

Self-Construal and its relationship with Individualism - Collectivism in Egypt

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ABSTRACT

This article studied the authenticity and validity of the Egyptian Version of Singelis's (1994) 30-item Self-Construal Scale (SCS). The Participants in this study consisted of 419 undergraduate students where they completed (SCS) scale and the Individualism-Collectivism (IND-COL) Scale. Results of factor analysis showed two interpretations: Independent and Interdependent Self Construal in Egypt environment. The internal consistency of the Inter. and Ind. SC subscales were found to be 0.89, 0.27 respectively. The Cronbach alphas of the Inter. and Ind. SC subscales were found to be 0.83, and 0.46 respectively. The Inter. SC Positively related to Collectivism but no significant relationship was found between Ind. SC and Individualism. Possible culture limitations of Self-Construal are discussed.

Keywords: *Self-Construal Scale, Individualism-Collectivism Scale, Psychometric Properties.*

Self-Construal scales have been studied for approximately a decade (Singelis & Brown 1993). The importance of Self-Construal is manifested in helping to understand the differences between cultural groups (Pusaksrikit, & Kang 2016). According to many cross-cultural studies, individual differences are shown in two dimensions: Interdependent-Independent Self Construal and these two dimensions are uncorrelated or separated (Yamada & Singelis 1999; Escalas & Bettman 2005; Lau-Gesk 2003; Levinson, Langer, & Rodebaugh 2011). Self Construal is referred as a construction of thoughts, feelings, and actions concerning the relation of the self to others or the self as separate from others (Singelis, Bond, Sharkey, & Lai 1999; Hallowell 1955; Wang & Wang 2016). The way people define themselves depends on how they interact with others (Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Researchers have identified two traditional spheres, Independent and Interdependent Self Construal (Singelis 1994). Markus and Kitayama (1991) identified Independent self-construal as a unitary, unique, and steady self that is distinguished from social aggregations. Individuals with stronger independent than interdependent self-construal are more concerned with the

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needs, goals, and expressions of themselves rather than those of others. They are especially aware of their self-images, such as who they are and want to be, what they should do, how they should behave, and so on. Consequently, they show less consideration about Others' requirements (Markus & Kitayama 1991). In contrast, an Interdependent Self-construal puts emphasis on belonging, fitting in, and promoting others' goals (Markus & Kitayama 1991). Thus, the motivation of interdependent self-construal individuals to accomplish tasks may reflect a desire to fit into the group or to meet its expectations. In fact, interdependent self-construal individuals may not regard it as appropriate to celebrate their own achievements without considering relevant others (Cheng & Lam 2013; Markus & Kitayama 1991; Tynan, Heath, Ennew, Wang, & Sun 2010). Further, they are likely to give higher attention to the other's needs than their own, especially when one's desire is conflicted the group desire (Qi 2000).

The differences of self-construal between Western and Eastern cultures was investigated in a variety of Cross cultural studies (e.g., Markus & Kitayama 1991; Geert & Jan 1991). The two types of construals differ in Eastern and Western cultures. Individuals in Eastern cultures tend to be more highly related and cooperative with larger social groups. Meanwhile, Western culture emphasizes the dispersion of persons from others. In addition, they tend to have separated identity from others as independence self-construal (Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus 2001).

Self- Construal Scale Development

Expanding on Markus and Kitayama's (1991) concept of self-construal, Singelis (1994) designed a measure of interdependent and independent self-construals. *First*, he checked some related scales. Individualism-Collectivism (INDCOL) Scale; Triandis, Leung, Villareal, and Clack's (1985) Idiocentrism- Allocentrism Scale; and Cross and Markus's (1991) Independent-Interdependent Self-Construal scale). *Second* Singelis (1994) verified and reviewed the psycho-metric properties of these scales. *Third*, he developed the original 12 independent items and 12 interdependent items together. *Fourth*, Singelis (1994) added six additional items to improve internal reliabilities of the original scale. Indeed, independent Cronbach Alpha reliabilities with the 15 items have been ranging from the 60's to the middle 70's. It is obvious that these reliabilities are adequate considering the broadness of the construct, and the wide range of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors assessed by the scale. Items more focused on a single aspect of the self would yield higher internal consistency, but would also threaten the validity of the measure (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand (1995). Singelis (1994) has identified the two factors of self-construal by using factor analysis and he has concluded that two-factor model is superior to a one-factor model. Then, Singelis has concluded that the divergent validity for the two factors was established (Qi 2000).

The present study tries to test the importance of being aware of the psychometric properties (reliability, validity) of Singelis's (1994) Self-Construal Scale in Egypt. The importance of using this scale with sound psychometrics properties cannot be assessed enough. While this scale is widely used, which does not mean that it is valid in different cultures or that it cannot

be improved. However, due to the factor that most of the hypotheses were supported, it is possible that SCS is a valid scale in different cultures, the present study will test comprised of construct, concurrent and predictive validity of SCS developed using samples from Egypt. Also, the internal consistency method will be approved, as it was the most recommended method.

METHOD

Participants

A total sample of 419 Egyptian undergraduate students (132 males, $M=19.81$, $SD =2.78$ years; 287 females, $M=19.13$, $SD =2.44$ years) from different programs from the Faculty of Arts (Arabic, Islamic Studies, and History).

Measures

1. Self-construal scale (SCS)²

The SCS (Singelis 1994) has been designed to measure independent and interdependent self-construal. The SCS contains the original 12 independent items (#s 1, 2, 9, 10, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 25, 27, and 29) and 12 interdependent items (#s 3,4,6,8,11,16,17,19,21,23,26, and 28) as a two factors solution was set. To score the scale each item is related on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7 strongly agree). Singelis has reported Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of 0.70 for the independent subscale and 0.74 for the interdependent subscale of Hawaii University students at Manoa (Singelis, 1994). He found that the two subscales are not significantly correlate $r =0.16$, $p > .05$ (Qi, 2000). Singelis 1994, added six additional items to improve the internal reliability of the original scale: independent (#s 5, 7, and 24) and interdependent (#s 12, 14, and 30) see (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995).

2. Individualism -Collectivism (IND-COL) Scale

The IND and COL Oyserman, (1993) have been measured with 10 item scales, respectively, following as a 5-point Likert-type format. Higher scores indicated more agreement with IND and COL where (0=strongly disagree and 4= strongly agree), Cronbach's alphas =0.63, 0.72 respectively. IND and COL scores were independent variables ($r=0.05$) (Oyserman, 1993). In IND-COL brief form of 5 items scales were used. Cronbach's alphas were 0.81, 0.72 respectively, and the internal consistency 0.68, 0.86 $p > .01$ respectively.

Procedure

The author translated both of the SCS and IND-COL from English into Arabic. Then, three Arabic speakers who are fluent in English and, resident in USA translated English versions into Arabic. The Arabic versions of the SCS and IND-COL were then translated back into English. The completed Egyptian versions were reevaluated by an Arabian academic who teaches the Arabic language to non-native speakers. The participants were undergraduate Egyptian students and they completed the SCS and IND-COL in their class room after the courses were finished by two assistants of the researcher. Then the researcher examined the responses of participants and ruled out the incomplete ones. Then the validity and reliability analysis of measures were examined using the statistics software program SPSS -18.

²I got the SCS and the permit of its translation to Arabic Language by contacting Dr. Singelis.

RESULTS

Construct Validity

The construct validity of SCS was examined by using the principal components factor analysis and Varimax rotation. It was found that, the screen plot of the factor analysis indicated a big drop after the second factor, hence the author preset a two-factor solution. To isolate the factors a minimum loading of 0.40 was used, where fifteen items were loaded on the first factor, and five items were loaded on the second factor. The retained of the two factors explained 24.36% of the variance by using the Varimax rotation.

Table 1 summarizes the factor analysis with the two factors solution of the SCS. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 5.26 and explained 17.37% of the variance. This factor included sixteen items that focus on the high values of social interaction (e.g. *"I feel good when I cooperate with others"* *"It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group"*). So this factor is named as interdependent self-construal. The second factor had an eigenvalue of 2.04, and explained 6.98% of the variance. This factor contained five items that focus on the personal preference to differentiate oneself from others (e.g. *"I try to do what is best for me, regardless of how that might affect others"* *"I do my own thing, regardless of what others think"*); this factor is coined as independent self-construal.

Concurrent validity and reliability

For Concurrent validity, Singelis, et al (1995), suggested that the SCS should be correlated with to IND-COL scale (Cozma, 2011). So, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between SCS and IND-COL. The results shown that the first factor (Interdependent SC) positively related to Collectivism ($r=0.16, p<.01$) but no significant relationship was found between the second factor (Independent SC) and Individualism. ($r=0.04$). For reliability of the Egyptian version of SC subscale internal consistency coefficients were calculated. The internal consistency coefficient of the interdependent and the independent SC were found as 0.89, 0.27 respectively ($p<.01, N=419$). In addition, Cronbach alphas were computed for each subscale. For the interdependent SC Cronbach alpha was 0.83 ($N=419$). For the Independent SC Cronbach's alpha was 0.46 ($N=419$), that is not reliable enough.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine the psychometric properties of the Interdependent-dependent SCS in the Egyptian environment. The result of factor structure showed that the Egyptian and the English forms of the SCS might be regarded as equivalent. Factor analysis showed two factors equivalent in the Egyptian. environment. The result of the first factor (Interdependent SC) as a general factor, in which 15 items were studied, is consistent with studies: (eg. Markus & Kitayama 1991; Hashimoto & Yamagishi 2013; Kolstad & Horpestad 2009; Ma, Yang, & Murali 2014; Akin, et al. 2010). Thus in Eastern cultures, such as Asia and Africa, the interdependent SC is higher prevalent where individuals have the belief that the human being is correlated with principals of social groups and the self is strongly associated with others. In addition, the second factor (Independent SC) dealt with 5 items and its result is consistent with (Oyserman, Coon & Kimmelmeier 2002; Singelis 1994) where

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they had stated that may be both of Interdependent and Independent self-construal exist among all the people in one culture. Moreover, the appearance of both dimensions (Inter-Ind SC) in the Egyptian environment does not necessarily mean a conflict in the results, it may be due to differences in the way of conducting the different studies, more than due to the differences in the process itself. On the other hand, this result is consistent with Singelis, 1994, that the two-factor model of SC scale was a better fit than the one-factor model. For concurrent validity, Person correlation coefficients between IND-COL and the Egyptian version of SC subscale were computed. Triandis&Singelis (1998) stated that if the SC scale had concurrent validity, collectivism will be positively related to Interdependent SC scale, and Individualism will be positively related to Independent SC scale. IND-COL scale as expected, Interdependent SCS was positively related with Collectivism. The internal consistency coefficient of the Interdependent SCS showed acceptable reliability. But there is no significant relationship was found between Independent SCS and Individualism. Therefore, the concurrent validity of the Independent SCS is in question. The lack of correlation between Independent SCS and Individualism is probably due to the weak validity of the IND-COL scale (Triandis& Singelis,1994) where they showed that, the scale used the words individualism and collectivism in the individual level. In addition, using student samples to test Self Construal across cultures do not find the “expected” patterns (Gudykunst, & Lee 2003).

Finally, according to the results, the SCS has been shown a sufficient validity and reliability that could be used in the Egyptian environment. Particularly, the Interdependent SCS which associated to interaction, cooperation, and social responsibility between people. It is obvious that the Independent SCS showed a lack of concurrent validity and hence further studies might be required on other samples rather than the university students. Furthermore, this study suggest that the different self-construal types may be associated with different personality variables as in ethnic groups. Finally, From the results, one could deduce that the two-dimensional self-construal scale has more precise conceptualization of self-construal not only in Egypt but in the Arab world.

Compliance with ethical Standards:

- 1- I declare that The author do not receive any funding
- 2- I declare that I do not have conflict of interest

For Ethical Approval

- 1- This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by the author
- 2- I have informed consent from all the individual participants included in this study

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Table 1: The factor analysis Result for Construal Scale (SCS) with two factor analysis

No.	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
1.	I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.		
2.	I can talk openly with a person, who I meet for the first time, even when this person is much older than I am.		
3.	Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid		.43
4.	I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.	.44	
5.	I do my own thing, regardless of what others think.		.53
6.	I respect people who are modest about themselves.	.62	
7.	I feel it is important for me to act as an independent person.		
8.	I will sacrifice myself interest for the benefit of the group I am in.	.41	
9.	I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.		
10.	Having a lively imagination is important to me.	.47	
11.	I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education /career plans.	.52	
12.	I feel my fate is intertwined with the fate of those around me.		
13.	I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.	.53	
14.	I feel good when I cooperate with others.	.63	
15.	I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.	.47	
16.	If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.	.50	
17.	I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.		
18.	Speaking up during a class (or a meeting) is not a problem for me.		.44
19.	I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor (or my boss).	.53	
20.	I act the same way no matter who I am with.	.44	
21.	My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.	.60	
22.	I value being in good health above everything.		

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23. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I am not happy with the group.	.47
24. I try to do what is best for me, regardless of how that might affect others.	.63
25. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.	.43
26. It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.	.59
27. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.	
28. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.	.61
29. I act the same way at home that I do at school (or work).	
30. I usually go along with what others want to do, even when I would rather do something different.	.51

Note. The retained factors explained 24.35 of the variance after the varimax rotation. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 5.26, and explained 17.37% of the variance. The second factor had an eigenvalue of 2.04, and explained 6.98% of the variance.

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