Assessing individual differences in attitudes towards touch in treatment settings: Introducing the touch & health scale

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Abstract

Individuals commonly receive touch in treatment settings, but there is limited research on how they perceive it. The current project sought to address this gap by: 1) developing the Touch & Health Scale (THS) - a novel instrument to measure attitudes to touch in treatment settings 2) assessing inter-individual differences in THS scores, and 3) examining the association between individuals’ THS scores and wellbeing. Data of a large U.K. adults sample (N > 12,000) were used. THS showed Cronbach’s α between 0.636 and 0.816 and significant correlations (p < 0.001) with day-to-day attitudes to touch. THS scores differed as a function of extraversion and avoidant attachment style. Participants with more positive attitudes to touch in treatment settings showed greater wellbeing. Overall, the study highlights the importance of a personalised approach to touch in treatment settings and provides a new scale that may act as a screening tool for this purpose.

Keywords: attachment style, personality traits, touch attitudes, wellbeing

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