

Essen Climate Evaluation Schema - Basic Information

Concern and history

The Essen Climate Evaluation Schema – *EssenCES*® - 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 *EssenCES*® 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:

Schalast N (2008) A short questionnaire for assessing the social climate on forensic psychiatric wards. Psychiatrische Praxis, 35, 175-181. DOI 10.1055/s-2007-970960 [Article in German with English abstract]

Schalast N, Redies M, Collins M, Stacey J, Howells K (2008) EssenCES, a short questionnaire for assessing the social climate of forensic psychiatric wards. Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, 18(1), 49-58. DOI: 10.1002/cbm.677

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

Schalast N, Groenewald I (2009) Ein Kurzfragebogen zur Einschätzung des sozialen Klimas im Strafvollzug. In: Haller, Jehle (eds.) Drogen, Sucht, Kriminalität. Mönchengladbach: Forum, 329 – 352.

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

Howells K, Tonkin M, Milburn Ch, Lewis J, Draycot S, Cordwell J, Price M, Davies St, Schalast N (2009) The EssenCES measure of social climate: A preliminary validation and normative data in UK high secure hospital settings. Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, 19(4), 308-320, DOI: 10.1002/cbm.745.

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 Leicester 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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I would like to thank Prof. Kevin Howells, Matthew Tonkin and Dr. Steffan Davies, who pushed and supported me to develop an English version of the German instrument and who promoted its use in Great Britain and Australia. Great thanks also to the (previous and future) clinicians and researchers in different countries, who co-operated in translating the scale. I owe special thanks to Dr. Mick Collins, who suggested the English (and international) name of the instrument.

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