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Title of Research Project: The Vulnerability to be Loved Scale: Scale Development and Initial Validation

Abstract

Vulnerability to be loved (VL) is how open someone is to love; this study examined a new measure of this. Participants in two samples (N=309) completed the VL scale and measures of compassionate love, self-esteem, well-being, (to examine convergent validity) and social desirability (to examine discriminant validity). The factor analyses suggest two facets of VL: Conceal Self and Openness to Intimate Relationships. Correlational results showed VL scores were positively related to all other measured variables.

Reflection Essay

This project started out as a requirement for my Research Methods and Statistics class. It was in that class I really began to utilize the library’s resources. From the start I knew I wanted to study love in its deepest most authentic form. I was not thinking along the lines of romance. I wanted to study a deeper, intrinsic love that I believe to exist at the core of every human being. I had some trouble finding relevant research at first. It seemed to me like prior research was afraid to get as intimate as I wanted to go. In class we were taught how to set search parameters in PsycINFO’s advanced search to specify peer reviewed, date ranges, and empirical articles. Even with these parameters I was still turning back a bunch of irrelevant results. Eventually I figured something out: “Boolean logic is cool!” I wrote to my advisor. While there was still clearly a gap between my thinking and the existing research, using Boolean logic in constructing my searches helped me navigate the library’s databases better.

The library’s databases were an essential part of my ground work. Although my initial searches were frustrating because I didn’t find articles I was hoping to find, I eventually came to realize that the gap between my thinking and the existing empirical literature was the gap I was looking to study. After many hours of searching and writing article reviews, I finally decided I wanted to examine the idea of what I decided to call “Living from a Place of Love.” It seemed to me that there were three aspects of living from a place of love: loving oneself, loving others, and allowing oneself to be loved. All I had left to do was figure out how to measure these. It should be simple! Wrong again. I had a lot more searching on PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, and PsycTESTS and reading articles before I would find two scales that I would use to measure loving oneself and loving others. Unfortunately, I was unable to find any scales that measured allowing oneself to be loved – a construct I came to call vulnerability to be loved.

Not yet having a scale to measure a crucial variable for my study was unnerving. Psychology students are told it is not likely that we will be allowed to make our own scale. My education would later show me why scale development can take researchers many years to fully complete. I organized all of my past research findings into word documents so that I could reference them in such an instance as this. When I realized I may need to make my own scale, I
went through these notes to look for any missing piece. Creating the Vulnerability to be Loved scale was not easy. I had to reflect on the literature and myself, which led to conversations that forced me to be vulnerable to love.

My advisor told me not to get my hopes up for the scale because it is unlikely that I would have developed a good scale in my first study. Maybe luck or maybe a good synthesis of what I found utilizing the library’s databases, but regardless, data from the initial study showed good reliability and promising evidence of validity.

I was not out of the weeds yet. My initial sample was small. I needed more participants for better analysis. My advisor recommended that I apply for a research grant to further scale development. So, I went back to the library’s databases as well as interlibrary loan and sought more evidence to bolster my initial literature searches. I was awarded an Undergraduate Summer Research grant. This allowed me to complete a second study with a larger, more representative sample. I could now conduct a factor analysis (a crucial step in scale development). Last fall, I also collected additional data from Saint Rose students to add to my original study to allow that data to be factor analyzed as well.

Results from both studies suggest that the scale looks promising. To my knowledge, nowhere in the existing empirical literature has Vulnerability to be Loved been examined or measured. I plan to conduct an additional study on the scale in this coming fall. I will rewrite some items to better control for socially desirable responding and am planning to measure additional constructs in order to explore more correlates of the scale. I will be using library resources again as I develop the new study.