



DIMENSIONALITY AND CONTENT OF OPTIMISM– PESSIMISM ANALYZED IN TERMS OF THE PAD TEMPERAMENT MODEL

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Summary—Optimism–pessimism (assessed with the Revised Life Orientation Test, LOTR) was analyzed using the Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD) Temperament Model. Correlation between opposite (optimism vs. pessimism) poles, when corrected for attenuation, was -0.82 . Factor analysis of the LOTR yielded a single factor. Also, opposing poles of the LOTR yielded nearly identical, but opposite, that is, mirror-image sets of PAD components: Optimism consisted primarily of pleasantness and, secondarily, of dominance; pessimism included unpleasantness and submissiveness. The high negative inter-pole correlation and mirror-image contents of the two poles showed the LOTR to be unidimensional and bi-polar. The entire LOTR, when scored negatively (for “pessimism”) differed from measures of Trait Anxiety, Neuroticism, and Depression. The anxious were more arousable and less dominant than pessimists; neurotics were more arousable than pessimists; the depressed were less dominant than pessimists. When scored positively (for “optimism”) the LOTR differed from Extraversion: extraverts were more dominant and more arousable than optimists. Overall, findings illustrated uses of the PAD Temperament Model for comparing and contrasting personality scales and indicated its possible uses for studies of individual reactions to stress or illness. © 1997 Elsevier Science Ltd

INTRODUCTION

Considerable evidence has been accumulated showing that dispositional optimism (pessimism) relates positively (negatively) to physical and psychological well-being (e.g. Peterson, Seligman & Vaillant, 1988; Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994; Seligman, 1991). Questions have been raised, however, regarding the independent value of optimism–pessimism for predicting beneficial coping strategies and adjustments to stress when effects of neuroticism or trait anxiety are controlled. Furthermore, because extraversion–introversion were defined, in part, in terms of optimism–pessimism (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975), relations of optimism–pessimism with the Extraversion Scale have also been of concern.

Some representative findings were as follows. Smith, Pope, Rhodewalt and Poulton (1989) found no significant relations of the Life Orientation Test (LOT), a measure of dispositional optimism–pessimism, with measures of coping behaviors or symptom reports when neuroticism was controlled; in contrast, relations of neuroticism with coping behaviors or symptom reports remained significant when the LOT was controlled. Smith *et al.* (pp. 645–646) concluded that coping behaviors and symptom reports were explained more parsimoniously in terms of neuroticism which, presumably, is a more fundamental personality dimension than optimism–pessimism.

Factor analytic findings by Williams (1992) suggested that the LOT was unidimensional. Also, a positive correlation of the LOT with extraversion ($r = 0.25$) and a negative, and stronger, correlation of the LOT with neuroticism ($r = -0.58$) led him to the conclusion that “the LOT appears to occupy much the same region of dimensional space as a measure of trait anxiety, but with a reversed direction of scoring” (p. 477). In contrast, findings by Marshall, Wortman, Kusulas, Hervig and Vickers (1992) suggested the LOT consisted of two factors (optimism and pessimism). Marshall *et al.* correlated the optimism and pessimism factors of the LOT with Extraversion, Neuroticism, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect scales (while adjusting for co-variation of optimism and pessimism). They found significant partial correlations of optimism with extraversion and positive

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affect only and significant partial correlations of pessimism with neuroticism and negative affect only. Thus, they concluded that optimism was associated primarily with extraversion and positive affect, whereas pessimism was related mostly to an independent dimension of neuroticism and negative affect. Finally, based on differing correlations of separate indicators of optimism and pessimism with a measure of psychological stress, Chang, D'Zurilla and Maydeu-Olivares (1994) also proposed a two-dimensional model of optimism-pessimism.

Work with an alternative measure of optimism-pessimism, the Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ) (Peterson, Semmel, von Baeyer, Abramson, Metalsky & Seligman, 1982), not used in the present study, also raised questions regarding dimensionality of optimism-pessimism. The ASQ indexes the degree to which attributions for favorable (and separately for unfavorable) events are internal-external, stable-unstable, and global-specific. Positive or optimistic attributions are internal, stable, and global for favorable events (e.g. respondent states that whatever caused a pay raise is self-determined, will generally be present, and will influence most situations in the respondent's life); negative or pessimistic attributions are internal, stable, and global for unfavorable events.

In two studies using the ASQ, Corr and Gray (1996) consistently obtained evidence for independence of positive and negative attributional styles. They also found mirror-image relations of positive and negative attributional styles with trait anxiety (Spielberger, Gorsuch & Lushene, 1970), but, consistent with the two-dimensional representation of the ASQ, found non-symmetric relations of positive and negative attributional styles with the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975): positive attributional style was largely unrelated to the EPQ scales, whereas negative style was related to low extraversion, high neuroticism, and high psychoticism. Unidimensionality, however, was suggested by Mitchell's (1989) findings showing that an activity-extraversion-stability factor had positive (negative) relations with internal, stable, and global attributions for positive (negative) events.

The preceding findings raised two sets of important theoretical questions regarding optimism-pessimism. (a) Is it unidimensional or two-dimensional and (b) what, exactly, is its distinct contribution relative to scales of neuroticism, trait anxiety, or extraversion? The present study was designed to provide a clarification of the dimensionality of optimism-pessimism (as assessed with the revised LOT, Scheier *et al.*, 1994) and to investigate its similarities and differences with measures of neuroticism, trait anxiety, and extraversion. Consistent with a suggestion by Marshall *et al.* (1992, p. 1073), the preceding questions were explored by investigating optimism and pessimism within a more general theoretical framework for personality and affect.

The PAD Temperament Model (e.g. Mehrabian, 1996a; Mehrabian, 1996b) differs substantially from other factor-based approaches to personality description, because it evolved from work *outside the field of personality*; specifically, from the study of emotions. Highly general factors of evaluation, activity, and potency, obtained using the semantic differential technique (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957; Snider & Osgood, 1969), served as the basis for the PAD Emotion Model (Mehrabian, 1995a). Pleasure-Displeasure (i.e. positive vs negative affective states), arousal-nonarousal (i.e. mental and/or physical activation), and dominance-submissiveness (i.e. control vs lack of control) were three basic dimensions of emotion in the model and were shown to be nearly orthogonal and to provide a reasonably comprehensive description of emotional states (e.g. Mehrabian, 1995a). Thus, for instance, excitement, vigor, and boldness consist of pleasure, high arousal, and dominance; loneliness and sadness involve displeasure, low arousal, and submissiveness. Distress, humiliation, and pain consist of displeasure, high arousal, and submissiveness, whereas hate, belligerence, and anger include displeasure, high arousal, and dominance.

Distinguishing emotional *states* from emotional *traits*, Mehrabian (1978) suggested that "emotional traits" (i.e. characteristic individual emotional predispositions, or temperament) could be inferred by sampling and averaging an individual's emotional states in everyday situations. Since a reasonably general description of emotional states was provided by the PAD emotion factors, a corresponding general description could possibly be achieved using an analogous set of PAD temperament factors.

Three basic dimensions, and scales, of temperament were developed: trait pleasure-displeasure (i.e. generalized individual predispositions toward positive vs negative affective states, Mehrabian, 1978), trait arousability (arousal amplitude and duration of habituation in response to complex,

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