Dispositional Greed: Scale Development and Validation

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Greed is often invoked as an explanation for non-cooperative behavior in economic games, as a driving force in resource exploitation and is considered as intrinsic in a materialistic lifestyle. Despite this view of greed as a fundamental motive, no empirical research has been conducted to investigate causes and consequences of greed. Related to this, it is not clear why people differ in how greedy they are. To investigate these issues, a measure for dispositional greed - or greed as an individual behavior caused by internal characteristics - is develop to investigate the extent to which various factors covary with greed. The final greed scale consists of 22 items measuring insatiability, materialistic greed and unethical greed.

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2 have demonstrated the main effect. Study 3 has provided the process evidence: A large assortment provides a better “fit” to the desire for variety seeking that is triggered by the emotional processing, thereby inducing greater satisfaction, compared to a smaller assortment.

REFERENCES


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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Greed is often invoked as an explanation for non-cooperative behavior in economic games (Stanley & Ume, 1998), as a driving force in resource exploitation (Ludwig et al, 1993) and is considered as intrinsic in a materialistic lifestyle (Belk, 1985). Despite this view of greed as a fundamental motive, no empirical research has been conducted to investigate causes and consequences of greed. Related to this, it is not clear why people differ in how greedy they are. To investigate these issues, a measure for dispositional greed - or greed as an individual behavior caused by internal characteristics - is develop to investigate the extent to which various factors covary with greed.

We first engaged in a thorough review of the philosophical and psychological literature concerning greed and conducted focus group research to identify different associations with ‘greed’ that may serve as the foundation for the development and individual difference measure of greed. In a second step an initial item pool of 60 items was generated based on theoretical assumptions, on operationalizations of theoretically related constructs in previous studies, like materialism (Richins and Dawson, 1992), envy (Belk, 1995) and greed avoidance (Lee and Ashton, 2004), and on population sampling, thus enhancing face validity. Furthermore, the response format was determined based on response tendencies and social desirability literature. The item pool and response format were both judged by laypersons for face and content validity, and the response format was assessed by a measurement expert. Moreover, the scale items and question wording were checked by a professional copy editor to ensure wording clarity, wording redundancy and correct meaning of the items. This resulted in an initial item pool of 60 questions attributed to five latent dimensions, of which three were highly related. These dimensions were: wanting more than is merely needed; insatiability; joy and pleasure from owning much; greed for status, wealth and power; and the use of ethically questionable methods to gain more.

METHOD

Pilot testing was used as an item-trimming procedure and to obtain initial estimates of reliability and validity. Given that the scale will be administered to further samples for refinement, a pilot study can reduce the number of items that do not meet certain psychometric criteria in an initial pool to a more manageable number. Also, items can be assessed initially for internal consistency, means, variances, average inter-item correlation and factor structure. Therefore, as part of a bigger questionnaire, the greed scale was administered among 400 Caucasian Americans (200 males, M age = 44.5, SD = 12.4).

RESULTS

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted for trimming and retaining items for the final scale. This EFA was used to reveal items that load poorly in terms of magnitude on an intended factor or load highly on more than one factor. The useful sample of this pilot study was 318. Factor interpretation took all items into account with loadings greater than 0.35. The requirements for the measures of sampling adequacy were met: KMO was 0.884 and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was highly significant at p < 0.001. Items which violated the criteria of anti-image correlations greater than 0.5, high inter-item correlations through item-wording redundancy, high cross loadings on different factors or low factor loadings were eliminated from the factor solution. The cumulative percentage of total variance explained by the final factor solution was 63%. Three factors were retained: instability, materialistic greed and unethical greed, measured by 10, 15 and 7 items respectively and with Cronbach’s Alphas of 0.89, 0.83 and 0.78, respectively.
On this refined item pool, an initial confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. Bearing in mind that more studies have to be executed before finalizing the scale, an initial test of internal consistency and validity was deemed useful as a detection of initial items that may threaten the dimensionality of the scale. The factor structure derived from the EFA and from theory showed a manageable initial fit. After deletion of items with highly correlated residual errors or low squared multiple correlations the model had a decent fit: the $\chi^2$/DF ratio was 1.997, the Goodness-of-fit index was 0.89, the Non Normed Fit Index was 0.96 and the Standardized RMR was 0.056. The Root Mean Square Approximation was only 0.059 but the threshold of 0.05 fell within the 90% confidence interval and had an upper confidence interval limit of 0.067. Discriminant analysis showed that all three greed constructs were significantly different and they had adequate composite reliability indices: 0.84 (insatiability, 7 items), 0.87 (materialistic greed, 10 items) and 0.79 (unethical greed, 5 items), respectively.

**RELEVANCE**

This model still has to be tested profoundly through further studies on several samples of relevant populations and additional item analysis and estimates of validity across studies have to be executed. Nonetheless, this initial study shows that this scale should be reliable and valid. Next the scale will be used to gain insight in greed. First, more research will be executed investigating what it means to be greedy, why people differ in how greedy they are, and how the concept of greed is linked to other psychological traits such as materialism, egoism and individualism. Second, when we have a better understanding of the effects and motives for greed, experiments will be set up to gain further insight into the nature of greed and to see how greed affects economic decisions. Specifically we will explore whether greed necessarily leads to uncooperative decision making in economic games, and if so, how these effects differ from those due to (anticipated) envy.

**LITERATURE**


**Why Does Guilt Lead to Self-punishment?**

**A Deterrence Account**

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The self-punishment triggered by the feeling of guilt has been documented in the literature. For example, it has been found that participants who cheated in an earlier task tended to impose a higher intensity of electronic shock to themselves later in an unrelated task (Wallington 1973). Similarly, Nelissen and Zeelenberg (2009) manipulated guilt via fairness concern and found that people in the guilt condition tended to allocate more penalty points to themselves later on. However, seeking unpleasant experience voluntarily seems to contradict with the hedonistic assumptions (e.g., seeking pleasure but avoiding pain), and such a behavior has been explained with the motivation to reduce guilt feelings via self-punishment. In other words, it has been suggested that people carry out the “eye for an eye” philosophy even for their own wrongdoings and want to balance out the wrong for which they felt responsible by punishing themselves. Self-punishment thus is predicted to restore moral balance and resolve the negative experience of guilt (Lindsay-Hartz, De Rivera, and Mascolo 1995). This view focuses on the affect-regulatory function of self-punishment.

However, we propose that people can have the intention to “prolong” their negative experience via self-punishment to protect the goal that they have failed (which elicits guilt). This view focuses on the strategic motivational function of guilt and is referred to as the “deterrence” account.

The position that self-punishment is viewed as a motivational device for future successes is consistent with the “feeling-is-for-doing” approach (Zeelenberg and Pieters 2006). According to this approach, emotion facilitates behavior that is aimed to address the concern reflected in an emotion. As guilt, a self-conscious emotion, arises when one’s behavior violates norms or goals that guide our behavior, it will be associated with an unsatisfied goal when such as an emotion is experienced (e.g., Berndsen et al. 2004). In most situations, people do not have opportunities to satisfy the goal. Alternatively, they might be in a mind of seeking ways to “protect” the failed goals by strategically choosing to stay in negative states. We argue that self-punishment may occur as a way to make the failed goal more likely to be achieved in the future.

If as we argue that self-punishment (e.g., forgoing pleasure experience) is a strategic behavior to protect one’s goal, those who experience guilt should be more likely to demonstrate a tendency to engage in self-punishing behavior when and only when participants are mo-