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Journal or publication title: Bulletin of the Graduate School, Toyo University

Volume: 52

Page range: 33-38

Year: 2015

URL: http://id.nii.ac.jp/1060/00008722/

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Examining the nature of ‘shoulds’ within personal standards of perfectionism

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This study aimed to examine the nature of ‘shoulds’ within personal standards of perfectionism. One-hundred-and-sixty undergraduate students in a Japanese college participated in this study. The total sample consisted of 67 men and 92 women (one unknown) with the mean age of 21.3 (SD = 0.80). The participants completed the Should–Personal Standard Scale (S-PSS) and Want–Personal Standard Scale (W–PSS), which were developed for this study, Self–rating Depression Scale (SDS; Zung, 1965), and Rosenberg Self–Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965). Multiple regression analysis revealed that S-SP and W-PS had a different effect. It is implied that ‘shoulds’ diminishes the positive effect of personal standards of perfectionism.

**Key words**: irrational belief, perfectionism, depression, self-esteem

Some clinicians have described the nature of ‘shoulds’, and noted that the ‘shoulds’ is associated with psychological problems. For example, Horney (1950) described ‘the tyranny of the shoulds,’ and noted that it was related to many psychological problems. Ellis (1962) regarded the irrational belief including imperatives like ‘must,’ ‘should’ and ‘ought’ as dysfunctional.

The concept of ‘shoulds’ is thought to associate with perfectionism. There have been many arguments concerning the definition of perfectionism (e.g., Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Hewitt, Flett, Besser, Sherry, & McGee, 2003; Shafran, Cooper, & Fairburn, 2002; Shafran & Mansell, 2001; Slade, & Owens, 1998), and it can be considered that perfectionism contains the ‘shoulds’ nature in part. Although the tendency to set excessively high personal standards (Personal Standard; PS), which is the essential component of perfectionism is not necessarily showed negative effect, PS is also assumed to include ‘shoulds’ nature. However, a scale to assess PS in early studies include both items assessing ‘shoulds’ tendency and items assessing no ‘shoulds’ tendency. When taking into

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account the nature of ‘shoulds.’ PS that only includes ‘shoulds’ nature may not have a positive effect.

This study aims to clarify the nature of ‘shoulds’ by empirically investigating the differences between ‘Should-PS’ and ‘Want-PS,’ with relationships to depression and self-esteem. In this study, when a person sets a high personal standard because he/she feels pursued to (or should), the author calls such PS ‘Should-PS (S-PS).’ On the other hand, when a person sets high personal standards only because he/she ‘wants to,’ the author calls it ‘Want-PS (W-PS).’ It is hypothesized that these two PSs may have different effect. That is, Should-PS may be maladaptive while Want-PS may be adaptive.

Method
Participants
One-hundred-and-sixty undergraduate students majoring psychology and education in a Japanese college participated in this study. The total sample consisted of 67 men and 92 women (one unknown) with the mean age of 21.3 (SD = 0.80). All participants voluntary participated and thier anonymity was guaranteed.

Measures
The participants completed the S-PS Scale (S-PSS), W-PS Scale (W-PSS), Self-rating Depression Scale (SDS; Zung, 1965), and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965).

S-PSS and W-PSS each consists of seven items generated from the scales developed in previous studies assessing the tendency to set high personal standards (e.g., Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale [Frost et al., 1990], Burn’s Perfectionism Scale [Burn, 1980]). The expression of the items was modified for the present study to capture two aspects of PS separately. Each scale is rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree.

The SDS (Zung, 1965) is a 20-item self-report scale, and each item is rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 = None or a little of the time to 4 = Most or all of the time. The SDS measures the degree of depression.

The RSE (Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item self-report scale, and each item is rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 4 = Strongly agree. The RSE measures the degree of global self-esteem.
Results

Development of S-PSS and W-PSS

First, seven items were prepared for each scale, and then, three items were eliminated based on the Cronbach’s $\alpha$, item-total correlation, and stepwise exploratory factor analysis. Thus, each scale consisted of four items that assessed S-PS and W-PS (e.g., S-PSS includes “I should always have competitive spirit” and W-PSS includes “I want to achieve as a high standards as possible”). The mean score, standard deviation, and Cronbach’s $\alpha$ of each scale were shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S-PSS</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W-PSS</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although the correlation coefficient $r$ between S-PSS and W-PSS was .44, an exploratory factor analysis revealed the divergence of S-PS and W-PS. Furthermore, a confirmatory factor analysis using Structural Equation Modeling techniques showed that the fit indices of two factor model were better than those of one factor model (Table 2). Lastly, a path coefficient of each item was larger than .55. Therefore, it is considered that these scales have good psychometric properties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>AIC</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one factor model</td>
<td>.886</td>
<td>.796</td>
<td>.626</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two factor model</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>.950</td>
<td>.325</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

The fit indices of one factor model and two factor model using Structural Equation Modeling ($N=160$)

Different effects of ‘Should-PS’ and ‘Want-PS’ on depression and self-esteem

To clarify the difference between S-PS and W-PS, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The scores of S-PSS, W-PSS, and their interaction were entered as predictors,
and the score of SDS and the score of RSE were entered as dependent variables.

Table 3 showed the results of the multiple regression analysis. W-PSS predicted SDS positively and significantly ($\beta = -.34$), but S-PSS and the interaction didn’t. Moreover, W-PSS predicted RSE negatively and significantly ($\beta = .31$), but S-PSS and the interaction didn’t. Thus, S-SP and W-PS showed a different effect.

Table 3
The results of multiple regression analysis in which SDS and RSE as dependent variables, S-PSS, W-PSS, and interaction of S-PSS x W-PSS were entered as predictors ($N=160$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SDS</th>
<th>RSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.09 **</td>
<td>.08 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-PSS (A)</td>
<td>.21 n.s.</td>
<td>-.19 n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W-PSS (B)</td>
<td>-.34 ***</td>
<td>.31 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A x B</td>
<td>-.01 n.s.</td>
<td>.01 n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Discussion

This study aimed to clarify the nature of ‘shoulds’ by empirically investigating the differences between Should_PS and Want_PS, along with their relationships to depression and self-esteem. The results indicated that Want_PS was positive and adaptive while Should_PS was neither positive nor adaptive. From these results, it may be considered that ‘shoulds’ diminishes the positive effect of personal standards of perfectionism.

This study has several limitations. This study investigated the nature of ‘shoulds’ by examining the differences between Should_PS and Want_PS only. Although S-PS did not clearly relate to depression and self-esteem in this study, ‘shoulds’ in other concepts may relate to depression and self-esteem. For example, ‘Concern over Mistakes,’ which is one of the important components of perfectionism, may clearly show the maladaptive effect of ‘shoulds.’ In addition, it may be useful to examine the concept ‘shoulds’ not only in the framework of perfectionism. Studies examining ‘shoulds’ within other concepts may be helpful to clarify the nature of ‘shoulds.’ It may contribute to treatment for psychopathology.
References


Note

This paper is presented at World Congress of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies 2004.
「べき」の性質
——完全主義の「高目標を掲げる傾向」を扱った検討——

社会学研究科社会学専攻博士後期課程修了
鈴木 公啓

本研究は、「べき」の性質について、完全主義の一つでありポジティブな側面を有しているとされる「高目標を掲げる傾向（Personal Standards; PS）」を扱い実証的に明らかにすることを目的とした。大学生160名（男子67名、女子92名、不明1名。平均21.3歳）を対象に、Should-PS Scale、Want-PS Scale、日本語版Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scaleおよび日本語版Self-rating Depression Scaleを実施した。重回帰分析の結果、両者は異なった性質を有していることが明らかになった。「べき」が、PSのポジティブな側面を抑制していることが示唆されたといえる。

キーワード：不合理な信念、完全主義、抑うつ、自尊感情