

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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**21st International Conference
DAYS OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY 2026**

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Niš, Serbia | 25th–26th September 2026

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KEYNOTE LECTURES



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VIRTUAL REALITY AS AN AID IN UNDERSTANDING AND TREATING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract. Antisocial behaviour remains an important challenge, both in society in general as well as in the settings (forensic institutions) treating and managing individuals with these behaviours. Psychotherapeutic treatments for antisocial behaviours have been evaluated, and remains a significant challenge given the heterogeneity and psychiatric comorbidity of individuals demonstrating antisocial behaviour. Common problem constellations relating to antisocial behaviours are deficits in social problem-solving skills, emotion regulation and exacerbated pro-criminal attitudes among the individuals. Treatments for antisocial behaviour should address these problem constellations, while engaging and motivating the individuals for completed treatment. Here, skills training has been demonstrated as a crucial component in the treatment. Commonly, treatment for these behaviours is provided within forensic institutions, e.g. prisons or forensic mental health services, and focus on individuals who have been convicted of crimes, i.e. offenders. A common challenge when providing treatment in forensic institutions is creating realistic skills training situations corresponding to the individuals' treatment needs. Virtual Reality (VR) technology has, during recent years, gained increased recognition as an assessment and therapeutic tool with potential to increased ecological validity of interventions in forensic institutions. This presentation will provide an overview of VR-assisted interventions that have been evaluated in forensic institutions, together with the current evidence base for such interventions. The presentation will combine theory, current research findings and clinical examples to illuminate the current state of the field and to provide clinicals with a basic know-how of this technology can be used to better understand and treat antisocial behaviour.

Keywords: antisocial behaviour, forensic institutions, prison, virtual reality, treatment

PERHAPS THERE IS NO GLOBAL MODEL OF PERSONALITY: EFFORTS TO CONCEPTUALIZE AND MEASURE PERSONALITY FUNCTIONING AND PATHOLOGY ACROSS THE WORLD

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Abstract. Culture permeates all of personality and human experience; however, most personality research has been culturally decontextualized and indifferent or denying of cross-cultural variation for the sake of identifying universalities. This inclination has subdued our understandings of specific cultural factors as they pertain to the conceptualization, etiology, manifestation, and measurement of personality functioning and pathology. Although a single, global model of personality that wholly accounts for cross-cultural variation would prove exceptionally valuable, one has yet to materialize. As such, the thesis of this keynote is that pursuit of a dynamic understanding of cross-cultural commonalities and cultural nuances of personality functioning and pathology, as well as their interaction might prove a more worthwhile objective. After briefly reviewing essential cultural considerations for studying personality functioning and pathology as I see them and the current state of the literature, I introduce a series of studies being conducted by an international collaborative evaluating the psychometric properties of personality measures across more than 40 countries and 20 languages, and exhibit findings from our recent preregistered study. Findings are discussed in a cultural context before I review the potential implications of this line of research for informing cross-cultural conceptualizations and measurement of personality functioning and pathology. I conclude this keynote by sharing some of the methodological difficulties and opportunities that have emerged while conducting these large, international projects and offer advice for those who aspire to lead international teams of researchers.

Keywords: culture, personality, personality functioning, personality pathology, cross-cultural differences, psychometrics

PARENTAL BEHAVIOR AND CHILD ANXIETY DURING ANESTHETIC INDUCTION

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Abstract. Sources of stress in children undergoing surgical treatment are multifaceted. In addition to painful procedures, adaptation is further complicated by separation from parents, children's misconceptions regarding the surgical intervention, as well as their limited ability to independently cope with acute medical stress. This research is broadly focused on examining the factors that contribute to increased anxiety in children within the context of pediatric surgery. More specifically, it aims to identify which behaviors within the parent-child interaction are associated with higher or lower levels of anxiety in children. The theoretical framework of this study is the *Proximo-distal model of behavior* in children during painful medical procedures. According to this model, parental and child behaviors in a surgical context can be categorized as those that elevate emotional distress (*distress behaviors*) and those that contribute to effective coping with stressful situations (*coping behaviors*). Parent-child interactions were recorded using video equipment across seven distinct situations: upon admission to the hospital, upon entering the premedication room, before the administration of a sedative, during the administration of the sedative, after receiving the sedative, at the moment of separation from parents, and during mask placement for anesthetic induction. The reciprocal influence of parental and child behaviors was examined over time, and the data were analyzed using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM). The findings indicate that coping behaviors displayed by both children and parents are associated with lower levels of preoperative anxiety, whereas distress behaviors are associated with higher levels of preoperative anxiety.

Keywords: pediatric surgery, preoperative anxiety, parent-child interaction, coping and distress behaviors

SKILL CLASS



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FROM ASSESSMENT TO INTERVENTION: PRACTICAL USE OF VIRTUAL REALITY IN WORKING WITH AFFECT AND IMPULSE REGULATION DIFFICULTIES

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Abstract. Difficulties in affect and impulse regulation are common among patients in forensic psychiatric settings and frequently contribute to aggressive behavior, interpersonal conflicts, and therapeutic challenges. Traditional psychological interventions remain essential, yet they can be limited by the inability to safely recreate real-life triggers or emotionally charged situations within clinical environments. Virtual reality (VR) offers a unique opportunity to bridge this gap by providing immersive, controlled, and ecologically valid scenarios that support both assessment and intervention. Clinical experience indicates that patients perceive VR scenarios as highly realistic and report increased readiness to apply learned strategies in real-world situations. VR thus enhances engagement, increases therapeutic generalization, and supports structured work on affective and behavioral regulation. This Skill Class presents practical applications of VR in forensic psychiatric treatment, based on clinical experience with patients diagnosed with a wide range of mental disorders, including psychotic disorders, personality disorders, autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, intellectual developmental disorders, paraphilic disorders, and complex affective and impulse regulation problems. VR is used as an adjunct to traditional psychotherapy, integrated into individualized treatment plans. Participants will be introduced to the process of collaboratively designing VR scenarios with patients, identifying individual triggers, and formulating therapeutic goals. Examples include VR-based exposure to emotionally activating or conflict-laden situations, practicing coping strategies, and strengthening emotional and behavioral regulation in a safe and controlled environment. VR is also used in assessment to observe spontaneous reactions, which are later explored through reflection and integrated into ongoing therapy.

Keywords: Virtual Reality (VR), forensic psychiatry, affect regulation, impulse regulation, psychological treatment

DEVELOPING THE INNER COMPASS: LEADERSHIP IMPACT THROUGH COACHING

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Abstract. This skills class explores coaching as a developmental approach and its role in creating positive leadership impact within organizational contexts, with a particular focus on the idea that leadership begins from within. Coaching is presented not only as a method for enhancing performance but also as a structured process that supports the deeper personal and professional development of leaders. As part of the session, the integrative Inner Compass coaching model will be introduced as a framework for understanding how self-awareness, personal responsibility, and internal alignment shape leadership behavior and impact. Through coaching, leaders develop greater self-awareness, strengthen their leadership competencies, and improve their ability to understand and regulate emotions. This enables them to build more constructive relationships, take responsibility for their role, and create psychologically safe and supportive environments. As a result, leaders become more capable of engaging in authentic relationships with their employees, fostering trust, accountability, and sustainable performance. In this way, coaching contributes to the creation of a positive and sustainable leadership impact. The session will also address the role of the coach as a reflective practitioner who continuously develops their competencies through reflective practice. Particular attention will be given to key coaching competencies, in line with EMCC standards, including self-awareness, commitment to self-development, the ability to reflect on one's own impact, and the ability to remain in the coaching role. The development of the coach is presented as an essential condition for the quality and effectiveness of coaching interventions. In addition, the class will provide insights into coaching practice within organizational settings, including when organizations engage coaches and the typical goals of coaching processes. Participants will reflect on their own development and begin to identify key areas for further growth in their personal and professional work, approaching development in a conscious and strategic way.

Keywords: leadership impact, coaching, self-awareness, reflective practice, coach development

IF EVERYONE WINS, WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS? HOW TO STUDY MECHANISMS OF CHANGE IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

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Abstract. Research on psychotherapy outcomes has consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of different therapeutic approaches. At the same time, relatively small differences between treatments, known as the Dodo bird effect, raise a more fundamental question. If different approaches lead to similar outcomes, what actually produces therapeutic change? Outcome research can establish whether a treatment works, but it cannot, by itself, explain how and why change occurs. Research on mechanisms of change attempts to identify the pathways through which therapeutic interventions translate into meaningful and lasting changes in clients' everyday lives. A central methodological challenge is to distinguish therapeutic processes, client change processes, mechanisms of change, and treatment outcomes, and to establish the temporal and causal relationships among them. Different therapeutic processes may lead to similar client changes, expected processes may not occur following specific interventions, and changes in proposed mechanisms do not necessarily lead to changes in treatment outcomes. Studying mechanisms of change therefore requires moving beyond traditional pre and post treatment designs. Particular attention needs to be given to the temporal sequencing of change, repeated assessment throughout treatment and between sessions, appropriate operationalization and measurement of mechanisms, and the nonlinear and individually variable nature of therapeutic change. This skill class presents a methodological framework for moving from the identification of treatment effects to the formulation and testing of models linking therapeutic processes, mechanisms of change, and outcomes. Practical examples and exercises will illustrate how questions about how and why psychotherapy works can be translated into research designs capable of identifying and testing mechanisms of therapeutic change.

Keywords: psychotherapy, mechanisms of change, therapeutic processes, treatment outcomes

WHEN A STUDENT NEEDS A RELATIONSHIP: THE TEACHER AS A SECURE BASE

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Abstract Contemporary understandings of learning increasingly recognize that students' educational development cannot be separated from their emotional security and the quality of the relationships they establish at school. Attachment theory provides a framework for understanding how early relational experiences shape students' expectations of others, their ways of seeking and accepting support, their capacity for emotion regulation, and their readiness to explore, cooperate, and learn. The skill classn will examine how attachment patterns are expressed in the school context and influence students' relationships with teachers. While some students are able to rely on a teacher flexibly and according to the demands of the situation, others avoid support, seek it intensely, or simultaneously desire and reject it. Understanding these differences allows student behavior to be considered not only in terms of motivation, discipline, or academic achievement, but also in relation to how students experience closeness, assistance, trust, and safety. Particular attention will be given to the possibility that a teacher may become an alternative attachment figure and secure base. Without assuming a parental or therapeutic role, teachers can establish relationships in which professional competence, care, reliability, trust, and predictability create conditions for exploration and learning. The presentation will clarify the relational processes through which teachers acquire this function and the ways in which students with different attachment patterns may use—or struggle to use—the teacher as a secure base. Participants will be offered guidelines for recognizing attachment-related patterns in the classroom and adapting support to students' relational needs while maintaining clear boundaries and the teacher's professional role. The aim is to deepen understanding of the emotional dimension of teaching and strengthen teachers' capacity to use the teacher–student relationship as a developmental and educational resource.

Keywords: attachment, secure base, alternative attachment figure, teacher–student relationship

POSTER SESSION



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BEYOND THE SCREEN: PERSONALITY INSIGHTS INTO THE FEAR OF MISSING OUT PHENOMENON

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Abstract. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has become a common aspect of students' online experiences, yet most studies continue to treat it as a single construct. Although FoMO has often been interpreted through Self-Determination Theory, individual differences in personality may help explain why students experience different forms of FoMO. Recent approaches suggest that FoMO may involve different dimensions related to belonging, popularity, anxiety, and problematic online engagement. Investigating personality predictors of specific FoMO dimensions may help determine whether different aspects of FoMO are associated with distinct psychological characteristics. The present study examined whether personality traits differentially predict these dimensions among university students in Serbia. A sample of 332 undergraduate students ($M = 21.3$, $SD = 2.8$; 58% female), primarily from social (63.3%) and technical sciences (34.6%), completed the 24-item IPIP-6 inventory (Sibley, C. G., 2012) and the 20-item Online Fear of Missing Out Inventory (ON-FoMO; $\alpha = .92$) (Sette et al., 2020). Separate multiple regression analyses revealed that personality traits explained a significant portion of variance across all dimensions. For the Need for Belonging, the model explained 30.5% of the variance, $F(6, 325) = 23.76$, $p < .001$. Neuroticism and Agreeableness were positive predictors, while Honesty-Humility and Conscientiousness were negative predictors. For the Need for Popularity, the model accounted for 14.1% of the variance, $F(6, 325) = 8.89$, $p < .001$, and was positively predicted by Agreeableness, and negatively by Honesty-Humility and Extraversion. The model for Anxiety explained 15.8% of the variance, $F(6, 325) = 10.14$, $p < .001$, where Neuroticism emerged as a positive predictor, while Honesty-Humility was a negative predictor. Finally, the model for Addiction explained 21.5% of the variance, $F(6, 325) = 14.86$, $p < .001$, positively predicted by Neuroticism, while Honesty-Humility and Conscientiousness were negatively associated. Assuming FoMO is multidimensional, different personality traits are associated with the different dimensions of FoMO. Neuroticism was particularly relevant for belonging, anxiety, and addiction-related engagement, which may

reflect greater sensitivity to unmet relatedness needs and negative affect, whereas lower Honesty-Humility may indicate stronger tendencies toward social comparison and popularity-related concerns. Ultimately, these results suggest that personality traits are differentially associated with distinct dimensions of FoMO, highlighting the importance of considering FoMO as a multidimensional construct.

Keywords: Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), personality traits, university students

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AND INFIDELITY TENDENCIES IN YOUNG ADULTS' ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: THE MODERATING ROLE OF RELIGIOSITY

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Marinković

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Abstract. In recent years, there has been an increase in research focused on identifying predictors of infidelity, which may be explained by the significant consequences infidelity has for the quality of intimate relationships, as well as for partners' psychological and physical well-being. Previous research indicates that lower relationship quality increases the likelihood of both emotional and sexual infidelity. At the same time, religiosity has been associated with greater relationship commitment and stability and more negative attitudes toward infidelity. Based on these findings, the aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between relationship satisfaction and infidelity tendencies, as well as the moderating role of religiosity in this relationship. The sample consisted of 228 participants (75.4% female), aged between 18 and 29 years ($M = 21.75$, $SD = 2.46$). The Infidelity Scale was used to assess infidelity tendencies, relationship satisfaction was measured using the Relationship Satisfaction subscale from the Investment Model Scale, while religiosity was assessed using a single item referring to the subjective importance of religious beliefs. Data were analyzed using moderation analysis conducted with Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 1). The results indicated that relationship satisfaction significantly and negatively predicted infidelity tendencies ($B = -0.95$, $SE = 0.43$, $t = -2.20$, $p = .03$). Furthermore, the interaction effect between relationship satisfaction and religiosity was statistically significant ($B = 0.34$, $SE = 0.13$, $t = 2.61$, $p = .01$), indicating a moderating role of religiosity. Conditional effects analysis showed that the negative association between relationship satisfaction and infidelity tendencies was stronger among individuals with lower levels of religiosity, whereas this association weakened and became non-significant as religiosity increased. The findings suggest that religiosity may play a protective role in romantic relationships, attenuating the association between relationship dissatisfaction and the propensity to engage in extra-dyadic behaviors. This is consistent with previous research linking religiosity to greater relationship commitment and stronger adherence to moral norms within intimate relationships.

Keywords: infidelity, religiosity, relationship satisfaction, young adulthood

DARK PERSONALITY TRAITS AND INFIDELITY TENDENCIES IN YOUNG ADULTS' ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT

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Abstract. Previous research suggests that insecure attachment, particularly anxious and avoidant attachment styles, are associated with greater infidelity tendencies, whereas secure attachment appears to serve as a protective factor. Furthermore, dark personality traits encompassed by the Dark Triad construct (Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy) have been linked to a higher likelihood of engaging in extradyadic relationships and poorer relationship quality. Given that individuals with more pronounced Dark Triad traits tend to exhibit insecure attachment patterns more frequently, attachment may represent an important mechanism underlying the relationship between dark personality traits and infidelity. Based on these findings, the aim of the present cross-sectional study was to examine the relationship between dark personality traits and infidelity tendencies, as well as the mediating role of romantic attachment in this relationship. The sample consisted of 228 participants (75.4% female), aged between 18 and 29 years ($M=21.75$, $SD=2.46$). Infidelity tendencies were assessed using the Infidelity Scale, dark personality traits were measured using the Serbian adaptation of the Short Dark Triad Scale, and romantic attachment was assessed using the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale. The mediation analysis indicated significant indirect effects of Machiavellianism ($\beta = .07$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI [.02, .12]), narcissism ($\beta = .03$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI [.00, .07]), and psychopathy ($\beta = .06$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI [.02, .11]) on infidelity tendencies through avoidant attachment. The findings suggest that the association between dark personality traits and infidelity tendencies may be explained, in part, by avoidant attachment, which is characterized by emotional distancing, lower levels of intimacy, and reduced commitment to a romantic partner, thereby increasing the likelihood of seeking alternative emotional or sexual relationships outside the primary relationship. These results highlight the importance of romantic attachment as a potential target for preventive and counseling interventions aimed at reducing the risk of infidelity, particularly among individuals with more pronounced Dark Triad traits.

Keywords: infidelity, Dark Triad, attachment, young adults

CAN LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS MEASURE STRUCTURAL SIMILARITY? A MULTI-MODEL VALIDATION USING CHESS EXPERTISE

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Abstract. Can large language models score the structural similarity of verbal reasoning, and do their ratings recover what expert human coders capture? Using a chess analogy production paradigm, 67 participants (32 advanced players, 35 novices) constructed analogous positions for ten scenarios and explained their reasoning in German, yielding 670 configurations. Two trained coders independently judged each configuration as analogous or not ($\kappa = .54$, 76.9% agreement). A third coder adjudicated all 155 disagreements, retaining 299 confirmed analogies. Advanced players produced more analogies than novices (56.88% vs. 33.43%; $p < .001$). Six models (DeepSeek-Chat-v3, Gemini-2.5-Flash-Lite, Qwen3-235B, Llama-4-Maverick, Claude Sonnet 5, Claude Opus 5) then scored each explanation using a prompt operationalizing Gentner's (1983) relational-attributional distinction. Inter-model reliability was excellent for rank ordering, ICC (2, k) consistency = .97, but model means spanned 2.4 scale points and single-model absolute agreement was lower, ICC(2,1) = .76, so scores are reliable yet not interchangeable without anchoring. Validity was more limited. Model scores correlated $\rho = .29$ with the consensus human rating, 63% of the coders' agreement with each other ($\rho = .46$), and this association was between participants ($b = .62$) rather than within ($b = .11$, *ns*). All models separated advanced from novice players (AUC = .83 to .88), but model scores correlated $\rho = .66$ to .77 with response length, whereas human ratings did not ($\rho = .36$). Adjusting for length eliminated every model's expertise effect (6–22% retained, all *ns*.) while the human criterion retained 86%. A length-matched subsample reproduced this. LLM scoring is therefore highly reliable but currently tracks verbosity more than relational structure, and is not yet a substitute for expert coding.

Keywords: large language models, structural similarity, analogical reasoning, automated protocol analysis, chess expertise

PERCEIVED POLITICAL ANOMIE AND RIGHT-WING AUTHORITARIANISM IN SERBIA: DOES EDUCATION MATTER?

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Abstract. Political uncertainty, declining trust in institutions, and increasing social polarization have renewed interest in the factors associated with authoritarian attitudes. Within this context, political anomie, or the perception that political institutions and actors are ineffective, self-serving, or unable to maintain a stable social order—may contribute to citizens’ support for authoritarian orientations. This study examined the relationship between perceived political anomie and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), as well as the moderating role of education among Serbian citizens. The sample consisted of 957 participants (53.9% men, 46.1% women) aged 18–99 years. Perceived political anomie was assessed through attitudes reflecting distrust in political institutions, political actors, and the functioning of the political system, while authoritarianism was measured using an adapted version of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation, linear regression, and hierarchical regression analyses. Results revealed a significant, but modest, positive association between perceived political anomie and authoritarianism ($r = .15$, $p < .001$), with perceived political anomie explaining 2.3% of the variance in authoritarianism ($R^2 = .023$, $\beta = .15$). Contary to expectations, education didn’t moderate this relationship ($\beta = .03$, $p = .386$). Unexpectedly, higher educational attainment was associated with higher levels of authoritarianism ($\beta = .13$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that perceived political anomie although associated with authoritarianism, its explanatory contribution is modest, and this association does not substantially differ across educational levels. The unexpected positive association between educational attainment and authoritarianism may indicate that formal educational level alone is insufficient to capture factors relevant to authoritarian attitudes, highlighting the potential importance of the quality and context of education. Further research should examine the broader psychological, social, and political factors underlying these associations.

Keywords: political anomie, education, social psychology, right-wing authoritarianism

EXPLAINING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING OF EMERGING ADULTS: THE ROLES OF BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND BODY ESTEEM

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Abstract. The present study examined the relative contributions of the Big Five personality traits and body esteem to subjective well-being, operationalized as life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. The sample comprised 151 emerging adults (119 women and 32 men; M age = 21.15 years, SD = 3.58). Participants completed the One-Item Measure of Life Satisfaction, the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE), the BFI-20, and the Body Esteem Scale (BES). Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine whether the dimensions of body esteem (Appearance, Attribution, and Weight) explained additional variance in subjective well-being beyond personality traits. The final model predicting life satisfaction was significant, $R^2 = .31$, $F(7, 143) = 9.21$, $p < .001$. Higher agreeableness ($\beta = .17$, $p = .024$), lower neuroticism ($\beta = -.18$, $p = .023$), as well as appearance body esteem ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted greater life satisfaction. The model predicting positive affect was also significant, $R^2 = .22$, $F(7, 143) = 5.77$, $p < .001$. Higher extraversion ($\beta = .18$, $p = .038$), higher conscientiousness ($\beta = .19$, $p = .025$), and lower neuroticism ($\beta = -.17$, $p = .047$) were significant predictors, whereas body esteem dimensions did not explain additional variance. The model predicting negative affect was significant, $R^2 = .21$, $F(7, 143) = 5.38$, $p < .001$. Higher neuroticism ($\beta = .26$, $p = .002$) and higher attribution body esteem ($\beta = .27$, $p = .006$) significantly predicted greater negative affect. Overall, the findings suggest that personality traits, particularly neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness, are significant predictors of subjective well-being, whereas body esteem demonstrates domain-specific associations, with appearance predicting greater life satisfaction and attribution predicting greater negative affect.

Keywords: subjective well-being, Big Five personality traits, body esteem, emerging adulthood

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Thematic Session
SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY



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THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN CONSUMER PROFILING: PSYCHOPOLITICS, BEHAVIORAL PREDICTION, AND CONTEMPORARY CONSUMER CULTURE

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Abstract. The expansion of digital consumer culture has transformed the relationship between psychology, marketing, and systems of power. Consumer profiling no longer relies primarily on demographic categories; it increasingly incorporates psychological and behavioral indicators, including attention, emotion, motivation, desire, personality, and predicted conduct. This shift is significant because digital marketing systems do not merely describe consumers but increasingly anticipate, personalize, and influence behavior through algorithmic and data-driven techniques.

This theoretical paper develops a conceptual synthesis examining consumer profiling through Byung-Chul Han's concept of psychopolitics, a form of power operating through psychological self-regulation, voluntary participation, affective stimulation, and continuous data production. It analyzes three interrelated mechanisms: algorithmic personalization, emotional targeting, and predictive behavioral analytics. Particular attention is devoted to how algorithmic personalization constructs individualized consumer experiences, reinforcing neoliberal ideals of productivity, optimization, and constant self-management. The paper argues that these mechanisms transform profiling from a marketing practice into a psychopolitical technique of market governance through convenience, personalization, self-optimization, and active data production. Consequently, consumption becomes a process through which subjectivity, desire, attention, and self-management are organized within digital capitalism. The main contribution is to clarify how psychopolitics serves as a conceptual framework for understanding contemporary consumer profiling. By connecting debates on personalization, behavioral prediction, surveillance capitalism, and consumer psychology, this paper shows how psychological knowledge becomes operationalized within digital marketing infrastructures. It contributes to critical discussions of power, subjectivity, and behavioral control in digital capitalism, while highlighting the ethical risks of using psychological knowledge in marketing practice.

Keywords: consumer psychology, psychopolitics, behavioral prediction, emotional targeting, self-optimization

FROM OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE TO SOCIAL GENERATIVITY: CONNECTEDNESS TO NATURE AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL BRIDGE

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Abstract: Personality traits are well-established as fundamental, biologically rooted structures that deeply shape an individual's worldview and basic attitudes and, ultimately, social behavior. The aim of this research is to explore the mechanism through which openness to experience relates to social generativity by testing the mediating role of nature connectedness. Data collection involved the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), the Connectedness to Nature Scale (CNS), and the Social Generativity Scale (SGS). The sample consisted of 289 participants, of whom 78.2% were female ($N = 226$), 21.5% were male ($N = 62$), and 0.3% preferred not to disclose their gender ($N = 1$). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 68 years ($M = 32.36$, $SD = 12.85$). Mediation analysis (Hayes' PROCESS, Model 4) revealed that openness to experience significantly and positively predicted nature connectedness ($\beta = 0.23, p < .001$), which in turn significantly predicted social generativity ($\beta = 0.23, p < .001$). The direct effect of openness to experience on social generativity remained significant ($\beta = 0.18, p = .002$). Additionally, a percentile bootstrap analysis confirmed a significant indirect effect of openness to experience on social generativity through nature connectedness ($\beta = 0.05, SE = 0.02, 95\% \text{ BootCI } [0.020, 0.096]$). These findings suggest that openness to experience may be linked to higher levels of social generativity, with this relationship being partly accounted for by nature connectedness, supporting a pattern of partial mediation. This points to nature connectedness as a potential pathway linking personality traits to prosocial outcomes. Future research should address the cross-sectional nature of this study, the underrepresentation of male participants, and the relatively small magnitude of the indirect effect.

Keywords: openness to experience, social generativity, nature connectedness, mediation analysis

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COGNITIVE PREDICTORS OF CONSPIRACY BELIEFS: THE ROLES OF COGNITIVE REFLECTION AND DELAYED REWARD DISCOUNTING

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Abstract. Belief in conspiracy theories has important consequences for trust in institutions, public health behavior, and susceptibility to misinformation. Previous research suggests that conspiracy beliefs may be related to intuitive thinking and individual differences in decision-making. The present study examined the roles of cognitive reflection and delayed reward discounting in predicting conspiracy beliefs. A total of 140 adults (98 women, 42 men) with a mean age 33 years ($SD = 13$) completed the Generic Conspiracist Beliefs Scale (GCBS), the Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT), and a Delayed Reward Discounting Task. Pearson correlation analyses and multiple linear regression were conducted to examine the relationships among the variables. Correlation analyses showed that stronger conspiracy beliefs were associated with greater preference for immediate rewards ($r = .35, p < .001$) and more intuitive responses on the CRT ($r = .20, p = .02$). A multiple linear regression analysis revealed that age, cognitive reflection, and delayed reward discounting significantly predicted conspiracy beliefs, $F(3,135) = 9.19, p < .001$, explaining 17% of the variance ($R^2 = .17$). Greater preference for immediate rewards was a significant positive predictor of conspiracy beliefs ($\beta = .35, p < .001$), whereas age was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.23, p < .01$). Gender and education showed no statistical significance in predicting conspiracy beliefs. Cognitive reflection also did not significantly predict conspiracy beliefs after controlling for the other variables. The findings suggest that conspiracy beliefs are more strongly associated with present-oriented decision-making than with cognitive reflection alone. Understanding the role of delayed reward preferences may help explain why some individuals are more vulnerable to misinformation and conspiratorial thinking. These results highlight the value of examining decision-making processes when addressing contemporary social and psychological challenges.

Keywords: conspiracy beliefs, cognitive reflection, delay discounting, misinformation, decision-making

COGNITIVE REFLECTION AND VACCINE CONSPIRACY BELIEFS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CONSPIRACY MENTALITY

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Abstract. Vaccine conspiracy beliefs are an important component of vaccine hesitancy, as they reflect distrust toward vaccines, pharmaceutical companies, health authorities, and vaccination information. Previous research suggests that vaccine conspiracy beliefs are related to broader conspiratorial thinking rather than only vaccine-specific concerns. Cognitive reflection is also relevant because previous research has linked lower analytic thinking and greater intuitive thinking to stronger conspiracy beliefs. Therefore, the present study examined whether general conspiracy mentality mediates the association between cognitive reflection and vaccine conspiracy beliefs. Cognitive reflection was measured with the Cognitive Reflection Test, general conspiracy mentality with the Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire (McDonald's $\omega = .94$), and vaccine conspiracy beliefs with the Vaccine Conspiracy Beliefs Scale ($\omega = .96$). The sample included 435 Bulgarian participants (361 women), age from 18 to 82 years ($M = 30.5$, $SD = 14.1$). Pearson correlations showed that conspiracy mentality was strongly and positively associated with vaccine conspiracy beliefs, $r = .605$, $p < .001$. Cognitive reflection was negatively associated with both conspiracy mentality, $r = -.115$, $p = .016$, and vaccine conspiracy beliefs, $r = -.217$, $p < .001$. A mediation analysis indicated that conspiracy mentality partially mediated the association between cognitive reflection and vaccine conspiracy beliefs. The indirect effect was significant, $b = -0.088$, $p = .017$, 95% CI $[-0.161, -0.016]$, while the direct effect of cognitive reflection on vaccine conspiracy beliefs remained significant, $b = -0.195$, $p < .001$. These findings suggest that higher cognitive reflection is associated with lower vaccine conspiracy beliefs both directly and indirectly through lower general conspiracy mentality. Since all variables were measured concurrently, the mediation model should be interpreted as statistical mediation rather than evidence of a causal sequence. Overall, these results highlight the role of both general conspiracy mentality and cognitive reflection in understanding individual differences in vaccine conspiracy beliefs.

Keywords: vaccine conspiracy beliefs, cognitive reflection, conspiracy mentality

PUNISHING FAILURE: MERITOCRATIC BELIEFS AND SEXISM DRIVE ASYMMETRIC OUTCOME BIAS IN ORGANIZATIONAL JUDGMENTS

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Abstract. While organizational meritocracy implies objective performance evaluations, judgments deviate from rational norms and remain susceptible to cognitive outcome bias (OB) and prejudices. To determine whether OB intersects with evaluators' ideologies and gender stereotypes, this study its predictors using a cross-sectional sample of 219 students (80.4% female, $Mage = 19.4$, $SD = 1.14$). In a fully repeated-measures design, participants evaluated decisions presented via vignettes where target's gender (male, female) and the decision outcome (positive, negative) were systematically manipulated across 6 organisational situations, resulting in 24 experimental conditions. OB was operationalized as the evaluation score difference between outcomes. Predictors were assessed using the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), the Actively Open-Minded Thinking (AOT), the Preference for the Merit Principle and Perceptions That Meritocracy Exists scales. An OB was observed across the sample, shifting evaluations by an average of 2.64 points on a 10-point scale (Cohen's $d = 1.56$). Bootstrapped Mann-Whitney U tests revealed that females' total OB was significantly stronger than males' ($p = .033$, Cohen's $d = 0.33$), particularly when evaluating male targets ($p = .020$, Cohen's $d = 0.33$). This difference was characterized by females imposing harsher penalties for males' negative outcomes. Multiple regression analyses (R^2 ranging from .05 to .06) revealed an asymmetrical pattern of predictors by target gender, whereas AOT was not significant across models. For female targets, preference for merit ($\beta = 0.24$, $p = .023$) and benevolent sexism ($\beta = 0.41$, $p = .020$) were positively associated with OB. For male targets, benevolent sexism showed a positive association with OB ($\beta = 0.47$, $p = .006$), while hostile sexism was negatively associated ($\beta = -0.44$, $p = .028$). The findings suggest that organizational OB follows a gender-specific ideological path; however, generalizability is limited, as the predominantly young, female student sample and cross-sectional design preclude causal inferences.

Keywords: organizational decision-making, outcome bias, meritocratic beliefs, sexism

“WHY DOES NOBODY WANT TO PLAY WITH THIS DOLL?” CHILDREN’S EXPLANATIONS OF SOCIAL STATUS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LIGHTER- AND DARKER-SKINNED DOLLS

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Abstract. From an early age, children recognize social hierarchies and understand their own position within them. They construct explanations for social inequalities, often drawing on cultural narratives that justify or reproduce existing social arrangements, thereby contributing to internalized oppression and the maintenance of the status quo. In a Serbian replication of the classic doll study (Clark & Clark, 1947), between 76.2% and 82.5% of preschool children attributed lower social status to a darker-skinned doll (Jovanović et al., 2025). The present study explored how children explain these status differences and whether their explanations vary by ethnic background and ethnic composition of their kindergarten group. Participants were 212 children aged 5–7 years ($M = 5.93$, $SD = 0.54$), 63 Roma and 149 Serbian. After assessing the social status of lighter- and darker-skinned dolls, children explained their judgments. A total of 353 explanations were analyzed using inductive qualitative content analysis, while the findings are presented as the number/percentage of explanations. Children most frequently referred to skin color when explaining status differences, suggesting that perceptual cues guide social categorization. Within Serbian children’s accounts, skin color emerged as the most prominent explanation for the darker-skinned doll’s lower status (41.2%), whereas Roma children’s accounts more often emphasized the doll’s internal negative characteristics (43.6%), with the content of these stereotypes differing qualitatively between the two groups. In both groups, children’s accounts also described the darker-skinned doll’s lower status as resulting from discrimination or exclusion by others (Roma: 26.6%; Serbian: 21.3%). Patterns also reflected the educational contexts in which children participated. In ethnically homogeneous Roma groups, explanations frequently portrayed the darker-skinned doll through negative personal characteristics. Moreover, accounts from homogeneous Roma and

ethnically mixed groups also frequently referred to discrimination and peer exclusion as explanations for lower social status. These findings suggest subtle differences in the ways that majority and minority group membership and experiences of intergroup contact shape children's attributions of unequal social status.

Keywords: internalized oppression, social status, intergroup contact, Roma, preschool education

EMPATHY AND BARRIERS IN POLICE INTERVENTION ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: PREDICTORS OF REACTIVE AND PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN SPAIN

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Abstract: Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a persistent social problem requiring coordinated institutional action where police play a crucial role as the first line of response. This study analyzed the attitudes, barriers, and facilitators that influence police intervention in GBV cases in terms of reactive and proactive responses, with special attention to empathy and professional responsibility. Reactive attitudes reflect passive responses after domestic violence has occurred, characterized by minimal police involvement and greater tolerance of violence. Proactive attitudes reflect preventive approaches that prioritize domestic violence as a police responsibility and support interventions such as pro-arrest policies. Empathy and professional responsibility were expected to facilitate proactive police responses to GBV and reduce reliance on reactive responses. An online quantitative cross-sectional design was conducted via Qualtrics with 255 active-duty Police officers in Spain (85% men; $M = 43.3$ years, $SD = 4.6$), with ethical approval from the University of Salamanca (Record No. 1346). Participants completed validated scales assessing empathy (JSE), professional attitudes (DVHPSS), perceived barriers, and type of response (reactive vs. proactive). Multiple regression analyses showed that higher cognitive and behavioral empathy ($\beta = .17, p = .030$), as well as perceived responsibility ($\beta = .20, p = .010$) predicted more proactive responses, whereas victim blaming ($\beta = .21, p = .005$) and fear of offending ($\beta = -.22, p = .006$) predicted reactive or minimizing responses; formal training showed no significant effects. Findings highlight empathy and responsibility as key facilitators of effective police intervention, while attitudinal biases and lack of confidence act as barriers. Enhancing emotional competence and reflective training may strengthen institutional responses to GBV.

Keywords: gender-based violence, police intervention, empathy, professional responsibility, proactive response

Thematic Session
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WHO RESISTS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE? CROSS-SECTOR AND DEMOGRAPHIC PREDICTORS IN NORTH MACEDONIAN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract. The aim of this study was to investigate the sociodemographic and contextual predictors of resistance to organizational change among employees in the public and private sectors of North Macedonia. Using data from a cross-sectional survey of 204 employees (113 men, 91 women; $M = 35.3$ years), resistance to change was assessed with the Resistance to Change Scale (RCS), and analyses were conducted using the overall resistance to change score. Hierarchical multiple regression was performed to examine the contribution of sociodemographic and workplace-related factors. In Step 1, baseline sociodemographic variables (gender, education, residence, and age) explained 14.5% of the variance in resistance to change ($R^2 = .145, p < .001$), with residence and age emerging as significant unique predictors. In Step 2, workplace contextual variables (organizational sector and tenure) were added, yielding a final model that explained 15.5% of the variance in resistance to change ($R^2 = .155$, Adjusted $R^2 = .129$), $F(6, 197) = 6.00, p < .001$. However, the addition of these contextual variables did not significantly improve the model ($\Delta R^2 = .010, p = .325$). In the final model, residence remained the only statistically significant unique predictor ($\beta = -.289, p < .001$), whereas age ($\beta = .194, p = .139$), organizational sector ($\beta = -.101, p = .179$), and tenure ($\beta = .117, p = .364$) did not make statistically significant unique contributions after controlling for the other variables. While the findings identify demographic differences associated with resistance to organizational change, the study does not examine the mechanisms underlying these differences. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as identifying employee groups with relatively higher resistance to organizational change rather than providing causal explanations or supporting specific human resource interventions.

Keywords: resistance to change, organizational change, public sector, transition economy

MAPPING TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE WITHIN ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR: A SCOPING REVIEW OF RESEARCH IN FIRST RESPONDER CONTEXTS

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Abstract. First responders in fire and rescue, emergency medical, and police services are routinely exposed to potentially traumatic incidents, increasing risk for trauma responses and psychological distress. Organisational responses are therefore important for workforce wellbeing and operational functioning. Although first responder mental health research has grown, attention remains largely on individual-level interventions and outcomes. It remains unclear how trauma-informed care (TIC) has been conceptualised and embedded organisationally in first responder contexts. This scoping review mapped organisational- and system-level TIC in first responder settings and identified priorities for implementation and evaluation. APA PsycInfo, CINAHL, Emcare, Medline, and Scopus were searched using trauma-informed terms, including close variants, and first responder population terms. No date limits were applied, and the review followed PRISMA-ScR guidance. Because the review mapped the TIC-explicit evidence base rather than the wider organisational stress and resilience literature, inclusion was limited to organisational- or system-level records explicitly framed as trauma-informed within first responder contexts. Related non-TIC-labelled literature was therefore excluded from the core dataset. Seventeen TIC-explicit records met the inclusion criteria. The evidence base was small, heterogeneous, and early-stage. Organisational TIC was framed through overlapping concepts, including climate, readiness, leadership, supervision, post-incident practices, peer and digital supports, and self-assessment. Anchoring to established trauma-informed frameworks was inconsistent, and uptake of principles was uneven. Organisational TIC in first responder settings therefore functions more as an umbrella label than a convergent implementation model. Where implementation was examined, outcomes were proximal, including feasibility, acceptability, burnout, and willingness to seek care; downstream indicators such as retention, absenteeism, and staffing stability were absent. This review highlights a key challenge: translating trauma-informed principles into organisational routines and accountabilities, especially where command

structures, repeated exposure, and confidentiality concerns complicate implementation. The next step is to develop clearer TIC frameworks and evaluate whether they improve workforce wellbeing and operational sustainability.

Keywords: trauma-informed care, first responders, organisational climate, occupational health psychology, scoping review

FROM SAFE JOB TO „INAT“: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS, AND CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURIAL IDENTITY IN SERBIA

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Abstract. Grounded in a pragmatist framework, this study employs a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design to examine the structural and psychological mechanisms driving corporate entrepreneurial identity in Serbia. The methodology bridges quantitative behavioural economics and qualitative organizational psychology, integrating the Corporate Entrepreneurship Assessment Instrument (CEAI) with Dialogical Self Theory (DST) to map organizational environments and explore subjective identity construction. In Phase 1, screening 556 respondents led to excluding 180 individuals who missed occupational criteria, yielding a final quantitative sample of 376 senior and middle managers. Structural equation modelling (SEM) confirmed an acceptable fit and exposed an organizational paradox: high perceived top management support significantly predicted low time availability and highly asymmetric reward structures for middle managers. In Phase 2, thematic dialogical analysis of semi-structured interviews decoded these quantitative pathways. The qualitative insights reveal how this structural paradox activates *inat* a localized cultural-psychological form of defiance which acts as an inner coping mechanism that ultimately fragments corporate entrepreneurial identity. This study fills the gap in an applied organizational psychology and behavioural economics by illustrating how institutional environments and cultural constructs boundary-condition managerial decisions. We conclude with evidence-based interventions for corporate leaders and strategic recommendations for economic policymakers.

Keywords: corporate entrepreneurship, dialogical Self Theory, behavioural economics, Corporate Entrepreneurship Assessment Instrument, Serbia, *inat*

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EMPLOYEES' DEMOGRAPHICS, EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE, AND DECISION MAKING

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Abstract. Numerous studies point to the conclusion that emotional competence is integral to decision-making, particularly in complex and demanding work environments. The present study addresses a more specific question, namely whether employees' demographic characteristics are associated with their emotional competence and with their preferred approaches to decision-making. 117 employed adults took part in the study by completing an online questionnaire. Items from four questionnaires were combined for the purpose of the study: the Emotional Style Questionnaire (Kesebir et al., 2019), the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003), the "Influence of Emotions on Decision-Making" questionnaire (Franco & Sanches, 2016), and the General Decision-Making Style Inventory (Scott & Bruce, 1995; adapted by Karastoyanov, 2018). The participants were from different organizations, sectors, and geographic locations in Bulgaria. Emotional competence was operationalized along four dimensions, namely emotional awareness, regulation, reactivity, and social adequacy. Decision-making was assessed through several scales reflecting both tendencies and related outcomes: rationality, impulsivity, postponement, a consultative style, and satisfaction with decisions. Work tenure, educational degree, and age were examined through one-way analyses of variance, and sex through an independent-samples t-test; hierarchical level was analyzed separately. Emotional awareness was significantly associated with education level. The associations with work tenure proved more extensive: employees with longer service obtained higher scores on the composite emotional intelligence index. Tenure was further linked to lower reactivity and a reduced tendency to defer decisions. These findings identify professional experience and education as factors associated with emotional competence and with certain decision-making tendencies and support the proposition that emotional intelligence continues to develop over the course of a career.

Keywords: emotional competence, emotional awareness, decision-making, work tenure, educational level

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK ADDICTION, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICTS IN A BULGARIAN SAMPLE OF EMPLOYEES

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Abstract: The current study examines the relationships between work addiction, emotional intelligence (EI) and work-family conflicts among Bulgarian employees. Work addiction is defined as excessive overworking driven by a compulsive urge. Modern work environments, marked by high performance demands and an “always-on” culture, hinder psychological detachment from work, strain EI, and intensifies role conflicts. Drawing on the Conservation of Resources theory and the Job Demands-Resources model, we hypothesized that compulsive task engagement, combined with insufficient recover, depletes emotional and cognitive resources, increases stress, and impairs self-regulation, thereby reducing the ability to manage both work and family responsibilities. The sample comprised 224 Bulgarian employees aged 18 to 61 ($M = 36.59$, $SD = 12.03$; 79.5% women) from diverse professional sectors. Participants completed online Bergen Work Addiction Scale, a short Bulgarian four-factor version of the Trait Meta-Mood Scale, and Work and Family Conflict Scale. Results indicated that two components of EI - attention to emotions and emotions regulation - were associated with a greater propensity for work addiction. These unexpected positive correlations may suggest that excessive focus on one’s own emotional experiences increases tension and stress, and compulsive overwork serves as a maladaptive way to channel and regulate emotions. Work addiction showed a stronger positive association with work-to-family conflict than with family-to-work conflict. Hierarchical regression revealed that work-to-family conflict was positively predicted by work addiction and attention to emotions, and negatively predicted by emotion regulation and emotional expression. In conclusion, the role of EI in work addiction and work-to-family conflict is complex and ambiguous, underscoring the need for further research. It is important to examine not only overall EI levels, but also the different abilities that make it up, as they exert mixed effects on role balance and workaholic tendencies. As an individual job resource, EI may be enhanced through more differentiated organizational training programs.

Keywords: work addiction, emotional intelligence, work-to-family conflicts, family-to-work conflicts

HEXACO PERSONALITY TRAITS AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

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Abstract: Building on previous findings on HEXACO personality traits as predictors of organizational attachment, this study examines the mechanism underlying this relationship: whether organizational identification mediates the effects of personality traits on organizational commitment. Additionally, we examined differences in identification and commitment with respect to work and family status. A convenience sample comprised 434 employees from private and state owned organizations in Serbia (59% female), balanced by employment status with an equal number of permanent and fixed term workers ($n = 217$ each), and including both managerial and non-managerial staff. A shortened HEXACO personality inventory, an organizational identification scale, and an organizational commitment scale were administered. Hierarchical regression analysis showed that identification explained commitment well beyond the contribution of personality traits ($R^2 = .60$, $F(7, 426) = 91.09$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .76$, $p < .001$), with the effects of most traits becoming non significant once identification was introduced into the model. Mediation analyses (bootstrap, 5,000 resamples) showed that identification fully mediated the effects of *Honesty* and *Humility*, *Agreeableness*, and *Conscientiousness*, while *Emotionality* was the only trait that retained a direct effect on commitment. For *Extraversion*, the indirect effect was positive and the direct effect negative, cancelling each other out in the total effect. *Openness to Experience* was the only trait that did not demonstrate any significant mediated effects. Permanently employed workers, employees in managerial positions, and parents reported higher identification and commitment ($d = 0.5$ to 0.6), whereas no differences were found with respect to gender or organizational ownership type. The findings show that personality traits contribute to organizational commitment primarily through organizational identification. These insights suggest that human resource management should utilize personality profiles to inform onboarding strategies and deliberately foster a highly identified organizational culture.

Keywords: HEXACO, organizational identification, organizational commitment, mediation

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SUPERVISOR AND CO-WORKER SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORKPLACE DIGITALIZATION

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Abstract. This study examines the relationship between workplace social support and employees' attitudes towards digitalization in Bulgarian organizations. The overall research sample comprised 432 employees from different business organizations, while the analyses of attitudes towards digitalization were based on 340 participants with valid responses to the digitalization measure. Workplace social support was assessed using the Social Support Scale developed by Caplan et al. and adapted for the Bulgarian context, with a particular focus on support received from direct supervisors and co-workers. Employees' attitudes towards workplace digitalization were measured using an author-developed six-item Scale of Perceived Benefits of Digitalization. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$). Employees generally reported positive attitudes towards digitalization ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.22$, on a seven-point scale). Perceived benefits of digitalization were positively associated with overall workplace social support ($r = .23$), supervisor support ($r = .22$), and co-worker support ($r = .21$). Although the relationships were relatively modest, the results indicate that employees who perceive greater support within their immediate work environment also tend to evaluate organizational digitalization more positively. The findings emphasize the role of the social organizational context in employees' adaptation to digital transformation. Supportive supervisors and co-workers may facilitate the acceptance and effective use of new digital tools, automation, artificial intelligence, and online forms of communication. The results have practical implications for organizations seeking to implement technological changes while maintaining employee involvement, confidence, and positive attitudes towards digitalization.

Keywords: workplace social support, employees' attitudes towards digitalization, Bulgarian organizations

Thematic Session
HUMAN BEHAVIOR
IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS



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NEUTRAL VS. PERSONA: UNCOVERING BIAS DYNAMICS IN LLM ATTITUDES TOWARD GENDER AND IMMIGRATION

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Abstract. Previous research shows that most large language models (LLMs) exhibit some types of sociocultural biases, including gender stereotyping and negative portrayals of migrants. This study investigates how prompt framing—modulates such attitudes across countries, languages, and models, while assessing alignment with human data. Neutral prompting did not specify a population perspective, while persona prompting instructed models to respond as typical residents of a given country. Six LLMs (GPT-4/5, Grok, Gemini, Gemma, Mistral, DeepSeek) were prompted with European Social Survey (ESS Round 11, 2023) items measuring gender equality (0–6 scale) and immigration attitudes (0–10 scale). Approximately 600 responses per condition were collected for the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, and Serbia. Mixed-design ANOVA revealed significant three-way interactions between prompt type, country, and model for gender equality ($F(15.000, 14657.000) = 455.477, \eta^2 = .318, p < .001$) and immigration ($F(15.000, 14646.000) = 504.857, \eta^2 = .341, p < .001$). Across models, neutral prompting yielded more egalitarian responses compared to persona prompting, indicating that identity framing activates culturally embedded biases. Comparisons with human ESS data revealed significant agent effects and agent*country interactions for gender equality (agent effect: $F(6, 22283) = 1341.767, \eta^2 = .265, p < .001$; agent*country: $F(18, 22283) = 157.878, \eta^2 = .113, p < .001$). And immigration (agent effect: $F(6, 22259) = 1099.762, \eta^2$

= .229, $p < .001$; agent*country: $F(18, 22259) = 50.458$, $\eta^2 = .039$, $p < .001$). LLMs expressed more egalitarian attitudes than humans, though model- and country-specific deviations emerged. Multidimensional scaling indicated small-to-non-existent overlap between model outputs and human responses. Overall, findings suggest that persona draws on patterns embedded in training data more than neutral prompting. These results highlight the importance of systematic bias auditing across prompt design, language context, and application domains, with implications for safer deployment and responsible research use of LLMs.

Keywords: multi-lingual models, cross-cultural, LLMs, algorithmic bias, Human–LLM Alignment

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IDENTITY PINNING BIAS: ACCIDENTAL PROMPT ENGINEERING AND THE AI IDENTITY TAX

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Abstract. This theoretical paper introduces Identity Pinning, a socio-technical bias emerging at the intersection of users' social identities and large language models (LLMs). Unlike algorithmic bias embedded during model training, Identity Pinning manifests during human–AI interaction. It occurs when identity-linked patterns of expression—particularly language style—shape output quality through a mechanism we term Accidental Prompt Engineering (APE). Because LLMs generate responses by mapping prompts into high-dimensional feature spaces, variations in phrasing, tone, and linguistic structure can influence outcomes. Identity is deeply encoded in language, and linguistic patterns vary systematically across gender, age, socio-economic status, and cultural background. At the same time, LLMs are trained on data disproportionately representing dominant groups (e.g., native English speakers, men, etc...). As a result, prompts aligned with these dominant linguistic norms tend to produce higher-quality outputs, while minority dialects or non-standard styles may become “pinned” to less optimal regions of the model’s feature space. Empirical findings show that AI systems can produce unequal outputs across demographic markers, including differences based on dialect, gendered language, and age-related expression. Identity Pinning is therefore both a product of training-stage biases and interaction dynamics shaped by uneven digital representation and access to linguistic capital. To compensate, users from marginalized groups may feel pressure to code-shift or mask aspects of their identity to obtain improved responses. This introduces an AI identity tax: the additional cognitive and cultural burden required to engage effectively with AI systems. This paper contributes a novel theoretical framework that conceptualizes Identity Pinning as an interaction-level form of AI bias. It introduces the concepts of Accidental Prompt Engineering (APE) and the AI identity tax to explain how identity-linked linguistic variation can shape LLM performance and reproduce social inequalities. In doing so,

it extends existing AI fairness research beyond training-data and model-centric accounts of bias.

Keywords: identity pinning, Accidental-Prompt Engineering (APE), algorithmic bias, social identity, AI identity tax

Acknowledgement. This publication has emanated from research jointly funded by Taighde Éireann – Research Ireland under Grant number 13/RC/2094_2, the European Union’s Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions under grant number 101126578 and was supported in part by University of Galway. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. Grant recipient: Ana Jovančević.

THE FOMO EFFECT AS A PREDICTOR OF DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, STRESS, AND MENTAL WELL-BEING: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PROBLEMATIC INTERNET USE

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Abstract. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is associated with emotional distress and lower positive mental well-being. This study examined FoMO's predictive role on depression, anxiety, stress, and positive mental well-being in young adults, focusing on problematic internet use as a potential mediator. The study included 303 participants (81.19% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 28.40$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 7.40$ years). Data were collected via an online questionnaire using: Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMoOs), the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21), the Generalized Problematic Internet Use Scale (GPIUS-2), and the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) distributed through social media and student groups, with voluntary and anonymous participation. The results showed that FoMO significantly predicted problematic internet use ($R^2 = .337$, $F_{(1,301)} = 152.82$, $p < .001$). For positive mental well-being, the direct effect of FoMO on mental health was not significant ($b = -.265$, $p = .273$), whereas the indirect effect through problematic internet use was significant $b = -.446$, 95% CI $[-.798, -.116]$), indicating full mediation. For depression, FoMO was a significant predictor ($b = 1.902$, $p < .001$), and the indirect effect through problematic internet use was also significant ($b = .742$, 95% CI $[.217, 1.316]$), suggesting partial mediation. Also, FoMO significantly predicted anxiety ($b = 2.025$, $p < .001$), with a significant indirect effect through problematic internet use ($b = .692$, 95% CI $[.119, 1.299]$), again indicating partial mediation. In the case of stress, FoMO was a significant predictor ($b = 2.651$, $p < .001$), but the indirect effect via problematic internet use was not significant ($b = .368$, 95% CI $[-.171, .941]$), implying that problematic internet use does not mediate the relationship with stress. Findings highlight the importance of problematic internet use as a key mechanism associating the FoMO effect with negative psychological outcomes, in line with theories that conceptualize FoMO as a form of social anxiety and a deficit in self-regulation.

Keywords: Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), emotional distress, mental well-being, problematic internet use

PROBLEMATIC SMARTPHONE APPLICATION USE AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH: TESTING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF LONELINESS AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

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Abstract. Adolescent mental health difficulties are often discussed in relation to digital media and smartphone use, although the nature of these associations remains insufficiently clarified. Drawing on theoretical models suggesting that maladaptive smartphone use may disrupt face-to-face interactions, increase social isolation, and impair mental health, the present study tested a moderated mediation model in which loneliness was expected to mediate the association between problematic smartphone application use and mental health, while perceived social support was expected to buffer the association between problematic smartphone use and loneliness. The study was conducted on a convenience sample of 228 high school students from Niš, Serbia. Females accounted for 76.3% of the sample ($N = 174$), males for 22.8% ($N = 52$), and two participants (0.9%) did not disclose their gender. Participants were 16 to 19 years old ($M = 17.79$, $SD = 0.66$). The administered instruments were the Smartphone Application-Based Addiction Scale (SABAS; $\alpha = .83$), Mental Health Inventory (MHI; $\alpha = .79$), short UCLA Loneliness Scale ($\alpha = .86$), and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; $\alpha = .91$). The proposed moderated mediation model was not supported. Problematic smartphone application use was not significantly associated with loneliness, and perceived social support did not moderate this association. The conditional indirect effects were also nonsignificant. However, loneliness was significantly negatively associated with mental health ($b = -0.465$, $p < .001$), indicating that adolescents reporting higher loneliness also reported poorer mental health. In addition, problematic smartphone application use showed a small but significant direct negative association with mental health ($b = -0.141$, $p = .005$). These findings suggest that smartphone use may be more relevant for adolescent mental health through specific patterns, motives, and contexts of use than through a general problematic-use score. The findings should be interpreted cautiously due to convenience sampling and the predominance of female participants.

Keywords: mental health, problematic smartphone application use, loneliness, adolescents

WHY DO BOYS AND GIRLS PLAY GAMES? EXAMINATION OF GENDER AND AGE DIFFERENCES IN MOTIVATIONS FOR GAMING

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Abstract. Video games are one of the most widespread leisure activities among adolescents. Contemporary psychological research suggests that playing video games is not a uniform behavior, but rather an activity led by different motivational processes. Previous research shows that the motivation for playing video games varies based on gender and age. Therefore, the aim of this study is the examination of gender differences in motivation for gaming, as well as the correlation between age and motivation. This research is a pilot study in which 100 high school students (50% female), aged 16 to 19 ($M = 16.82$, $SD = .75$) participated. Motivation for playing was assessed using the Motives for online gaming questionnaire, which measures seven motivational factors (Social, Escape, Competition, Coping, Skill development, Fantasy, and Recreation). Results of Independent samples t-test and Mann-Whitney test indicate a statistically significant difference between genders for motivational factors of Recreation ($t = 2.82$, $p = .004$), Competition ($U = 835.5$, $z = -2.87$, $p = .005$) and Skill development ($U = 891$, $z = -2.48$, $p = .007$), in favor of males. Spearman's correlation analyses showed statistically significant correlation between the respondents' age and motivational factor of Escape ($\rho = -.27$, $p = .007$), Coping ($\rho = -.25$, $p = .011$), Social ($\rho = -.22$, $p = .031$) and Competition ($\rho = -.22$, $p = .031$). Observed gender differences are aligned with previous research indicating that males tend to be more performance and achievement oriented than females. The decrease in coping, social and competition motivation with age may reflect increasingly adaptive emotion regulation and social strategies. The practical implications of this study lie in the possibility of creating educational programs and games sensitive to age and gender differences, improving the efficiency of game-based learning and tailoring educational content to different student profiles.

Keywords: video games, motivation, adolescence

FEASIBILITY AND PRELIMINARY EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNALIZED AGEISM-ORIENTED CYBERSECURITY TRAINING FOR OLDER ADULTS: A PILOT STUDY

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Abstract. Older adults remain underrepresented in cybersecurity interventions despite their vulnerability to cybercrime. Internalized ageism has been linked to negative age-attributions that may hinder cybersecurity engagement. This study examined the feasibility and preliminary effectiveness of the Internalized Ageism-Oriented Cybersecurity Training. The program integrated attributional retraining with cybersecurity training through activities and reflective discussions targeting internalized ageism. The pilot study is planned as a quantitative, pre-post single-arm design. Participants attended the training once a week (60-75 min) for two weeks. Data were collected one week before and one week after the intervention. Participants completed the Feasibility and Acceptability Questionnaire, Elderly Internalized Stigma Scale, Cybersecurity Awareness Scale, Cybersecurity Self-Efficacy Scale, Attributions Toward Cybersecurity Form, and Cybersecurity Behavior Simulation. A total of 10 participants ($M_{age} = 69.25$, $SD = 3.66$) were recruited and 8 (80% retention) participants completed post-tests. Average attendance was 87.5% and acceptability ratings were 4.6/5 ($SD = 0.30$). There were statistically significant improvements in cybersecurity behavior ($t(7) = 4.13$, Hedges' $g = 1.32$), cybersecurity awareness ($t(7) = 2.36$, Hedges' $g = 0.75$), and cybersecurity self-efficacy ($t(7) = 3.14$, Hedges' $g = 0.99$), alongside a significant reduction in attribution to complexity ($t(7) = -3.00$, Hedges' $g = -0.94$) all $ps < .05$. Although not statistically significant, internalized ageism ($t(7) = -1.06$, Hedges' $g = -0.33$), attribution to age ($t(7) = -0.92$, Hedges' $g = -0.28$), and attributions to lack of guidance ($t(7) = -1.32$, Hedges' $g = -0.42$) decreased, whereas attributions to lack of experience ($t(7) = 1.57$, Hedges' $g = 0.50$) increased all $ps > .05$. Findings of the pilot study indicate the acceptability and feasibility of the intervention. Integrating attributional retraining targeting internalized ageism with cybersecurity training may support cybersecurity engagement. Further research could examine the effectiveness of the intervention in larger samples with control groups and potential role of digital literacy.

Keywords: older adults, internalized ageism, cybersecurity, intervention

Thematic Session
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY



21th
DAYS OF
APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

THE ROLE OF RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL BELIEFS IN PREDICTING COPING STYLES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract. The aim of the study was to examine to what extent proactive and preventive coping, as well as symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress, can be predicted based on rational and irrational beliefs. The sample consisted of 366 participants (291 females and 75 males), aged 18 to 30 years. Data were collected using the General Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (GABS-37), the Proactive and Preventive Coping Scale, and DASS-21. Results of multiple regression analyses indicated that beliefs explained 4% of the variance in preventive coping $F(2, 363) = 7.38, p < .001$, with rational beliefs emerging as a significant predictor ($\beta = .197, p < .001$). Furthermore, beliefs accounted for 7% of the variance in proactive coping $F(2, 363) = 13.70, p < .001$, with both rational beliefs ($\beta = .191, p < .001$) and irrational beliefs ($\beta = -.050, p < .001$) identified as significant predictors. Regarding psychological distress, beliefs explained 17% of the variance in depression $F(2, 363) = 37.23, p < .001$, with irrational beliefs being a significant predictor ($\beta = .113, p < .001$). Additionally, beliefs accounted for 9% of the variance in anxiety $F(2, 363) = 18.23, p < .001$, with irrational beliefs again emerging as a significant predictor ($\beta = .087, p < .001$). Finally, beliefs explained 10% of the variance in stress $F(2, 363) = 21.21, p < .001$, with irrational beliefs remaining a significant predictor ($\beta = .094, p < .001$). These findings suggest that rational and irrational beliefs significantly contribute to coping strategies and psychological distress. Rational beliefs emerged as significant predictors of preventive and proactive coping, indicating that individuals with realistic and logical appraisals are more likely to plan, prepare, and actively address future challenges. In contrast, irrational beliefs were negatively associated with proactive coping, suggesting that unrealistic and illogical expectations may reduce readiness for active coping. Regarding psychological distress, irrational beliefs consistently predicted depression, anxiety, and stress. Individuals with more pronounced dysfunctional beliefs are more likely to experience negative emotional states and greater psychological burden. Overall, these findings highlight the potential value of targeting rational and irrational beliefs in both future research and psychological interventions, as modifying maladaptive belief patterns may enhance adaptive coping strategies and reduce psychological distress.

Keywords: beliefs, coping strategies, depression, anxiety, stress

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EGO-IDENTITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS IN A STUDENT SAMPLE

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Abstract. As formulated by Erikson, ego-identity represents a continuous sense of self formulated against a tangible social future. However, in today's world the continuous sense of self is problematic due to a constant need to reinvent oneself because of the ever-changing social landscape making the idea of a tangible social future, at present, nothing more than an illusion. The aim of our study was to determine the relationship of ego-identity dimensions as measured by the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS) and measures of anxiety and psychological distress such as ambiguity intolerance (SAIS-7), intolerance of uncertainty (IUS-11) and depression, stress and anxiety scale (DASS-12). The sample consisted of 411 students of various universities based in Novi Sad. 269 (65.5%) were female, with an average sample age of 20.54 ($min = 18$; $max = 25$; $SD = 2.11$). The sample was collected via an online survey distributed by students to other students for student credit. The internal consistency of all instruments had Cronbach's alpha values well over .8 except the exploration in breadth DIDS subscale (.67) and SAIS-7 (.64). The commitment and identification with commitment DIDS subscales significantly negatively correlate with all distress constructs except prospective anxiety and intolerance of ambiguity, with the correlation being the strongest with depression ($r = -.31$). On the other hand, exploration subscales of the DIDS questionnaire correlate positively with ambiguity intolerance ($r = .21$ and $r = .18$). Ruminative exploration subscale of the DIDS, a predictor of negative developmental outcomes, correlates positively with all aspects of anxiety and psychological distress (r from .22 to .33). This confirms the relationship between ruminative exploration and negative developmental outcomes given its relationship with psychological distress, and the beneficial effects of identity commitment.

Keywords: ego-identity, anxiety, distress, DIDS

MULTIDIMENSIONAL STRUCTURE AND LATENT PROFILES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS IN YOUTH: AN INTEGRATED FACTOR–CLUSTER ANALYSIS

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Abstract. Psychological distress in youth is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing both somatic and cognitive-emotional components. Traditional unidimensional approaches may fail to capture the underlying heterogeneity and individual variability in symptom expression. This study aimed to investigate the latent structure of psychological distress and identify distinct distress profiles among adolescents and young adults using an integrated factor–cluster analytical approach. Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted on 736 participants aged 15–24 years (mean age 17.95 ± 2.33 years; 62.1% female). Psychological distress was assessed using Conn’s Psychological Distress Battery. Exploratory factor analysis (principal axis factoring with oblique rotation) was used to identify underlying dimensions, with factor retention based on eigenvalues and scree plot inspection. Subsequently, k-means cluster analysis was performed on standardized factor scores, and the optimal number of clusters was determined using the elbow method, cluster interpretability, and centroid separation criteria. Associations with demographic variables were examined using regression models. Factor analysis revealed two strongly correlated dimensions somatic and cognitive distress ($r = 0.85$) accounting for 53.5% of the total variance. Subsequently, k-means cluster analysis was applied to standardized somatic and cognitive factor scores. The optimal three-cluster solution was selected based on elbow plot inspection and cluster separation characteristics. Male gender and higher educational level emerged as significant predictors of higher overall psychological distress. The findings demonstrate substantial heterogeneity in both severity and configuration of psychological distress across individuals. Psychological distress in youth is best conceptualized as a multidimensional and heterogeneous construct. The integration of factor and cluster analysis provides a more nuanced understanding of distress profiles, supporting the need for personalized screening and targeted intervention strategies in mental health care.

Keywords: adolescent, cluster analysis, factor analysis, statistical, mental health, psychological distress, young adult

PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLEXIBILITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AS PATHWAYS FROM NEGATIVE BELIEFS ABOUT OTHERS TO PARANOID IDEATION

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Abstract. Paranoid thinking exists on a continuum and can be observed in both clinical and non-clinical populations. Cognitive models suggest that maladaptive core beliefs about others contribute to paranoid ideation, while psychological processes such as psychological inflexibility and psychological distress may help explain this relationship. The present study examined whether psychological inflexibility and psychological distress sequentially mediate the association between negative beliefs about others and paranoid thinking in a community sample. The sample consisted of 300 adults (62.7% female; M age = 45.11 years, SD = 13.48). Participants completed the Negative Core Beliefs Inventory, the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II, the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21), and the Paranoia scale. All measures demonstrated high internal consistency (α = .90-.95). It was hypothesized that negative beliefs about others would be associated with greater psychological inflexibility, which would in turn predict higher psychological distress and ultimately increased paranoid thinking. This hypothesis was tested using serial mediation analysis with 5000 bootstrap resamples. Results indicated that negative beliefs about others significantly predicted psychological inflexibility, which significantly predicted psychological distress, which in turn predicted paranoid ideation. The hypothesized sequential indirect effect was significant, B = .041, 95% CI [.007, .076], as was the total indirect effect, B = .128, 95% CI [.055, .197]. The direct effect of negative beliefs about others on paranoid ideation also remained significant, B = .553, p < .001. The model explained 62.9% of the variance in paranoid ideation. Overall, findings suggest that psychological inflexibility and psychological distress partially explain the relationship between negative beliefs about others and paranoid thinking, highlighting potential targets for contextual-behavior interventions. Findings should be interpreted cautiously given reported overlap between AAQ-II scores and measures of psychological distress, which may have contributed to the substantial explained variance.

Keywords: negative beliefs about others, psychological inflexibility, psychological distress, paranoid ideation

DISTINGUISHING FEAR FROM ANXIETY IN YOUNG CHILDREN: IMPLICATIONS FOR VERBAL SELF-REPORT ASSESSMENT

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Abstract. The validity of verbal self-report anxiety questionnaires for young children may depend on whether children can conceptually distinguish anxiety - a diffuse, future-oriented worry - from fear, a reaction to an identifiable threat. If children do not clearly differentiate fear from anxiety, their RCMAS responses may reflect general negative affect rather than anxiety-specific experience, threatening the scale's construct validity in this age group. The present study tests whether children aged 5-8 can conceptually differentiate fear from anxiety and examines the implications for verbal anxiety self-report. A sample of 125 children (aged 5-8, $M = 6.64$, $SD = 1.10$) completed a matching task developed specifically for this study to assess preschool and early-school-age children's ability to differentiate emotional labels within the same valence group. The task used verbal item wording drawn from the Bulgarian version of the RCMAS and tracked children's ability to correctly classify these items by emotion (fear, anxiety, calmness, happiness). Results indicate that while children reliably differentiate emotions of opposite valence, such as fear and happiness, they show difficulty distinguishing between emotions of the same valence, such as fear and anxiety. Fear- and anxiety-related words were frequently co-classified (35.9% of comparisons; $OR = 27.46$, 95% CI [16.14, 46.72], $p < .001$), while confusion within the positive-valence category (calm-happy) was less pronounced (17.0% of comparisons; $OR = 9.72$, 95% CI [6.09, 15.50], $p < .001$). These findings suggest that young children's difficulty differentiating conceptually related emotions - particularly within the negative-valence domain - should be considered when designing and interpreting verbal anxiety questionnaires for this age group.

Keywords: fear, anxiety, emotion differentiation, verbal assessment, face-emotion matching task

DATING VIOLENCE, NEGATIVE AFFECT, AND SUICIDE RISK AMONG LGBTQ+ YOUTH FROM SPAIN AND COLOMBIA

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Abstract. Dating violence (DV) occurs in non-cohabiting relationships without legal or parental ties and can severely affect victims' mental health. It has been linked to drug use, negative affect, social withdrawal, and suicide risk. However, the relationship between DV and suicide risk among LGBTQ+ adolescents and young adults remains understudied compared to heterosexual couples. This cross-sectional study examined the indirect associations of drug use, negative affect, and social withdrawal in the relationship between DV victimization and suicide risk.

The sample included 146 LGBTQ+ youth aged 15–27 years, with 80 (54.8%) residing in Spain and 66 (45.2%) in Colombia. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and all participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. DV victimization was assessed using the CUVINO Scale, drug use was assessed using a single-item frequency measure, negative affect was assessed using the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PNA), social withdrawal was assessed using two items from the Mood Affect Regulation Scale (MARS), and suicide risk was assessed using three items from the Plutchik Suicide Risk Scale (RS). DV victimization prevalence was determined using a zero-tolerance criterion, whereby any positive response on the CUVINO Scale was classified as victimization. Data were analyzed using a multiple sequential mediation model (PROCESS Model 6, three mediators).

Results indicated that 90% of participants reported experiencing some form of DV. Significant differences between countries were found in negative affect and suicide risk, with higher scores among participants in Colombia. Although DV was not directly associated with suicide risk, a significant indirect association was observed through drug use, negative affect, and social withdrawal ($B = 0.001$, $SE = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.000, 0.004]). The model explained 22% of the variance in suicide risk. These findings suggest that drug use, negative affect, and social withdrawal may help explain the observed association between DV victimization and suicide risk among LGBTQ+ youth.

Keywords: dating violence, suicide risk, drug use, negative affect, LGBTQ+ youth

Thematic Session
PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY



21th
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APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

PREDICTING LIFE SATISFACTION: THE INCREMENTAL VALUE OF TIME PERSPECTIVES OVER PERSONALITY TRAITS

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Abstract. Life satisfaction represents a key cognitive component of subjective well-being, reflecting individuals' global evaluation of the quality of their lives according to their personal standards. Although personality traits are well-established correlates of subjective well-being, time perspectives may provide additional insight into life satisfaction by representing individuals' orientations toward the past, present, and future. The present study examined whether time perspectives contribute to the prediction of life satisfaction beyond sociodemographic characteristics and personality traits. The study included 2,227 adults aged 18 to 79 years ($M = 28.2$, $SD = 12.5$). Participants completed the short version of the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI-short), the Mini-IPIP-6 personality measure, and a single-item measure of life satisfaction. Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted, with sociodemographic characteristics entered in the first step, personality traits in the second, and time perspective dimensions in the third step. After accounting for sociodemographic characteristics, personality traits explained an additional 12.4% of variance in life satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = .124$, $p < .001$), with Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Honesty-Humility emerging as significant predictors. Time perspectives provided a further significant increment ($\Delta R^2 = .064$, $p < .001$). The final model explained 23.2% of the variance in life satisfaction. Among time perspective dimensions, Future Negative ($\beta = -.472$, $p < .001$) and Past Negative ($\beta = -.107$, $p < .010$) were associated with lower life satisfaction, while Past Positive ($\beta = .192$, $p < .001$) and Future Positive ($\beta = -.182$, $p < .001$) were positively associated with life satisfaction. These findings highlight the unique contribution of time perspectives to understanding individual differences in life satisfaction. Negative interpretations of past experiences and pessimistic future expectations were linked to lower life satisfaction, while positive orientations toward past experiences and future possibilities were related to more favorable evaluations of life quality.

Keywords: life satisfaction, time perspective, personality traits

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFFECTIVE TEMPERAMENT AND PRIMARY EMOTIONS: A PRELIMINARY STUDY IN THE GENERAL POPULATION

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Abstract. The aim of this study was to examine whether affective temperaments derived from Hagop Akiskal's model could be predicted on the basis of Jaak Panksepp's primary emotional systems. Data were collected using the following instruments: the Serbian adaptation of the TEMPS-A scale (Temperament Evaluation of the Memphis, Pisa, Paris and San Diego Autoquestionnaire; Hinić et al., 2013) and the Serbian adaptation of the ANPS 2.4 (Affective Neuroscience Personality Scales; Montag et al., 2019). The study used a convenience sample comprising 130 participants ($M_{age} = 36.65$, $SD = 11.32$) from the general population, of whom 23 (17.7%) were men and 107 (82.3%) were women. The results of regression analysis showed that depressive temperament traits ($R = .579$, $R^2 = .335$, $F(6, 123) = 10.340$, $p < .001$) could be significantly predicted by the primary emotions of FEAR ($\beta = .336$, $p = .003$) and ANGER ($\beta = .209$, $p = .009$). Cyclothymic temperament traits ($R = .645$, $R^2 = .416$, $F(6, 123) = 14.594$, $p < .001$) were predicted by FEAR ($\beta = .296$, $p = .006$), ANGER ($\beta = .201$, $p = .008$), and SADNESS ($\beta = .322$, $p = .001$). The predictors of hyperthymic temperament ($R = .591$, $R^2 = .350$, $F(6, 123) = 11.031$, $p < .001$) were SEEKING ($\beta = .374$, $p < .001$) and PLAY ($\beta = .188$, $p = .046$). The intensity of irritable temperament traits ($R = .707$, $R^2 = .500$, $F(6, 123) = 20.521$, $p < .001$) was predicted by ANGER ($\beta = .701$, $p < .001$). Scores on the anxious-cognitive temperament ($R = .734$, $R^2 = .539$, $F(6, 123) = 23.992$, $p < .001$) were predicted by FEAR ($\beta = .566$, $p < .001$) and SADNESS ($\beta = .178$, $p = .043$), whereas FEAR ($\beta = .388$, $p = .002$) made a significant contribution to the prediction of anxious-somatic temperament traits ($R = .444$, $R^2 = .197$, $F(6, 123) = 5.038$, $p < .001$). The variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values indicated no evidence of problematic multicollinearity. The findings indicate that individual differences in affective temperament are systematically associated with primary emotional systems as conceptualized within affective neuroscience theory. The observed patterns suggest meaningful convergence between Akiskal's model of affective temperament and Panksepp's framework of primary emotional systems. Although both sets of constructs were assessed using self-report measures, the findings provide preliminary evidence of

theoretically meaningful associations between affective temperament traits and dispositional tendencies corresponding to primary emotional systems.

Keywords: affective temperaments, primary emotions, affective neuroscience, primary emotional systems

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PERSONALITY TRAITS, MUSIC PREFERENCES, AND EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES IN EMERGING ADULTHOOD: A PILOT STUDY

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Abstract. The present pilot study examined the factorial validity of three psychological instruments in a Bulgarian sample and explored the interrelationships among Big Five personality traits, music preferences, and emotion regulation strategies in Bulgarian emerging adults. A total of 201 participants took part in the study (63 men, 137 women, 1 non-binary participant). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 29 years ($M = 21.77$, $SD = 2.52$). Three instruments were administered: a Bulgarian adaptation of the Short Test of Music Preferences (STOMP), extended to include the culturally salient genres *popfolk* and *estrada*; a brief Big Five measure; and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). Given the pilot nature of the study and the use of adapted instruments, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to assess the factor structure of the instruments, alongside correlation analyses, independent-samples *t*-tests, and one-way ANOVAs to examine group differences. The factor structures of the Big Five measure and the ERQ were replicated. EFA of the adapted STOMP yielded a five-factor solution partially reproducing the original model, with a culturally specific dimension — *Bulgarian and Conventional Music* — encompassing *popfolk*, *estrada*, oldies, and pop. Extraversion emerged as the strongest personality correlate of both emotion regulation strategies, showing a positive association with cognitive reappraisal ($r = .356$, $p < .001$) and a negative association with expressive suppression ($r = -.287$, $p < .001$). Preferences for Complex and Culturally Specific Music were positively associated with cognitive reappraisal ($r = .165$, $p = .019$). Significant differences were also observed across gender and relationship-status groups. The findings provide a foundational evidence base with potential applications in developmental psychology and academia, laying the groundwork for future confirmatory and predictive research on personality traits, music preferences, and emotion regulation in Bulgarian emerging adults.

Keywords: personality traits, music preferences, emerging adulthood, emotion regulation, *popfolk*

BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AS PREDICTORS OF LONELINESS AMONG BULGARIAN ADULTS

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Abstract. The article examines the relationship between loneliness and the traits included in the Five-factor model of personality, often called The Big Five - Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Neuroticism and Openness. Literature review indicates that the Big five traits have been shown to be significant correlates of loneliness in multiple studies. In most samples four of the Big five (all except Openness) show significant correlations with perceived loneliness, extraversion being the strongest negative correlate ($r = -.37$) and neuroticism – the strongest positive correlate ($r = .35$). The aim of the current study is to investigate this relationship among adult Bulgarian population. An empirical study was conducted with 818 participants, ages from 18 to 86 ($M = 32$; $SD = 14.1$), 63,3% of the respondents being women, 31,8% men and 1,8% choosing other option. The scales that were used are the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale and a newly developed short form measuring the Five-Factor Model (IPIP-NEO-60). The methods used for the analysis were Pearson's correlation and regression (standard). The analysis of the results indicates that four traits from the five-factor model (all but Openness) show significant correlation with loneliness with neuroticism ($r = .46$), extraversion ($r = -.44$) and conscientiousness ($r = -.38$) being the strongest correlates. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(5, 814) = 100.68$, $p < .001$, with a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .62 and an adjusted R^2 of .38. The present study demonstrates that the subjective experience of loneliness is not simply a function of external circumstances, but is rooted in the personality structure - understanding these individual differences may serve as a valuable basis for developing more precise and personalized interventions to address loneliness and its negative consequences for health and well-being.

Keywords: Big five, loneliness, Bulgarian adults

FROM NEUROAFFECTIVE SYSTEMS TO INTERPERSONAL STRATEGIES: THE INCREMENTAL CONTRIBUTION OF NARQ DIMENSIONS IN PREDICTING VULNERABLE NARCISSISM

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Abstract. A growing body of empirical evidence supports conceptualizing narcissism as a spectrum ranging from grandiose to vulnerable manifestations, both sharing a common antagonistic core rooted in a sense of entitlement and uniqueness. This study aimed to examine the incremental contribution of the predominantly grandiose NARQ dimensions (Admiration and Rivalry) in predicting vulnerable narcissism (NVS) over and above the effects of basic emotional systems (ANP model). The study was conducted on a convenience sample of 254 participants from the general adult population (61% female, $M = 32.8$, $SD = 13.8$, age range 18–74 years). The measures administered included the NARQ (Rivalry $\alpha = .70$; Admiration $\alpha = .79$) and the NVS ($\alpha = .83$). Hierarchical regression analysis was utilized to control for the contributions of basic neuroaffective systems (SEEKING $\alpha = .70$; CARE $\alpha = .70$; PLAY $\alpha = .66$; ANGER $\alpha = .77$; FEAR $\alpha = .79$; SADNESS $\alpha = .76$) in the first step, thereby testing the incremental validity of interpersonal self-protection strategies. In the first step, basic emotions accounted for 43% of the variance in vulnerable narcissism. The strongest positive predictors were SADNESS ($\beta = .42, p < .001$), followed by FEAR ($\beta = .25, p < .001$) and ANGER ($\beta = .24, p < .001$), while PLAY emerged as a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.22, p < .001$). Upon entering the variables in the second step, Rivalry became the strongest predictor in the overall model ($\beta = .52, p < .001$), whereas Admiration did not reach statistical significance; however, the inclusion of these interpersonal strategies accounted for an additional 11% of the variance in vulnerable narcissism ($\Delta R^2 = .11, p < .001$). The findings confirm that vulnerable narcissism is highly correlative with negative affect dimensions. Furthermore, interpersonal strategies conceptualized by the NARC model—specifically narcissistic rivalry—explain the vulnerable aspect of narcissism to a substantial degree beyond the effects of basic emotions. This supports the validity of the Narcissism Spectrum Model (NSM), indicating that these phenotypic dimensions indeed share an antagonistic core. The significance of this research lies in demonstrating that antagonistic traits, which accompany basic affect, serve as an interpersonal strategy for maintaining a positive self-image in the presence of chronic underlying negative affect.

Keywords: NARQ, vulnerable narcissism, incremental validity, Narcissism Spectrum Model

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DIFFERENTIAL EMOTIONAL PATHWAYS LINKING PERCEIVED VALUE OF DISTANCE LEARNING TO AUTONOMOUS MOTIVATION

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Abstract. This study examines the role of academic emotions in the relationship between the perceived value of distance learning and autonomous motivation, integrating Control-Value Theory and Self-Determination Theory. The study was conducted on a sample of 500 university students in Serbia (83.4% female; $Mage = 21.26$, $SD = 2.55$), the majority of whom had no prior experience with distance learning (75.8%). Data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the context of emergency remote teaching. Measures included the Task Value subscale (MSLQ), the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire – Short Version (AEQ-S), and the Self-Regulation Questionnaire – Academic (SRQ-A), with the Relative Autonomy Index (RAI) as the outcome variable. Structural equation modeling indicated good model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.17$, RMSEA = .05, CFI = .99, TLI = .98, SRMR = .02). The perceived value of distance learning did not have a significant direct effect on autonomous motivation. Instead, its influence was fully mediated by academic emotions. Specifically, enthusiasm was positively associated with autonomous motivation, whereas frustration and confusion were negatively associated with the outcome variable. Additionally, the perceived value of distance learning demonstrated positive, albeit modest, associations with all three emotional dimensions. Indirect effects analysis revealed two opposing mediation pathways: a positive pathway through enthusiasm ($\beta = .038$, 95% CI [.021, .059]) and negative pathways through frustration ($\beta = -.028$, 95% CI [-.047, -.010]) and confusion ($\beta = -.028$, 95% CI [-.044, -.015]). The overall indirect effect was small, reflecting the partial cancellation of these opposing influences. The findings highlight the central role of academic emotions as mechanisms linking cognitive appraisals and motivational outcomes in online learning contexts. They also underscore the importance of considering emotional experiences in the design of distance learning environments, particularly in unstable and unstructured conditions such as emergency remote teaching.

Keywords: distance learning, perceived value, academic emotions, autonomous motivation

THE CONTROL-VALUE THEORY IN ONLINE LEARNING: EVIDENCE FROM STUDENTS IN SERBIA

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Abstract. Guided by Pekrun's control-value theory of achievement emotions, this study examined the mediating role of academic emotions in the relationship between perceived academic control and two cognitive learning strategies (rehearsal and elaboration). The sample consisted of 500 university students from Serbia (83.4% female; $M_{age} = 21.26$, $SD = 2.55$) who attended online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instruments included the Perceived Academic Control Scale, the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire – Short Version (AEQ-S), and the Elaboration and Rehearsal subscales of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). Factor analysis identified three groups of emotions: frustration and confusion (negative activating), and enthusiasm (positive activating). Regression-based mediation analysis revealed that academic control had significant direct effects on all three emotions and on elaboration and rehearsal. Frustration was associated with decreases in both elaboration ($\beta = -.17$) and rehearsal ($\beta = -.17$), whereas enthusiasm was associated with increases in both strategies ($\beta = .38$ for elaboration; $\beta = .29$ for rehearsal). Confusion showed weaker positive associations with elaboration ($\beta = .12$) and rehearsal ($\beta = .11$). Indirect effects indicated that academic control was negatively associated with elaboration via frustration ($\beta = -.04$, 95% CI $[-.07, -.01]$) and with rehearsal via frustration ($\beta = -.04$, 95% CI $[-.07, -.01]$). Positive indirect effects were found via enthusiasm for elaboration ($\beta = .13$, 95% CI $[.06, .20]$) and rehearsal ($\beta = .10$, 95% CI $[.05, .16]$). Indirect effects via confusion were positive and significant for both elaboration ($\beta = .06$, 95% CI $[.03, .10]$) and rehearsal ($\beta = .06$, 95% CI $[.02, .09]$). Overall, the findings underscore the need to design online learning environments that promote enthusiasm and reduce frustration, as these emotional processes are critical for supporting effective learning strategies.

Keywords: academic control, academic emotions, learning strategies, online learning

AUTHORITATIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE AND TEACHER DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES: THE ROLE OF SUPPORT AND STRUCTURE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract. The concept of authoritative school climate emphasizes the balance between responsiveness/social support and demandingness/structure within the school environment. While the link between authoritative school climate and student outcomes has been studied, less is known about its role in shaping teachers' own disciplinary practices. Grounded in authoritative discipline theory and the Delaware School Climate Survey (DSCS) framework, this study examined whether teachers' perceptions of school climate dimensions predict the use of different disciplinary practices in secondary schools. The study included 254 secondary school teachers (M age = 45.71, SD = 9.11) from six secondary schools (grammar and vocational schools) in Belgrade. Teachers completed self-report measures assessing two broader school climate dimensions constructed from DSCS subscales: responsiveness/social support (α = .90) and demandingness/structure (α = .86), as well as measures of positive, social-emotional learning (SEL), and punitive disciplinary practices. Responsiveness/social support was positively correlated with positive disciplinary practices (r = .704, p < .001) and SEL practices (r = .780, p < .001). Demandingness/structure was also positively correlated with positive disciplinary practices (r = .641, p < .001) and SEL practices (r = .770, p < .001). Punitive practices were not significantly associated with either climate dimension. Regression analyses revealed that the model significantly predicted positive disciplinary practices, $F(2, 239) = 119.16$, p < .001, R^2 = .499, with responsiveness/social support as the only significant predictor (β = .603, p < .001). For SEL practices, the model was also significant, $F(2, 245) = 217.25$, p < .001, R^2 = .639, with both responsiveness/social support (β = .454, p < .001) and demandingness/structure (β = .370, p < .001) emerging as significant predictors. These findings support authoritative discipline theory and contribute to understanding how school climate relates to teacher's disciplinary practices.

Keywords: school climate, authoritative discipline theory, disciplinary practices, social-emotional learning, secondary schools

DISTINGUISHING ABSORBED AND BREAKDOWN-INDUCING DISTURBANCES IN SCHOOL ACTIVITY SYSTEMS

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Abstract. As dynamic systems characterized by dense networks of actors and a high intensity of activities, schools are continuously exposed to disturbances. Drawing on Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), this study aims to further our understanding of disturbances that can be absorbed within ongoing system activity and those that lead to a breakdown of school functioning. To address this research aim, reflexive thematic analysis was conducted on data collected through 20 semi-structured interviews with school actors: teachers, the principal, the assistant principal, the psychologist, and the school secretary. The data was gathered as part of a larger ethnographic case study conducted in a public primary school in Serbia. The findings pointed to two types of disturbances. The first included *recurrent, typical events*, such as staff turnover, school violence, and inspections, which did not represent major deviations from the scripted flow of the activity since the activity system had historically accumulated practices and mechanisms to assimilate/absorb them. The second category comprised *atypical, unprecedented* disruptions, such as the departure of key actors from the school activity system (the long-serving principal, the school pedagogue, and the newly appointed vice principal). Unlike routine disruptions, these events fell outside historically established mechanisms of regulation and adaptation. Precisely because of their unique and historically contingent nature, such events carried the potential to disrupt the reproduction of established activity and to lead to a breakdown of ongoing actions. Surprisingly, even these high-magnitude disturbances did not destabilize the system. Interpreting these findings through CHAT, we would advance and illustrate a revised account of the system's ability to absorb disruptions. It is not the magnitude of an event, but rather the *preservation of the object* as the source of meaning and orientation that determines whether the activity system maintains its functioning or breaks down.

Keywords: activity systems; organizational change; tensions; object of activity

MORE THAN A LABOUR-MARKET OUTCOME: EMPLOYABILITY RESOURCES AMONG VET STUDENTS AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS WITH CAREER ADAPTABILITY AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract. In a constantly changing labour market, employability resources have been recognised as an important factor in successful school-to-work transition and career development. Despite being widely studied among university students, less is known about how these resources manifest among vocational education and training (VET) students, who often make an earlier transition to employment. The aim of this study was to examine employability resources among VET students using an adapted version of the Employability Development Profile (EDP), based on the CareerEDGE model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), and their associations with career adaptability and school engagement. A total of 1331 second-year students from 19 Croatian VET schools participated in this study. Given the adaptation of the EDP for VET students and inclusion of two additional items, exploratory factor analysis was conducted on one of two randomly selected subsamples. The resulting structure was cross-validated using confirmatory factor analysis on the second subsample. After removing one item and adding residual covariances between conceptually related items, results supported a five-factor model consisting of: Career Development and Preparedness, Academic Performance and Study Skills, Communication Skills, General Professional Competencies and Emotional Intelligence and Self-Management. This model demonstrated acceptable fit ($CFI = .922$, $TLI = .913$, $RMSEA = .061$, $SRMR = .054$) and satisfactory internal consistency across subscales ($\omega > .80$). Findings indicated generally positive perceptions of employability resources. Employability resources were positively correlated with career adaptability ($r = .39 - .65$) and school engagement ($r = .22 - .37$). Students reporting higher levels of employability resources also reported higher school engagement and career adaptability. Associations were stronger with career adaptability, suggesting that these resources are closely linked to students' career development. These findings support the conceptualisation of employability resources as a multidimensional construct that is important for career development and school experiences rather than solely representing a labour-market outcome.

Keywords: vocational education, employability resources, career adaptability, school engagement

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE WITH COMPUTER-SUPPORTED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

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Abstract. Educational policies worldwide emphasize the importance of developing students' digital and social competences. Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) is a promising approach to support both. This study evaluated the effectiveness of CSCL lessons developed within the Erasmus+ KA2 Co-CREATE project. Teachers, secondary school students, and experts in education and psychology collaboratively developed 90-minutes lessons aligned with national Computer Science and Informatics (CSI) curricula. The lessons were delivered via an open e-learning platform and tested in authentic classroom settings in Serbia and Croatia. In total, 123 students participated in CSCL-based classes (experimental groups, EG), while 119 students attended traditional instruction covering the same content (control groups, CG). Female students comprised 66.5% of the sample, and the mean age was 15.24 years ($SD = 1.02$). Both groups completed pre- and post-intervention questionnaires designed for this study addressing motivation for learning CSI, engagement, social competences, and overall experience with CSCL. Based on Expectancy-Value Theory, three-item 7-point Likert scales assessed Intrinsic, Utility and Attainment value, Cost, and Self-efficacy. Social competence was assessed using 12 items (e.g., active listening, teamwork, constructive conflict resolution), which loaded on a single factor (50.2% explained variance) and were therefore combined into a composite score. No statistically significant differences were found between the EG and CG at pre-test, confirming baseline comparability. At post-test, students in the EG reported significantly higher Intrinsic and Utility value compared to the CG ($t(107) = 3.76, p < .001$, and $t(107) = 2.16, p = .033$, respectively). Effect sizes indicated a medium-to-large effect for Intrinsic value (Cohen's $d = 0.36, \eta^2 = .12$) and a small effect for Utility value (Cohen's $d = 0.21, \eta^2 = .04$). Analysis of open-ended responses showed that students most frequently emphasized group work as a key positive aspect of CSCL. These findings suggest that CSCL may enhance students' motivation toward school subjects through collaborative learning. However, its effects on the development of social competences may require longer implementation and more structured

facilitation. Future research should further examine its impact on subject knowledge acquisition.

Keywords: Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL), motivation, Expectancy–Value Theory, secondary school students, quasi-experimental study

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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS A POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract. The practice of physical exercise in schools promotes increased muscle tension, which is a facilitating element in the performance of various psychological tasks. In his study, subjects undergoing physical exercise showed greater speed in the acquisition and evolution of nonsense syllables and a greater capacity at the level of learning/memorizing associated pairs, greater accuracy in solving simple mathematical problems and superior efficiency in a perceptual color naming test, than subjects who perform the same tasks under normal conditions (Bills, 1986). The study intended to relate the practice of physical activity to self-concept, self-esteem, and academic performance in elementary school-children, identifying a context that is not very detailed, relating these variables together. The participants were 213 students (102 males and 111 females), aged between 7 and 9 years ($M = 8,12 \pm 1,23$). For data collection purposes, a questionnaire was used, in which students responded the total amount of weekly PA, and teachers gave the information about student's classifications of each discipline they were attending in school. Students were divided into 4 groups according to the amount of PA, namely G1= no practice of PA; G2=PA until 3 hours/week; G3=between 4 and 6/week and G4=7 or more hours/week. The Self Concept Scale Susan Harter validated for the Portuguese population (Martins, Peixoto, Woods & Miller, 1995) was also applied for the dependent variables. ANOVA with post hoc tests was used to examine the relationships between physical

activity, self-concept, self-esteem, and academic performance between groups. The results indicated that there were higher values of children's self-concept, self-esteem and overall academic performance as the weekly hours of physical activity practiced by students increased as well.

Keywords: physical activity, academic performance, children, elementary school

Thematic Session PSYCHOMETRICS



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THE BOOTSTRAP EXPLORATORY GRAPH ANALYSIS OF THE SERBIAN VERSION OF THE YOUNG SCHEMA QUESTIONNAIRE – SHORT FORM 3

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Abstract. This research aimed to assess the psychometric structure of the Serbian Young Schema Questionnaire – Short Form 3 (YSQ-S3; Young, 2005) via a novel network clustering approach. We aimed to examine whether early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) cluster together as predicted by theory into the five schema domains. The sample included 656 participants (mostly university students; 70.7 % were female; $M_{age} = 25.38$, $SD_{age} = 7.36$). YSQ-S3 (Young, 2005) was administered to assess EMSs. The bootstrap exploratory graph analysis (bootEGA) was used to derive node communities, i.e., dimensions that would theoretically correspond to schema domains. The median number of dimensions across 10000 bootstraps was four (lower/upper quantile range: 1-5). However, four dimensions appeared 52.14 % of the time, which suggests instability. Structural consistency estimates suggest that dimensions one (.97) and four (.75) are mostly stable; however, dimensions two (.27) and three (.63) are not. The node clusters/dimensions were as follows. The first cluster consisted of Social Isolation/Alienation, Defectiveness/Shame, Emotional Inhibition, and Emotional Deprivation. Stability of these schemas for this dimension was high (.98–.99). The second cluster included Negativity/Pessimism, Self-Sacrifice, Mistrust/Abuse, Punitiveness, Abandonment/Instability, Vulnerability to Harm, and Insufficient Self-Control. Apart from Insufficient Self-Control (.41), all other nodes were stable as members of this dimension (.76–.86). The third cluster encompassed Dependence/Incompetence, Failure, Enmeshment, and Subjugation. These nodes were moderately stable at this dimension (.63–.71). The final cluster consisted of stable nodes (.75–.84): Entitlement/Grandiosity, Hypercriticalness, and Approval-Seeking. In conclusion, the node clusters/dimensions are mostly unstable, i.e., not replicable across the bootstrap samples. Finally, the allocation of nodes (EMSs) to the corresponding cluster does not (at all) replicate the schema domains proposed by Young et al. The findings may reflect both cultural specificity and psychometric shortcomings of the instrument.

Keywords: Early Maladaptive Schemas, YSQ-S3, Bootstrap Exploratory Graph Analysis

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PRELIMINARY VALIDATION OF THE SERBIAN VERSION OF THE INTERPERSONAL REGULATION QUESTIONNAIRE (IRQ)

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Abstract. Interpersonal emotion regulation is emotion regulation processes occurring within ongoing social interactions. The Interpersonal Regulation Questionnaire (IRQ) operationalizes this construct through four dimensions: Positive-Tendency, Positive-Efficacy, Negative-Tendency, and Negative-Efficacy. As the IRQ has not previously been validated in Serbian, the present study aimed to provide a preliminary evaluation of its psychometric properties in a Serbian sample. The study included a convenience sample of 228 adults (M age = 27.48, SD age = 9.57, range = 18–64), of whom 77.6% were women. Participants completed the IRQ together with measures of personality, coping strategies, interpersonal reactivity, emotion regulation, rejection sensitivity, loneliness, affect, and life satisfaction. Construct validity was evaluated by examining the questionnaire's internal structure using confirmatory factor analysis with maximum likelihood estimation and its convergent and external validity through correlations with theoretically related constructs and life satisfaction. The original four-factor model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data: $\chi^2(97) = 238.04$, $p < .001$, CFI = .935, TLI = .919, RMSEA = .080, 90% CI [.067, .093], SRMR = .057. A hierarchical model also demonstrated acceptable fit: $\chi^2(99) = 246.33$, $p < .001$, CFI = .932, TLI = .917, RMSEA = .081, 90% CI [.068, .094], SRMR = .059. Together, these findings support the construct validity of the Serbian version of the IRQ and suggest that, in addition to the four subscale scores, an overall score may also be interpreted. Correlations with theoretically related constructs largely supported the questionnaire's convergent and external validity. Internal consistency was satisfactory, with Cronbach's α s ranging from .79 to .86 and McDonald's ω s ranging from .79 to .87 across the subscales, while both coefficients were .93 for the total scale. Although the findings should be interpreted in light of the relatively small convenience sample, they provide preliminary support for the validity and reliability of the Serbian version of the IRQ.

Keywords: interpersonal emotion regulation, Interpersonal Regulation Questionnaire, validation, psychometric properties, Serbian adaptation

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PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF THE SERBIAN VERSION OF THE APPROACH AND AVOIDANCE TEMPERAMENT QUESTIONNAIRE (ATQ)

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Abstract. Approach and avoidance tendencies are basic dimensions of temperament in many of the models of personality. Therefore, many of the temperament models based on the individual differences paradigm propose these two dimensions, albeit under different names. One of the classic conceptualizations of these dimensions is that of Elliot and Thrash (2010), while the accompanying instrument has not been adapted to Serbian so far, even though its economical nature makes it a good measure to quickly gauge these two basic dimensions. The goal of this study is to examine the psychometric properties of the 12-item Approach and Avoidance Temperament Questionnaire (ATQ) via the examination of its factor structure and convergent validity. This test has been adapted to Serbian via a backward-translation procedure. The sample included 431 participants (60.8% female; $M_{age} = 31.49$, $SD_{age} = 13.46$). The confirmatory factor analysis yielded mixed results ($DWLS \chi^2(52) = 361.30$, $p < 0.001$; $RMSEA = 0.118$, 90% CI [0.106 – 0.129], $CFI = 0.969$, $TLI = 0.961$), although the higher RMSEA values could be attributed to high factor loadings. The factor loadings ranged from .51 to .83 for the approach dimension, and from .66 to .86 for the avoidance factor. The approach scale had a moderate correlation with the BAS scale of the Reinforcement Sensitivity Questionnaire (Smederevac et al., 2014; $r = .46$, $p < .001$), while the avoidance scale had a high correlation with the BIS dimension ($r = .73$, $p < .001$). In conclusion, the Serbian ATQ has a satisfactory factor structure (but the RMSEA might point to the need for some refinements), good measurement quality (excellent factor loadings), and good convergent validity. Finally, regarding the convergent validity, one should bear in mind that a somewhat lower correlation between BAS and the approach scale could be accounted for by the fact that these constructs overlap to a certain extent but do have conceptual differences that are more pronounced than those between the BIS and the avoidance scale.

Keywords: approach, avoidance, temperament, personality, factor structure

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DEVELOPING A DIAGNOSTIC READING COMPREHENSION TEST: PSYCHOMETRIC EVIDENCE FROM A SLOVAK PILOT STUDY

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Abstract. Valid reading-comprehension measures are needed for diagnosing developmental learning disabilities, including dyslexia, and for planning targeted interventions. Our broader project aims to improve diagnostic assessment in Slovak counselling and prevention centres by developing measures of reading comprehension and related language-cognitive processes. This study presents a psychometric analysis of a pilot diagnostic reading-comprehension test for pupils in grades 5–7 of elementary school (10–14 years). We examined dimensionality, reliability, item functioning, and gender-related differential item and test functioning. Rasch and unidimensional 2PL models were compared, and subsequent analyses were based on the better-fitting 2PL model. The pilot comprised two forms, each containing 40 four-option multiple-choice items organised around five texts of 200–250 words. Each text was followed by eight items assessing lexical, sentence-level, explicit, inferential, causal, main-idea, attention-related, and critical comprehension. The sample included 418 pupils (Form A: $n = 175$; 85 girls and 90 boys; Form B: $n = 243$; 128 girls and 115 boys). The 2PL model showed broadly acceptable approximate fit, although fit was stronger for Form B (Form A: RMSEA = .036, CFI = .919, SRMSR = .078; Form B: RMSEA = .032, CFI = .952, SRMSR = .064). Both forms showed high internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$ and .92, respectively). Items were generally relatively easy, with median difficulty parameters of -1.61 and -1.23 logits and median discrimination parameters of 1.01 and 0.97 for Forms A and B, respectively. In Form A, four items showed gender-related DIF, three of them belonging to the football text. An inference item about the closely contested 2022 final showed non-uniform DIF, with a steeper response curve for boys, possibly indicating that football familiarity interacted with the measured reading-comprehension ability. At the test level, expected-score curves indicated only a modest female advantage at the lowest ability levels in Form A, whereas differential test functioning was negligible in Form B. Combining IRT analysis with qualitative item review identified a small subset of items requiring revision, particularly with regard to wording and distractors. This approach can support the development of diagnostically more accurate and practically useful tools for counselling and special-education practice.

Keywords: reading comprehension; diagnostic assessment; item response theory; differential item functioning; developmental dyslexia

PRELIMINARY PSYCHOMETRIC EVALUATION OF THE MACEDONIAN TRANSLATIONS OF THE CHILDHOOD TRAUMA QUESTIONNAIRE – SHORT FORM (CTQ-SF) AND THE SCHEMA COPING INVENTORY (SCI)

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Abstract. Adverse childhood experiences and maladaptive coping styles are central concepts in Schema Therapy and are associated with a wide range of mental health difficulties. Instruments assessing these constructs are currently lacking in Macedonian, thus, the present study examined the psychometric properties of Macedonian translations of the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire – Short Form (CTQ-SF) and the Schema Coping Inventory (SCI). The instruments were translated using a forward translation. The instruments were administered online to a convenience sample of 234 adults from the general population in the Republic of North Macedonia aged 18–45 years ($M_{\text{age}} = 34$, $SD = 6.00$; 169 female, 65 male). The SCI demonstrated marginal to good consistency across its three domains ($\alpha = .60-.82$), with the Surrender subscale showing the highest reliability and the Overcompensation subscale the lowest. The CTQ-SF demonstrated alpha coefficients ranging from .60 to .92, with Sexual Abuse showing the highest internal consistency and Physical Neglect the lowest. Lower alpha coefficients observed for the SCI Overcompensation subscale and the CTQ-SF Physical Neglect subscale were interpreted with caution. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), using principal axis factoring, was conducted for both instruments. EFA generally supported the original three-factor structure of the SCI, except for one item showing no clear primary loading and supported the original five-factor structure of the CTQ-SF, although some inconsistencies were observed within the Physical Neglect domain. Convergent validity was examined by calculating correlations between the CTQ-SF and SCI domains, as both instruments assess theoretically associated constructs. The convergent validity analysis demonstrated weak to moderate positive correlations between domains of the CTQ-SF and the SCI, providing preliminary support for the expected relationship between the constructs. Overall, the findings provide preliminary support for the reliability and construct validity of the Macedonian versions of CTQ-SF and SCI and contribute to cross-cultural psychometric research on Schema Therapy.

Keywords: adverse childhood experiences, schema therapy, psychometric evaluation

DEVELOPMENT AND MULTILEVEL VALIDATION OF THE THREE-FACTOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY SCALE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract. Academic dishonesty is a multifaceted construct including behaviors aimed at obtaining unfair academic advantages for oneself or others. Existing measures often focus on active cheating, while passive cheating and technology-mediated forms remain underrepresented. This study aimed to develop and validate a comprehensive measure of academic dishonesty for secondary school students and examine its factorial structure at the individual and classroom levels. The scale was developed in three phases. First, items were generated based on theoretical classifications and existing measures, followed by expert evaluation. The preliminary version included 34 items. Next, the scale was administered to 168 students. Exploratory factor analysis supported a three-factor structure comprising Active Cheating, Passive Cheating, and Unauthorized Information Exchange, with satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha = .88, .76$, and $.71$, respectively). In the third phase, a refined 22-item version was administered to 713 students nested within 65 classrooms. Confirmatory factor analyses using robust maximum likelihood estimation indicated inadequate fit of the initial three-factor model. Item reduction was guided by standardized factor loadings, model diagnostics and theoretical considerations. The resulting 11-item model demonstrated improved fit ($RMSEA = .079$, $CFI = .948$, $TLI = .931$). This final model was subsequently evaluated using multilevel confirmatory factor analysis, supporting the three-factor structure across both levels ($RMSEA = .051$, $CFI = .951$, $TLI = .934$, $SRMR_{within} = .062$, $SRMR_{between} = .092$). Reliability was satisfactory at both levels ($\omega = .78-.82$ and $.95-.99$, respectively). Intraclass correlations indicated meaningful classroom-level variability ($ICC1 = .174, .200$, and $.182$, respectively). The findings support the Academic Dishonesty Scale as a reliable and valid measure of multiple forms of academic dishonesty among secondary school students and highlight the importance of considering both individual- and classroom-level manifestations of dishonest academic behavior.

Keywords: academic dishonesty, scale development, construct validity, multilevel validation, secondary school students

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON CONSTRUCT VALIDITY OF MALADAPTIVE DAYDREAMING SCALE (MDS-16) IN A SERBIAN SAMPLE

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Abstract. Maladaptive daydreaming (MD) is an excessive and vivid fantasy activity that interferes with an individual's normal functioning and can result in severe distress. Research has shown that MD is associated with a number of personal, interpersonal and behavioral problems. The aim was to identify psychometric characteristics and adapt the Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale (MDS-16) in a Serbian sample. The study included 274 participants aged 15 to 75 years ($M = 33.02$, $SD = 14.91$), of whom 198 (72.3%) were female, with diverse sociodemographic characteristics. Based on previous cross-cultural findings, several factorial models were tested, and the model previously identified in the Italian sample, comprising the factors Interference with Life ($\alpha = .926$) and Somato-Sensory Retreat ($\alpha = .868$), demonstrated the best fit to the data. Building on this structure, a bifactor model was examined to capture both the general MD construct and the unique variance associated with these two dimensions ($df = 88$, $p < .001$, CFI = .963, TLI = .950, RMSEA = .055). Although the bifactor model identified distinct specific factors, the high hierarchical omega coefficient ($\omega_H = .845$) indicated essential unidimensionality, supporting the interpretation of a strong general maladaptive daydreaming factor. Furthermore, external validity was examined by calculating the correlations with measures of depression ($r = .419$, $p < .01$) and anxiety ($r = .410$, $p < .01$), with the results being consistent with previous studies. The findings of this study go in favour of construct validity of MDS-16 in the Serbian sample, but further exploration (measurement invariance, nomological network) on a larger and more diverse sample is recommended.

Keywords: maladaptive daydreaming, Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale (MDS-16), excessive daydreaming

Thematic Session
COGNITIVE AND
APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY



21th
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APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY PRIVATE LAW SYSTEMS

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Abstract. The relationship between psychology and law has become increasingly significant in understanding legal responsibility, particularly in private law disputes where human behavior, intention, and decision-making processes play a central role. While traditional legal systems tend to rely on objective standards of liability, modern legal scholarship increasingly recognizes the importance of psychological factors in assessing fault, consent, and contractual behavior. This paper explores how psychological elements influence the interpretation and application of private law, with a focus on contractual liability, civil responsibility, and dispute resolution mechanisms. It argues that legal reasoning cannot be fully detached from behavioral sciences, as individual cognitive biases, emotional states, and social pressures often shape legal outcomes. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for a more interdisciplinary approach that integrates legal doctrine with insights from applied psychology, particularly in cases involving consent validity, fraud, negligence, and consumer protection. By examining comparative legal perspectives, the paper demonstrates how different jurisdictions gradually incorporate psychological understanding into legal reasoning. The paper concludes that bridging law and psychology enhances the fairness and effectiveness of legal systems and contributes to more realistic assessments of human behavior in private law disputes.

Keywords: law and psychology, legal responsibility, private law, behavioral science, civil liability

TRENDS AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY: CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS OF AN EMERGING CRITICAL PARADIGM

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Abstract. Engaging with the conference theme, a current transformational trend in applied psychology is introduced and critically discussed. The conceptual analysis integrates the metatheory of social science paradigms, paradox theory, and systemic force field analysis. First, the establishment of a critical stream in work and organizational psychology within the last decade is outlined, mentioning foundational academic events and publications. Main disciplinary influences of social theory, critical psychologies, and critical management studies are noted. It is argued that topical boundaries of this stream should be extended towards applied psychology, including political, environmental, community, educational, health, and clinical subfields. Extracted from previous conceptions are generalizable definitional features as socio-critical, dialectical, deconstructionist, self-reflexive, emancipatory, and radical humanist. The second part debates contradictions of the critical stream. Internal and external stabilizing and disintegrating systemic force fields are analyzed, distinguishing paradigmatic (substantive) and political (interest-guided) components. The former include ontological and epistemological questions (theories, methods), the latter power-struggles over discursive hegemony and resources (funding, publication opportunities, positions). Derived from these tensions are four pragmatic paradoxes of inclusion-exclusion (emphasizing diversity or internal alignment), reform-transformation (aspiring to incremental improvements or radical change), continuity-disruption (reproducing existing structures and discourses or pursuing counterhegemony), and recognition-prefiguration (emphasizing commonly accepted research outputs or seeking to transform academic processes). Dynamic trade-offs created by these paradoxes are discussed with regard to the long-standing thesis of the “iron law of oligarchy”, undermining alternative social movements in ideologically incompatible environments. Lastly, drawing on metatheory, possible future trajectories of critical applied psychology are discussed. These comprise assimilation by the mainstream, fragmentation and demise, consolidation and segregation, and transdisciplinary dissemination to integrate allied fields of social science. Deliberated are action strategies to extend resilience, scope, and influence of this transformational trend, argued to hold potential to increase theoretical and methodological pluralism, reflexivity, and societal relevance of applied psychology.

Keywords: critical psychology, philosophy of science, metatheory of social science paradigms, paradox theory, systemic force field analysis

CONSCIOUSNESS AS ENTROPY MINIMIZATION: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF PERCEPTION

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Abstract. This study explores the nature of consciousness through the lens of entropy minimization and the free energy principle, conceptualizing it as a dynamic mechanism for reducing uncertainty within perceptual systems. The objective was to empirically examine how cognitive systems manage informational entropy and the role of individual differences in this process. The research was conducted on a sample of 80 participants using the Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT), the Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale (TAS), and the Need for Cognitive Closure Scale (NFCS). The experimental phase involved tasks with visual stimuli of varying entropy levels, with data analyzed using correlation, regression, and ANOVA. Results indicate a significant decline in cognitive performance as perceptual entropy increases, with cognitive reflection explaining 68.5% of the variance in the ability to successfully extract meaning from informational chaos. Qualitative analysis further confirmed a transition from logical-exact to metaphorical thinking at high levels of ambiguity. It is concluded that consciousness functions as an active mathematical entropy reducer that utilizes reflection to stabilize experience, acting as a crucial interface for transforming raw data into coherent meaning. These findings support the thesis that operational cognitive capacities are primary over dispositional personality styles in the process of stabilizing the perceptual world.

Keywords: consciousness, entropy, perception, predictive coding, cognitive imbalance

WRITING UNITS OR DECADES FIRST IN THREE DIGIT NUMBERS DICTATION TASK: THE CASE OF ARABIC AN INVERTED LANGUAGE

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Abstract. This study aimed to investigate the effect of educational level and of the syntactic representation of numbers in Arabic on the task of transcoding three-digit numbers from dictation. The Arabic number system is unique compared to other number systems by its inverted units decades order in multi-digit numbers. The participants were primary (53), junior-high (48), and high school pupils (52). All spoke Arabic as a mother tongue. They performed a transcoding task, namely writing three-digit numbers from dictation. The three-digit numbers were dictated by an audio recording controlled by the experimenter and the writing pattern was coded by the experimenter after the participant finished the writing each three-digit number. Units-first/decades-first writing patterns were collected depending on the differential syntactic structures of the three-digit number dictated (no decades and no units: whole hundreds-800, decades first: whole tens-620; units first: units only-608; teen numbers-618; identical units and decades-733; identical units and decades and hundreds-333, remaining three-digit numbers-647). The findings reveal that in general (see Table 1 below), Arabic speakers adopt a decades-first writing pattern for three-digit numbers contrary to the inherent units-decades natural syntax of the Arabic number system, especially (1) when it is consistent with the syntactic structure of three-digit numbers, as in no decades and no units: such as in whole hundreds, decades first: such as in whole tens; no decades such as in units only; identical units and decades; identical units and decades and hundreds. This decade-first writing pattern is more evident and consistent in junior-high school, and high school than in primary school due to the improvement in mathematical skills and second and third languages. In Hebrew, the second language and English the third language decades are read and written in three-digit numbers and contrary to Arabic. However, this pattern is modulated by the syntactic complexity of the unit-decade structure. This complexity is more pronounced in three-digit numbers whose processing is more dependent on numerical syntax. Thus, no decades and no units (whole hundreds), decades first (whole tens); no decades (units only); identical units and decades; identical units and decades and hundreds are less complex than the remaining three-digit numbers

which were written less from decades to units. The study findings stress the contribution of working memory (reversing the order of units and decades in three-digit numbers writing to dictation) and second and third languages decades units order in transcoding tasks.

Keywords: three-digit numbers, transcoding, Arabic, dictation, numerical development, counting systems

PILOTING VIDEO STIMULATED RECALL IN INTERPERSONAL SYNCHRONY RESEARCH

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Abstract. Interpersonal synchrony, the spontaneous alignment of behavior and physiology between interaction partners, is commonly assessed using objective behavioral methods such as Motion Energy Analysis (MEA), which quantifies movement coordination from video recordings. However, these methods cannot capture participants' subjective experiences during moments of behavioral synchrony. This pilot study evaluated the feasibility of Video Stimulated Recall (VSR) as a complementary method for exploring these experiences. A methodological pilot case study was conducted with one female student dyad (aged 23 and 25) who had no prior relationship. Participants engaged in a 45-minute structured closeness-generating procedure, during which they answered progressively more personal questions designed to facilitate interpersonal connection. The interaction was video-recorded and analyzed using MEA to identify three 60–90-second segments representing two periods of highest behavioral synchrony and one period of lowest synchrony. Seven days later, the same participants participated in individual semi-structured VSR interviews, during which they viewed the selected video segments to recall and reflect on their subjective, in-the-moment experiences. Qualitative content analysis indicated that VSR enabled participants to verbalize implicit interpersonal processes that were not captured by behavioral synchrony measures alone. Three themes emerged: interaction context (humor, responsiveness, perceived similarity), situational factors (question difficulty and response latency), and internal experiences (initial anxiety gradually shifting toward psychological safety). Subjective experiences of connection were not always consistent with MEA-derived levels of behavioral synchrony. As a pilot study involving a single dyad, the findings cannot be generalized but support the feasibility of VSR as a method for exploring subjective experiences associated with interpersonal synchrony. The study also identified methodological considerations for future research, including ensuring stable video recordings, minimizing participants' reactivity to camera presence, and carefully wording informed consent to reduce potential bias during recall interviews.

Keywords: interpersonal synchrony, video stimulated recall, motion energy analysis, mixed methods, pilot study

CO-DESIGNING AN AUDIOVISUAL RESOURCE TO PREVENT DATING VIOLENCE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

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Abstract. Dating violence remains a major challenge to gender equality. It includes physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, as well as forms of control exercised in person or online. While school-based prevention programs have been shown to improve knowledge, attitudes, and social-emotional skills regarding dating violence, these interventions often take an adult perspective that might ignore the actual challenges and interests of youth. Co-design is a participatory process where researchers and end-users collaborate as equal partners from problem identification and shaping research questions to solution development. It redistributes decision-making power, values lived expertise alongside academic evidence and iteratively adapts materials using communication and narratives that are relatable to teenagers and young adults. This study investigates how co-design with young people can inform the development and dissemination of social media-based dating violence prevention materials that are relevant to them. To this end, we formed three focus groups: one with 15-year-old high school students ($n = 8$); a second with participants aged 17–21 ($n = 6$), including a mix of high school students, university students, and working young people; and a third with university students aged 20–24 ($n = 6$). Participants were purposively recruited through the research team's network, excluding direct relationships with the two interviewing researchers and aiming for a diverse sociodemographic profile. Following the PPI Ignite Network recommendations, researchers met with each group over two sessions to build trust and a rapport with participants, guaranteeing confidentiality and avoiding judging particular replies to minimize social desirability bias. Researchers were transparent about the objectives and limitations of the process, and a small voucher compensation was provided for participants not tied to specific answers. The first session focused on social media and the portrayal of relationships online, while the second addressed issues in couples and dating violence prevention, and specifically how to develop useful materials and disseminate them on social media to reach as large an audience as possible. Deductive thematic analysis guided by the dating violence literature indicates that young people identify online control (e.g., through location tracking) as a key concern. They also express interest in real stories and the perpetrators' point of view, and recommend short, humorous video content (careful to avoid trivialization) like reels over text-based or obviously didactic formats. These findings can inform both content and dissemination strategies.

Keywords: dating violence, audiovisual resource, prevention, co-design

THE NECESSITY OF SLOWNESS: PSYCHOANALYSIS IN AN AGE OF EFFICIENCY

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Abstract. Contemporary mental health care is increasingly organised around efficiency, measurable outcomes, and the reduction of symptoms. Within this landscape, psychoanalysis often appears anomalous, its emphasis on uncertainty, prolonged exploration, and the absence of predetermined therapeutic goals sitting uneasily alongside models of treatment that prioritise demonstrable improvement and standardised measures of effectiveness. Yet the very features that can make psychoanalysis appear out of step with contemporary therapeutic culture may also point towards its continuing relevance. Freud's observation that analysis may transform "hysterical misery into common unhappiness" remains a troubling proposition in a context where treatment is frequently expected to deliver symptom relief, adaptation, and psychological well-being. Rather than treating this formulation as evidence of psychoanalysis' limitations, the paper approaches it as an invitation to reconsider prevailing assumptions about therapeutic success, asking what forms of change become visible when treatment is not understood primarily in terms of symptom reduction or the achievement of predefined outcomes. Drawing on clinical case studies from psychoanalytic practice, understood as detailed investigations of particular therapeutic encounters that allow for the exploration of complex psychological and relational processes in context, this paper explores the tension between outcome-oriented understandings of treatment and the often indirect, uneven, and unpredictable character of analytic work. From a psychoanalytic perspective, therapeutic change rarely unfolds in a linear manner. Repetition, impasse, and resistance may not simply obstruct progress but constitute important aspects of the process through which unconscious conflicts become available for reflection and transformation. The clinical material is employed to explore how moments that might conventionally be regarded as setbacks can acquire a different significance within analytic work. In doing so, the paper contributes to wider debates concerning the nature of therapeutic effectiveness, the meaning of psychological change, and the place of psychoanalytic thinking within contemporary psychotherapy.

Keywords: psychoanalysis, psychotherapy research, evidence-based practice, outcome measurement, therapeutic change

Thematic Session
MENTAL HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



21th
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APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

HIDDEN COERCION, VISIBLE SCARS: SEXUAL PRESSURE AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SPAIN

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Abstract: Sexual coercion remains a pervasive form of sexual violence, yet evidence regarding its prevalence and psychological correlates among European university students remains limited. Sexual coercion is defined as any act in which an individual is pressured, manipulated, threatened, or forced into engaging in sexual activity without freely given consent. This study aimed to estimate the prevalence of sexual coercion and examine its psychological correlates, including depression, self-blame, and perceived social support, among university students in Salamanca, Spain. A cross-sectional design was employed ($N = 111$; 73 women, 38 men; $M_{age} = 21.40$ years, $SD_{age} = 2.10$), using instruments: the Non-Consensual Sexual Experiences Questionnaire, Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), Perceived Social Support from Friends and Family (AFAR-R) and Brief-COPE scale (dimension self-blame). Data were collected in person at the university using an online Qualtrics survey administered to undergraduate students enrolled in Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work programs. Results showed that 36.9% of participants experienced sexual coercion, with verbal coercion being most frequent (24.3%), followed by alcohol/drug-facilitated (8.1%) and physical force (4.5%). Women who reported at least one experience of sexual coercion exhibited higher levels of depression than those who did not ($t(109) = 4.26, p < .001$). Self-blame significantly mediated the association between coercion and depressive symptoms (indirect effect: $b = .24, SE = .12, 95\% CI [.03, .51]$) while perceived social support did not moderate the association between coercion and depression symptoms ($b = .07, SE = .08, 95\% CI [-.88, .25]$). Findings underscore the need for culturally sensitive prevention and support programs that address coercive behaviors and strengthen social support among university students.

Keywords: sexual coercion, mental health, university students, social support

WELL-BEING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AS PREDICTORS OF WORK ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC-SECTOR NURSES

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Abstract. Work engagement is a critical determinant of nursing performance and retention. However, the relative contribution of psychological distress and well-being as predictors remains underexamined. Within the Job Demands-Resources model, well-being reflects a motivational resource and psychological distress a health-impairment indicator. The present study compares their relative predictive contribution to engagement. Few studies have explored the relative contribution of well-being, measured as a multidimensional construct with the PERMA-Profil, versus psychological distress (measured with the DASS-21) to work engagement. Therefore, this study aimed to determine whether well-being explains a larger portion of the variance than psychological distress. A cross-sectional survey of 1,198 nurses from the Greek public sector was conducted. Nurses worked in public hospitals as clinical nurses (59.2%) or in public schools as school nurses (40.8%). Participants were mostly women (89.2%), with an average age of 41.88 years ($SD = 9.77$). Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to assess the relative contribution of psychological distress and well-being to nurses' work engagement while controlling for the influence of demographic and occupational variables. The analysis indicated that psychological distress explained 7.5% of work-engagement variance ($\Delta R^2 = .075, p < .001$), whereas well-being explained a further 17.6% ($\Delta R^2 = .176, p < .001$). The final model accounted for 32.3% ($R^2 = .323, p < .001$). The findings suggest that cultivating nurses' well-being may enhance work engagement more than reducing psychological distress alone. This pattern aligns with theories that emphasise the motivational role of personal resources in work engagement, including the Job Demands-Resources model, Conservation of Resources theory, and Broaden-and-Build theory. These findings support prioritising positive-psychology interventions that build well-being to enhance nurses' engagement and retention.

Keywords: work engagement, PERMA, psychological distress, nurses, positive psychology

DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES IN WELL-BEING, PERSONALITY, AND VALUES AMONG SOCIAL-SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES STUDENTS

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Abstract. Although often treated as a single bloc, social-sciences and humanities (SSH) disciplines differ in content, culture, and prospects. Both self-selection (“gravitational”) and socialization accounts accordingly predict different psychological functioning of their students. Because direct comparisons of SSH fields remain scarce, universities lack the evidence needed to move from one-size-fits-all student support towards field-tailored services. We therefore asked whether SSH students differ across fields in study satisfaction, burnout, mental health, HEXACO traits, and Schwartz values, while accounting for gender, given the fields’ unequal gender composition and documented gender differences in personality traits and values. Across 2024–2026, 563 students at the University of Banja Luka (84.2% women, 86.9% undergraduate) were surveyed and grouped into six fields: psychology, economics, law, philology, political sciences, and other education/humanities programmes. Measures included study satisfaction (3 items, $\alpha = .88$), academic burnout (4 items, $\alpha = .78$), overall mental health (3 items, $\alpha = .86$), a very brief 12-item HEXACO inventory, and 12 Schwartz value items ipsatized into four higher-order types. We ran two-way ANOVAs (field $\times$ gender), with correction for multiple comparisons. Self-transcendence values showed the largest field effect, highest among psychology and lowest among law students ($d = 0.96$). We also observed a well-being gradient: psychology students were most satisfied and least burned out, while law and economics students rated their experiences worst (all $p < .001$); psychology-versus-law gaps were large (satisfaction $d = 0.93$, burnout $d = -0.68$, mental health $d = 0.55$). Furthermore, economics and political-science students scored lowest on Honesty-Humility, while philology students scored highest (d up to 0.97). Gender added little once the field was accounted for, except for women scoring higher on Emotionality ($d = 0.84$) and slightly worse on mental health ($d = -0.25$, $p = .009$). We discuss self-selection versus socialization explanations and counselling implications, particularly for law and economics students.

Keywords: study satisfaction, academic burnout, HEXACO, Schwartz values, field of study

HOW OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES SUPPORT STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING: THE ROLES OF PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITIES, RESTORATIVE EXPERIENCES, AND PLACE ATTACHMENT

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Abstract. Outdoor public spaces within and around university campuses may influence students' psychological functioning, including mental well-being and satisfaction with the surrounding environment. Although restorative experiences are considered a key mechanism underlying these associations, the role of emotional bonds with place has received less attention. This study examined whether perceived environmental qualities of outdoor public spaces predict mental well-being and place satisfaction among Italian university students and explored the incremental contribution of place attachment and restorative qualities beyond environmental perceptions. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with a convenience sample of 407 students (92.9% female, 7.1% male; $M_{age} = 26.96$, $SD = 8.18$) at the University of Foggia (Italy). Participants completed an online questionnaire including socio-demographic information, 7 dimensions of the Perceived Residential Environmental Quality (PREQ) indicator, the being-away dimension from the Psychological Restoration Scale, the Place Attachment Scale, and self-report measures of mental well-being and place satisfaction. Two hierarchical multiple regressions were performed, one for each outcome, entering socio-demographic variables, perceived environmental quality dimensions, and place attachment and being-away. Place attachment and being-away explained significant incremental variance in both outcomes beyond environmental perceptions. For mental well-being ($R^2 = .26$), being-away was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .33$), followed by place attachment ($\beta = .21$), while environmental quality dimensions lost significance. For place satisfaction ($R^2 = .41$), place attachment was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .36$), followed by being-away ($\beta = .24$) and aesthetic quality of buildings ($\beta = .19$), which retained a direct effect. These findings enhance understanding of how outdoor public space characteristics shape students' psychological functioning and offer relevant implications for urban planning and design.

Keywords: place attachment, psychological restoration, outdoor public spaces, mental well-being, place satisfaction

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR BURNOUT INTERVENTION

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Abstract. Burnout prevention and intervention have received increasing attention among mental health professionals, healthcare professionals, employers, and employees. A promising development is the growing awareness among the working population of the major risks and signs of burnout. However, approaches to its assessment and treatment continue to require further development. As a complex occupational and health-related phenomenon, burnout can involve psychological, physical, and social consequences that extend beyond the workplace and affect an individual's overall quality of life. Occupational therapy may therefore offer a valuable contribution to burnout intervention by addressing the relationship between health, daily occupations, roles, routines, and participation in meaningful activities. As a component of psychosocial rehabilitation, occupational therapy supports individuals in coping with the consequences of health conditions, maintaining or resuming family, work, and social roles, restoring self-esteem and self-confidence, and achieving the highest possible quality of life. Its scope includes self-care, leisure, and productivity (Švraka, 2012). This conceptual paper explores how occupational therapy could address the treatment needs associated with burnout and proposes a general framework for further research and clinical exploration. The proposed approach focuses on secondary and tertiary intervention delivered through interdisciplinary teams, primarily involving occupational therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, with additional medical specialists included according to individual needs and symptomatology. The framework is based on personalized intervention plans and collaborative use of patient data (Lloyd, Bassett, & King, 2004, p. 87). It includes *multidisciplinary assessment* of the individual's physical and psychological condition; *collaborative goal setting* across different life roles; *planning of occupations*; *psychoeducation and communication* with family members and, where appropriate, the workplace; gradual re-engagement in meaningful activities related to relaxation, family, and work; and ongoing *evaluation* of outcomes. Depending on individual goals and needs, the intervention may also address *professional renewal*, career transition, or employability. The proposed framework extends beyond the immediate intervention period by incorporating longer-term occupational planning and evaluation, emphasizing continuity of care and sustainable participation in meaningful life roles.

Keywords: concept framework, burnout, occupational therapy, interdisciplinary approach, intervention

APPLYING EXPERIENCE SAMPLING METHODOLOGY IN STUDYING STUDENT WELL-BEING

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Abstract. Student well-being is dynamic, fluctuating across hours and days in response to social context, emotional demands, and momentary situations. Drawing on self-determination theory and on contemporary frameworks of affect dynamics and emotion regulation, this study conceptualizes well-being as a within-person process shaped by momentary social context and the fluctuation in satisfaction of basic psychological needs. We present the design and preliminary findings of a pilot study conducted within the TEEN-WELL project, which applied an experience sampling approach to well-being among university students. Participants ($N = \text{cca. } 80$) completed brief assessments four times per day over ten consecutive days, yielding up to 40 momentary measurements per person. At each prompt, students reported momentary positive and negative affect, their current interaction partners, their emotion regulation characteristics. End of day measures additionally included need-based experiences and daily life satisfaction. We aimed to evaluate the feasibility and compliance of the ESM protocol. The within-person dynamics of well-being are examined exploratory in aims to inform subsequent work. The response rate to scheduled prompts was 86.6%. Participants completed, on average, 34.6 ($SD = 7.92$) of the 40 prompts. Compliance was comparable across morning (87.1%), early afternoon (87.0%), late afternoon (84.3%), and evening (87.9%) indicating good feasibility. Beyond feasibility, momentary positive and negative affect fluctuated substantially within persons. Multilevel variance decomposition showed that, for positive affect, 63% of the variance in momentary happiness and 73% of the variance in momentary relaxation was located within persons (intraclass correlations, $ICC = .37$ and $.28$, respectively). For negative affect, within-person variance accounted for 51% of the variance in sadness, 64% in anger, and 57% in anxiety ($ICC = .49$, $.36$, and $.43$, respectively). Thus, across all affect dimensions, roughly half to nearly three-quarters of the variability (51%–73%) was located at the within-person rather than the between-person level, underscoring the value of intensive longitudinal assessment for capturing student well-being. These findings will inform refinement of the assessment protocol and guide the design of subsequent, larger-scale studies. The pilot illustrates both the promise and the practical challenges of applying intensive longitudinal methods to the study of student well-being. Detailed results will be discussed.

Keywords: well-being, ESM, students, affect

SENECA'S THERAPY OF WRATH IN THE LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES: AN REBT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. This paper examines the Stoic definition of happiness and the vital role of managing wrath to live a truly meaningful life. Stoics believe that the quality of human life rests in our own hands – deeply shaped by how we see ourselves, others, and the world around us. Although wrath is understood in contemporary psychology as an adaptive reaction, this paper focuses on Seneca's treatise *De Ira*, in which wrath is presented as a disturbance of the individual's inner peace. To explore this, we will adopt an interdisciplinary approach that connects classical philosophy with contemporary psychology, drawing on psychological insights to differentiate between anger, hatred, rage, and wrath. While anger (and rage as its affect) functions as a potentially constructive affective state aimed at correcting another person's behaviour, hatred (and wrath as its affect) operates as an irrational and disruptive one – directed at their very being, creating a point of absolute rupture that persists regardless of behavioural changes. Seneca uses the word wrath broadly, encompassing both destructive irrationality (akin to hatred) and the impulse to punish (akin to anger). Secondly, we link Seneca's ancient insights directly to modern clinical practice, and examine how his guidelines align with cognitive-behavioural approaches, specifically with Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT). We pay special attention to how Seneca's ideas about early emotional triggers (initial reactions to events) actually lay the groundwork for the modern REBT model of activating events and irrational beliefs. For Seneca, wrath is a uniquely human, irrational passion born within reason itself, which can be countered through an awareness of universal human fallibility and mortality, and ultimately remedied by deliberate postponement to prevent immediate assent to impressions of wrongdoing. Finally, we will demonstrate how Stoic self-reflection serves as a practical tool that may help a certain number of people to overcome emotional crises, change negative beliefs, and build daily resilience. By doing this, we aim to show that ancient philosophy remains a powerful, active tool for modern mental well-being.

Keywords: Seneca, wrath, happiness, self-reflection, cognitive-behavioural therapy

Thematic Session
PSYCHOLOGY OF
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES



21th
DAYS OF
APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

NEED FOR COGNITION, BOREDOM PRONENESS, AND FILM-GENRE VIEWING FREQUENCY: DESCRIPTIVE TRENDS AND CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract. This study examined film-genre viewing frequency and its associations with two constructs commonly treated as potential motivators of media engagement: need for cognition (NC) and boredom proneness (BP). The convenience sample included 629 participants, mostly women (69.2%), with a mean age of 28 years ($SD = 12$; range = 18–69). Viewing frequency was assessed with self-reported ratings of how often participants generally tended to watch films from 16 genres on a five-point scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *very often*). NC was measured with the NCS-6 ($\omega=.81$), and BP with the BPS-SR ($\omega=.85$). The highest mean viewing-frequency ratings were obtained for crime/mystery ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.20$), comedy ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.09$), action/adventure ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.12$), thriller ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.21$), and drama ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.13$). The lowest mean viewing-frequency ratings were obtained for western ($M = 1.74$, $SD = 0.95$), sports ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 1.06$), horror ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 1.31$), war ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.12$), and superhero/comic-book films ($M=2.28$, $SD=1.21$). Ordinal genre-frequency ratings were individually related to NC and BP scores using polyserial correlations, appropriate for modeling ordinal-scale relationships. NC correlations were small ($r_{poly} = -.11$ to $.14$). Positive values were clearest for war, science fiction, biographical/historical, fantasy, crime/mystery, and thriller films ($r_{poly} = .08$ to $.14$), whereas negative values were most evident for horror, romance, and comedy ($r_{poly} = -.11$ to $-.08$). BP correlations were also generally small ($r_{poly} = -.09$ to $.26$). Horror showed the clearest positive value ($r_{poly} = .26$), followed by weaker positive links with science fiction, fantasy, thriller, drama, superhero/comic-book, and crime/mystery films ($r_{poly} = .08$ to $.14$), while the lowest values were observed for biographical/historical, comedy, sports, documentary, and war films ($r_{poly} = -.09$ to $-.01$). Overall, the descriptive pattern indicated higher mean viewing for broadly accessible narrative, humorous, suspenseful, and action-oriented genres and lower mean viewing for more specialized genres. The correlational pattern further suggested small, construct-specific tendencies in film selection: NC was linked to cognitively, narratively, speculatively, or historically engaging genres, whereas BP was most clearly linked to horror.

Keywords: need for cognition, boredom proneness, film genres, film-genre, viewing frequency

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN TEMPORAL FOCUS, SUBJECTIVE AGE AND BODY SATISFACTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

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Abstract. The human body changes significantly over time, but it is little known about association between psychological time and body satisfaction. How one perceives the time of life can be studied through various constructs, including a temporal focus (the proportion of attention a person usually pays to the past, present, or future) and subjective age (the assessment of one's years). This study aims to develop and test the model of the effect of temporal focus and subjective age on body satisfaction of students. The sample consisted of 212 students (98 women and 114 men, $M_{age} = 20.6$, $SD = 2.9$). The instruments used were the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ) (Cash, 2002), Temporal Focus Scale (TFS) (Shipp et al., 2009), and modified Age-of-Me (Barak, 2009). TFS includes past, current and future focus subscales. Age-of-Me consists of four subscales assessing emotional (feel-age), physical (look-age), social (do-age), and intellectual (interest-age) ages. We also used two subscales of MBSRQ, namely, Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, and Overweight Preoccupation. Based on theoretical analysis, we hypothesized that current focus and more mature subjective age contribute to higher body satisfaction, whereas past focus and less mature age relate to lower satisfaction. SEM demonstrated good fit: $CMIN = 9.285$, $p = 0.158$; $RMSEA = 0.051$; $CFI = 0.930$; $GFI = 0.983$; $P_{close} = 0.423$. The strongest association was between past focus and weight concern ($R = 0.21$), suggesting that recalling memories increases overweight preoccupation. Conversely, present-moment engagement was linked to greater body satisfaction ($R = 0.15$). Older social age has been positively associated with body satisfaction ($R = 0.13$). Thus, findings underscore the protective role of mature social age and current focus in enhancing young adults' body satisfaction.

Keywords: body satisfaction, concern for excess weight, temporal focus, subjective age, social age

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ATTITUDES TOWARD DRIVING AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract. Adolescent risk-taking in traffic is often linked to underlying emotional regulation and social cognition mechanisms, which shape how young people perceive and evaluate safety rules. While trait emotional intelligence (EI) is frequently considered a uniform protective factor, its specific multidimensional associations with adolescent traffic attitudes remain under-researched. This study examined the relationship between trait emotional intelligence facets and attitudes toward risky driving among adolescents. A sample of $N = 252$ high school students aged 15–19 (58.7% female, 41.3% male; 44.8% having prior experience with operating/driving a vehicle) completed the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-SF) and a 14-item scale assessing attitudes toward risky driving behavior. Low-to-moderate intercorrelations among the EI facets justified their simultaneous inclusion in a multiple linear regression analysis ($VIF < 1.46$). The overall regression model accounted for 7.42% of the variance in risky driving attitudes ($R^2 = .074$, $p < .001$). The analysis revealed divergent roles of specific emotional traits: Emotionality emerged as a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.25$, $p < .001$), indicating that heightened empathy and emotional perception are associated with lower acceptance of road risks. Conversely, Sociability was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .22$, $p = .002$), suggesting that greater social assertiveness is linked to an increased propensity for traffic risks. Well-being and Self-control were not unique contributors. These findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence facets share distinct, non-homogeneous relationships with traffic safety attitudes. Educational interventions could benefit from addressing these divergent patterns by cultivating empathetic competencies while accounting for peer-related social dynamics in highly social young drivers.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, adolescents, driving attitudes, multiple regression, traffic psychology

PERFECTIONISM, FEAR OF MISSING OUT AND PREFERENCE FOR CONSISTENCY AS PREDICTORS OF SELF-CARE

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Abstract. Previous research has shown that self-care is associated with various psychological characteristics, including perfectionism and factors related to self-regulation and social evaluation. However, less is known about the extent to which perfectionism, fear of missing out (FOMO), and preference for consistency jointly contribute to individual differences in self-care. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to examine whether perfectionism, fear of missing out (FOMO), and preference for consistency are significant predictors of self-care. The study included a convenience sample of 122 participants, of whom 73.2% were female. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 78 years ($M = 35.43$, $SD = 15.78$). They completed the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, the Self-Care Scale, the Preference for Consistency Scale–Short Form, and the Fear of Missing Out Scale. Data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The overall regression model was statistically significant, explaining 46.4% of the variance in self-care ($R^2 = .464$, $F(3, 119) = 34.36$, $p < .001$). Perfectionism ($\beta = .435$, $p < .001$), preference for consistency ($\beta = .272$, $p < .001$), and fear of missing out ($\beta = .234$, $p = .001$) were significant predictors of self-care. The findings indicate that perfectionism, fear of missing out, and preference for consistency significantly contribute to individual differences in self-care. These results highlight the importance of considering multiple personality and cognitive factors in understanding self-care and provide a basis for future research on the mechanisms underlying these associations.

Keywords: perfectionism, fear of missing out (FOMO), self-care, preference for consistency

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALEXITHYMIA AND EGO-IDENTITY

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Abstract. Erikson's definition of ego-identity represents his seminal contribution to developmental psychology. It is formed during adolescence and early adulthood and its successful formation is considered a sustainable sense of a continuous self. There are many instruments measuring various aspects of ego-identity such as the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS) and the Utrecht Management of Identity Commitments scale (U-MICS). On the other hand alexithymia represents a psychological disorder that prevents an individual from identifying their emotions, registering the emotions of others and a tendency towards practical thinking and lack of the imagination. The most prolifically used instrument to measure alexithymia is the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20). The question asked is can lack of emotional recognition in self and others impair identity development. On a sample of 397 medical university students we tested this hypothesis (263(66.2%) female; *Mean* 20.06; *Min* = 18; *Max* = 26; *SD* = 1.27), this hypothesis was tested and the DIDS, U-MICS and TAS-20 questionnaires were applied in a paper and pencil survey form. The DIDS subscales regarding commitment making identification with commitment all significantly negatively correlate with all TAS-20 subscales (from -.10 to -.19). The DIDS subscale ruminative exploration that is a predictor of negative developmental outcomes correlates .39 with difficulties identifying feelings and .33 with difficulty describing feelings TAS-20 subscales. When relational identity is concerned (U-MICS) all of its subscales, commitment making, exploration and reconsideration of commitments correlate positively with difficulty identifying feelings and externally oriented thinking (from .10 to .18) but there are no correlations with difficulty describing feelings TAS-20 subscale. In a regression model TAS-20 subscales explain 15.5% of ruminative exploration variance but none of the exploration in depth variance. It is expected that difficulties in emotional regulation present challenges to identity formation and an in depth analysis has found some surprising association that need to be expanded upon.

Keywords: Erikson, Ego-identity, alexithymia, DIDS, TAS-20

Thematic Session
HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY



21th
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REPRODUCTIVE IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF INFERTILITY: CONCEPTUALIZATION, MEASUREMENT, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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Abstract. Reproductive identity is an emerging psychological construct that describes how individuals define themselves through their reproductive experiences, aspirations, and interpretations of reproductive events. As reproductive choices have become increasingly individualized, issues related to parenthood have evolved from socially prescribed roles into important components of personal identity. Following Athan's conceptualization, reproductive identity is viewed as a dynamic, multidimensional, and fluid aspect of the self that develops throughout the lifespan. This work provides an overview of the theoretical foundations of reproductive identity and introduces the development of the Reproductive Identity Questionnaire (RIQ), a measure designed to assess reproductive identity in women with and without difficulties conceiving. The instrument was developed through expert evaluation and validation studies and captures several key dimensions of reproductive identity, including long-standing desire for motherhood, identity centrality and purpose, reproductive identity fluidity, and negative reconsideration of parenthood. Particular attention is devoted to reproductive identity in the context of infertility. Infertility is conceptualized as a major biopsychosocial crisis that disrupts expected life trajectories and challenges core aspects of self-definition. Qualitative findings from women undergoing in vitro fertilization demonstrate that infertility profoundly shapes reproductive identity through experiences of identity frustration, altered self-perception, social comparison, and psychological adaptation. Alongside experiences of loss and identity crisis, many women also report personal growth, greater resilience, and enhanced self-understanding. These findings informed the development of an infertility-specific extension of the questionnaire (RIQ-Inf), which assesses reproductive identity crisis and identity-related growth resulting from infertility. Together, the theoretical framework, qualitative evidence, and psychometric findings presented here suggest that reproductive identity is a fundamental yet understudied domain of identity development. Understanding reproductive identity offers valuable insights into psychological adaptation across diverse

reproductive pathways and provides a useful framework for both future research and clinical practice in reproductive and health psychology.

Keywords: reproductive identity, infertility, crisis

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PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A MODERATOR OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTOLERANCE OF UNCERTAINTY AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING DURING EARLY PREGNANCY

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Abstract. Pregnancy is a major life transition accompanied by substantial psychological and emotional changes. This study examined whether social support moderates the relationship between intolerance of uncertainty and subjective well-being during early pregnancy. The sample comprised 105 women in their first trimester of pregnancy ($M_{age} = 27.50$ years, $SD = 5.59$) who completed the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience, the One-Item Measure of Life Satisfaction, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and the Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale. Moderation analyses were conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 1). The interaction between intolerance of uncertainty and social support was not significant for positive emotions ($B = .02, p = .84, 95\%CI [-0.19, 0.23]$), negative emotions ($B = -.16, p = .25, 95\%CI [-0.43, 0.11]$), or life satisfaction ($B = .07, p = .81, 95\%CI [-0.52, 0.66]$). However, the model predicting positive emotions was significant, $R^2 = .16, F(3, 101) = 6.43, p < .001$, with intolerance of uncertainty as a significant negative predictor ($B = -.17, p = .007$) and social support as a significant positive predictor ($B = .25, p = .016$). The model predicting negative emotions was also significant, $R^2 = .24, F(3, 101) = 10.84, p < .001$, with intolerance of uncertainty as a significant positive predictor ($B = .21, p = .008$) and social support as a significant negative predictor ($B = -.47, p < .001$). The model predicting life satisfaction was significant, $R^2 = .12, F(3, 101) = 4.46, p = .006$, with intolerance of uncertainty as the only significant negative predictor ($B = -.47, p = .007$). The findings indicate that intolerance of uncertainty is associated with lower subjective well-being during early pregnancy, whereas social support is independently associated with emotional well-being but does not buffer the negative effects of intolerance of uncertainty.

Keywords: pregnancy, subjective well-being, intolerance of uncertainty, social support, women

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„I FELT CHEATED“ – UNEXPECTED DISCOMFORT, PAIN AND FEAR IN IVF

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Abstract. In vitro fertilisation (IVF) is a biomedical procedure developed to treat infertility, widely welcomed as a medical advancement supporting couples in achieving pregnancy. However, medical advancements in the field of infertility do not always prioritize women's health and wellbeing. Additionally, while topics of reproduction and fertility are present in the public discourse, women's perspectives remain underrepresented. The lived reality of IVF is complex for many women, as they are expected to conform to painful injections, medical interventions, even health complications. Research objective presented here was to explore the discomfort, pain and fear experienced by women going through IVF. The participants were 20 women trying for their first child through IVF in Serbia, having gone through between one and four previous cycles. Method was qualitative. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analysed through interpretative phenomenological analysis. Four themes were identified: fear of consequences; endurance; neglect; panic and powerlessness. When faced with repeated unsuccessful treatments, women may wonder about long-term health consequences of the hormonal treatment. These fears were not necessarily addressed and repeated cycles are even encouraged through public policies. Experiencing discomfort and pain was a surprise for the participants, sitting in opposition with the public image of IVF as a simple tool for achieving pregnancy. Participant typically didn't receive any warnings, which speaks about a societal expectation that they should endure discomfort, pain and fear when it comes to achieving pregnancy. Additionally, when communicating their discomfort and pain, they didn't necessarily receive help. The IVF protocols seem to be developed having pregnancy as a priority and the well-being of women, even with explicit demands and complains, might get neglected. Pain can, on occasion, signal a medical complication, urging women to seek medical help, often with the sense of panic and powerlessness. Urgent medical interventions, although rare, were unexpected, painful and emotionally difficult to process. These findings provide an important insight into the women's personal experiences of IVF and call for a conversation about priorities in infertility treatment.

Keywords: reproductive psychology, IVF, fear, pain

PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSIVE AND ANXIETY SYMPTOMS AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN IN SERBIA: A PRELIMINARY EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract. The perinatal period is a sensitive developmental stage accompanied by numerous biological, psychological, and social changes that may contribute to the emergence of mental health difficulties. The aim of our study is to provide epidemiological data on the prevalence of depressive and anxiety symptoms among pregnant women in Serbia, with the goal to support the implementation of mandatory perinatal mental health screening that could improve the health of pregnant women. The study was conducted in collaboration with the Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinic “Dr Dragiša Mišović” and included a sample of $N = 473$ participants in second or third trimester ($M = 30.87$, $SD = 4.73$, $Min = 19$, $Max = 45$). Standardized instruments were used to assess depressive symptoms (Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale; EPDS) and anxiety symptoms (Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7; GAD-7). When it comes to EPDS, scores ranged from 0 to 18 ($M = 4.79$, $Md = 4$, $SD = 3.65$), with slight positive skewness ($Sk = 0.64$) and satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.76$). While the majority of pregnant women (87.7%) did not exhibit elevated depressive symptoms ($EPDS < 10$), 12.3% showed elevated symptoms ($EPDS \geq 10$), a rate consistent with global prevalence statistics. On the GAD-7, scores ranged from 0 to 16 ($M = 2.88$, $Md = 2$, $SD = 2.72$), with more pronounced positive skewness ($Sk = 1.47$) and good internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.80$). Response frequencies mirror global epidemiological trends: 73% of women reported minimal anxiety, 23.5% mild anxiety, 3.2% moderate anxiety, and 0.3% severe anxiety. Data collection began in December 2025 and is still ongoing, with the aim of increasing the sample size and obtaining a more representative insight. In conclusion, these findings confirm that maternal mental health risks in Serbia mirror global trends, strongly supporting the implementation of national mandatory screening protocols.

Keywords: pregnancy, depression, anxiety, screening protocol

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF AN INTEGRATED, MULTI-TIERED PERIPARTUM DEPRESSION SCREENING PATHWAY

Mina Hagen¹, Slađana Mihajlović^{2,3}, Ana Anđelković¹, Iva Bogićević², Anja Bošnjak¹, Una Brtkova¹, Dunja Vujošević¹, Mina Vučković¹, Isidora Đorđević¹, Lucija Milović¹, Dunja Mićunović¹, Dunja Filipović¹, Sanja Milić², Đurdica Kalićanin², Ivan Hristov², & Jana Dabović²

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Abstract. Peripartum depression is a major public health challenge, yet universal screening remains unimplemented across most of Europe, including Serbia. Traditional screening is frequently inhibited by limited mental health resources, a lack of training, and time constraints among clinical medical staff. Furthermore, standalone appointments require patients to declare they are unwell, a step hindered by stigma. Our aim was to design, implement, and evaluate a sustainable pathway that utilizes routine obstetric waiting-room time and integrates psychology departments to bypass hospital resource constraints. During routine clinic visits, second and third-trimester patients receive waiting-room packets containing educational leaflets, consent forms, obstetric history queries, the EPDS, the GAD-7, and a novel 3-item partner relationship scale ($\alpha = .85$): 1) “I am satisfied with our communication during this period”; 2) “We view parenting similarly...”; and 3) “My partner understands how I am feeling...”. This scale aims to identify low-quality relationships as a postpartum depression (PPD) risk factor; it correlated significantly with the EPDS ($r = -0.33, p < .001$) and GAD-7 ($r = -0.27, p < .001$). To ensure blinding and security, mentored psychology students collect packets semi-weekly, de-identify forms, and log anonymized scores, while the lead researcher holds the master key. Within 2–3 days, a triage protocol is executed: EPDS scores < 10 indicate no elevated symptoms, 10–12 prompt a 1-month re-test, and > 12 (or a positive response to Question 10 suicide risk) trigger an immediate in-hospital psychiatric referral. During the first three months, response rates hovered between 20% and 30%. As nursing staff adapted to workflow logistics and patients adjusted to the routine, compliance stabilized at over 50% resulting in 981 women screened during the first 6 months. This model demonstrates a scalable, sustainable framework for universal peripartum mental health care without requiring additional hospital personnel.

Keywords: maternal mental health, peripartum mental health screening, anxiety, depression

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