Validation of the Multi-Context Problems Checklist in a Young Adult Sample
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Abstract
This study examined the psychometric properties of the Multi-Context Problems Checklist (MCPC). The MCPC assesses six domains of functioning, tapping into the social, intimate relationships, thoughts and feelings, attitudes about self, work adjustment, and work performance problems young adults report experiencing. We administered the scale to 227 young adults and collected data on these participants’ personality traits and subjective well-being. We aimed to determine the internal consistency, content and construct validity of the MCPC scales and item sets. The results showed that the MCPC has good psychometric properties and warrants attention as a brief psychosocial measure of adaptation.

Introduction
Theoretical Background
• Five-Factor Theory (FF, McCrae & Costa, 1999) distinguishes between two critical elements of personality: basic tendencies (i.e., personality traits) and characteristic adaptations (i.e., behavioral manifestations of traits in response to the social environment).
• Characteristic adaptations are intended to help the individual adjust to the environment, but they are not always adaptive: “At any one time, adaptations may not be optimum with respect to cultural values or personal goals” (McCrae & Costa, 1999, p. 145).
• A rationally generated list of problems was developed by Waligier, Costa, and McCrae (2002).
• Items selected by Waligier et al. (2002) are believed to be conceptually related to each of the Big Five personality traits.
• These associations to the Big Five are hypothetical; however, there is little data that measure the clinical relevance or utility of the items.

Current Study Objectives
• The purpose of the current study is to assess the psychometric properties of the MCPC. This will be accomplished by evaluating:
  - Frequency of endorments and internal consistency for each of the MCPC subscales (Table 1)
  - Associations between the MCPC subscales and measures of personality and well-being (Table 2)
• Patterns of correlations between specific problems in living and the Big Five personality dimensions (Table 3)

Methods
Participants
227 undergraduate students (155 women and 76 men)
- Average age 19.15 (SD = 19.15; range = 17–20)
- 39% Asian or Pacific Islander, 26% Latino/Latina, 12% Caucasian, 10% African American, 7% Middle Eastern, 6% mixed, other, or had missing data

Measures
• Big Five Inventory (BFI; John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991) – a brief 44-item measure of the Big Five personality dimensions
• Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Expanded Form (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1994) – a 40-item inventory designed to measure positive and negative affect, as well as 11 more specific emotional states
• Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) – a 5-item measure of the global life satisfaction component of subjective well-being
• Multi-Context Problems Checklist (MCPC; Boudreaux, Piedmont, & Sherman, 2007) – a 128-item check list designed to assess six life domains of functioning, including social, intimate relationships, thoughts and feelings, attitudes about self, work adjustment, and work performance

Procedure
Participants were recruited from introductory psychology classes.
- Materials were compiled in groups of approximately 6
- The sequencing of the scales was counterbalanced to control for order effects
- For more information, please send your email to the following address: Michael.Boudreaux@ucr.edu

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics, both overall and within gender, for all of the MCPC scales as well as for an overall endorsement rate. As shown:
- Participants endorsed, on average, 30 (SD = 16.4) of 128 items, a 23% endorsement rate.
- The focal subscale had the highest number of endorsements. Intimate Relationships had the fewest.
- There were significant gender differences for the Thoughts and Feelings, Attitudes about Self, and Work Performance subscales, where females endorsed more items in these categories of problems.
- Cronbach’s coefficient alpha ranged from .67 (Work Adjustment sub-scale) to .80 (Intimate Relationships sub-scale); α = .78 for MCPC Total.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MCPC</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0–26</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.16</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>0–20</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.16</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts &amp; Feelings</td>
<td>0–20</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>3.72</td>
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<td>0.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes About Self</td>
<td>0–19</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Adjustment</td>
<td>0–22</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Performance</td>
<td>0–21</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCPC Total</td>
<td>0–128</td>
<td>26.89</td>
<td>14.44</td>
<td>18.77</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>14.30</td>
<td>20.16</td>
<td>14.93</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.16</td>
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</table>

Table 2 presents correlations of the MCPC scales with the Big Five personality trait dimensions and measures of subjective well-being. As shown:
- Neuroticism has the largest associations with personal problems across all subscales.
- Low Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness are associated with more personal problems.
- Total MCPC score was negatively correlated with life satisfaction (SWLS) and positive affect (PA).
- These relations were observed mainly for interprossional problems (i.e., thoughts and feelings, attitudes about self).
- Difficulty in life and negative affect (NA) were each positively associated with all six facet scales on the MCPC.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MCPC Scales</th>
<th>Personality Factors</th>
<th>r</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>-0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts &amp; Feelings</td>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes About Self</td>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Adjustment</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Performance</td>
<td>SWLS</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Examples of Correlations of MCPC Scale Items with the Big Five Personality Dimensions

Extraversion
- being too argumentative (.24); needing to be in control (.19); being too smart for my own good (.18); being “brutally honest” (.13)
- not fitting in with other people (.35); being afraid of trying new things (.32); fear of taking risks (.32); difficulty expressing feelings (.25); holding no opinions about anything (.22); being too concerned by what others think (.21)
- Agreeableness
- being too critical or judgmental (.36); not caring about many people (.33); feeling superior to other people (.31); being easily angered by small things (.30); not following through with commitments (.29); being selfish (.27); always needing to do things my way (.27); having difficulty accepting things I don’t agree with (.27)
- Conscientiousness
- lacking direction in life (.39); not following through with commitments (.32); being indecisive about future aspirations (.32); not managing time effectively (.31); not being able to prioritize work tasks (.29); lacking will power or self-control (.28)
- Neuroticism
- feeling oppressed by life (.41); being too concerned by what others think (.39); taking things too personally (.38); being unable to handle criticism (.38); feeling stressed or high-strung (.36); shutting down when upset (.34); having difficulty dealing with transitions (.33); feeling like the cause of bad things (.33)
- Openness to Experience
- being overly involved in work (.25); being too smart for my own good (.23); not enjoying sex (.17); having an overactive imagination (.13)
- being unable to think “outside the box” (.28); always second guessing self (.22); not reaching full potential (.22); being unable to work without clear rules and guidelines (.20); being too demanding of partners (.19); blowing things out of proportion (.16); fear of taking risks (.16)

Note: N = 227. Correlations are in parentheses.

Conclusions
• The MCPC samples specific problems in living that are salient and relevant to a young adult sample.
• There were no ceiling effects present.
• For individuals in more distress, there is additional room to indicate more difficulty.
• The MCPC subscales and item content are associated with personality and measures of well-being in meaningful and expected ways.
• These data show that the MCPC has good psychometric properties and warrants attention as a brief psychosocial measure of adaptation.

References