



Development and validation of a Self-esteem Contingency Questionnaire for Adolescents



Sofie Wouters^{a,*}, Karine Verschueren^a, Veerle Briers^a, Rianne Janssen^b

^a School Psychology and Child and Adolescent Development, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven, Belgium

^b Educational Effectiveness and Evaluation, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven, Belgium

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 23 December 2015

Received in revised form 30 April 2016

Accepted 2 May 2016

Available online 21 May 2016

Keywords:

Self-esteem contingency

Self-esteem level

Adolescence

Questionnaire

ABSTRACT

Self-esteem (SE) contingency refers to the extent to which one's level of self-esteem depends on meeting certain internal or external criteria and has been identified as a psychological risk factor. Addressing limitations of existing SE contingency questionnaires, we developed a domain-specific situation-response questionnaire for adolescents that (1) measures SE contingency in domains which are considered important for adolescents, based on multidimensional self-concept models, and (2) includes balanced numbers of positive and negative items per domain, allowing to distinguish between upward and downward contingencies. The current findings support the reliability and validity of the new 24-item questionnaire in a sample of high school students ($N = 599$, age range 15–22). Confirmatory factor analyses supported the 4 (domains) \times 2 (valence) structure of our questionnaire and its convergent and discriminant validity was established. Finally, external validity was supported by finding the expected associations with psychological control and depressive symptoms.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Self-esteem (SE) is considered a heterogeneous construct consisting of multiple aspects beyond its level (Heppner & Kernis, 2011). One such other aspect is SE contingency which refers to the degree to which one's SE depends on attaining external or internal standards. Adolescents higher on SE contingency feel they have to meet certain criteria to be able to perceive themselves as good and worthy. Research and theorizing (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1995; Wouters, Doumen, Germeijs, Colpin & Verschueren, 2013) suggest that this need to incessantly prove oneself may, at least to some extent, be explained by the level of psychological control exerted by the parents. Individuals lower on SE contingency, on the other hand, have SE that is less dependent on being successful or is less threatened by failure. Several studies have already demonstrated that higher levels of SE contingency are positively associated with several negative outcomes, sometimes even above and beyond any effect of SE level (e.g., Bos, Huijding, Muris, Vogel, & Biesheuvel, 2010; Burwell & Shirk, 2006; Wouters, Duriez et al., 2013).

Although several instruments have been developed to measure SE contingency, they all share one or more limitations we aim to

address by developing a new instrument for measuring adolescents' SE contingency.

1.1. Measuring self-esteem contingency

In the current study, we focus explicitly on developing a new *domain-specific* SE contingency questionnaire for adolescents, thereby accounting for the possibility that adolescents' level of SE contingency differs across various domains. Additionally, these domains may each have their own correlates and consequences. The Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSWS; Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003) is an example of a domain-specific questionnaire in which multiple factors are expected to emerge (see Table 1 for an overview of existing domain-specific questionnaires). Although there are also questionnaires which measure SE contingency as a general tendency (e.g., the Contingent Self-esteem Scale; Paradise & Kernis, 1999) and they may supplement domain-specific questionnaires, we will not consider them in the current study.

A first limitation of domain-specific SE contingency questionnaires is that there seems little consistency in the specificity (e.g., appearance vs. body weight) and the number of domains (one domain vs. seven domains), which may be at least partly due to the lack of a clear theoretical rationale. Also, some of these measures may not be ideally suited for use in adolescent samples as they were originally developed for older students or adults.

A second limitation concerns the valence of the items. As individuals high on self-esteem contingency are expected to experience both self-esteem boosts and sharp self-esteem drops depending on

* Corresponding author at: School Psychology and Child and Adolescent Development, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven, Tiensestraat 102, Box 3717, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium.

E-mail address: sofie.wouters@kuleuven.be (S. Wouters).

¹ Sofie Wouters is a postdoctoral fellow of the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO). The authors would like to thank Lette van Bael for her assistance in this research as part of her master's thesis in psychology.

Table 1
Overview of existing domain-specific self-esteem contingency questionnaires.

Questionnaire	Authors	Target group	Dimensions	Number of items
Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSWS)	Crocker et al. (2003)	College students	Family support, competition, approval from generalized others, competencies, appearance, God's love, virtue	35
Self-Worth Contingency Questionnaire (SWCQ)	Burwell and Shirk (2003)	Adolescents	Social acceptance and approval, academic performance, activity performance, physical appearance + total score	32
Competence based SE and Relation based SE scales	Johnson and Blom (2007)	College students	Competence based self-esteem, Relation based self-esteem	26
Relationship-contingent self-esteem	Knee, Canevello, Bush, and Cook (2008)	College students	Total score	11
Academic contingencies of self-worth	Lawrence and Crocker (2009)	College students	Total score	6
Extrinsic Contingency Focus Scale (ECFS)	Williams, Schimel, Hayes, and Martens (2010)	College students	Total score	20
Self-esteem conditions scale for French-speaking adolescents	Dupras and Bouffard (2011)	Adolescents	Social acceptance, physical appearance, sportive & athletic performance, body weight, academic achievement + total score	30
Domain-specific contingency of self-esteem	Vonk and Smit (2012)	All ages (≥ 16 years)	Appearance, social approval, performance, intrinsic	29

whether they reach their self-related standards or not, items may be upward or downward (e.g., 'My self-esteem strengthens considerably when others seek my company', upward item Relation Based Self-esteem Scale; 'I feel bad about myself whenever my academic performance is lacking', downward CSWS-item). Additionally, items may be valence-free or neutral, not referring to positive or negative events (e.g., 'If other people's feelings about me change, my feelings of self-worth change as well', Self-Worth Contingency Questionnaire). Some SE contingency questionnaires only contain neutral items, whereas others comprise an unbalanced mix of upward and downward items and some have both. As an exception, Vonk and Smit (2012) developed a SE contingency questionnaire using *balanced* numbers of upward and downward items in three extrinsic contingency domains (i.e., performance, social approval, and appearance). Results supported the distinction between upward and downward contingencies in these three extrinsic domains. Moreover, their findings suggested that having downward contingencies may be more detrimental for one's well-being than having upward contingencies. Nevertheless, this questionnaire was not specifically designed for adolescents and validated in an older sample ($M_{age} = 38.6$).

1.2. Research aims

To address the two main limitations of existing measures, we developed a new brief domain-specific SE contingency questionnaire for adolescents tapping different self-concept domains deemed important for adolescents. We specifically targeted adolescents because their SE may be particularly vulnerable and contingent (Burwell & Shirk, 2006; Harter, 2006). Responding to the need for a more clear theoretical rationale for identifying important contingency domains for adolescents, we used information from multidimensional self-concept models (Harter, 1999; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976) and two well-established and validated measures of adolescent self-concept, the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA; Harter, 1988) and the Self-Description Questionnaire-II (SDQ-II; Marsh, 1992) (see Table 2). Despite an obvious link between SE level and SE contingency, surprisingly few connections have been made at the measurement level. Therefore, we chose to include items referring to specific and tangible events in six self-relevant domains (i.e., academic competence, physical appearance, physical competence, social acceptance, close friendships, and romantic attractiveness) based on a comparison of the SPPA and SDQ-II items. Additionally, we used a balanced number of negative and positive items per contingency domain, allowing us to examine differential correlates of downward versus upward contingencies.

In addition to developing this questionnaire, we aimed to investigate its reliability and validity. In line with the findings of Vonk and Smit (2012), we expected to find support for a 6×2 factor structure capturing the aforementioned six domains and two valences (i.e., upward/positive and downward/negative items). Additionally, as an indication of convergent validity, we expected strong correlations between corresponding domains of the new questionnaire and the CSWS (i.e., social acceptance/others' approval, academic competence, and physical appearance/appearance). As an indication of discriminant validity and based on previous research, we expected small to moderate (negative) correlations between corresponding SE contingency and SE level subscales (e.g., Bos et al., 2010; Wouters, Doumen et al., 2013; Wouters, Duriez et al., 2013). Finally, as support for external validity and based on previous research (e.g., Burwell & Shirk, 2006; Wouters, Doumen et al., 2013) and theorizing (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1995), we expected positive associations between perceived parental psychological control and SE contingency and between SE contingency and self-reported depressive symptoms. Based on the results of Vonk and Smit (2012), we further hypothesized that relations between SE contingency and depressive symptoms would be stronger for downward contingencies than for upward contingencies.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

In total, 599 high-school students participated (49% male; mean age = 17.7 years, $SD = 1.1$ year), who were recruited by 292 undergraduate psychology students from a large university in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. Each student was given a profile of two high-school students he or she had to contact specifying the gender and the educational track of the student to guarantee a good cross-section of the population. In the Flemish educational system, four

Table 2
Overview of corresponding domains in several self-esteem (contingency) questionnaires.

SCQA	SPPA	SDQ-II
Physical appearance	Physical appearance	Physical appearance
Academic competence	Scholastic competence	General school (and math & verbal)
Sports competence	Athletic competence	Physical abilities
Close friendship	Close friendship	Relationships (same & opposite sex)
Romantic attractiveness	Romantic appeal	
Social acceptance	Social acceptance	

Note. SCQA = Self-esteem Contingency Questionnaire for Adolescents, SPPA = Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter), SDQ = Self-Description Questionnaire-II (Marsh).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/889734>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/889734>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)