

REFINING THE MEASUREMENT OF SELF-LEADERSHIP: INCORPORATING COLLECTIVIST AND RELATIONSHIP VALUES*

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ABSTRACT

Although the measurement of self-leadership (RSLQ) has been developed and validated with samples from the US with promising reliability and construct validity, its generalizability to other non-western context is problematic. In order to enhance the generalizability of self-leadership theory to the Chinese context, the authors of this study extend the breadth of self-leadership dimensions and refine its measurement based on the cross-cultural theory about self-concept differences between individualism and collectivism. The reliability and construct validity of this refined self-leadership scale are explored using exploratory (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

INTRODUCTION

Self-leadership is a self-influence process through which people achieve the self-direction and self-motivation necessary to carry out tasks to reach desired goals (Manz, 1986; and Manz and Neck, 2004). Individuals differ in their practice of self-leadership strategies, and these differences can determine whether an individual performs well or fails in achieving their own goals (Manz, 1986; Neck and Manz, 1992, 1996; Prussia *et al.*, 1998; Stewart *et al.*, 1996). Recent research has sought to develop and validate a measure of self-leadership. Houghton and Neck (2002), using samples from the USA have developed a revised self-leadership questionnaire (RSLQ) with promising reliability and construct validity. However, its generalizability to other non-western context is problematic. Neubert and Wu's (2006) replication study found that RSLQ did not uniformly generalize to a Chinese context.

The purpose of this study is to address the cross-cultural application problem of self-leadership measurement in a non-western context. Based on cross-cultural theory about differences of individualism and collectivism, we refine the RSLQ so as to enhance the generalizability to a Chinese context. From this conceptual perspective we propose a number of modifications to the RSLQ. First, we expand the component dimensions of RLSQ by incorporating the concept of relationship building, which is conceptualised as more relevant for the Chinese culture (Alves et al, 2006). Second we carry out an exploratory factor analysis (n = 284) and refine our questionnaire by removing items that have low factor loadings or heavily cross-load with other inappropriate factors. Third, we use confirmatory factor analysis to examine the model fit and factorial structure of the data of the modified RSLQ scale in a second

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validation study ($n = 285$). Implications of the scale improvement are discussed, and a future research agenda is proposed.

METHOD

Participants

Participants in the study were a sample of 590 Associate degree local Chinese students of one community college in Hong Kong undertaking management studies. The whole data set was randomly split into two halves. One half constituted the calibration sample used for exploratory factor analysis (sample 1: $n = 284$; 44 percent male, 56 percent female) and the other half constituted the validation sample using confirmatory factor analysis (Sample 2: $n = 285$; 43 percent male, 57 percent female). Mean age in both samples was 20. The questionnaires were completed anonymously and participation was voluntary.

RESULTS

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory factor analysis of the modified RSLQ yielded 12 factors (with eigenvalues >1) that explained 64% of the variance. One factor was eliminated because it was not interpretable as it did not make any conceptual sense. All the remaining 11 factors loaded in a pattern broadly consistent with our theoretical expectation. Nine of these remaining 11 factors were the same as the original nine factors identified by Houghton and Neck's (2002) using a U.S. sample. In addition two factors were represented by our newly developed measures of relation-based natural rewards and relation-based evaluation of beliefs and assumptions. However, task-based and relation-based self-observation items however, merged with the original task-based items to form a single factor.

Three components - task-based natural rewards, task and relation-based self-observation and individual-oriented evaluation of beliefs and assumptions, showed substantial increases in coefficient alphas from the original RSLQ scale.

To examine the stability of the 11-factor solution derived from exploratory factor analyses, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis on the 38-items modified RSLQ using the second Chinese student sub-sample ($n = 285$). We tested two models. The first model was our hypothesized eleven-factor model found in the EFA, in which each of the items was constrained to load on its respective latent variable. The second model was a one-factor model, in which all of the items were constrained to load on one latent variable. Table 3 presents the fit statistics for the two models. The one-factor model fit the data poorly as

none of the fit indices approached an acceptable level, χ^2 (781, N = 284) = 3,089.85, $p < 0.0001$ ($\chi^2/df = 3.96$, IFI = 3.96, TLI = .44, CFI = .47, RSMEA = .1). The eleven-factor hypothesized model provided a much better fit, as indicated by all fit indices, χ^2 (741, N = 284) = 1,009.52, $p < .001$ ($\chi^2/df = 1.65$, IFI = .9, TLI = .88, CFI = .90, RSMEA = .05). Four out of six fit indices reached their respective recommended levels of acceptable, indicating that this 11-factor model fitted the data well. The chi-square difference test also revealed that the one-factor model was significantly worse than the hypothesized model, $\Delta\chi^2$ (56, N = 284) = 2,080.23, $p < 0.001$. All items of the hypothesized model loaded significantly ($p < .05$) on the anticipated factors.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide support for the validity and reliability of this modified version of RSLQ as an acceptable measure of self-leadership skills and behaviors within a Chinese sample. Exploratory factor analysis showed eleven interpretable factor structure which represented distinct self-leadership dimensions as specified by self-leadership theory. Two expanded dimensions proposed for the modified RSLQ, relation-based natural rewards and social-oriented evaluation of beliefs and assumptions, consistently emerged in two independent student samples. In addition, task-based and relation-based self-observation items merged together to form one factor, suggesting that in Chinese culture, task-based self-observation cannot be separated with relation-based self-observation. Reliability estimates for the refined version of 38-item RSLQ improved significantly or remained relatively stable in comparison to Houghton and Neck's (2002) original 35-item RSLQ. This study contributes to the self-leadership by extending the theoretical breadth of self-leadership by incorporating the features of interpersonal relation into self-leadership theory.

REFERENCES

A full reference list and questionnaire is available from the second author.