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Original article

Attempt to validate the Self-Construal Scale in French: Systematic approach and model limitation



Essai de validation en français de l'Échelle de Construction de Soi : approche systématique et limitation du modèle

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. – Independent and interdependent self-construals are included in individuals' self-definitions. The 24-item Self-Construal Scale (SCS) was developed by Singelis (1994) as a means of measuring the “two selves” of individual identity, namely the independent self and the interdependent self. It has been translated into a number of different languages including French. Yet, proper psychometric validation procedures of the scale in foreign languages are lacking which is problematic given the recurrently reported subscales poor reliabilities.

Objective. – The aim of the present paper is to present the steps followed in order to validate a French-translated version of Singelis' (1994) 24-item Self-Construal Scale. Following such a systematic validation approach enables us to locate psychometric weaknesses and assess to what extent a standard validation procedure can address these limitations.

Method. – Study 1 pertains to the translation of the inventory, item face-validity checks, and factor analyses. Study 2 aims to assess the inventory's test–retest stability, as well as its criterion-related validity based on correlations with Big Five personality traits.

Results. – Results evidenced that back-translation, face-validity check and item selection did not enhance the SCS to a valid psychometric level. Factor analyses revealed that a three-factor model proved a better fit with the collected data.

Conclusion. – Given the poor psychometric properties of the SCS and the emergence of theory refinements, future research should consider alternative conceptualizations of self-construal.

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R É S U M É

Introduction. – Les constructions indépendantes et interdépendantes de soi font partie de la manière dont les individus se définissent. L'Échelle de Construction de Soi (ECS) composée de 24 items fut développée par Singelis (1994) comme un moyen de mesurer les « deux Soi » de l'identité, respectivement le Soi indépendant et le Soi interdépendant. L'échelle a été traduite dans différentes langues y compris le français. Cependant, aucune application de procédures de validation de l'échelle n'a été proposée dans ces langues, ce qui est problématique compte tenu des faibles fiabilités reportées dans diverses études.

Objectif. – Le but du présent article est de présenter les étapes suivies afin de valider une version française de l'Échelle de Construction de Soi incluant 24 items proposée par Singelis (1994). Suivre cette approche systématique de validation nous permet de situer les faiblesses psychométriques de l'échelle et d'évaluer dans quelle mesure une procédure standard de validation peut pallier ces limitations.

Mots clés :

Échelle de Construction de Soi

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Méthode. – L'étude 1 inclut la traduction de l'inventaire, la vérification de la validité apparente des items et les analyses factorielles. L'étude 2 a pour objectif d'évaluer la stabilité test–retest de l'inventaire, ainsi que sa validité de critère à partir de corrélations avec les traits de personnalité issue du Big Five.

Résultats. – Les résultats montrent que la traduction inverse, la vérification de la validité apparente et la sélection des items n'amènent pas l'Échelle de Construction de Soi à un niveau psychométrique valide. Les analyses factorielles révèlent qu'une structure en trois facteurs correspond mieux aux données collectées.

Conclusion. – Étant donné les propriétés psychométriques pauvres de l'Échelle de Construction de Soi et l'émergence d'ajustements de la théorie, les recherches futures devraient considérer des conceptualisations alternatives de la Construction de Soi.

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1. Introduction

Broadly defined, “self-construal refers to how individuals define and make meaning of the self” (p. 143) (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2011). Self-construal relates to how individuals define and present themselves in public (Cross et al., 2011) building on the postulate that public self-presentation is intimately influenced by an individual's culture (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This self-definition is assumed to vary across culture and across individuals within the same culture influencing people's cognition, emotion, and motivation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Independent and interdependent self-construals – or two possible self-views – were first put forward by Markus and Kitayama (1991) as a means for considering how both individualistic and collectivistic norms and values are included in individuals' self-definitions. Individualism and collectivism are considered as two sides of a bipolar dimension at the cultural level (Triandis & Suh, 2002) but Markus and Kitayama (1991) conceptualized independent and interdependent self-construals as two non-exclusive facets at the individual level. Within this framework, Singelis (1994) defined self-construals as the “constellation of thoughts, feelings and actions concerning one's relationship to others, and the self as distinct from others” (p.581). The independent self-construal is considered as disassociated from social context. As stated by Singelis (1994), “individuals with highly developed independent self-construals will have as a referent their own abilities, attributes, characteristics, or goals rather than referring to the thoughts, feelings, or actions of others” (p.581). Conversely, the interdependent self-construal is described as socially-bound, with “a sense that the self and others are intertwined” (Singelis, 1994, p.581).

Several authors presented the creation of self-report scales allowing to measure self-construals. The three most used scales were developed by Singelis (1994), Leung and Kim (1997) and Gudykunst et al. (1996). The one developed by Gudykunst et al. (1996) has been developed in the explicit purpose of tapping cross-cultural differences: the measure is designed to have the same factor structure across cultures. The Twenty Statement Test (TST) (Kuhn & Thomas, 1954) has been used as an alternative open-ended self-report measurement of self-construals.

Considered as the “cultural whats” in studies of individual differences (Saribay, Rim, & Uleman, 2012), self-report measurements of self-construals have proven their value in social psychology research, offering opportunities to ascertain the impact of culture-related self-concepts on various aspects of cognition, motivation, and social behaviors at both within- and between-culture levels (Cross et al., 2011).

In 2003, Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, Wittenbaum, et al. (2003) presented multiple studies raising strong concerns about self-construals scales validity (including the three scales mentioned above). These exchanges (Gudykunst & Carmen, 2003; Kim & Narayan, 2003; Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, Lee et al., 2003) brought various insights into strengths and

weaknesses of the self-construal construct. Against inconsistencies when comparing individual levels of independence-interdependence with individualism-collectivism national classifications (Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, Wittenbaum et al., 2003), Kim and Narayan (2003) argued that self-construal were considered to go beyond national stereotypes. Various elements in the socialization process modulate how individuals identify with their culture, which induce a significant amount of self-construals variability within a culture (about 30% of a population do not fit with national stereotypes) (Gudykunst & Carmen, 2003). While Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, Wittenbaum, et al. (2003) considered the insensitivity of the interdependent scale to priming as an evidence of construct invalidity, Kim and Narayan (2003) contended that self-construals scales were designed to measure trait-like aspects (stable) of self-construal. In this view, the Twenty Statement Test is affected by priming as it refers to the dynamic aspect of self-construal (Kim & Narayan, 2003). This consideration of stable and dynamic aspects of self-construals also provides an explanation for the absence of correlation between the TST and others self-construals scales. Lastly, Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, Wittenbaum, et al. (2003) presented five measurement studies where absolute fit of the two dimensional model of self-construals is evaluated without any scale modifications. Noticing poor fit indices, exploratory factor analyses were used resulting in inconsistent multiple factor structures across studies. This approach was criticized by both Kim and Narayan (2003) and Gudykunst and Carmen (2003) who acknowledged weaknesses of the two dimensional model but consider it as the best parsimonious and interpretable model. According to Kim and Narayan (2003), the community agrees that the number of self-construals dimensions is more than one, and theory for interpretation is strong enough to consider two of them: independence and interdependence. Gudykunst and Carmen (2003) considered the relational self-construal as a viable third dimension given the convergence of a strong rational with empirical evidences (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000). To date, no multidimensional model beyond this last one [such as the one proposed in (Hardin, Leong, & Bhagwat, 2004)] have reached a consensus.

The aim of the present paper is to investigate the validity of the 24-item Self-Construal Scale (SCS, Singelis, 1994) for within culture research purposes in French. Among the three widely used scales, the one proposed in Gudykunst et al. (1996) is specifically designed for cross-cultural purposes. The scale proposed by Leung and Kim (1997) appeared to bring no validity improvement (Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, Wittenbaum et al., 2003), which justify our choice to stick with the most widely used form of self-construal scale (SCS, Singelis, 1994).

The SCS has been translated into a number of different languages, including Japanese (Ozawa, Crosby, & Crosby, 1996), Chinese (Aaker & Schmitt, 2001), Singaporean, Hebrew and Israel Arabic (Kurman, 2001), Thai and Taiwanese (Neff, Pisitsungkagarn, & Hsieh, 2008), Korean (Sung & Choi, 2012), Greek (Nezlek,

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