Examining the association between self-concept clarity and self-esteem on a sample of Romanian students

Cristiana Cătălina Cici\textsuperscript{a,b,*}

\textsuperscript{a}Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, 6-8 Povernei St., Bucharest 010643, Romania

\textsuperscript{b}Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest, 90 Panduri Ave., Bucharest 050663, Romania

Abstract

Current studies indicate that Self-Esteem is positively related to Self-Concept Clarity; findings highlighting that people with a higher Self-Concept Clarity also attained high levels of Self-Esteem. The Self-Concept Clarity Scale (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee & Lehman, 1996) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) were applied on a sample of 149 Romanian students. Results indicate strong correlations between the two constructs, the male students obtaining stronger correlation levels than the female students. The obtained findings support previous research conducted on students of other nationalities.

Keywords: Self-Concept Clarity, Self-Esteem, Romanin students, male students, female students.

1. Introduction

Studies regarding Self-concept indicate that individuals differentiate not only in terms of Self cognitions, but also in the clarity and certainty of their Self-images (Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, 1990; Campbell & Lavallee, 1993; Campbell et al., 1996; Setterlund & Niedenthal, 1993 cited in Guadagno & Burger, 2007). Self-Concept Clarity (SCC) is defined as the extent to which the contents of an individual's Self-concept (e.g., perceived personal attributes) are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman, 1996, p. 141). As Guadagno & Burger (2007) mention, the importance of individual differences in Self-Concept Clarity emerged from the research conducted on Self-Esteem (Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, 1990). Findings indicate that high-Self-Esteem individuals have positive, well-articulated beliefs about the Self, and, in contrast, the prototypic low-Self-Esteem person has not a well-defined negative view of the Self, but is better described as evaluatively neutral and characterized by high levels of uncertainty, instability, and inconsistency (Campbell et al., 1996).

Regarding Self-Concept Clarity, variations caused by age and gender differences have been examined, but due to a small number of empirical studies, the findings are still inconclusive (Wu, Watkins, & Watkins, 2006). For example, empirical evidences indicate that males reported higher levels of Self-Concept Clarity than females, on Canadian (Campbell et al., 1996), Slovakian (Fickova & Korcova, 2000) or Estonian samples (Matto & Realo, 2012).

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +4-021-318-0882; fax: +4-021-311-7148.
E-mail address: catalina.cici@comunicare.ro.
2001) (as cited in Wu, et al., 2006). Campbell et al. (1996) related these moderate findings with findings from prior research indicating that women generally report higher levels of neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1985), anxiety (Jackson, 1976), and negative affectivity (Woods, Rhodes & Whelan, 1989). Also, there is some evidence that Self-Concept Clarity increases moderately with age. For instance, Self-Concept Clarity scores were weakly correlated with age (r=.08-.12), on a sample of Canadian students (Campbell et al., 1996) and on a heterogeneous sample of Estonians with ages ranging from 14 to 80 (r=.13) (Matto & Realo, 2001, as cited in Wu, et al., 2006).

Self-Esteem is usually thought to be the evaluative component of a broader representation of self (Blaschovich & Tomaka, 1991). Also, Self-Esteem can be defined as the sum of evaluations across salient attributes of one’s Self, or personality, representing thus the overall affective evaluation of one’s own worth, value or importance (Blaschovich & Tomaka, 1991, p. 115). As Epstein (1983, cited in Baumeister, 1999) mentions, Self-Esteem can be considered to be a global personal judgment of worthiness that appears to form relatively early in the course of development, remains fairly constant over time and is resistant to change.

Regarding the relationship between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem, studies indicate that Self-Esteem is positively related to Self-Concept Clarity, people with high levels of Self-Esteem having a higher Self-Concept Clarity (Bigler, Neymeyer, & Brown, 2001; Campbell et al., 1996, 2000, 2003, cited in Wu, et al., 2006). As the authors state, there are two directions of research in examining the relationship between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem, in the first line of research Self-Concept Clarity being conceived as a process-related variable, whereas Self-Esteem represents the evaluative component of Self-Concept Clarity (Wu, et al., 2006). Thus, Self-Esteem and Self-Concept Clarity are separate constructs, positive and moderate to strong correlations (about .60) between measures of the two constructs being reported (Wu, et al., 2006).

From the second line of research, higher Self-Esteem has been considered to be an indicator of a better psychological adjustment (Bigler et al., 2001 cited in Wu, et al., 2006), a more articulated Self being associated with a higher sense of Self-worth. This perspective was based on studies of authors like Campbell et al. (1996), who indicated that Self-Concept Clarity is strongly and positively associated with Self-Esteem (r=.57 to .64), negative strong correlations being obtained in relationship with neuroticism (r=-.57 to -.71).

Thus, examined together, both lines of research suggest a strong positive relationship between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem.

2. Purpose of the study

Starting from these theoretical considerations, the present study examines the association between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem on a sample of Romanian students. Thus, the main hypothesis of the research states that strong correlations will be obtained between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem in the case of Romanian students. From this perspective, we expect that the results will confirm the intensity of the association indicated by studies on samples from other countries (Campbell et al, 1996; Wu, et al., 2006).

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The research was conducted on 149 students from two Romanian universities, enrolled in Psychology and Communication academic programs, with ages between 19 and 25 years old (m=21.7, S.D=1.10). 45% of the students were males and 55% females. The students were selected in equal number from the two academic programs of the two universities, having in view their equal proportion in what concerns the year of study. The Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS) developed by Campbell et al. (1996) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) were applied on the selected sample in view of assessing Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem.
3.2. Instruments

The Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS) developed by Campbell et al. (1996) was applied in order to assess the extend to which self-beliefs are stable, clearly and confidently defined. SCCS is a 12 item self-report measure of the temporal stability, consistency and clarity of self-beliefs. In the present research, a Cronbach alpha value of .78 was obtained for the scale.

Self-Esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) (SES). SES is a 10-item self-report measure designed to evaluate global feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance, items requiring the respondent to report feelings about the Self directly. For the current research, a Cronbach alpha value of .80 was obtained for the scale, the measure indicating good internal consistency.

4. Results

After the data have been collected, their analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, SPSS 16.0, first being calculated the means and standard deviations for the two variables (Table 1). In what regards Self-Concept Clarity, the score obtained for the male student sample \( (m=38.51, S.D=1.133) \) was higher in comparison with the score obtained for the female student sample \( (m=35.52, S.D=1.119) \), for the general student sample being obtained a mean of 38.89 \( (S.D=1.617) \). Compared to the level of Self-Esteem, the score obtained on the male student sample \( (m=25.04, S.D=1.862) \) was higher than the score obtained for the female student sample \( (m=21.04, S.D=2.559) \), and higher in from the score obtained on the general student sample \( (m=22.38, S.D=1.592) \).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Clarity</td>
<td>38.89</td>
<td>1.617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male students</td>
<td>38.51</td>
<td>1.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female students</td>
<td>35.52</td>
<td>1.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>22.38</td>
<td>1.592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male students</td>
<td>25.04</td>
<td>1.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female students</td>
<td>21.04</td>
<td>2.559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After reporting the descriptive statistic indicators, in view of testing the research hypotheses, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. Thus, strong positive correlations have been identified between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem \( (r=.613, p<0.01) \). The findings indicate that high-Self-Esteem students have positive, well-articulated beliefs about the Self and that low-Self-Esteem students have high levels of uncertainty, instability, and inconsistency regarding the Self. Also, the results are consistent with other research conducted at the international level (Campbell et al., 1996; Wu, et al., 2006).

Also, strong positive correlations have been obtained between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem \( (r=.599, p<0.01) \) in the case of the male Romanian students investigated. Moderate positive correlations \( (r=.428, p<0.01) \) have been obtained between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem, when having in view the sample of female students investigated. The obtained results indicate that, on the current selected sample, the association between the two constructs is stronger on the sample of male students, in comparison with the female sample, male Romanian students exhibiting a pronounced association between the affective evaluation of one’s own worth, value or importance and the clarity and stability of the beliefs regarding the Self.
5. Discussions

The current research aimed to examine the association between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem on a sample of Romanian students, starting from the previous studies indicating that Self-Esteem is positively related to Self-Concept Clarity, people with high levels of Self-Esteem having a higher Self-Concept Clarity (Bigler, Neymeyer, & Brown, 2001; Campbell et al., 1996, 2000, 2003 as cited in Wu, et al., 2006). The obtained results confirmed the strong positive association between the two constructs, enhancing the fact that high-Self-Esteem Romanian students have positive, well-articulated beliefs about the Self and that low-Self-Esteem students have high levels of uncertainty, instability, and inconsistency regarding the Self. Also, a higher intensity of the positive correlation was obtained in the case of male students, in comparison with the female students, regarding the association between the two constructs. The findings could enhance the empirical evidences according to which women generally report higher levels of neuroticism (Costa &McCrae, 1985), anxiety (Jackson, 1976), and negative affectivity (Woods, et al., 1989).

A series of limits of the current research can be identified, consisting in the reduced number of subjects and in the use of self-report measures. New research directions can be traced in the examination of the relationship between Self-Esteem, and Self-Concept Clarity in a heterogeneous sample of Romanian individuals, and in the investigation of the relationship between personality traits, Self-Esteem, and Self-concept clarity.

References