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ABSTRACT

A Personal Friends Check List (PFCL) and the NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO PI-R) were administrated to samples from 3 nations: Egyptian subjects (n=141; 30 males and 111 females, ages 18-24), Saudi Arabian subjects (n=125; only female subjects ages 18-25); and American subjects (n=108, 30 males and 87 females ages 18 -27). It was assumed that the three nation-samples would differ in their performance on the PFCL which has several components: general, positive and negative extremeness; general, positive and negative flexibility; and indifference response sets. By using stepwise regression, the results showed that cultural background is a good means by which to predict response sets. By using Pearson's correlations, results showed that the cultural background formulates the relationships between personality traits and response sets. (Contains 3 tables and 17 references.) (JDM)

EXTREMENESS, FLEXIBILITY, AND INDIFFERENCE RESPONSE SETS: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY [1]

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Abstract:

A Personal Friends Check List (PFCL) and the NEO PI-R were administrated to samples from three nations: Egyptian subjects (N= 141; 30 males, and 111 females, aged between 18-24 yrs.), Saudi Arabian subjects (N=125; only female subjects, aged between 18-25 yrs.), and American subjects (N= 108; 30 males, and 87 females, aged between 18-27 yrs.). It was assumed that the three nation-samples will differ in their performance on the PFCL which has seven components: general, positive, and negative extremeness, general, positive, and negative flexibility, and indifference response sets. By using stepwise regression, the results showed that cultural background is a good mean to predict response sets. By using Pearson' correlation, results showed that the cultural background formulates the relationships between personality traits and response sets.

Key Words:

Cross-cultural, Response Sets, Positive Extremeness, Negative Extremeness, Positive Flexibility, Negative Flexibility, Indifference, and Neo PI-R.

The current study was conducted to investigate the differences on extremeness, flexibility, and indifference as a response sets with differ the cultures and to also discover the relationships between response sets and personality traits in the light of the different cultures.

Cronbach 1950 (cited in Soueif, 1958a) defined response sets as "*characteristics of the individual stable from time to time, or as transient sets which can only be regarded as errors in testing rather than personality characteristics*".

According to Berg, 1953 and Rundquist, 1950 (cited in Soueif, 1958 a) response sets are the tendencies to choose extreme position when marking choices on the tests is acceptably stable. Swearingen (1998) reported that the extreme responding is related to dimension of thinking style; the concreteness – abstractness.

Soueif (1958 a) showed that response sets can be measured by scores on scales of intolerance of ambiguity.

By using various group of Egyptian subjects, Soueif (1958 a) found the following results: a) Male Moslem adolescents showed significantly higher extreme responses than their Christian counterparts.; b) Christian adults and female adolescents subjects were found to be significantly higher on response sets than their Moslem counterparts. Generally speaking, results indicated that the Egyptians with a higher tension levels' groups (such as females, adolescents, and Christians) tended to have higher extreme response scores than lower tension levels' groups (such as males, adults, and Moslems). Soueif pointed out that higher tension groups have marginal feelings. In another study, Souief (1958 b) investigated the extreme response sets in a sample of Egyptian juvenile delinquent subjects and a sample of normal adolescents (the range of their age between 15–21 yrs.). Results showed that: a) No significant difference between juvenile delinquents and normal samples on general extreme response sets (± 2) and positive extreme response (+2) has been found; b) Juvenile delinquents scored significantly higher on positive extreme response set compared with the scores of the same subjects on negative extreme response; and c) Non-delinquent subjects scored significantly higher response compared by the scores of the same subjects on positive extreme response.

Generally, Soueif's results revealed no differences between delinquents and non-delinquents on the level of tensions. However, a balance between positive and negative extreme responses has been found in non delinquents more than in the delinquent group, which indicated that juvenile delinquents have a weakness in their ego, and they can not cope with stress.

In a replicated study, Soueif (1959) compared a sample of Egyptian Moslem male delinquents (aged 14-20 yrs.) with a similar normal sample. Results supported the Soueif's (1958 b) previous study which revealed no differences between delinquents and normal subjects on extreme response sets except on the negative extreme response, where normal subjects composed with delinquents scored significantly higher on negative extreme response and where delinquents scored significantly higher than their normal counterparts on positive extreme response.

Later, Soueif (1962) conducted a cross-cultural and factors analytical study, on Eysenck model and in which he applied five sub-scales from MMPI, three sub-scales from Guilford's STDCR, and the PFCL on sample of Egyptian and British subjects. Results showed a general factor, which extended from extremeness and modestly. Male subjects, compared with female counterparts, choose the modest (±1) response more, while female subjects choose extreme responses (± 2) more than males did.

In 1966, Morsi and Hannoura (cited in Soueif, 1968; 2000) replicated Soueif's (1958 b) study, by using samples of delinquent and normal adolescents aged between 16 and 20 yrs. They added the number of times +2, +1, 0.0, -1, and –2 responses to the Soueif' PFCL. Results supported Soueif's previous studies (1958b, 1959) and showed: a) higher "0.0" response were significantly higher in delinquents compared with their normal counterparts, which means that delinquents have had more indifferences attributes; b) lower modest responses (± 1) were significantly higher in delinquents than in the normal sample.

Some studies have focused on the effects of the cultural backgrounds on extremeness response sets. Among these studies are: Brengelmann' (1959) study in which he applied the PFCL (100 items) on 88 British male subjects, and 100 male and female German subjects with different occupational levels, and 100 male and female German teachers. Only male subjects' scores in the two cultures have been analyzed. Results revealed a lower extreme positive response in British group than in the two German groups.

Soueif,s (1968 b) compared extreme response sets in males and females from Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, aged between 17-19 yrs. to reveal the cultural effects on extreme response sets. Results showed the followings: a) No differences have been found between Egyptian and Syrian male subjects on the positive, negative, and general extremeness response sets; b) No differences between Egyptians and Jordanians on general extremeness response sets, have been reported, c) Male Jordanian subjects produced higher modesty responses (± 1) than their Syrian and Egyptian counterparts did; d) Egyptians had the lowest scores on indifference scores than Jordanians and Syrians.; e) Gender differences seemed to be the factor responsible for the differences between three nation- samples; and f) Extreme positive response was the best response sets to differentiate three nation-samples.

Hannoura 1967 (cited by Soueif, 1968 a; 2000) studied the effects of rural, urban, and semi-urban settings on psychic tension as expressed by extremeness response sets. Sample consisted of 166 urban, 50 semi-urban, and 168 rural male Egyptian subjects using Soueif' PFCL. Results indicated that the urban subjects produced the highest general and positive extremeness response sets, and the lowest modesty scores (±1) than the other two sub-groups. Rural subjects produced the lowest general and positive extremeness scores, and the highest modesty scores than the other two sub-groups. Negative extremeness and indifference variables could be used to differentiate among the three sub-groups.

The scattered studies which involved anxiety such as the study of Lewis & Taylor, 1955 (cited by Soueif, 1958 a), interaction between gender and anxiety (Berg

& Collier, 1953), and rigidity; Brengelmann, 1958; Al-Aassar, 1964 (cited in Soueif, 1968 a; 1960 a; 1960 b) showed significant relationships between gender and anxiety, and the positive extremeness response sets.

Brengelmann, 1958 (cited by Soueif, 1968 a) conducted a serial of studies included extremeness response set (PFCL) to investigate the extreme response in neurotic and schizophrenic patients. Results revealed that neurotic and schizophrenic female subjects produced more general extremeness response (±2) than their male counterparts; and schizophrenics composed with neurotics, were higher on positive extremeness response. In another study, Brengelmann (1959) using +2, +1, -1, and –2 PFCL' responses. Results reported a) no relationships between negative extremeness response and each of introversion, neuroticism, and rigidity; b) significant relationships between negative extremeness response and rigidity, and between positive and negative extremeness responses have been found; and c) positive extremeness response set could be used to measure drive intensity.

Brengelmann (1960 a) conducted a study using 88 male normal subjects, and 105 male and female abnormal subjects. He found that the rigidity correlated higher with extremeness response sets. Results also showed that: a) a significant correlation among positive extremeness response and each of age, rigidity, dogmatism, drive intensity, and intolerance of ambiguity in both normal and abnormal groups have been found; and b) positive extremeness response could be used to differentiate between normal and abnormal subjects.

In a second study (Brengelmann, 1960 b), 146 normal subjects (112 males and 34 females), 58 male and female neurotic, and 56 male and female psychotic patients have been found. Brengelmann focused on the relationship of the positive and negative extremeness response on the one hand, and the measured of personality, on the other hand. Also, Brengelmann tested the suitability of each measures to differentiate between the three sub-sample. Results supported the Brengelmann's previous studies. Psychotics produced more positive extremeness response than neurotics did, however, neurotics scored more negative extremeness responses than the psychotics.

Barendrgt and Bruin (1961) aimed at predicting the experimental psychotic symptoms (as the reactions to LSD-25) by using extremeness response sets with PFCL. Sample consisted of 39 volunteer subjects (27 males; 12 females; mean age = 32 yrs.). Findings revealed that the positive extremeness response sets could be used to predict with the psychotic symptoms, which means that the positive extremeness responses strongly, but negatively, related to the psychotic symptoms.

In Egypt, Farrag's (1965) study showed that higher positive extremeness response sets have been found higher in psychotics than in normal subjects, but lower negative extremeness response sets were more in psychotics than in normal and neurotic subjects.

Methodology

Study purpose: The present study aimed at investigating the effects of the cultural background on the response sets; general extremeness (±2), positive

extremeness (+2), negative extremeness (-2), general flexibility (±1), positive flexibility (+1), negative flexibility (-1), indifference (zero), and their relationships with some personality traits.

At the hand of the results of the previous research studies which investigated the effects of different cultural backgrounds on the extremeness response sets (i.e. Brengelmann, 1959; 1960 a; 1960 b; and Soueif, 1967), and the results of the research studies which focused on the relationships between extremeness response sets and personality traits (Brengelmann, 1958; 1959; 1960 a; 1960 b; and Soueif, 1968). The present researcher set the following two hypotheses:

H1: The three cultural groups differ on extremeness, flexibility, and indifference response scores. Accordingly, some predictions have been formulated; a) American subjects are expected to produce more indifference and flexibility response sets than both Egyptians and Saudi Arabians; b) Egyptian subjects will produce more general, positive, and negative extremeness response sets than American subjects, but Egyptian subjects will have more flexibility than their Saudi counterparts; and c) Saudi subjects are expected to have more positive extreme response than the Egyptian and American, and Saudi subjects expected to produce more indifference responses than Egyptian subjects.

H2: There are relationships between response sets; as measured by PFCL , on one hand, and some personality traits such as neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness as assessed by NEO PI-R, on the other hand.

Subjects:

The sample of the present study consists of 374 male and female, university students. They were divided into the following three cultural groups: a) 108 (87 females; 30 males) Americans were enrolled in educational psychology course, Department of Educational Psychology, The University of Georgia (USA), their age ranged between 18 - 27 years with mean (20.407) years and SD (1.290), b) 141 (111 females; 30 males) Egyptians undergraduate students in Psychology Department, Menoufia University, aged between 18 to 24 years (20.035 ± 1.446) ; and c) 125 female Saudi subjects in Faculty of Education, General Presidency For Girls Education, aged between 18 to 25 years (20.880 ± 1.202).

Measures:

(1) A Personal Friends Check list (PFCL): which devised, developed and used by Soueif, 1951, 1962, 1965, and 1967. It contains 70 items (adjectives for friends), each of which is to be checked either +2, +1, 0.0, -1, or –2.

General extreme and general flexibility response scores were obtained by counting the number of ± 2 and ± 1, respectively. Positive and negative extremeness response sets, positive and negative flexibility response sets, and indifference response scores could be obtained by counting the number of +2, -2, +1, -1, and 0.0, respectively (Soueif, 1968a).

The English version of PFCL, was administrated to American subjects. Only 70 adjectives have been selected in Brengelmann' (1960 a, b) studies.

By using split -half and Guttman' formula (N.= 76; Americans = 26; Egyptian =25 and Saudi Arabian subjects =25), the PFCL reliability was calculated. The reliability values were: ± 2= .90; ± 1 = .81; +2= .89; +1 = .78; 0.0 = .75; -1 = .74; and –2= .84 for American subjects; ± 2= .75; ± 1= .74; +2= .73; +1 = .76; 0.0 = .77; -1 = .70; and –2= .73 for Egyptian subjects; and ± 2= .79; ± 1= .78; +2= .78; +1= .77; 0.0 = .76; -1= .72; and –2 = .81 for Saudi Arabian subjects.

(2) The NEO PI-R: This inventory was devised and developed by Costa and McCrae (1985, 1989, and 1992). It was translated into Arabic and adapted by Younis and Khalil (in press). It is a multi-dimensional self-report scale. The original English inventory consists of 240 items (5 dimensions; and 30 facets of personality), but the Arabic version consists only of 224 items (28 facets). The five dimensions and its facets are, as follows:

1) Neuroticism (N) includes anxiety (N1), angry hostility (N2), depression (N3), self-consciousness (N4), impulsiveness (N5), and vulnerability (N6) facets;
2) Extraversion (E) includes warmth (E1), gregarious-ness (E2), assertiveness (E3), activity (E4), excitement-seeking (E5), and positive emotions (E6);
3) Openness to Experience (O) which has fantasy (O1), aesthetics (O2), feelings (O3), actions (O4), ideas (O5), and values (O6) facets (in Arabic version, action and values facets have been canceled because they have no has validity standards;
4) Agreeableness (A) consists of trust (A1), straight-forwardness (A2), altruism (A3), compliance (A4), modesty (A5), and tender-mindedness (A6) facets; and
5) Conscientiousness (C) dimension includes competence (C1), order (C2), dutiful-ness (C3), achievement-striving (C4), self-discipline (C5), and deliberation (C6).

The Arabic version of NEO PI-R has been used with Egyptian and Saudi subjects. American subjects received the original English version. To estimate the reliability coefficients of the NEO PI-R, the measure was administrated to 40 Egyptian, 41 Saudi and 55 American subjects in original groups. The correlation coefficients between big five dimensions and its facets were calculated for each of the three cultural samples to reveal the internal consistency (reliability) of NEO PI-R. The correlation coefficients values were ranged between .580 and .833 for American subjects; between .344 and .846 for Egyptian subjects; and between .389 and .877 for Saudi Arabian subjects. These values were indicated that the NEO –PI' facets enjoy good standard of reliability.

Results and Discussion

General, positive and negative extremeness (± 2, +2, and -2) and flexibility (± 1, +1, and –1), and indifferences (0.0), were conceptualized as an dependent or criterions variables. Age, the cultural background, and gender (in Egyptian and American Samples), were used to predict the independent variables.

H1: Stepwise regression was utilized to estimate the predictive contribution of the cultural background on the independent variables (general, positive, and negative extremeness and flexibility, and indifference) (Table 1).

Table 1 should be inserted here

Results showed that cultural background is a potential predictor to ± 2, +2, and –2 in all subjects (the adjusted R^2 = .073, which indicates the proportion of variance in the criterion that is shard by weighted of predictor); for Egyptians ±2 and –1, and +2 for Saudis, in other words, the culture background formulates the extreme response sets.

By using ANOVA (Table 2), results showed significant differences between the three cultural concerning ± 2, +2, -2, ± 1, +1, -1, zero on the PFCL ' responses.

Table 2 should be inserted here

The t-test (Table 3) revealed the following results:-

Table 3 should be inserted here

a) The general (±2), positive (+2), and negative (-2) extremeness responses were significantly higher in Saudi subjects than in their American counterparts;
b) The general (±1), positive (+1) and negative (-1) flexibility, and indifference (0.0) responses were significantly higher in the American sample compared with Saudi sample.;
c) The general, positive, and negative extremeness scores were significantly higher in Egyptians sample than in their American counterparts;
d) The general and negative flexibility and indifference scores were significantly higher in American subjects than in the Egyptian subjects;
e) No significant difference between Egyptians and Americans on positive flexibility scores (+1) have been found;
f) The positive extreme response was significantly higher in Saudis than in their Egyptian counterparts;
g) The negative extremeness and the general flexibility were significantly higher in the Egyptian subjects than in their Saudis counterparts; and,
h) No significant differences between Egyptians and Saudis in general extremeness, positive and negative flexibility and indifference scores have been found.

The above mentioned results indicate that the three nation- samples occupying different position on the acculturation stress continuum, as indicated by number of the PFCL extreme response scores.

As for Saudi society rapidly exposed to more social and cultural changes, so they would tend to make more extremeness response sets when compared with the other cultural groups. But American culture is a stable culture, so American subjects would tend to make more flexibility and indifference scores. On the other hand, Egyptians have slow and limited changes, so Egyptian subjects are occupying moderate position on the acculturation stress continuum; between Saudis and Americans.

In the case of Egyptians and Americans, stepwise regression was used to reveal the effects of age and gender on dependent variables; general, positive, negative extremeness and flexibility, and indifference response sets. Results showed:

a) Gender (in the case of males) is a good predictor of positive flexibility in Egyptians (adjusted R^2 = .022), and of positive and negative extremeness, general and negative flexibility, and indifference in the Americans (adjusted R^2 = .087).
b) Age was not a good predictor to any of the dependent variables in the Egyptians, however, the age was found to be a good predictor of positive and negative extremeness, general and negative flexibility, and indifference variables in the Americans, yet, it did not reach the significant level.

H2: Pearson' correlation coefficients were calculated for the dimensions of personality and its facets; as assessed with NEO PI -R and the response sets; as measured by the PFCL. The results are:

1) In the Egyptian sample, there were positive relationships between positive extremeness and self-discipline "C5" (.351), self—consciousness "N4" and negative extremeness (.346), excitement-seeking "E5" and indifference (.439), and negative relations with each of deliberation "C6" and negative (-. 351), and general (-.322) flexibility.

2) In case of the Saudi sample, there were negative relationships between indifference and each of the competence "C1" (-. 378), gregarious-ness "E2" (-. 380), order "C2" (-. 402), achievement-striving "C4" (-. 356), ideas "O5" (-. 402), modestly "A5" (-. 338), and dimension of conscientiousness "C" (.440). Indifference related positively with vulnerability "N6" (.522). General extremeness correlated negatively with aesthetics "O2" (-. 347), and positively with modesty "A5" (.347). Positive flexibility was positively correlated with aesthetics "O2" (.360).

3) In the American sample, no relationships among the dimensions of personality and their facets and the response sets have been found. Positive relationships between indifference and modesty "A5" (.267), and between general extremeness and self- discipline "C5" (.274) have been found.

The above mentioned results indicated that personality traits which related to response sets, were differed according to the differences of cultural backgrounds.

In the Egyptian sample, deliberation trait was related to flexibility and the strength of ego (i. e -1 response set). Positive extremeness response set means that the subject makes his actions to obtain group acceptance (Soueif, 1968 a), so this response set was related to self-discipline which reinforcement in Egyptian culture.

Results also indicated that indifference was negatively related to competence, order, achievement- striving, ideas, and conscientiousness dimension. The general extremeness was also negatively related to aesthetics, and positively to modesty. These results can be explained based on the characteristics of Saudi society, which reinforces indifference behavior and does not accept strongly the aesthetics expressions.

In the American sample, no relationship between response sets and variables of personality have been obtained, except positive relationships between indifference and modesty, and between general extremeness and self-discipline.

Further studies are still needed to explore the relationships between personality traits and the extremeness response sets by using large samples with different age, gender, marital status, educational levels, occupational levels, and cultural backgrounds.

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Table 1: Prediction Models of Cultural Background, Age, And Gender by Stepwise Regression Analysis.

Predictor V.	Criterion	Beta	t-values	Sig.	R^2	F. ratio	Sig.	Constant
Cultural Background	+2	.465	5.564	.000	.073	10.856	.000	12.451
	±2	-.471	-4.800	.000				
	-1	-.193	-2.994	.003				
Age								
Egyptian	Non	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Saudi A.	Non	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
American	+2	1.703	.268	n. s.	.009	.807	n. s.	-.024
	0.0	2.150	.260	n. s.				
	-1	-.198	-1.062	n. s..				
	-2	1.299	.226	n. s.				
	±1	2.220	.255	n. s.				
Gender								
Egyptian	+1	.170	2.029	.044	.022	4.116	.044	.323
	+2	3.474	.575	n. s.				
	0.0	4.013	.510	n. s.				
American	-1	-.278	-1.569	n. s.	.087	3.049	.013	-.501
	-2	2.579	.473	n. s.				
	±1	4.325	.527	n. s.				

Note: Egyptian sample = 141, Saudi Arabian sample = 125, and American sample = 108.

Table 2: ANOVA for Response Sets Scores Among The Three Nation Samples.

Response Sets	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F.	Sig.
+2 between groups	4490.253	2	2245.126	54.401	.000
within group	15311.269	371	41.270		
total	19801.521	373			
+1 between groups	226.929	2	113.465	3.199	.042
within group	13156.910	371	35.463		
total	13383.840	373			
0.0 between groups	12037.850	2	6018.925	111.517	.000
within group	20024.108	371	53.973		
total	32061.957	373			
-1 between groups	597.047	2	298.542	7.260	.001
within group	15255.950	371	41.121		
total	15852.997	373			
-2 between groups	6571.052	2	3285.526	68.378	.000
within group	17826.469	371	48.050		
total	24397.521	373			
±2 between groups	19821.342	2	9910.671	94.146	.000
within group	39055.067	371	105.270		
total	58876.409	373			
±1 between groups	1504.961	2	752.480	8.789	.000
within group	31762.633	371	85.614		
total	3367.594	373			

Note: Egyptian sample = 141, Saudi Arabian sample = 125, and American sample = 108.

Table 3: T-test Values Between American and Saudi Arabian, Egyptian and American subjects, And Egyptian And Saudi Arabian Subjects.

Variables	N.	Mean	S. D.	t- values	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
+2	108 125	7.7222 16.4160	6.2739 7.0861	-9.845	231	.000
+1	108 125	15.2315 13.3440	5.4027 6.7143	2.339	231	.020
0.0	108 125	24.8796 13.0400	8.1810 7.6994	11.370	231	.000
-1	108 125	13.8889 10.7520	5.228 6.4629	4.033	231	.000
-2	108 125	8.2685 16.3040	5.6711 7.334	-9.245	231	.000
±2	108 125	15.9907 32.3600	10.5054 10.4313	-11.906	231	.000
±1	108 125	29.1204 24.0240	8.5835 9.3286	4.315	231	.000
+2	141 108	13.5106 7.7222	5.8999 6.2739	7.464	247	.000
+1	141 108	14.7021 15.2315	5.6338 5.4027	-.748	247	n. s.
0.0	141 108	11.8511 24.8796	6.2746 8.1810	-14.224	247	.000
-1	141 108	11.6525 13.8889	7.1504 5.2228	-2.738	247	.007
-2	141 108	18.2553 8.2685	7.4233 5.6711	11.621	247	.000
±2	141 108	31.7660 15.9907	9.9115 10.5054	12.127	247	.000
±1	141 108	26.3546 29.1204	9.6689 8.5835	-2.347	247	.000
+2	141 125	13.5106 16.4160	5.8999 7.0861	-3.647	264	.000
+1	141 125	14.7021 13.3440	5.6338 6.7143	1.793	264	n. s.
0.0	141 125	11.8511 13.0400	6.2746 7.6994	-1.386	264	n. s.
-1	141 125	11.6525 10.7520	7.1504 6.4629	1.072	264	n. s.
-2	141 125	18.2553 16.3040	7.4233 7.3344	2.152	264	.032
±2	141 125	31.7660 32.3600	9.9115 10.4313	-.476	264	n. s.
±1	141 125	26.3546 24.0240	9.6689 9.3286	1.995	264	.047

Note: Egyptian sample = 141, Saudi Arabian sample = 125, and American sample =108

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