Does Deviation from a Balanced Time Perspective Mediate Social Anxiety and Mental Health?

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Abstract
This research assessed associations between social anxiety and mental health with deviation from a balanced time perspective (individuals’ perception of the past, present, and future time frames) as a potential mediator. It was hypothesized that more deviation from a balanced time perspective would help explain the link between more social anxiety and worse mental health.

Method: Participants were 306 undergraduates (80.4% female; 91.5% Caucasian) who completed online surveys. Social anxiety was assessed using the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (Fergus et al., 2012), mental health was assessed using a modified version of the SF-12 Health Survey (Ware et al., 1996), and deviation from a balanced time perspective was assessed using the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Results: Partial correlations (controlling for age and sex) indicated that more social anxiety was related to worse mental health (r = -.47, p < .001). Mediation analyses revealed that more social anxiety was related to deviation from balance (beta = -.37***), and more deviation from balance was related to worse mental health (beta = -.25***). Overall, these findings suggest that clinicians could emphasize the importance of finding balance between individuals’ views of the past, present, and future, as this may help decrease social anxiety and improve mental health.

Background
Social anxiety
- Fear about social situations (DSM-5) e.g., having a conversation meeting people, etc.

Previous research
- More social anxiety is related to worse mental health (Gren-Landell et al., 2013)

Hypothesis
- It is predicted that more deviation from a balanced time perspective will explain why more social anxiety is related to worse mental health.

Participants
Cross-sectional Design
- N = 306 Undergraduates
- 91.5% Caucasian
- 80.4% Female
- Mean age: 22.62 years (SD = 7.16)

Instruments
Social Anxiety
- Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS; Fergus et al., 2012)
  - e.g., “I feel tense if along with one other person.”
  - Rated: 1 = None of the time; 5 = All of the time
  - M = [___] (SD = [___]); α = .86

Mental Health
- Modified SF-12 Health Survey (Ware et al., 1996)
  - e.g., “How much of the time during the past 4 weeks have you felt calm and peaceful?”
  - Rated: 1 = None of the time; 5 = All of the time
  - M = [___] (SD = [___]); α = [___]

Preliminary Analyses
Preliminary results
- Older individuals reported significantly less social anxiety; r (304) = [___]; p < [___]
- Females (M = [___]) reported more social anxiety than did males (M = [___]); t (304) = [___]; p < [___]
- Therefore, all analyses control for age and sex.

Statistical requirement
- The three main study variables must be related to each other before conducting mediation analyses.
  1. More social anxiety is related to worse mental health (r = [___]).
  2. More social anxiety is related to more deviation from a balanced time perspective (r = [___]).
  3. More deviation from a balanced time perspective is related to worse mental health (r = [___]).

Results
Research question
- Does deviation from a balanced time perspective mediate the relationship between social anxiety and mental health?

Conclusions
Overall Conclusion
- Deviation from a balanced time perspective helps to explain why more social anxiety is related to worse mental health.

Clinical Implications
- Clinicians could emphasize the importance of finding balance between individuals’ views of the past, present, and future, particularly for those who report social anxiety, as finding balance may help improve their mental health.

Study Limitations and Future Directions
Homogeneous sample
- Primarily female, Caucasian undergraduate students
- Future research should include a more diverse sample to improve generalizability

Research design
- Cross-sectional analyses limit causal interpretation
- Longitudinal research would help clarify relationships

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Results
- More deviation from a balanced time perspective mediates the relationship between social anxiety and mental health (Path c': beta = -25***)

Path Diagram
- Deviation from a Balanced Time Perspective
- Social Anxiety
- Mental Health
- Path a = .60***
- Path b = -.20***
- Path c = .25***
- Path c' = -.25***

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