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 worse mental health (beta = -.37***), and to more deviation from balance (beta = .60***). More deviation from a balanced time perspective was also related to worse mental health (beta = -.20***). Further, mediation analyses revealed that social anxiety was related to worse mental health by way of the mediator, deviation from a balanced time perspective (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 = SD; 5 = SA
- 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 = ___

Deviation from a Balanced Time Perspective
- Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory
- (ZTPI; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999)
- e .g., "I get nostalgic about my childhood."
- Rated: 1 = very untrue; 5 = very true
- DBTP formula:
$$\sqrt{(oPN - ePN)^2 + (oPP - ePP)^2 + (oPF - ePF)^2 + (oPH - ePH)^2 + (oF - eF)^2}$$
- Lower scores indicate more balanced time perspectives
- Sample mean = 4.21 (*SD* = 1.45)

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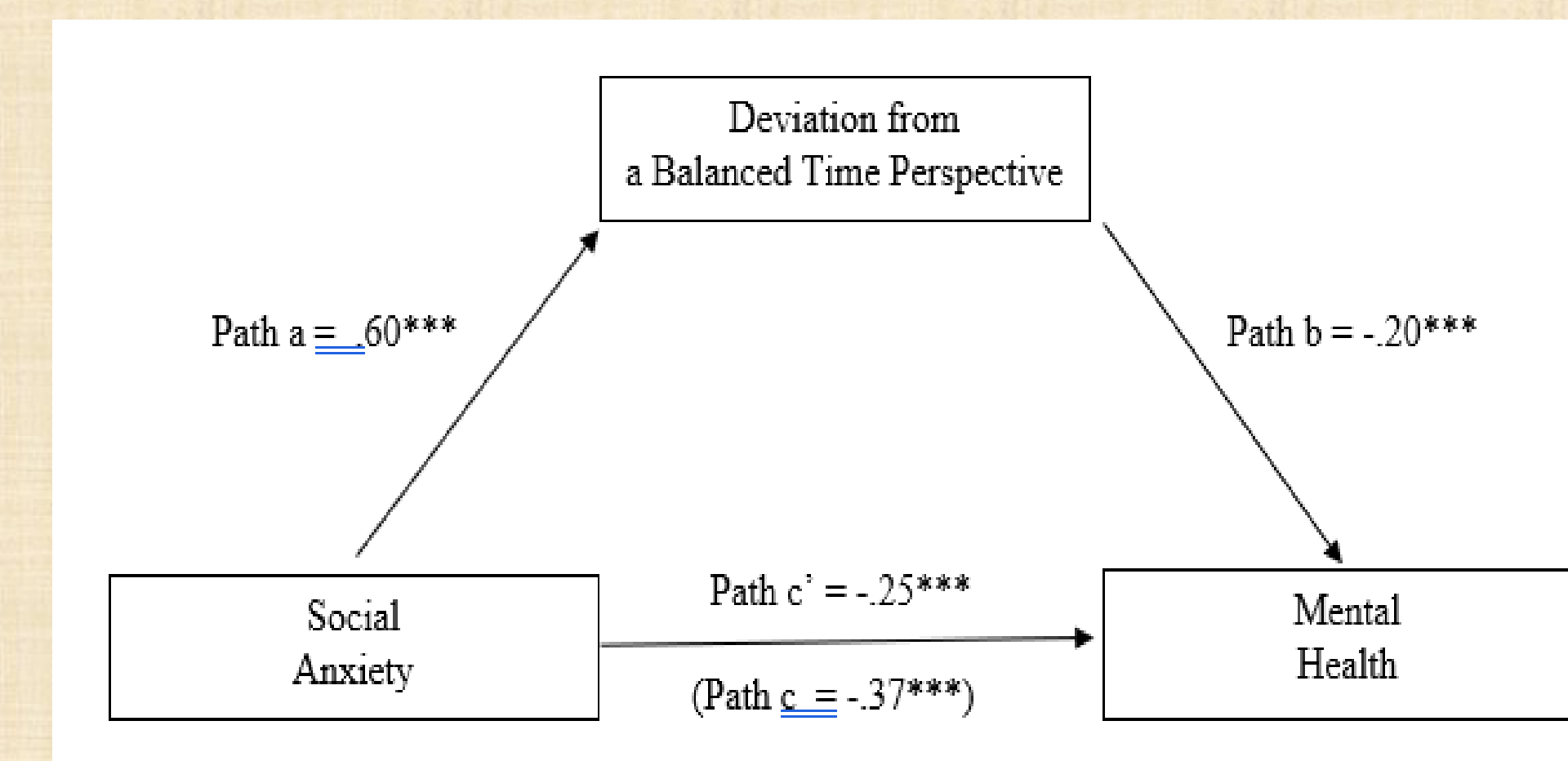
Results
- More deviation from a balanced time perspective mediates the relationship between social anxiety and mental health
        (Path c': beta = -25***)

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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