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Christopher Latourrette

Morgan Haas

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To Read or not to Read, That is the Question: A cluster analysis of traits on reading frequencies

Christopher Latourrette, Morgan Haas, Margaret Kneuer and Dr. Jeffrey Green

Virginia Commonwealth University



Introduction

Using an exploratory approach, we investigated whether positive psychological traits (i.e., greater subjective well-being, self-esteem, meaning in life, and lower loneliness) and leisure motivational variables (i.e., intellectual pursuits or distraction source) clustered together among undergraduate readers and non-readers. In support of a larger ongoing research study exploring the psychological benefits of reading and re-reading novels, we conducted a k-means cluster analysis followed by an analysis of variance to determine the clustering group membership that exists based on various psychological trait measures and motivational factors, and the subsequent effect of the clusters on reading frequency. Research shows that reading is significantly associated with increased creativity (Kelly & Kneipp, 2009), Decreased Loneliness (Rane-Szostak & Herth, 1995), and increased happiness (Jung, Lee, & Shim, 2017)

People with higher positive personality traits and are more motivated to read leisurely for intellectual gains and as a source of distraction read significantly more often, compared to people with less positive personality traits or who are unmotivated to read for intellectual gains and a source of distraction.

Research Question

What clusters of people exist at the intrapersonal level across traits and motivations, and how do these different groups of people vary in reading frequency?

Participants

Participants were recruited from the SONA pool at Virginia Commonwealth University. This pool is comprised of undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses at VCU.

- N = 257
- Gender:
 - 46 Men
 - 211 Women
- Age:
 - M = 19.01
 - SD = 1.97

Methods

Psychological Variables

The UCLA Loneliness Scale – Version 3 (Russell, 1996)
 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger & Frazier, 2005)
 The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)
 The Social Connectedness Scale (Lee & Robbins, 1995)
 The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)

Leisure Reading Variables

The Leisure Motivation Scale (Beard & Ragheb, 1983)
 Reading Frequency (Watson, 2016)

Discussion

Findings

- The overall test was significant, $F(2, 226) = 16.02, p < .001$
- Cluster 1 ($M = 3.03$) showed significant differences in reading frequency when compared to cluster 2 and 3.
- Cluster 2 ($M = 1.49$) and 3 ($M = .59$) did not show significant differences in reading frequency when compared to each other.
- Motivations for leisure reading were important in terms of reading frequencies.

What does this mean?

- People who have higher scores in the adaptive personality traits and are more motivated to read leisure because of intellectual gains, or distraction / escape (Cluster 1), read significantly more than those who show less adaptive traits and are unmotivated to read due to intellectual gain or distraction / escape (Cluster 2-3)

Limitations

- Statistical analysis was taken from a larger correlational study in which there were not specific item measures for parasocial interactions from reading

Future Directions

- Looking into how narrative transportation influences motivations to read
- Looking into what motivates people to read as a source of distraction / escape

Results

Final Cluster Centers				Final Cluster Traits			
Classifying Variable	Cluster 1 (n = 84)	Cluster 2 (n = 88)	Cluster 3 (n = 57)	Classifying Variable	Cluster 1 (n = 84)	Cluster 2 (n = 88)	Cluster 3 (n = 57)
Subjective Well-Being	.35	-.92	.74	Positive Traits		X	
Self-Esteem	.13	-.86	.93		Negative Traits	X	
Presence of Meaning in Life	.27	-.86	.82	Motivation to read for gaining knowledge or distraction / escape			X
Loneliness	-.07	.71	-.90				
Intellectual Leisure Motivation	.64	-.29	-.57				
Stimulus Avoidance	.72	-.17	-.83				
Leisure Motivation							

Final Cluster Centers			
Classifying Variable	Cluster 1 (n = 84)	Cluster 2 (n = 88)	Cluster 3 (n = 57)
Subjective Well-Being	Very slightly above average	Slightly below average	Slightly above average
Self-Esteem	Average	Slightly below average	Slightly above average
Presence of Meaning in Life	Very slightly above average	Slightly below average	Slightly above average
Loneliness	Average	Slightly above average	Slightly below average
Intellectual Motivation	Slightly above average	Very slightly below average	Slightly below average
Stimulus Avoidance	Slightly above average	Average	Slightly below average
Motivation			

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