Social Anxiety and Discomfort with Friendly Giving

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Abstract
Using a new measure of reactions to friendly favors, the Favor Scale (FS), we tested a model of friendship impairment in social anxiety. Social anxiety related directly to negative reactions to favors, and indirectly to friend quality via negative (and lack of positive) reactions to favors.

Hypothesis
E-TFT, NEG, and POS will mediate the relationship between social anxiety and friendship impairment.

Measures
The Favor Scale
(FS: Fernandez & Rodebaugh, in press)
- 22-item measure measuring how participants would react if a close friend did them a helpful favor they had not asked for
- Cognition: My friend did the favor with no strings attached.
- Affect: I would feel guilty until I returned the favor.
- All items are rated on a 1 (not at all true) to 7 (completely true) Likert-type scale.

Contains three subscales:
- Expectation of strict reciprocity (i.e., tit-for-tat) behavior (E-TFT; α = .74).
- Negative (NEG; α = .82).
- Positive (POS; α = .79).

Social Interaction Anxiety Scale and Social Phobia Scale
(SIAS and SPS: Mattick & Clarke, 1998)
- SIAS: 20-item measure of anxiety related to social interaction situations (α = .92).
- SPS: 20-item measure of anxiety related to being observed in certain situations (α = .85).
- SIAS used in Sample 1, and both SIAS and SPS were combined in Sample 2 (α = .86).

Quality of Life Inventory
(QOLI: Frisch, 1994)
- A 32-item measure of importance given to/satisfaction with different life domains.

Friendship subscale used
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support
(MSPSS: Zimet et al., 1988)
- A 12-item measure of social support.

Results: Sample 1
- The Favor Scale showed excellent model fit with three factors (CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04), and was invariant across gender and ethnicity.
- The final CFA loadings and factor relationships retained three relatively distinct ways of reacting to favors.

Results: Sample 2 (cont’d)
- Final model showed excellent fit (CFI = 1.0, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .03, SRMR = .04).
- The indirect path from social anxiety to friendship quality through NEG and POS was also significant (Estimate = -.051, p = .042).
- POS related directly to friendship quality, and social anxiety had an indirect effect on friendship quality through NEG and POS.

Discussion
- Our model indicates that reactions to favors arise out of social anxiety.
- When friends of individuals with higher social anxiety are thoughtful or helpful, the individual feels guilt and a pressure to reciprocate, impairing their ability to experience these events as positive and thereby impairing the friendship.
- Lower warmth may be tied to discomfort with being unable to repay the favor in an equitable way, coupled with anxiety about receiving favors in the future.
- Further research could focus on testing this model with other constructs (e.g., depression), obtaining better measurements of friendship quality, and use behavioral tasks to study how individuals higher in social anxiety respond to favors in person.