



The reliability and validity of the Temporal Focus Scale in young Japanese adults



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ABSTRACT

Temporal focus is understood as one component of an individual's time perspective, and is defined as the attention individuals devote to thinking about the past, present, and future. The 12-item Temporal Focus Scale is comprised of 3 factors (*past*, *current*, and *future focus*). In this study, we examined the reliability and validity of Temporal Focus Scale scores in a sample of 977 young Japanese adults, aged 18–24 years old. The hypothesized 3 factor structure was confirmed, although there were problems with item number 10. Internal consistency estimates for scores without item 10 were over 0.70, and seven-week test-retest reliability was also adequate. To verify the convergent and discriminant validity, we tested the relationship between scores and time perspective, time attitudes, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and career confidence. Results of correlational analyses supported our hypotheses. Specifically, a *future focus* was more strongly correlated with career efficacy than a *past* or *current focus*.

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1. Introduction

Time perspective was originally defined by Lewin (1951) as “the totality of the individual's views of his psychological future and his psychological past existing at a given time” (p. 75), and research interest in this area has grown rapidly in recent years. Time perspective is a general or broad term for a multi-faceted construct (Shipp, Edwards, & Schurer-Lambert, 2009), which assesses the influence of time with respect to valence, attitudes, orientation, extension, affect, focus, and speed (Lasane & O'Donnell, 2005; Mello & Worrell, 2015). A multiplicity of inventories and scales have been developed in order to assess the construct, including, but not limited to the Time Attitude Scale (Nuttin, 1985), the Adolescent Time Attitude Scale (see Worrell, Mello, & Buhl, 2013), the Temporal Orientation Scale (Holman & Silver, 1998) and the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). One relatively under-studied temporal dimension is temporal focus. In a review of the literature, Karniol and Ross (1996) suggested that temporal focus provides a meaningful framework for social cognitive approaches to motivation. The present study assessed the psychometric validity and internal consistency of one temporal focus measure, the Temporal Focus Scale (TFS; Shipp et al., 2009).

1.1. The Temporal Focus Scale

The TFS (Shipp et al., 2009) has been used in several countries, including the U.S. (Shipp et al., 2009), Canada (Rush & Grouzet, 2012), Northern Ireland (McKay, Percy, Goudie, Sumnall, & Cole, 2012; Worrell, McKay, & Andretta, 2015), Germany (Strobel, Tumasjan, Spörrle, & Welpel, 2013), Australia (Zacher, 2014, 2016), and Japan (Chishima, McKay, & Cole, 2017). Temporal focus describes the extent to which individuals characteristically devote their attention to perceptions of the past, present, and future (Bluedorn, 2002). In a series of studies, Shipp et al. (2009) reported support for the three-factor structure of the TFS (past focus, current focus, and future focus), as well as internal consistency and both convergent and discriminant validity. However, McKay et al. (2012), in a sample of Northern Irish adolescents, found that one of the *current focus* items (#10) was problematic, with this item loading significantly onto all three factors. They reported a Cronbach's alpha value without the item included, but the result was still inadequate (0.58). Thus, concerns about the reliability of the TFS remain.

1.2. TFS and related variables

Previous studies have examined the relationships between scores on the TFS and criterion variables, including time perspective (McKay et al., 2012; Shipp et al., 2009; Worrell et al., 2015), life satisfaction, positive

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affect, self-esteem (Busseri, Malinowski, & Choma, 2013; Chishima et al., 2017; McKay et al., 2012; Rush & Grouzet, 2012; Shipp et al., 2009; Worrell et al., 2015; Zacher, 2014), personality traits (Shipp et al., 2009; Strobel et al., 2013; Zacher, 2014, 2016), optimism/pessimism (Busseri et al., 2013; Shipp et al., 2009), career adaptability (Zacher, 2014, 2016), job related behavior (Cojuharenco, Patient, & Bashshur, 2011; Foo, Uy, & Baron, 2009; Nadkarni & Chen, 2014; Shipp et al., 2009), and risk taking behavior (McKay et al., 2012; Shipp et al., 2009). These studies revealed that *past focus* scores were more strongly related to scores on past negative time perspective, than to scores on past positive time perspective. This suggests that past temporal focus appears to tap more negative than positive thoughts and feelings. While *past focus* is negatively related to well-being, *current* and *future focus* have displayed positive relationships to well-being. In particular, higher *current focus* scores have been shown to have a strong relationship with hedonistic well-being (Rush & Grouzet, 2012; Shipp et al., 2009; Worrell et al., 2015). Additionally, a relatively strong relationship has been demonstrated between higher scores on *future focus*, and both optimism and career adaptability (Busseri et al., 2013; Shipp et al., 2009; Zacher, 2014, 2016).

1.3. Cross-cultural studies including Japanese samples

Recently, Japanese research interest has increased in cross-cultural studies, partly because the Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government (2014) reported that Japanese youth are more likely to see their future more negatively than youth in other developed countries. However, there remains little direct evidence from Japanese participants in cross-cultural studies, due to the lack of psychometrically valid and internally consistent Japanese versions of time perspective scales. For example, in a 24-country study by Sircova et al. (2014), the Japanese sample was removed from analyses because of item bias problems. Additionally, Chishima et al. (2017) examined the viability of person-centered analyses using TFS data from adolescents in Japan and the United Kingdom in order to assess how temporal focus clusters related to scores on self-esteem. However this study did not report detailed psychometric results for the TFS, reporting only internal consistency estimates. In order for future cross-cultural studies to be able to include Japanese participants, it is important that valid and reliable assessment measures are used.

1.4. The present study

The present study sought to examine the psychometric validity, internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and construct validity of a Japanese version of the TFS. Internal consistency was examined by calculating both alpha and omega estimates. Seven week test-retest reliability was used to examine temporal stability. To measure validity, we examined structural, convergent, and discriminant validity, using previous studies as guides (e.g., McKay et al., 2012; Shipp et al., 2009; Worrell et al., 2015). Accordingly, and based on the above reviewed literature, we chose instruments directly assessing time perspective, time attitudes, life satisfaction and self-esteem. We also included a measure of career confidence, hypothesizing that greater future focus would be related to higher career confidence. Elsewhere, Zacher (2014) showed that *future focus* scores are positively correlated with career adaptabilities, including career confidence. We further hypothesized that *past focus* scores would be positively related to *past negative* time attitudes and time perspective scores, and negatively related to well-being scores. We also hypothesized that *current focus* scores would be positively related to *present hedonistic* well-being, *present positive* attitude, and overall well-being scores.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

Participants were recruited from seven universities in urban and rural areas in Japan. The final sample consisted of 977 Japanese university students (500 female [48.4%], 473 male [51.2%], and 4 unknown [0.4%]), aged 18 to 24 years ($M_{age} = 19.65$ years, $SD = 1.27$). Participants were enrolled in their 1st to 4th year (1st = 33.7%, 2nd = 29.1%, 3rd = 30.4%, 4th = 6.2%, and unknown = 0.6%). Although all participants responded to the TFS, the questionnaires were divided into four different types (see Table 1). Therefore, sample sizes that responded to other variables were not consistent with the reported TFS n size. Age and grade were correlated significantly only with *future focus* scores of the TFS ($r = 0.11$, $p < 0.01$; $r = 0.12$, $p < 0.001$). Gender demonstrated no significant differences on any of the TFS subscales. Additionally, 87 participants (46 female [52.9%], 40 male [46.0%], and 1 unknown [1.1%]; $M_{age} = 19.41$ years, $SD = 1.22$) were asked to respond the TFS items again after 7 weeks to examine test-retest reliability.

2.2. Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained for this study (Ref. 25–163) from the University of Tsukuba research ethics committee. Student participants completed the questionnaires anonymously at a time that was convenient for the lecturers of the respective universities, between March and October of 2014. It was specified that responses were voluntary, that it was acceptable to refuse to answer or to stop responding, and that there would be no consequences in the event of refusal to answer or ceasing to respond. Lecturers also reiterated these points prior to commencement. Once the questionnaires had been completed, they were couriered back to the first author. Data were analyzed using the statistical software packages SPSS (v23) and Mplus Version 7.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2012). Some items were negatively worded and hence required reverse scoring prior to analyses. Scores for items on each subscale were summed and divided by the number of items to yield a mean score. In order to aid the interpretation of correlation coefficients, we employed the criteria suggested by Ferguson (2009). Accordingly, a coefficient of ≥ 0.20 was considered to be practically significant, and a coefficient ≥ 0.50 as moderate-sized.

2.3. Measures

2.3.1. Temporal Focus Scale (TFS)

All participants responded to this scale. The TFS (Shipp et al., 2009) consists of 12 items split into three 4-item subscales: (a) *Past Focus* (“I reflect on what has happened in my life”), (b) *Current Focus* (“I focus on what is currently happening in my life”), and (c) *Future Focus* (“I think about what my future has in store”). TFS items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*), 3 (*sometimes*), 5 (*frequently*), 7 (*constantly*). As previously noted, TFS scores have been shown to be

Table 1
Participant numbers and constructs assessed in each sample.

	Participant numbers	Constructs
Sample A	$n = 182$ (female = 86, male = 95, unknown = 1, $M_{age} = 19.93$ years, $SD = 1.28$)	TFS
Sample B	$n = 220$ (female = 163, male = 57, unknown = 0, $M_{age} = 20.95$ years, $SD = 0.73$)	TFS, ZTPI, LS
Sample C	$n = 282$ (female = 98, male = 181, unknown = 3, $M_{age} = 18.61$ years, $SD = 0.81$)	TFS, TAS, CC
Sample D	$n = 293$ (female = 153, male = 140, unknown = 0, $M_{age} = 19.51$ years, $SD = 1.04$)	TFS, SE, CC

Note: TFS = Temporal Focus Scale, ZTPI = Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory, LS = Life Satisfaction, TAS = Time Attitude Scale, SE = Self-Esteem, CC = Career Confidence.

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