SOME ASPECTS OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF BELIEFS IN A JUST WORLD QUESTIONNAIRE

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The study was conducted to translate and evaluate some aspects of reliability and validity of translated Beliefs in a Just World Questionnaire, consisting of General Belief in a Just World Scale (Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987) and Personal Belief in a Just World Scale (Dalbert, 1999). It was hypothesized that the Urdu version of the questionnaire would consist of the same two factors as observed in other studies and the two reliable just world scales could be built. The administration of the Urdu version of the questionnaire on female college teachers of Lahore *(N = 134)* of ages 23 to 59 years provided support for the two dimensions of Belief in a Just World Scale. Cronbach's alpha for Personal Belief in a Just World Scale was .93 and for General Belief in a Just World Scale was .66. Furthermore endorsement of personal belief in a just world was significantly higher than general belief in a just world.

All over the world interest of the psychologists in role of various aspects of cognitions affecting human beings in different ways is increasing. One of the much cognitive strength that has been recognized recently, is the drive for justice. Although the concept of justice has been one of the major concerns for human beings since the very beginning, subjective aspects of justice have been quite ignored by the psychologists. Melvin. J. Lerner was the first to introduce the Justice motive theory (Lerner, 1975),

which states that individuals are motivated to believe that the world is a just place, that is, people get what they deserve and what they get. This motive guides human behavior and thinking. It is a cognitive schema which fulfils the purpose of describing the world as a meaningful place to live in, which in turn provides the foundation for meaningful action in the world. Belief in a just world (BJW) is indicative of justice motive. Individuals high in BJW endeavor to establish justice and compensate injustice, and feel obliged to behave fairly.

Two aspects of just world beliefs have been identified recently (Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996) including beliefs that the world is a just place in general, and the belief that world is particularly just for the individual him or herself. General belief in a just world is the belief that on the whole people get what they deserve and they deserve what they get. First Belief in

Just World Scale to measure general BJW was developed by Rubin and Peplau (1975). Although this scale has been widely used, it has been criticized for its multidimensionality and poor psychometric properties (Whatley, 2000). Recognizing the need for better scale Dalbert, Montada, and Schmitt (1987), and Lipkus (1991) developed comparable General BJW and Global BJW scales respectively. Both of these scales are one-dimensional measuring the individual's belief that the world is just in general. The second type of belief is called personal belief in a just world. This is the belief that world is just for the self. Lerner (1975) was the first who alluded to the importance of distinction between general and personal beliefs in a just world by discussing that people follow different rules of justice when they deal with people with whom they can identify themselves, who are similar to them and those who are perceived as out groups. Dalbert and Yamauchi (1994), Furnham and Procter (1989), and Hafer and Olson (1993) also hinted towards self versus other distinction. Lipkus, Dalbert, and Siegler (1996) attempted to develop a separate measure to assess BJW for self as distinguished from general belief in a just world. Consequently Personal Belief in a Just World Scale (Dalbert, 1999) was developed. Although used in relatively few researches, this scale has been used successfully to demonstrate the importance of personal BJW for various aspects of mental health (Dalbert, 2001).

Dalbert incorporated the General Belief in a Just World Scale (Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987) and Personal Belief in a Just world Scale (Dalbert, 1999) in Beliefs in a Just World Questionnaire (Dalbert, 2000). General Belief in a Just World Scale has demonstrated satisfactory levels of internal reliability measured with Cronbach's alpha (Dalbert, 1999; Dalbert, et al. 1987; Dalbert & Yamauchi, 1994; Lipkus et al. 1996) ranging from .66 to .88. The Personal Belief in a Just World Scale also demonstrated a good level of internal reliability, ranging from .82 to .87 (Dalbert, 1999). Furthermore, the two factor structure of Beliefs in a Just World Questionnaire has been observed in four questionnaire studies (Dalbert, 1999), with a total of 632 male and female adult subjects, with one factor underlying general just world items and another factor underlying personal just world items. Moreover individuals were more convinced of a personal compared to a general belief in a just world. Similar findings were reported by Cubela and Ivanov (2000), and Cubela, Prorokovic, and Gregov (1999). Two other studies (Dalbert & Radant, 2004; Dalbert & Dzuka, 2004) provide the evidence for differentiation between personal and general belief in a just world in adolescences using the same scales. A more recent study confirms the discriminant validity of Personal Belief in a Just World Scale versus General Belief in a Just World Scale by reporting the regression analyses which showed that personal but not general BJW was

negatively associated with anxiety, depression and general psychological distress (Otto, Boos, Dalbert, Schöps, & Hoyer, in press)

Present study was an attempt to translate this questionnaire in Urdu and to check its factorial structure and the alpha reliability of the scales. It was hypothesized that Urdu version of Beliefs in a Just World Questionnaire would consist of the two factors, namely personal and general belief in a just world, that two internally consistent just world scales could be formed and that individuals more strongly endorsed the personal compared to the general belief in a just world.

Method

Sample

Sample consisted of 134 female college teachers of Lahore. Their ages ranged from 23 to 59 years (M = 41.98, SD = 8.60). At the time of research they were teaching at one of the ten colleges, randomly selected from a list of 27 government colleges for women in Lahore. Both science and arts teachers were included. There were 64 lecturers, 48 assistant professors and, 22 associate professors in the sample.

Instrument

Beliefs in a Just World Questionnaire (Dalbert, 1999) consisting of 13 items, seven items measuring personal belief in a just world and six items measuring general belief in a just world was translated into Urdu. The questionnaire along with instructions and response categories was given to the four bilingual persons (3 psychologists; 1 student of M. Phil in Urdu) for translation into Urdu, each working independently. The translators were not given any specific instruction as to whether to aim for literal or free translation. From these translations, two independent judges selected in cooperation the most suitable ones, in terms of their resemblance with expression conveyed by the English items, and in terms of understandability. They worked item by item to select most suitable translations. The new Urdu text was sent to four other bilinguals (1 psychologist; 3 teachers of English), who were requested to back translate it into English. Each item was then evaluated to determine whether the precise meaning of the items in the original version had been successfully conveyed. All the back translations conveyed the same meaning as conveyed by the English version of the questionnaire. The new Urdu version was used in the present study. All items were positively stated. They had to be responded in one of the six response categories ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6) on a Likert type rating scale.

Procedure

Teachers were contacted in their colleges with the prior permission of their principals. Only those teachers

were asked to fill the questionnaire who were free at that time and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. After taking verbal consent from them, the Urdu version of Belief in a Just World Questionnaire with instructions on the top and a demographic questionnaire along with a cover letter mentioning the name of researcher and introducing the research topic as "Beliefs of people" were given to the teachers individually. The study was conducted as a part of another study which included other questionnaires as well. Teachers were asked to read the instructions carefully and respond to each item one by one according to the given instructions. Following instructions were given to them. "Below you will find various statements. There are six response categories for each statement ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Read each statement carefully and decide to what extent you personally agree or disagree with it. Circle the number which corresponds to this judgment. Make sure you circle a number for every statement. There is no right or wrong answer so respond as you feel." The time taken by the teachers to complete the questionnaire varied from five to ten minutes.

Results

In order to determine the factorial structure of Beliefs in a Just World Questionnaire, method of Principal Components extraction with varimax rotation was used. Two eigen values greater than 1 emerged i.e., 6.11; 1.20. Two factors were extracted. Varimax rotated factor loadings are presented in the Table 1.

Items with factor loading of at least .40 were used to characterize each factor and were included in the scales. The results can be summarized as follows: Item 11 had to be excluded from the questionnaire because of the factor loading of less than .40 at both factors. As item 3 has almost equal loadings on the two factors it had also to be excluded in order to avoid overlap between both factors. Out of remaining 11 items, 7 items belonging to the original Personal BJW scale characterized factor 1, and 4 items of the original General BJW Scale typified factor 2. This factor structure was in close confirmation with the factor structure of original questionnaire. Factors were labeled as the original scales included in the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha of both scales are also depicted in Table 1 which indicates high reliability for the Personal BJW Scale and moderate reliability for General BJW Scale Means, standard deviations, and item-total correlations were also calculated for each item. As table 2 shows, means of items of General Belief in a Just World Scale range from 3.26 to 4.36 and means of Personal Belief in a Just World Scale range from 4.07 to 4.38. Item total correlations of all items in both scales are significant at $\alpha = .01$.

Mean of scores on each scale (sum of scores divided by number of items) was used as scale value following Cubela and Ivanov (2000);

Cubela, Prorokovic, and Gregov (1999); and Dalbert (1999). The use of mean values instead of total score has been recommended by Cohen and Cohen (1983) for various analyses. Items 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 12, and 13 (7 items) were averaged to form the Personal BJW scale and items 1, 6, 8, and 9 (4 items) were included in General BJW scale. Higher values indicated

Table 1

Varimax Rotated Principal Components of Beliefs in a Just World Questionnaire (N = 134)

Items	Components	
	Personal BJW	General BJW
1. I think basically the world is a just place.	.31	.56*
2. I believe, by and large, I deserve what happens to me.	.75*	.12
3. I believe, by and large, people get what they deserve.	.49	.42
4. I am usually treated fairly.	.80*	.28
5. I believe I usually get what I deserve.	.82*	.16
6. I firmly believe that injustice in all areas of life (e.g., professional, family, politics) are the exception rather than the rule.	.16	.76*
7. Overall events in my life are just.	.74*	.31
8. I am convinced that in the long run people will be compensated for injustices.	.07	.72*
9. I think people try to be fair when making important decisions.	.32	.56*
10. In my life injustice is the exception rather than the rule.	.77*	.29
11. I am confidant that justice always prevails over injustice.	.35	.26
12. I believe that most of things that happen in my life are fair.	.88*	.24
13. I think that important decisions that are made concerning me are usually just.	.83*	.26
Eigen values	6.28	1.20
% of variance	48.28	9.23
α	.93	.66

Note: BJW = Belief in a Just World

*Item retained in the scale

Table 2

Item Analyses of PBJW and GBJW Scales

Item Content	M	SD	r_{it}
GBJW Scale			
I think basically the world is a just place**.**	3.59	1.30	.68*
I firmly believe that injustice in all areas of life (e.g., professional, family, politics) are the exception rather than the rule.	3.26	1.39	.69*
I am convinced that in the long run people will be compensated for injustices.	4.36	1.41	.73*
I think people try to be fair when making important decisions.	3.92	1.25	.43*
PBJW Scale			
I believe, by and large, I deserve what happens to me.	4.07	1.33	.76*
I am usually treated fairly.	4.10	1.21	.85*
I believe I usually get what I deserve.	4.38	1.19	.83*
Overall events in my life are just.	4.07	1.17	.82*
In my life injustice is the exception rather than the rule.	4.25	1.12	.82*
I believe that most of things that happen in my life are fair.	4.30	1.08	.90*
I think that important decisions that are made concerning me are usually just.	4.19	1.19	.88*

*p < .01.

higher belief in a just world and lower values indicated lower belief in a just world in respective scales.

Means, standard deviation and *t*-value for Personal and General Belief in a Just World Scales were also calculated as given in table 4. Both just world beliefs significantly differed. Female teachers more strongly endorsed the personal compared to gen eral belief in a just world. Correlation between the two scales is .56

Table 3

Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value for Personal and General Beliefs in a Just World Scores of Female College Teachers (N = 134)

Beliefs in a Just World	M	SD	t
Personal	4.21	.99	5.18*
General	3.78	.94	

*p < .001.

Discussion

The administration of the Urdu version of Belief in a Just World Questionnaire on female college teachers of Lahore provided support for the two separable dimensions of belief in a just world, thus confirming the results of the study by Dalbert (1999).

Personal belief in a just world scale has shown to be more internally consistent with alpha of .93 in present sample than reported in studies with original version (Dalbert, 1999). Although reliability reported for General belief in a just world scale (α = .66) is in minimum range of what has been reported in earlier studies, keeping in view the small number of items (n = 4) this seems to be quite satisfactory.

Although in sum a good replication of former studies with other versions of the Belief in a Just World Questionnaire and conducted in other cultures, the results concerning the General BJW cast doubt on the suitability of items as a measure of general belief in a just world in the present sample. Compared to personal BJW, less variance were explained by this second factor, the internal consistency, although satisfactory, was lower, and most importantly it were two items from General BJW Scale which had to be dropped. Item 3 ("I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve") revealed high loading on the two factors. One reason for that seems to be that this item was presented just after the item 2 (I believe that, by and large, I deserve what happens to me) from Personal Belief

in a Just World Scale. The similarity of the wording of the two items might have caused confusion in the minds of respondents regarding whether the two items mean the same or different. Thus it is suggested that in future studies instead of excluding item 3, should present this item at a different place in the questionnaire. Item 11 (I am confidant that justice always prevails over injustice) got loading of less than .4 on both factors. Looking carefully we find that the other items of the General Belief in a Just World Scale are about belief in justice "in general", for example item no.1 "I think generally there is justice in the world." On the other hand item no.11 is about permanence of justice. "I am confidant that justice always prevails over injustice". If "always" is replaced with "most of the time" quite different results can be obtained.

Although the correlation between the two scales is moderate, the female college teachers endorsed personal belief in just world more than general belief in a just world. This finding is in line with previous researches (Cubela, & Ivanov, 2000; Cubela et al., 1999; and Dalbert, 1999). It not only confirms the discriminant validity of personal belief in a just world against general belief in a just world but also supports the rationale behind the distinction between personal and general beliefs in a just world according to which people follow different rules of justice when they deal with the people with whom they can identify themselves and those who are perceived as out groups (Lerner,

1975). This distinction is also implied in the studies of Lipkus and Siegler (1993), Messik, Bloom, Boldizar, and Samuelson (1985), and Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, and Lalonde (1990).

This finding also implies that justice is considered more important for oneself than for others. One explanation can be that human beings' survival is based on their concern with their selves. Individuals socialize with others and care for others in order to serve their own selves, one way or another. So if belief in a just world is considered a need; the need for justice for one's own self, and need to believe that one is treated fairly should be even higher.

One possible reason for higher personal belief in a just world as compared to general belief in a just world can be that when people compare themselves to others, on subjective and socially desirable characteristics, they see themselves as better than average (Myers, 1999). This is especially so when comparing one self to people in general than to known individuals (Alicke, Klotz, Breitenbecher, Yurak, & Vredenburg, 1995).

Overall the two scales of Belief in a Just World Questionnaire seem to be short and easily administered reliable and valid measures of personal and general beliefs in a just world of female college teachers. The two factor structure and the significant mean difference support the divergent validity of both scales. Item nos. 3 and 13 need to be handled carefully in future studies to get better results. To gener-

alize the results to a larger population, inclusion of male sample and people of different categories of society is strongly recommended. Future studies should more closely examine the differential meaning and impact of the personal compared to the general belief in a just world. The Urdu version of Beliefs in a Just World Questionnaire will be quite helpful in measuring the phenomenon thus examining the relevance of the concept in our culture and its relationship with other important psychological variables.

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