



A confirmatory factor analysis of two models of sensation seeking

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Abstract

The factor structures of Zuckerman's sensation seeking scale Form V (SSSV) [Zuckerman, M., Eysenck, S. & Eysenck, H. J. (1978). Sensation seeking in England and America: cross-cultural, age and sex comparisons. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 46(1), 139–149 revised, Zuckerman, M. (1994). *Behavioural Expressions and Biosocial Bases of Sensation Seeking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press] and Arnett's [Arnett, J. (1994). Sensation seeking: a new scale and a new conceptualisation. *Personality and Individual Differences* 16(2), 289–296.] inventory of sensation seeking (AISS) were analysed using confirmatory factor analysis. 822 participants completed the two measures of sensation seeking and the sample was divided randomly into two subsamples. The factor structures were examined using confirmatory factor analysis with one half of the data. Modification indices (MIs) and standardised expected parameter changes (SEPCs) were used to modify the models as appropriate. The modified models were then re-estimated using the second half of the data set. MIs and SEPCs indicated correlations between the unique variance of some of the SSSV items, suggesting that the subscales may not be unidimensional and in the removal of some items from the AISS due to low factor loadings. A shortened four-factor scale based on the SSSV was tested but did not provide satisfactory results. In light of these and other limitations with the SSSV it is concluded that the modified shortened AISS may provide the more appropriate measure of sensation seeking. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

The concept of sensation seeking arose out of interest in the optimum level of stimulation and the optimum level of arousal. Zuckerman et al. began work on the first sensation seeking scale during the early 1960's. Since then the sensation seeking scale has undergone a number of stages of development. The first scale, Form I (Zuckerman, Kolin, Price & Zoob, 1964) consisted of 50 items. Items were subsequently selected for Form II (Zuckerman et al., 1964) on the basis of their loadings on the first unrotated factor to emerge from a factor analysis of the 50 items from Form I. This resulted in a scale that was intended to measure a single general trait of sensation seeking. At this time the authors were only interested in a general trait of sensation seeking, however subsequent research suggested that the structure of sensation seeking was more complex, being comprised of more than one dimension (Farley, 1967). Zuckerman and Link (1968) carried out a factor analysis of Form II and identified four subscales for males of which two were also present in female data. These were thrill sensation seeking; social sensation seeking; visual sensation seeking and antisocial sensation seeking. Although four subscales had been identified, the original Form I did not include an adequate number of items to define these four factors clearly.

To overcome this Zuckerman (1971) developed an additional 63 items and factor analysed these together with the original 50 items from Form I. This analysis resulted in the extraction of four factors, thrill and adventure seeking (TAS), experience seeking (ES), disinhibition (Dis) and boredom susceptibility (BS). The general factor was also retained and this general factor and the four subscales constituted the 72 item Form IV. However, a problem emerged as the general scale carried over from Form II did not contain any items from the Dis subscale and as such constituted a poor general representation of sensation seeking. Problems with the general scale were addressed by Zuckerman, Eysenck and Eysenck (1978), with the development of Form V which substituted the general scale from Forms II and IV with a total sensation seeking score derived from the sum of the total scores from the four subscales. The 72 items from Form IV were factor analysed using an oblique rotation and 10 items were selected for each of the four subscales based on primary loadings and the criteria of loadings with absolute values of greater than 0.3. While most items did meet these criteria, it was necessary to include a small number of items with loadings less than 0.3, however, all items had their primary loadings on the relevant factor.

All forms of the sensation seeking scale had used a dichotomous forced choice answer format, however, this was altered in Form VI which uses a 3-point answer scale and provides participants with a little more choice in responses. Items included in form VI represent the TAS and Dis subscales and assesses experience of, and intention to, engage in a variety of sensation seeking behaviours. The Sensation Seeking Scale Form V remains one of the most popular and widely used of the sensation seeking scales and as such merits further attention.

Evidence for the existence of the four factors has been found across both gender and culture. Zuckerman et al. (1978) found evidence for the existence of the four factors in both English and American samples. The four factors showed high resemblance across both English and American males and females with the exception of boredom susceptibility which was not consistent across American males and females. Additional support for the existence of the four factors comes from Ball, Farnill and Wangeman (1983) who found evidence for the four

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