Weisz Communication Styles Inventory (WCSI-Version 1.0): Development and Validation

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We all communicate differently and have different needs in meeting. Managers often find it helpful to have a model for recognizing different communication styles of people within organizational settings. By having an insight into the communication styles of employees, as well as their predominant needs, a manager may be better able to detect and resolve dysfunctional behaviours. Unfortunately, there has been a lack of a psychometrically sound yet practically short communication styles measure for management research. The purpose of this study was to develop such a measure and provide evidence concerning its validity.

Borrowed heavily from child development theories, we proposed that (a) there are certain set of needs which children express and desire to satisfy during different stages of their development—affectation during infancy, attention during toddlerhood, structure and limits during preschool, and esteem during middle childhood; (b) the same set of needs, one way or other, predominantly guide human behavior during adulthood; (c) people from their childhood relational experiences and satisfaction and non-satisfaction of these needs, develop cognitive representations, or internal working models, that consist of specific ways of expressing and satisfying these needs; (d) people mainly use four psychological languages or communication styles for satisfying their different set of needs, that is, relationships (R) for affection, ideas (I) for attention, structures (S) for confirmation, and values (V) for esteem; and finally (e) the frequent use of any particular psychological language or communication style depends on the importance of certain set of needs for an individual.

Construction of the communication styles inventory (CSI) occurred in three major phases. In the first phase of constructing the scale, we generated a pool of 152 short phrases and adjectives organized in 38 frames of four choices each. Each choice within each frame reflected an adaptive tendency towards a particular communication style (i.e., R, I, S, or V). Respondents selected a forced choice option of “most-like me” (one choice among the four). To explore the inherent structure of the 38-item scale the Multiple Correspondence Analysis-MCA method was applied to the response data set of N= 1453. Initial visualization of joint plot of category points and discrimination indices revealed that 23 items performed poorly in discriminating among the item options or styles. Thus, these 23 items were dropped from further analysis and we continued with a set of remaining 15 items. The Cronbach alph, based on optimal scaling technique, revealed to be .81 for the set of 15 items. In the second step, we subjected the response patterns on the items to latent class cluster analysis (LCA). The major goal of LCA is to determine the number of latent classes R-in this case, communication styles- that are necessary to account for the association that exists among the manifest variables. Theoretically, if our 15-items scale discriminates well among the four communication styles (R, I, S, V), we might expect to see a four cluster solution. Latent class models were tested for 1 to 6 groups of latent classes. LCA results clearly supported a four class solution representing four communication styles.

To establish the construct validity of the communication styles inventory, another study was conducted to test the relationships between scores on communication styles inventory with other established constructs, that is, the Big Five personality dimensions and emotional intelligence. Participants of this study included 228 students from two nonnative English speaking national cultures: 101 from a university in Aix-en-Provence, France (45 males, 56 females), and 127 from a large university in the province of Balochistan, Pakistan (78 males and 48 females, one unreported). Results indicated that 15-items communication styles inventory is related to but yet different from the Big Five personality dimensions and emotional intelligence.