matsunaga, 2008; W. M. Rogers & Schmitt, 2004). The sums of the parcels were used in the analysis, resulting in the 40 items of the BLRI being transformed into 12 parcels (or three to four parcels per subscale). Parceling can reduce the absolute amount of measurement error and improve model fit (Little et al., 2002). Furthermore, parcels are more likely to normalize the distribution (Bandalos & Finney, 2001). They can be helpful when sample sizes are small, as the number of parameters estimated in the model is reduced (Little et al., 2013).

Based on previous assessments of the scale's construct validity (Barrett Lennard, 1962; Gurman, 1977; Liao et al., 2018), a four-factor correlated model with Empathic Understanding, Congruence, Unconditionality of Regard, and Level of Regard as latent factors was assessed. Maximum Likelihood was used to estimate model parameters and goodness-of-fit for the CFA model.

The goodness-of-fit was assessed using goodness-of-fit index, comparative-fit index, normed-fit index, root mean square residual, standardized root mean square residual, chi-squared, and chi-Squared/degrees of freedom. We used criteria of Chi-Square $p > .05$ (Wheaton et al., 1977), RMSEA $< .08$ (Browne & Cudeck, 1993), SRMR $< .08$ (Schreiber et al., 2006) GFI $> .90$ (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1984), CFI $> .90$ (Bentler, 1990), NFI $> .90$ (Bollen, 1989), and Chisq/df < 3.0 (Marsh & Hocevar, 1985).

Results

Internal reliability

Overall, the 40 items of the BLRI had a high level of internal consistency: Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$, 95% CI [.92, .95]. The internal consistency for the four subscales of the BLRI were $\alpha = .84$, 95% CI [.80, .88] for Level of Regard; $\alpha = .94$, 95% CI [.92, .95] for Empathy; $\alpha = .59$, 95% CI [.48, .69] for Unconditionality of Regard; and $\alpha = .83$ for Congruence 95% CI [.78, .87].

All scales significantly correlated with each other ($p < .05$). The subscale of Level of Regard strongly correlated with the subscales of Empathy ($r = .74$, 95% CI [.62, .82]), and Congruence ($r = .73$, 95% CI [.61, .80]). The Empathy and Congruence subscales positively correlated with each other ($r = .65$, 95% CI [.49, .75]). However, the subscale of Unconditionality of Regard weakly correlated with the remaining subscales (Level of Regard, $r = .31$, 95% CI [.17, .45], Empathy $r = .17$, 95% CI [.02, .36]), Congruence $r = .23$, 95% CI [.05, .39]).

Table 3. Correlations between PCEPS-YP items and BLRI subscales and BLRI total.

	Regard	Empathy	Unconditionality	Congruence	BLRI Total
Frame of Reference	.46* [.15, .68]	.63* [.43, .77]	.08 [−.19, .35]	.19 [−.14, .49]	.47* [.16, .70]
Tracking	.61* [.37, .78]	.47* [.23, .71]	.42* [.22, .59]	.42* [.15, .62]	.59* [.37, .76]
Empathic Resonance	.54* [.37, .67]	.80* [.67, .88]	.12 [−.18, .39]	.41* [.16, .60]	.67* [.47, .80]
Accepting Presence	.61* [.43, .73]	.46* [.24, .64]	.51* [.27, .68]	.58* [.37, .73]	.67* [.52, .78]
Genuineness	.61* [.38, .76]	.47* [.19, .66]	.41* [.13, .63]	.64* [.44, .81]	.69* [.51, .81]
Emotion Focused	.46* [.21, .67]	.81* [.66, .90]	.01 [−.28, .30]	.35 [.08, .58]	.61* [.38, .78]
Emotion Symbolization	.44* [.12, .67]	.72* [.51, .86]	−.03 [−.33, .24]	.26 [−.11, .55]	.53* [.15, .77]
Client Self-Development	.59* [.40, .75]	.65* [.48, .79]	−.08 [−.39, .20]	.55* [.38, .70]	.66* [.50, .79]
Developmental Response	.51* [.29, .68]	.41* [.16, .63]	−.01 [−.25, .22]	.46* [.26, .65]	.51* [.30, .71]
PCEPS-YP Total	.73* [.58, .85]	.85* [.75, .91]	.20 [−.09, .44]	.58* [.39, .74]	.83* [.69, .91]

*Significant at $p < .01$ (2-Tailed) Bootstrapped 95% CI [LL, UL]

Test-retest reliability

Significant positive correlations ($p < .05$) were found between T1 and T2 for Total BLRI Score ($r = .55$, 95% CI [.32, .72], Level of Regard ($r = .61$, 95% CI [.36, .81]), Congruence ($r = .60$, 95% CI [.40, .79]), and Unconditionality of Regard ($r = .43$, 95% CI [.15, .65]). The subscale of Empathy showed a weak non-significant correlation across T1 and T2 ($r = .24$, 95% CI [.05, .55]).

Inter-rater reliability

Across all three raters, Cronbach's α for the Total BLRI score was .42, 95% CI [.08, .65]. At a between-raters level, Rater 1 and Rater 2 demonstrated a significant positive correlation for total BLRI score ($r = .51$, 95% CI [.31, .69] $p > .01$). Rater 3 did not significantly correlate with Rater 1 or Rater 2 on total BLRI score (R1 vs. R3 $r = -.05$ 95% CI [−.30, .26], $p = .75$; and R2 vs. R3, $r = .20$ 95% CI [−.07, .50], $p = .16$).

Convergent validity

The correlation (r) between BLRI total score and PCEPS-YP total score was .83, 95% CI [.69, .91] ($p < .01$). Correlations between the BLRI Obs-40 subscales, total score, and PCEPS-YP items are reported in Table 3. Significant positive correlations ($p < .01$) were found for all predicted BLRI subscale and PCEPS-YP item pairs (r s = .51 to .81).

Structural validity

CFA demonstrated a very good fit for the data. All fit indices indicated a satisfactory model fit for the data (Table 4). Almost all parcels had heavy loadings ($r > .65$); however, two Unconditionality parcels revealed lower loadings, unconditionality parcel 1 ($r = .46$) and unconditionality parcel 2 ($r = .54$). Parcel loadings are displayed in Figure 1.

Table 4. Model fit indices.

Model	χ^2	df	P	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	CFI	NFI	Chisq/df
Four factor correlated, 12 parcels	60.85	48	.10	.05	.04	.93	.99	.95	1.27

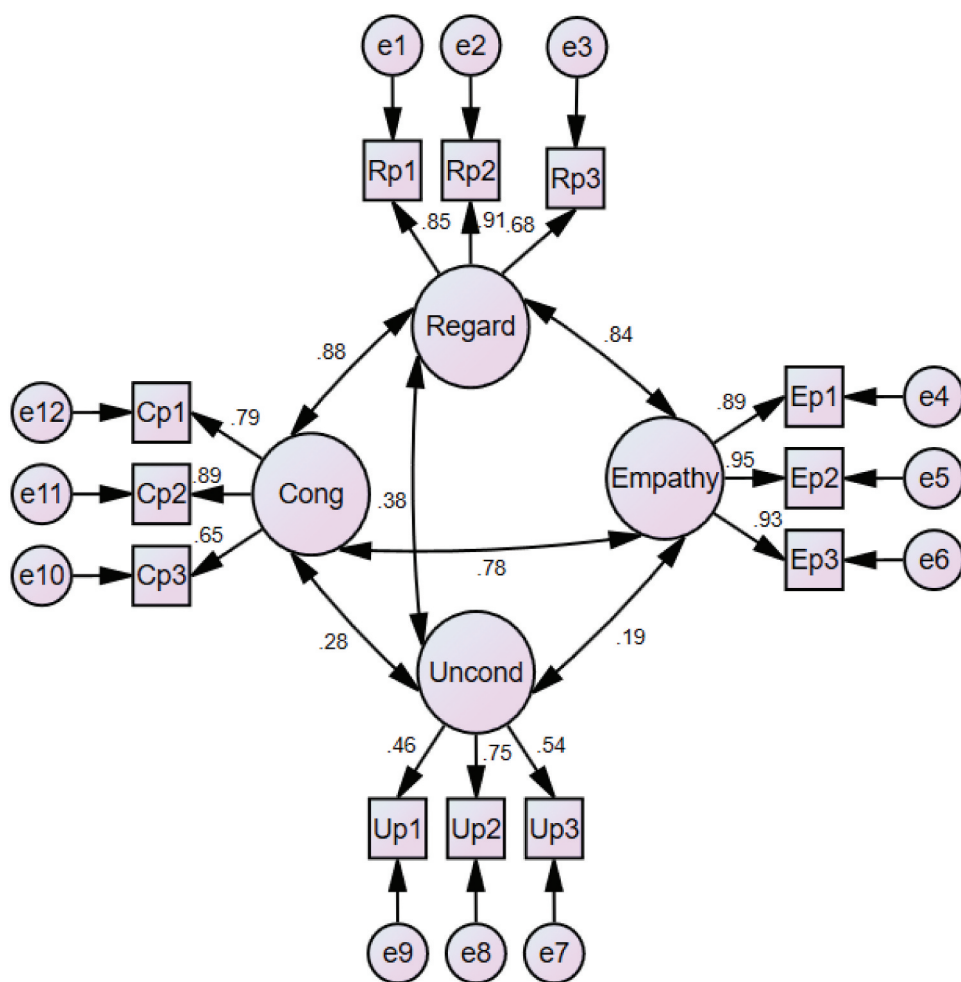


Figure 1. CFA model of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory Obs-40. Latent factors: level of regard, empathy, unconditionality of regard, and congruence.

Discussion

Summary of findings and exploratory evaluation of BLRI Obs-40

This study explored the psychometric properties of the BLRI Obs-40 in a population of young people. Overall, the initial findings of this study suggest that the BLRI Obs-40 could be a reliable and valid measure of the core conditions in therapeutic relationships with young people.

Internal reliability for the BLRI items were .93, meaning the items on the BLRI Obs-40 are highly consistent with each other. Findings are further supported when considering the strength of correlations between the subscales. The subscales of Level of Regard, Empathy, and Congruence demonstrated strong positive correlations with each other; however, the subscale of Unconditionality of Regard weakly correlated with the remaining subscales. These findings suggest that the Unconditionality of Regard scale is

independent of the other subscales, and could be taken as further support for dividing the core condition of unconditional positive regard into these two subscales (Barrett Lennard, 1959).

Test-retest reliability of a subset of recordings revealed moderate stability of ratings in Level of Regard, Unconditionality of Regard, Congruence, and total BLRI scores over five months. However, poor reliability over time was found for the Empathy subscale. Empathy as a core condition is described from the therapist's perspective as a felt sense (C. R. Rogers, 1957). Therefore, it is possible that observers to the therapy relationship cannot fully comprehend the level of empathy present in the relationship, especially when this may not always be verbalized. Furthermore, the Empathy subscale may be more sensitive to individual rater changes over time.

Results suggest poor inter-rater reliability; however, this may reflect differences in the raters' clinical training and client-facing experience rather than low scale agreement. In addition, differences may be a consequence of the raters' understanding of the person-centered and humanistic approach due to their training orientation. Raters included an integrative counseling psychologist trainee (Rater 1), a person-centered counselor (Rater 2), and a movement psychotherapist (Rater 3), each possessing varying levels of familiarity with the person-centered approach. Rater 3, the most divergent rater, may have adopted a more stringent criterion when scoring and seems to have required more robust behavioral evidence when rating. The varying levels of familiarity with the scale and person-centered model may have acted as confounding variables and may account for the low level of rater agreement. The inter-rater reliability findings suggest that raters with similar training backgrounds and levels of understanding of the person-centered model may interpret and score the BLRI Obs-40 more consistently. This suggests that further training on the scale could improve reliability. In doing so, it should be possible to more accurately evaluate the scales' properties, and establish whether poor inter-rater reliability is due to the scale, per se, or rater error.

Positive significant correlations ($r > 0.50$) were found for all hypothesized correlations between the items of the PCEPS-YP and the BLRI subscales, further supporting the construct validity of most of the subscales of the BLRI Obs-40. However, the Unconditionality of Regard subscale did not significantly correlate with the PCEPS-YP total score or many PCEPS-YP individual items, suggesting a difference in the underlying constructs of the PCEPS-YP and Unconditionality of Regard subscale. This, again, may reflect the independence of the Unconditionality of Regard subscale within the BLRI. The PCEPS-YP, therefore, may not be an appropriate measure of convergent validity for the Unconditionality of Regard subscale.

In comparing the PCEPS-YP and the BLRI, the former operationalizes both classic person-centered theory and experiential humanistic approaches. Therefore, it has a divide of items within the scale across these two approaches. This means that, unlike the BLRI Obs-40, not all items of the PCEPS-YP will focus on the therapist relationship conditions – some, instead, focus on the facilitation and exploration of emotions (Freire et al., 2014). In addition, the BLRI aims to measure the therapeutic relationship conditions, whereas the PCEPS-YP acts as an adherence and competency measure of person-centered and experiential practice. These subtle differences may account for the imperfect convergent validity of the BLRI Obs-40 and PCEPS-YP.

In our study, the BLRI was confirmed theoretically via CFA. This supports the original theoretical model of the therapeutic relationship, as outlined by Barrett Lennard (1962). All items loaded significantly upon their hypothesized factor, with high factor loadings for most items. However, findings from the correlation matrix of the factors do show a weak correlation between the Unconditionality of Regard factor and Level of Regard, Empathic Understanding, and Congruence factors. These findings are comparable to previous literature in adult populations (Gurman, 1977; Lin, 1973; McClanahan, 1974).

Limitations

This study's principal limitation is that the data for several of the tests were derived from just one rater. This means that findings from test-retest reliability may demonstrate rater reliability over time rather than scale reliability over time. In addition, the convergent validity analysis may potentially inflate correlations as ratings were dependent on only one rater. Finally, findings are restricted to young people between 13 and 16 years old, and results cannot be generalized to clients with severe psychological distress and high risk.

Future research

The BLRI Obs-40 may have merit for use with young people, and its initial psychometric quality – internal reliability, test-retest reliability, convergent validity, and structural validity – appears promising. However, further investigation is essential. Further validation should include ratings from several observers. Additional observers will disentangle reliability over time as attributed to the rater versus the scale itself. Subsequent attempts at validation should use raters with similar clinical experience and training backgrounds. It will also be important to standardize observer training to ensure homogeneity across raters. Subsequent assessment of convergent validity should include additional scales beyond the PCEPS-YP, for instance Watson and Prosser's (2002) observer measure of Expressed Empathy, or the Therapeutic Relationship Scale developed by Sanders and Freire (2008).

Implications for practice

Once validated, the BLRI Obs-40 can be used in supervision when listening to extracts of a supervisee's practice. The scale could also be used in skills practice for therapists training to work with young people, alongside the PCEPS-YP. Where the PCEPS-YP acts as an adherence and competency measure of person-centered practice, the BLRI aims to measure the specific therapist interpersonal skills, allowing a greater focus on the relationship between the therapist and client.

Conclusion

Despite the extensive assessment and use of the BLRI, no other study to date has assessed the psychometric quality of the observer-rated BLRI in a population of young people. Overall, findings from this study suggest the BLRI Obs-40 is a potentially valuable measure

of the core conditions with young people. However, further psychometric testing is required to support these initial findings. In addition, reliability across raters needs to be established, and convergent validity with additional scales is required. Nevertheless, with subsequent testing, the BLRI Obs-40 can potentially be used to benefit research and practice in person-centered and humanistic counseling with young people.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Appendix A

BLRI Obs-40 (Version 3) and Scoring Key (Barrett-Lennard, 1962)

Observer's name/code Person observed Answer date

Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory: Form Obs-40 (Version 3)

Developed by Godfrey T. Barrett-Lennard, PhD

Listed below are different ways that one person may feel and behave in relation to another. Please consider each numbered statement with reference to your present sense and perception of person A's (_____) attitude, feeling and way of relating to person B (_____). First, note in the spaces here who "A" and "B" are.

Try to suspend any reaction of approval or disapproval you may have in giving your own best sense and estimate of how A is responding to B, as you focus on each item-aspect. The 'right' answer is whatever is truest to your personal sense and view from what you have observed and have to go on.

Mark each statement in the left margin, according to how strongly you feel that it is true, or not true, in *this relationship*. Please be sure to mark every one. Write in a minus number (-3, -2, or -1) when your answer is on the "no" side, and a plus number (+1, +2, or +3) when your answer is a "yes." Here is the exact meaning of each answer number:-

- | | |
|---|--|
| +3: YES, I strongly feel that it is true | -1: (No) I feel that it is probably untrue, or more untrue than true |
| +2: Yes, I feel it is true | -2: No, I feel it is not true |
| +1: (Yes) I feel that it is probably true, or more true than untrue | -3: NO, I strongly feel that it is not true |

-
- _____ 1. A is personally respecting of _____ [write in name/identity of B, as above]
 - _____ 2. She/he senses or realizes how B is *feeling*.
 - _____ 3. Her/his interest in B depends on B's communication and style of behavior.
 - _____ 4. S/he assumes a role or front with B.
 - _____ 5. S/he evidently feels a responsive personal warmth and liking for B.
 - _____ 6. S/he reacts to B's words but does *not* see the way B feels inside
 - _____ 7. Whether B is feeling happy or unhappy *with him/herself* doesn't (or wouldn't) affect A's own feeling toward him/her.
 - _____ 8. S/he doesn't avoid or shy away from anything that's important in the relationship with B.
 - _____ 9. S/he is indifferent to B as a person.
 - _____ 10. S/he nearly always sees exactly what B means.
 - _____ 11. Depending on B's behavior, s/he has a better (or worse) opinion of B sometimes or at some moments than s/he has at other times/moments.
 - _____ 12. My sense is that s/he is genuine and honest with B.
 - _____ 13. The way that A responds conveys a personal appreciation and valuing of B.
 - _____ 14. A's personal reaction to something about B gets in the way of her/his understanding.
 - _____ 15. A's attitude and responsiveness (or lack of response) stays essentially the same no matter what feelings and self-qualities B expresses.

- _____ 16. S/he keeps quiet about his/her own inner impressions and feelings with B.
- _____ 17. S/he evidently finds B pretty dull and uninteresting.
- _____ 18. S/he somehow grasps what B means even when B has difficulty in saying it.
- _____ 19. S/he judges B's reactions and style, with definite preference for certain characteristics.
- _____ 20. A is willing to say what is on her/his mind with B, including personal feelings and sense of how they are getting along.
- _____ 21. S/he isn't going through motions; s/he *cares* about B.
- _____ 22. S/he doesn't listen and pick up on what B actually thinks and feels.
- _____ 23. S/he seems to like and respect B in some ways, but not to like other things about her/him.
- _____ 24. S/he is personally straightforward and open in their relationship.
- _____ 25. S/he disapproves of B – as s/he sees her/him.
- _____ 26. S/he usually understands the whole of B's expression and meaning.
- _____ 27. No matter whether B's feelings/reactions are 'good' or 'bad', healthy or unhealthy, her/his attention and response to B remains the same.
- _____ 28. At some moments s/he is not comfortable, but they go on, outwardly ignoring it.
- _____ 29. S/he is friendly and warm toward B.
- _____ 30. S/he really doesn't understand B's experienced world and feelings.
- _____ 31. Her/his reaction to B seems to range from acceptance to disapproval.
- _____ 32. I sense that s/he is quite in touch with her/his own feelings and reactions with B; s/he is not covering up inside.
- _____ 33. S/he just tolerates B, because that's part of her/his job or role.
- _____ 34. S/he appreciates just how the things B is going through feel *to her/him*.
- _____ 35. At some moments she warms to B and then at other times she seems cool or indifferent to what B expresses or feels.
- _____ 36. Her/his outward response is different from my sense of the way she/he is feeling underneath.
- _____ 37. S/he responds very warmly to B, even with a kind of affection.
- _____ 38. Her/his response with B is so fixed and automatic that B does not get through to him/her.
- _____ 39. Nothing B expresses alters A's basic attitude and felt response to her/him.
- _____ 40. There are things going on but unspoken in their communication that make the relationship somewhat unreal.

Have you answered all the items, even ones that were not straightforward or where you had to go out on a limb a bit? Please double check and make sure there are no gaps. Add qualifying comments if you wish. (Godfrey T. Barrett-Lennard. Adapted 2007 from RI forms OS-40 & MO-40 (and a prior 64-item observer form)).

Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory: Scoring Sheet – 40-item OS, MO, and Obs-40 (adult) forms

Developed by Godfrey T. Barrett-Lennard, PhD

Name/code Date answered

Class of relationship Form: OS MO Obs40 (circle one)

Position of respondent Note if other RI data on same relationship

Enter the answer for each item in its space, below, after reversing the sign (from + to –, or – to +) for the item numbers shown in bold. (The bold items are worded “negatively.”)

Level of Regard (R)		Empathy (E)		Unconditionality (U)		Congruence (C)	
Item No.	Answer	Item No.	Answer	Item No.	Answer	Item No.	Answer
1		2		3	Reverse sign	4	Reverse sign
5		6	Reverse sign	7		8	
9	Reverse sign	10		11	Reverse sign	12	
13		14	Reverse sign	15		16	Reverse sign
17	Reverse sign	18		19	Reverse sign	20	
21		22	Reverse sign	23	Reverse sign	24	
25	Reverse sign	26		27		28	Reverse sign
29		30	Reverse sign	31	Reverse sign	32	
33	Reverse sign	34		35	Reverse sign	36	Reverse sign
37		38	Reverse sign	39		40	Reverse sign
R Scale Score->		E Scale Score->		U Scale Score->		C Scale Score->	

Add the 10 values in each answer column to obtain the score for that scale, which might be a positive or negative number. The *possible* range of scale scores is –30 (or -3×10) to +30 ($+3 \times 10$). If avoidance of negative values is necessary, add a constant of +30 to each obtained scale score, to yield ‘converted scores’ with a *possible* range of 0 to 60.