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Optimism Scale Development

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Generally, positive prospects about the future are defined as optimism, while negative or hopeless perspectives about the future are defined as pessimism. Both are inevitable in life and are indicated by research as important parts of learning and psychological balance (Craig et al., 2021). Craig et al. (2021) suggest that finding a balance, so one does not despair when the future does not look positive and does not become unrealistic about positive prospects is essential. However, optimism is an adaptive construct, especially when things do not appear to go in one's favor. One tends to focus on the positive prospects in a bad situation hence optimism, while pessimistic-oriented individuals tend to focus on what is wrong in their lives (Schieret al., 2021). Endurance with the hope for a better future is an important characteristic in optimistic attitudes, which may not be present in pessimistic individuals. Dejected moods characterize pessimistic individuals; generally, hopelessness, worries about the future and discouragement. Due to these factors, prolonged pessimistic attitudes will likely evolve into acute anxiety and stress (Schieret al., 2021). It is unclear whether pessimism is an adaptive construct or a sign of accepting a bad situation and maintaining a negative attitude instead of raising one's hopes that better will come (Schieret al., 2021). Moreover, it is possible that one could be unrealistically pessimistic due to the continued negative experience so that they fail to notice some of the practical opportunities or highly likely sources of hope for the future. This then generates three important factors: one could be realistically optimistic despite enduring challenging situations, or one could be just hopeless about the future and understandably dejected, or another could be experiencing negative emotions that they fail to see presentable situations that could generate hope for a better future.

Due to the need for balance between pessimism and optimism in an individual's life, most empirically developed measures of optimism and pessimism assume that the two are similar and only work in the opposite direction (Rasmussen et al., 2006). However, studies suggest that optimism and pessimism could be entirely different constructs, let alone the same construct on opposite measurement points (Craig et al., 2021). The operational definition of realistic optimism considers the rational hope that the future will be positive based on practically available limitations. There is no room for self-deception, and both the positive and potential limitations of realistic optimism are considered. On the other hand, Schneider (2001) notes that unrealistic optimism differs from realistic optimism in that the former does not take into consideration the reality that there could be limitations to the optimism. Dolinski et al. (2021) capture unrealistic optimism as the state where one considers themselves safer than others in the same environment despite all individuals facing similar perils and having similar [limited] resources to avoid the peril. This study brings a new perspective that unrealistic optimism is biased and could be an individual's way of escaping reality or coping with difficult situations with which there does not seem to be a way out.

Realistic optimism, on the other hand, is considered fuzzy and counter-intuitive by some researchers. This is because optimism is usually subjectively biased toward positive feelings, whereas being realistic is choosing to forego biases and assess one's environment as it is. If there is any form of positivity when being realistic, it is due to the assessed knowledge that the future will bring hope with a significant likelihood. If left alone without the important check of being realistic, according to Schneider (2001), optimism can only lead to "self-deception." Realistic optimism is built upon the important check of predicting the future from the point of knowledge

rather than personal desired beliefs. Under the illusion of control, Jefferson et al. (2016) intimated that this is the individual's ability to control external and independent events, while the perception of being better than average is characterized by viewing oneself as superior to others. Jefferson et al. (2016) hold that realistic optimism gives space for reasoning and evaluating the situation. Other studies consider pessimism as a situation when one has despaired due to the constant consumption of negative information or observing that the environment is hostile to one's future aspirations. For one to be pessimistic, they are dejected from objectively evaluating their environments and finding not much that could assure them of a better future. The characteristic emotions are defined by realistic assessment, leading to one being convinced that they do not have much to look forward to.

Existing Measures of Optimism

In the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R), optimism and pessimism are considered similar constructs (Vautier et al., 2003). The scale was developed by observing participants' attitudes and individual perceptions about their futures. Optimism about the future was attributed to factors ranging from genetic-related factors to societal norms to the cultural environment accrued over the subjects' lives. The resulting scale consisted of half of the items capturing pessimistic tendencies and the other half capturing optimistic factors. Smith et al. (1989) criticized the assumption of opposing sides of the same construct: pessimism and optimism. The researchers indicated that the traits describing an optimistic viewpoint had elements of personality traits (neuroticism) that are not differentiable. Despite the test showing high validity and consistency across cultures, LOT-R, a 10-item scale measuring dispositional optimism, is suspect of considering optimism and pessimism opposite factors of the same construct.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed by Diener et al.,(1985) and progressively tested for reliability and validity to capture the cognitive component of positivity and satisfaction with life. While this scale is based on subjective well-being and captures the affective component of subjective well-being, it does not serve the purpose of measuring optimism (either realistic optimism or unrealistic optimism) or pessimism as independent constructs (Diener et al.,1985). However, due to SWLS's ability to capture global cognitive perspectives of satisfaction, this study suggests that either the RO subscale or UO subscale or both RO and UO subscales will positively affect the 5-item SWLS.

On the other hand, the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) captures to what extent an individual perceives they experience positive or negative moods or both positive and negative moods (Thomas, 2007). This scale is key in that both positive and negative affect are considered independent, but both positive and negative affect can show high scores in the same individual. Positive affect states could include being alert, joy, happiness and optimism about the future. Negative states include distress, anger, guilt, shame, and anxiety. The significance of the PANAS is that both states could affect the overall perception of optimism or pessimism. Thus, the newly developed RO scale or UO or both RO and UO subscales are likely to have a positive and strong linear correlation with the positive affect subscale of PANAS. On the other hand, the negative affect subscale of PANAS is likely to have a strong and positive correlation with the P subscale in the new scale.

Openness under the 'big 5' personality trait is characterized by curiosity, adventure, trying out new ideas, and generally being curious. Based on this prospect, the RO and UO subscales are likely to have no association with the openness trait as one of the big 5 personality traits

(Donellan et al., 2006). Moreover, due to the higher scores in self-thought, self-consciousness, and self-control under the conscientious personality trait, it is unlikely that the UO subscale in the proposed optimism scale will correlate with conscientiousness. Discriminant validity of the UO subscale will have a weak correlation with the scores for the conscientiousness subscale of the 'big 5' personality trait.

The measure of optimism being linked with pessimism is also identified in the Optimism-Pessimism (OP) scale, which captures optimism as a continuum (low optimism equates to high pessimism) (Burke et al., 2000). The scale contains 56 items, each answered on a four-point Likert Scale. A critique of the use of the OP scale is the lack of internal validity in measuring optimism. Burke et al. (2000), in a sample of 154 volunteer university student participants, investigated the concurrent validity of LOT-R and the OP scale. The findings showed that LOT-R tended to measure "trait" optimism while the OP scale tended to measure "state" optimism (Burke et al., 2000). Both scales also appeared to suggest different measures when participants' race was accounted for.

Justification for the Proposed Scale

Existing measures of optimism are built on the idea that optimism and pessimism are similar constructs; hence, it is necessary to measure optimism in isolation and understand its core dimensions (Smith et al., 1989; Vautier et al., 2003). Second, measuring optimism as an individual construct means the inevitable classification of whether the optimism is unrealistic or realistic (Burke et al., 2000). The LOT-R, for instance, is applied in the measure of optimism, yet analyses by Terrill et al. (2002) suggest that the LOT-R could be manipulated by "faking hope."

Based on this argument, LOT-R fails to distinguish between UO and RO. The proposed scale attempts to fill this gap of knowledge. On the other hand, the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) fails to capture subjective well-being adequately due to the SWLS' characteristic of leaning towards the affective aspect rather than the cognitive aspect. This analysis holds that RO and subjective well-being likely have a moderate or strong linear association. Subjective well-being, however, is limited under the SWLS.

Hypothesis about Expected Factor Structure of the New Scale

The core hypotheses for the development of the optimism scale are:

- i. This study hypothesizes that the proposed scale for optimism will be multidimensional, with three core factors, realistic optimism, unrealistic optimism, and pessimism
- ii. To test convergent validity, it was hypothesized that there would be a moderate positive correlation between the RO subscale of the new optimism measure and the LOT-R (Scheier et al., 1994).
- iii. To test convergent validity, it was hypothesized that there would be a moderate to a strong positive correlation between the UO subscale of the new optimism measure and the satisfaction with life measure (Diener et al., 1985).
- iv. To test convergent validity, it was hypothesized that there would be a moderate to a strong, positive correlation between the P subscale of the new optimism measure and the Negative affect subscale of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Thompson, 2007).

- v. To test discriminant validity, it was hypothesized that there would be no correlation between the RO subscale of the new optimism measure and the Openness subscale from the Mini-IPIP (Donellan et al., 2006).
- vi. To test discriminant validity, it was hypothesized that there would be a weak correlation between the UO subscale of the new optimism measure and the conscientious subscale of the Mini-IPIP (Donellan et al., 2006).
- vii.** To test discriminant validity, it was hypothesized that there would be a weak correlation between the P subscale of the new optimism measure and the positive affect subscale of PANAS (Thompson, 2007)

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