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How can we measure the impact of self-awareness at work? **Construction of the Self-Awareness Outcomes Questionnaire**



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Introduction

Attempts to improve an individual's self-awareness are made in fields as diverse as employee development [1], counsellor training [2] and continuing professional development. There is good evidence for the beneficial consequences of self-awareness in everyday life [3], but the practical impact of self-awareness at work remains difficult to measure.



Current research into self-awareness tends to focus on related concepts such as mindfulness [4] or to operationalise self-awareness as a personality trait [5]. Given the substantial investment of time and money by organisations and individuals in activities promoting self-awareness, a reliable and valid measure of actual workplace outcomes is an essential step in assessing the return on these investments. We address this need by developing the Self-awareness Outcomes Questionnaire (SAOQ).

Research Aims

- To create an initial self-report measure of self-awareness correlates
- To further explore and identify the outcomes associated with selfawareness

Method

We developed a comprehensive list of SAOQ items from three sources:

- analysis of reported outcomes of employee development workshops
- focus group discussions with counsellors experienced in developing client

This resulted in a final list of 83 items representing 14 different groups of outcomes, E.g.:

Group	Item
Understanding / acceptance of others, diversity	I have compassion and acceptance for others
Understanding / acceptance of self	I have learnt about myself and how I see the world
Costs of self-awareness	I feel vulnerable

A stratified sampling approach recruited 215 participants (76% female, mean age 35.8 years) from four different populations, representing theoretically different levels of self-awareness:

Higher levels of self-awareness	Average levels of self-awareness
Therapists / counsellors	Employees in fields unrelated to psychotherapy
Post-graduate counselling students	Post-graduate business students

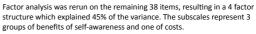
Participants completed an online questionnaire battery including:

- The SAOQ items
- Measures of different conceptualisations of self-awareness
 - Reflection-Rumination Questionnaire [5] (Reflection is a type of self-attentiveness associated with positive well-being, Rumination is associated with negative well-being)
 - Mindful Attention Awareness Scale [6]
 - Self-Reflection / Insight Scale [7]
- Engagement in mindfulness / self-awareness practices (e.g. meditation, writing a journal).

Results

Questionnaire development

Factor analysis was conducted on the SAOO items (alpha factoring with promax rotation to maximise alpha reliability of the resulting subscales). Items which did not load clearly (above .4) on a single factor were excluded and resulting factors with a reliability $\alpha \! > \! .7$ were retained.



Subscale			
Proactive at work	I take control of my work	9	.81
Acceptance (of self and others)	I feel on the whole very comfortable with the way I am	11	.83
Reflective self- development	I focus on ways of amending my behaviour that would be useful	11	.87
Costs	I feel vulnerable	7	.77

Relationship between self-awareness measures and SAOQ

		Acceptance of self and others		Costs
Insight	+	+	+	-
Self-reflection	+		+	+
Reflection	+			+
Rumination		-		+
Mindfulness		-		+

^{+ / –} indicates positive / negative correlation (p<.05)

In addition, increased engagement in mindfulness or self-awareness practices is associated with increased Reflective Self-Development and Acceptance but also increased Costs.

Self-Awareness Outcomes

T-test comparisons of the subsample groups confirmed the theoretically expected differences in self-awareness between the groups. Comparison of the groups on the SAOQ scales also showed significant differences:

- Therapists reported higher Reflective Self-Development and Proactive at Work outcomes than non-therapists
- Students on therapy-related courses reported higher Costs than business students

Applications

- The SAOQ enables practitioners and researchers to measure the practical impact of self-awareness interventions on employees' work live
- Because items were originally developed from a longitudinal study, the SAOQ can be used to demonstrate both the short- and long-term utility of improved self-awareness in a range of developmental contexts at work.
- We also contribute to improved theoretical understanding of the selfawareness and mindfulness concepts, particularly the intriguing finding that mindfulness shows a similar (negative) pattern of outcomes to rumination.
- Finally, our results indicate that students on counselling or therapy-related courses report more costs of self-awareness than equivalent business students. It is important that any interventions designed to improve selfawareness include appropriate support to help participants to deal with

Limitations: Further work is needed to confirm the factor structure in different populations.



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