Self-Concept Clarity and personality profiles assessed by Perf ECHO-R, a forced-choice questionnaire of people's preferred style of behavior at work

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Introduction

Self-Concept Clarity (SCC) is defined as "the extent to which the contents of an individual self-concept (e.g., perceived personal attributes) are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable" (Campbell et al., 1996).

SCC is positively related with extraversion, conscientious-ness and openness to experience and negatively linked to neuroticism. It has also been shown to correspond positively with self-esteem and negatively with passive coping style. These results suggest that while SCC is a judgment of the consistency of the self, it is itself a meaningful construct that can facilitate a better understanding of personality and can be used in the validation process of personality assessment.

Objectives – Studying the relationships between SCC and personality in the workplace as measured by ECHO-R, a computerized forced-choice questionnaire.

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Method

• Sample

940 women and 958 men aged 18–63 (M = 35.5, SD = 10.4).

• Measures and procedure

ECHO-R consists of 55 pairs of items (10 one-dimensional and 45 two-dimensional pairs of items) assessing 10 dimensions: *EXTraversion, ANXiety, ASSertion, DisTaNce, RIGor, Intellectual DYNamism, COMbativeness, Motivation of ACHievement, Motivation of BELonging, Motivation of POWer.*

Respondents were asked to choose for each pair the statement that best described them.

SCC was then assessed with 3 ten-point Likert scales ("Often I wonder who I really am"; "What I think of myself changes from day to day "; "I often had difficulty choosing between the two statements") with lower values indicating high SCC.

Data were collected through an online survey.

• Statistical analysis

The SEM modeling approach integrated:

*   a measurement model for both SCC data (CFA with effects coding method of identification) and ECHO-R data (exploratory Thurstonian IRT model with target rotation; Brown & Maydeu-Olivares, 2011);

*   a structural model in which all latent variables (impact effect) and some pairs of items (DIF) were regressed on sex, age and age squared.

The model was estimated using Mplus (WLSMV estimator with theta parameterization and mean and variance-corrected Satorra-Bentler goodness-of-fit tests).
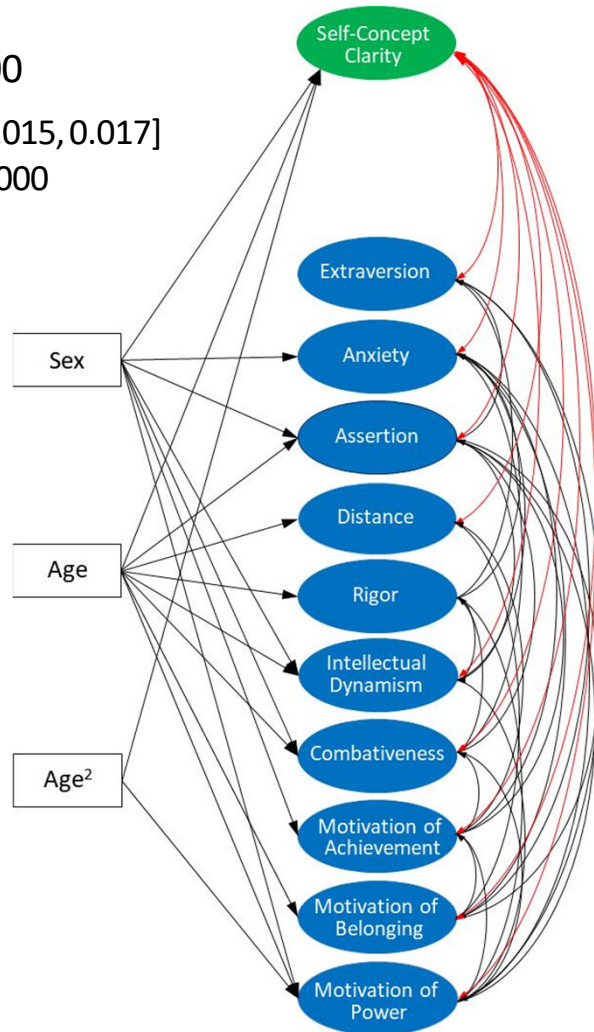
Model fit indices provide support for good fit

$\chi^2 (1260) = 1904$, p = 0.000

RMSEA = 0.016, 90% C.I. [0.015, 0.017]
Probability RMSEA <= .05 is 1.000
CFI = 0.965
TLI = 0.949
SRMR = 0.029

Standardized coefficients

	Sex→	Age→	Age^2→
SCC	-0.074*	0.394***	-0.099**
EXT	-	-	-
ANX	0.258***	-	-
RIG	-	-0.417***	-
DTN	-	0.306***	-
ASS	-0.105*	-	0.094**
DYN	-0.083*	-0.264***	-
COM	-0.189***	-	-
ACH	0.221***	0.131**	-
BEL	-	0.142**	-
POW	-0.278***	0.599***	-0.157***

Age is standardized.
Sex : 0=men, 1=women.

Number of free parameters = 628
DIF path coefficients not presented.

Residual correlations between latent variables

	SCC	EXT	ANX	RIG	DTN	ASS	DYN	COM	ACH	BEL
EXT	0.274***									
ANX	-0.728***	-								
RIG	-	-0.201***	0.330***							
DTN	0.196*	-	-	0.131*						
ASS	0.447***	0.344***	-	-0.264***	-					
DYN	0.150*	-	-	-0.355***	-	0.256***				
COM	0.268***	-	-0.116***	-0.122**	0.109*	0.321***	-			
ACH	0.182**	-	-0.110**	-	-0.153***	0.186***	-	0.267***		
BEL	0.121*	0.248***	-0.171***	-	-0.256***	0.221**	-	-	0.215***	
POW	0.286***	0.148*	-0.228***	-0.282*	-	0.520***	0.285***	0.116*	-	0.104**

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

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Discussion

Consistent with past research (e.g., Lodi-Smith et al., 2017), these results provide additional evidence that:

- increase in age leads to a raise in SCC that likely reflects the consolidation of identity during adulthood;
- SCC becomes more stable in the late middle of life;
- several components of people's preferred style of behavior at work change with age.

We also found that women were little lower on SCC than men. Though findings on gender differences in SCC are still inconclusive, the well-demonstrated positive relationship between self-esteem and SCC with men generally having higher levels of self-esteem than women might explain this result.

Residual correlations between latent variables revealed that SCC presents:

- a very strong negative link with ANXiety;
- a strong positive relationship with ASSertiveness;
- positive relationships with the other ECHO-R dimensions, except for RIGor.

Overall, this pattern of correlations is consistent with the hypothesis arising from the literature review.

Conclusions

SCC deserves to be more considered in research on personality measurement and structure.

The relationships between SCC and several ECHO-R dimensions provide additional evidence in the validation research process of ECHO-R.

From a practical point of view and due to the importance of assertiveness and anxiety in the workplace, assertive training and programs for reducing workplace stress could benefit from interventions focused on SCC.