

9

What is Humility and Do We Need It? Validating a Humility Questionnaire

Jasmina Mehulić and Margareta Jelić

*University of Zagreb, Department of Psychology,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia*

Abstract

This study aimed to validate the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) Humility-Modesty subscale (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) using a Croatian sample (N = 783; 71.6% women). In addition, we assessed the psychometric characteristics (e.g. internal consistency reliability and factor structure) of the measure, congruent validity using a correlation analysis with measures of humility (the Humility-Arrogance Semantic Differential and the Other Focus Scale), convergent validity using the Self-Compassion Scale, and discriminant validity (using the measure of narcissism from the dark triad). Multiple regression analysis was then conducted in order to assess whether humility statistically significantly contributes to the overall satisfaction with life. The factor analysis yielded two factors. The first factor represented modest self-presentation, while the second factor pertained to dispositional humility, an individual's view of oneself as humble. Both factors marginally, but significantly contributed to life satisfaction, suggesting that humility is an important asset. This study's results show the importance of validating constructs across different social settings and call for further research on humility in Croatia and internationally.

Keywords: humility, VIA-IS, Croatia, dark triad, life satisfaction

Introduction

Throughout history humility has been equated with humiliation and low self-regard (Tangney, 2000). Equivalently, descriptions of humility in the Croatian language include a lowly view of self, one's importance and value (Anić, 1998). Nevertheless, rather than a derogatory view of self, researchers are finding humility to be an important virtue related to well-being (Exline & Geyer, 2004). Tangney (2000) offered one of the first attempts at conceptualizing humility: as an accurate view of self, egalitarian values, openness to new ideas and contradictory information and a relatively low self-focus i.e. "forgetting of the self". This multifacetedness encouraged Davis, Worthington, and Hook (2010) to simplify the construct of humility by dividing it into accurate self-perception and modest self-presentation. Humble individuals are not only accurate in how they view themselves, but are honest in the way they present themselves to others. Wright, Nadelhoffer, Ross, and Sinnott-Armstrong (2016) strongly emphasized the importance of focusing on others instead of focusing on oneself. Consequentially, Worthington, Davis, and Hook (2016) posited that humility encompasses two broad domains, intrapersonal and interpersonal humility – the former pertains to individual and the latter to relational qualities. Intrapersonal humility corresponds to Tangney's (2000) accurate view of self, personal strengths, weaknesses and limitations and it refers to the individual. Interpersonal humility refers to the relational qualities, particularly modest self-presentation and an orientation towards others through regulating emotions in a socially acceptable way, others focused behaviour, showing respect and empathy and through a lack of superiority.

Clearly, apart from humility's connotative association with an inferior self-regard in the Croatian language, a major issue is a lack of consensus regarding the definition and operationalization of humility. Humility has been defined as an adaptive form of pride (Cheng, Weidman, & Tracy, 2018), a personality trait (Exline & Hill, 2012; LaBouff, Rowatt, Johnson, Tsang, & McCullough Willerton, 2012; Landrum, 2011), a set of relationship skills (Davis et al., 2011) and a range of metacognitive abilities (Thrive Center for Human Development, 2013). Despite this discord in defining humility, researchers seem to have found what determines it.

Determinants of Humility

Authors seem to agree that one of the key aspects of humility is an accurate view of self - the ability to accurately gauge one's place in the society, one's abilities and success, as well as shortcomings and flaws (Baumeister & Exline, 1999; Emmons, 1999; Rowatt, Ottenbreit, Nadelhoffer, & Cunningham, 2002; Tangney, 2000). The ability to recognize personal limitations and flaws might suggest that a humble individual also has low self-esteem or is self-critical. However, this is inaccurate. Unlike those who are humble, people with low self-esteem (as well as those who are arrogant or narcissistic), have a pronounced self-focus and an unstable sense of worth (Tangney, 2009). Hence, they tend to overestimate how events may affect the self (Ryan, 1983). Their praise-seeking ego might perceive criticism as a threat and when they become aware of any misgivings or shortcomings, they might feel shame, humiliation and anxiety. Consequentially, people with low self-esteem tend to engage in defensive behaviours, such as shifting blame, reactive aggression, self-handicapping and defensive self-enhancement (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Humility, however, requires first knowing oneself and then overcoming oneself (Roberts, 1983). This is accomplished by removing oneself from one's own focus and instead focusing on others (Wright et al., 2016).

Orientation towards others (focusing on others) manifests in acknowledging others' needs, beliefs and values, even when they differ from one's own, and having a high interest in others' well-being (Worthington, Davis, & Hook, 2016). It is a sense of connection with others (Wright et al., 2016). A greater desire to

help and contribute to group well-being comes with it (Kunz, 2002). Humility, through focusing on others, enables respect, caring, equality and understanding (Sandage, 1999) and consequentially strengthens relationships with others (Davis et al., 2013). A low self-focus is also beneficial for interpersonal and romantic relations (Davis et al., 2011). When combined with accurate self-perception, low self-focus and high other focus clear the way to having a more open conversation about doubts and mistakes. In other words, humility facilitates an understanding between partners and keeps self-involved emotions such as shame, fear, resentment and the need to control others (Sandage, 1999), which induce aggressive or avoidant behaviours that damage relationships, at bay. Having overcome themselves, humble people no longer need validation or attention. Their self-presentation is modest, void of self-enhancement, self-deprecation and illusions. People who are humble believe that all human beings, including themselves, are inherently worthy, regardless of differences in culture, opinions, education etc. (Tangney, 2000).

Although the literature is not yet clear on which of these determinants constitutes the core of humility as opposed to being its correlates or consequences (Davis et al., 2016), the benefits of humility are clear and there are many.

Correlates and benefits of humility

One of the most obvious correlates of humility is modesty (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), with which humility shares only the quality of modest self-presentation. Other aspects that make humility an eclectic virtue, such as forgetting the self, other focus, egalitarian values, and accurate self-perception are not part of the construct of modesty (Tangney, 2007). In fact, although modesty could be consistent with an inner value of humility, it can also occur as a reaction to situational needs or pressures (Rowatt et al., 2006).

Humility also correlates with forgiveness (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003) and gratitude (Exline & Hill, 2012). Humility's low self-focus, and consequently a less self-involved and vulnerable ego, enables solving conflict through reconciliation and forgiveness. Humble individuals understand that anybody can err, and in situations of injustice view themselves as less innocent and those who wronged them as less culpable (Worthington, 2008). Humility is associated with helping others, even after controlling for agreeableness (LaBouff et al., 2012), and therefore relevant for prosocial behaviour (Davis et al., 2016). Positive relationship outcomes, relationship stability (Davis et al., 2013) and relationship satisfaction (Peters, Rowatt, & Johnson, 2011) are also associated with humility.

Based on the aforementioned descriptions of humility, it is not surprising that it negatively correlates with the propensity for exploiting, cheating, manipulation, entitlement, narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy (Lee et al., 2013), revenge (Lee & Ashton, 2012) and exhibitionism (Rowatt et al., 2006), traits that are especially detrimental for organizations. In contrast to them, humility negatively correlates with counterproductive work behaviour (Lee et al., 2013) and benefits the work environment (Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2013).

Higher levels of humility are associated with psychological and physical well-being (Jankowski, Sandage, & Hill, 2013; Krause, 2010; Krause, Pargament, Hill, & Ironson, 2016) whereas lower levels of humility, often associated with narcissism and an increased self-focus, might be a risk factor for developing heart-related problems (Scherwitz & Canick, 1998). With regard to psychological well-being humility is positively correlated with a higher subjective well-being, autonomy, self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, and a sense of purpose in life (Aghababaei, Wasserman, & Nannini, 2014) and it is negatively associated with depression (Sandage, Jankowski, Bissonette, & Paine, 2016) and anxiety (Quiros, 2008). There is, however, mixed evidence for the relationship between humility and self-esteem. Depending on which measure of humility was used, humility was either significantly positively related to self-esteem or the relationship between humility and self-esteem was not significant (Rowatt et al., 2006).

Humility and Life Satisfaction

Humility might, especially in these times of rapid change and high demands, represent an important determinant of life satisfaction and an important resource in creating and maintaining a purposeful life. Life-satisfaction, an assessment of one's own life as a whole (Diener, 2000), tends to be higher among those who report fewer psychological and social problems, for example depression and dysfunctional personal relations (Furr & Funder, 1998). Life satisfaction is also associated with gratitude (Kruse, Chancellor, Ruberton & Lyubomirsky, 2014), openness (Baron, 2000), a higher resilience to stress (Frisch, 2000), and forgiveness (McCullough, 2000). Given that humility is comparably associated with these constructs, it could be expected that humility is positively associated with life satisfaction. This relationship is, however, not as straightforward. Rowatt et al. (2006), for example, confirmed this association, whereas Pollock, Noser, Holden and Ziegler-Hill (2016) did not. There are very few attempts at studying the correlation between the two variables and humility has so far not been used to predict life satisfaction.

However, some questions remain unanswered: does humility function the same way in Croatia, a country in transition, as it does in western, more individualistic countries? Can humility predict life-satisfaction? In order to answer these questions and many more to come in the future, it is important to validate a humility questionnaire on a Croatian sample.

Study Aims

Firstly, the current study aimed to introduce humility, as it is a relatively unknown construct in Croatian psychological research and practice. Secondly, to validate the humility questionnaire Humility-Modesty subscale of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS HumilityModesty; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) in a Croatian sample; and thirdly to assess whether humility, due to its multiple benefits, contributes to life-satisfaction, especially given mixed results from previous studies. Given this goal, a humility questionnaire Humility-Modesty subscale of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS Humility-Modesty; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) was validated and its metric characteristics examined (convergent validity through correlations with other humility measures, self-compassion and self-esteem; and discriminant validity by analysing the correlations of the humility questionnaire with a dark triad measure). Using the validated questionnaire, it was estimated whether humility can explain life satisfaction variance above and beyond sociodemographic data, self-compassion, the dark triad and self-esteem.

Method and Material

Participants and Procedures

The data were collected in Croatia in the spring 2016 using an online survey tool LimeSurvey. The link to the study was distributed via social networks (private Facebook profiles, Facebook groups), private mailing lists, public forums and websites pertaining to psychological topics by the authors. In order to include a broader sample, personally known participants forwarded and publicly shared the link to the survey website. The time required to complete the survey was between 10 and 15 minutes.

Of the 978 persons who accessed the survey website 783 (71.3% women) individuals proceeded to complete the questionnaire and were included in the analytical sample ($M_{age} = 26.33$, $SD = 9.32$; range = 18-78 years). The missing values were missing completely at random (Little's MCAR $\chi^2 = 140.31$, $p > .52$) with no variable having more than 4% of missing values. The sample was somewhat heterogeneous regarding

the participants' education, with a majority of participants reporting to have completed at least some higher education or received a master's degree. The majority (57.5%) of participants lived in the capital city of Zagreb, 25.3% in other cities and 17.2% in smaller cities and villages. Two thirds of the participants were at the time of the survey still students (70.4%), 19.9% were employed, and 9.7% were unemployed. Most participants assessed their socioeconomic status as average (46%) or slightly above average (36%) (Table 1).

Table 1 *Sociodemographic characteristics*

| Variables | Categories | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Sex | M | 28.4% |
| | F | 71.6% |
| Highest degree of education attained | Primary school | 1.3% |
| | High school | 36.5% |
| | Vocational school | 2.7% |
| | Bachelor's degree | 34.4% |
| | Master's degree | 22.0% |
| | PhD | 3.1% |
| City size | Less than 5 000 | 11.0% |
| | 5 000-10 000 | 6.2% |
| | 10 000-100 000 | 16.5% |
| | 100 000-500 000 | 8.8% |
| | More than 500 000 | 57.5% |
| Assessment of socioeconomic status | A lot below average | 2.6% |
| | Little below average | 11.0% |
| | Average | 46% |
| | Little above average | 36% |
| | A lot above average | 4.5% |

Measures

Humility scales

Following the most recent standard of translation (van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004), questionnaires used in the survey — VIA-IS Humility-Modesty, Humility-Arrogance Semantic Differential Measure and Other Focus — were translated using tripartite translations (a psychologist, a linguist and a layperson) and focus group discussions.

The Humility-Modesty Subscale of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) is reported to be a unidimensional 10-item measure of modest self-presentation and low self-focus. Items include statements such as "I never brag about my accomplishments" or "I rarely call attention to myself". Responses are anchored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*very much unlike me*) to 5 (*very much like me*).

Humility-Arrogance Semantic Differential Measure (Rowatt et al., 2006) is a semantic differential-type 7-item scale that measures humility in opposition to arrogance. Participants reported their answers on a 7-point bipolar rating scale consisting of the following end-labels: humble/arrogant, modest/immodest, respectful/disrespectful, egotistical/not self-centered, conceited/not conceited, intolerant/tolerant, and closed-minded/open-minded. Internal consistency of the scale in this study was at .70. The composite measure was calculated as the average of the responses to all items, with a higher result indicating a higher level of humility.

Other Focus (Wright et al., 2016) is a 5-item measure of focus on other people. The scale consists of items such as “My friends would say I focus more on others than I do on myself” and “My actions are often aimed towards the well-being of others”. The participants anchored their answers on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Internal consistency of the scale in this study was at .86. The composite indicator was calculated as the average of all item responses, with a higher result indicating a higher focus on others.

Other measures used in the study

Short Dark Triad (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2014) measures three facets of the dark triad: Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy. Each subscale consists of nine items. Participants anchored their answers on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). In this study, the internal consistency of the Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy subscales were at .82, .72 and .68, respectively. As per author instructions, composites were calculated separately for each subscale, with a higher result indicating a higher propensity for Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy respectively.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item measure assessing the degree to which a person views themselves as a person of worth where 1 equals strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. In this study, the internal consistency of the scale was .88. The composite was calculated as the average of all items, with a higher result indicating a higher level of self-esteem.

Self-compassion scale (Neff, 2003) is a 12-item measure of kindness and understanding towards oneself, especially in moments of turmoil, rather than engaging in harsh self-criticism and judgment (e.g. “I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don’t like.”). In this study, Cronbach’s α was at .74. The composite measure was calculated as the average of all items, with a higher result indicating a higher level of self-compassion.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) is a 5-item measure of happiness and well-being (e.g. “I am satisfied with my life”). Answers are anchored on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Internal consistency was .85. The composite was calculated as the average of all items, with a higher result on the composite variable indicating a higher degree of life satisfaction.

Results

Validating the VIA-IS Humility-Modesty Measure

As it was the case in previous studies (Rosenberg, 1965; Rowatt et al., 2006), both histogram analysis and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated a slightly negatively asymmetric distribution for life-satisfaction, self-esteem and humility measures (VIA-IS ($K-S = .04; p < .05$) and semantic differential scale ($K-S = .05; p < .05$)). Their residuals, however, followed a normal distribution, which is a prerequisite for making valid inferences from the regression analysis (Field, 2009). Therefore, said variables were not normalised, however, bootstrapping with 2000 resamples was still employed to provide more reliable estimates

of standard errors (Byrne, 2009). As a prerequisite for bootstrapping, missing values were estimated using model-based FIML regression imputation (Newman, 2003).

Prerequisites for factor analysis were met (KMO = .85, Bartlett’s test of sphericity is significant $p < .001$ with $\chi^2(45, N = 783) = 1745.92$). Exploratory factor analysis yielded a Geomin rotated two-factor solution with the correlation between the two factors being at .36 (Table 2). According to the fit indices the two-factor solution ($\chi^2(26) = 77.14, p < .01, TLI = .91, CFI .95, RMSEA = .068; 90\% CI = .051-.086$) fit the data better compared to the one-factor solution ($\chi^2(35) = 173.51, p < .01, TLI = .81, CFI .85, RMSEA = .097; 90\% CI = .083-.111; \Delta\chi^2(9) = 96.36, p < .01$). The same structure was attained on both men and women – there was no significant difference between how the data fit men and how they fit women ($\Delta\chi^2(7) = 5.88, p = .55$). The EFA model fit was evaluated by the standards proposed by Hu & Bentler (1999).

Given that the first factor was saturated with items pertaining to the behavioral manifestations of humility – modest self-presentation and a low self-focus - we named it modest self-presentation. The second factor was saturated with items related to the assessment of one’s own personality characteristics and it was named dispositional humility (Table 2).

In contrast to the unidimensional structure of the VIA-IS Humility-Modesty measure that was reported for the US sample (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), EFA yielded a two-factor structure of the measure in the Croatian sample. Therefore, congruent, convergent and discriminant validity for the Croatian version of the VIA-IS Humility-Modesty measure were evaluated separately for each of the two factors—modest self-presentation and dispositional humility.

Table 2 *Factor loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis With Geomin Rotation of the VIA-IS Humility-Modesty subscale*

| Items | Factor Loadings | |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------|
| | Modest self-presentation | Dispositional humiltiy |
| 3. I do not act as if I were a special person. | .73 | |
| 2. I do not like to stand out in a crowd. | .68 | |
| 7. I rarely call attention to myself. | .60 | |
| 4. I never brag about my accomplishments. | .61 | |
| 6. I prefer to let other people talk about themselves. | .56 | |
| 5. I am proud that I am an ordinary person. | .31 | |
| 10. People are drawn to me because I am humble. | | .71 |
| 1. I am always humble about the good things that have happened to me. | | .46 |
| 8. I have been told that modesty is one of my most notable characteristics. | | .45 |
| 9. No one would ever describe me as arrogant. | | .30 |

Note. Only saturations $>.30$ are shown in the t

Table 3 Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on Relevant Variables and Sociodemographic Data

| | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. | 9. | 10. | M | SD |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1. Modest Self-Presentation (VIA-IS factor 1) | - | | | | | | | | | | 3.26 | .79 |
| 2. Dispositional Humility (VIA-IS factor 2) | .63** | - | | | | | | | | | 2.94 | .84 |
| 3. Humility-Arrogance Semantic Differential Scale | .53** | .66** | - | | | | | | | | 4.85 | .83 |
| 4. Other Focus | .24** | .35** | .38** | - | | | | | | | 3.46 | .84 |
| 5. Machiavellianism | -.16** | -.19** | -.33** | -.23** | - | | | | | | 2.70 | .71 |
| 6. Narcissism | -.56** | -.34** | -.30** | -.10** | .32** | - | | | | | 2.80 | .71 |
| 7. Psychopathy | -.29** | -.25** | -.38** | -.17** | .60** | .41** | - | | | | 2.17 | .74 |
| 8. Self-Compassion Scale | .01 | .07* | .21** | -.03 | -.14** | .15** | -.10** | - | | | 3.10 | .67 |
| 9. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale | -.16** | -.12* | .07 | -.05 | -.06 | .36** | -.04 | .60** | - | | 3.80 | .82 |
| 10. Satisfaction with Life Scale | -.13** | -.04 | .07 | -.03 | -.08* | .20** | -.07* | .41** | .58** | - | 3.90 | 1.0 |
| Age | .07* | .03 | .10** | .09* | -.05 | -.05 | -.05 | .08* | .12** | -.06 | 26.33 | 9.32 |
| Sex | .02 | .06 | .11** | .08* | -.18** | -.08* | -.22** | -.10** | -.07 | .01 | | |
| City size | -.16* | -.11** | -.04 | .02 | -.05 | .13** | .03 | .01 | .04 | .06 | | |
| Highest obtained academic degree | .03 | .01 | .04 | .01 | -.11** | -.01 | -.20** | .10** | .15** | .08* | 3.49 | 1.30 |
| Socioeconomic Standard | -.06 | -.09* | -.05 | -.03 | .03 | .16** | .01 | .06 | .20** | .40** | 3.30 | .82 |

Note. For all scales, higher mean scores are indicative of more extreme responding in the direction of the construct assessed. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Both VIA-IS Humility-Modesty subscales were positively correlated with other measures of humility (Table 3), confirming congruent validity of the measure in the Croatian sample. The subscales correlate with the semantic differential scale and with the Other Focus scale, which measures one of humility aspects (orientation towards others, focus on others). Suggesting good discriminant validity of the measure, as expected, both modest self-presentation and dispositional humility were negatively correlated with narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism. Self-compassion correlated only with dispositional humility, although the two constructs were only weakly related. Moreover, both modest self-presentation and dispositional humility were negatively related to self-esteem. Finally, modest self-presentation negatively correlated with life satisfaction, whereas dispositional humility was not significantly associated with life satisfaction.

The results obtained indicate that participants deem themselves as moderately humble (Table 3) which is less humble compared to participants from the US (Rowatt et al, 2006). There are no statistically significant differences between men and women in their self-assessment on the VIAIS Humility-Modesty subscale ($M_{men} = 3.05$; $SD_{men} = .75$; $M_{women} = 3.12$; $SD_{women} = .69$; $t(781) = -1.216$; $p > .05$) which corresponds to the findings of Rowatt et al. (2006).

A hierarchical linear regression analysis was then conducted to assess whether the two VIA-IS humility subscales significantly contribute to life satisfaction while controlling for the contributions of socio-demographic characteristics, the dark triad, self-compassion and self-esteem (Table 4).

All predictor blocks had a statistically significant contribution in the explanation of the outcome variable. Sociodemographic variables in Step 1 explained 17% of variance. Step 2 with the dark triad, self-compassion and self-esteem added to the model explained an additional 29% of the variance. The two humility subscales included in Step 3 explained only about 1% of the variance in life satisfaction. The first VIA-IS factor, modest self-presentation, was a negative predictor of life-satisfaction ($\beta = -.13$, $t = -3.37$, $p < .01$), while the second factor, dispositional humility, positively predicted the outcome ($\beta = .10$, $t = 2.80$, $p < .01$). Self-esteem, as seen in the literature (Diener et al., 1985) had the highest individual contribution ($\beta = .50$, $t = 13.91$, $p < .01$). The analysis explained 47% of the life-satisfaction variance ($R^2 = .47$, $F(12,779) = 57.50$, $p < .01$).

Table 4 Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Life Satisfaction ($N = 783$)

| Variable | Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | | | | Model 3 | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|-------------|--------------|---------|----------|-------------|--------------|---------|----------|-------------|---------------|---------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | 95% CI | β | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | 95% CI | β | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | 95% CI | β |
| Age | -.07 | 1.43 | [-.12, -.02] | -.10* | -.09 | 1.76 | [-.14, -.05] | -.14* | -.09 | .03 | [-.14, -.05] | -.14* |
| Sex | .08 | .03 | [-.78, .98] | .01 | -.54 | .03 | [-.21, 1.26] | .04 | .47 | .39 | [-.27, 1.18] | .04 |
| City size | -.01 | .46 | [-.29, .29] | .00 | .05 | .39 | [-.18, .29] | .01 | .02 | .12 | [-.21, .27] | .01 |
| Highest obtained academic degree | .38 | .15 | [.00, .77] | .08* | .02 | .12 | [-.29, .35] | .01 | .03 | .16 | [-.27, .35] | .01 |
| Socioeconomic standard | 2.89 | .18 | [2.34, 3.38] | .39* | 2.18 | .16 | [1.78, 2.59] | .29* | 2.23 | .21 | [1.83, 2.63] | .30* |
| Machiavellianism | | | | | -.01 | .03 | [-.07, .04] | -.02 | .00 | .03 | [-.07, .05] | -.01 |
| Narcissism | | | | | -.03 | .03 | [-.09, .03] | -.03 | -.07 | .03 | [-.14, .00] | -.07 |
| Psychoopathy | | | | | -.03 | .04 | [-.10, .04] | -.02 | -.03 | .04 | [-.10, .04] | -.03 |
| Self-compassion | | | | | .09 | .03 | [.04, .14] | .12* | .09 | .03 | [.03, .14] | .12* |
| Self-esteem | | | | | 3.62 | .27 | [3.12, 4.15] | .49* | 3.68 | .27 | [3.18, 4.21] | .50* |
| VIA-IS Modest self-presentation | | | | | | | | | -.86 | .28 | [-1.42, -.27] | -.13* |
| VIA-IS Dispositional humility | | | | | | | | | .66 | .26 | [.18, 1.13] | .10* |
| R^2 | | | | | | | | | | | | .47* |
| ΔR^2 | | | | | | | | | | | | .01* |
| ΔF^2 | | | | | | | | | | | | 6.26* |

Note. CI = confidence interval for *B*.; * $p < .01$.

Discussion

This study aimed to validate the Croatian version of the humility questionnaire Humility-Modesty subscale of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS Humility-Modesty; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and assess whether humility positively contributes to life-satisfaction. In contrast to Peterson and Seligman's finding that VIA-IS Humility-Modesty scale has an unidimensional structure (2004), the factor analysis yielded a two-factors structure in a Croatian sample— modest self-presentation and dispositional humility. In this discussion we will offer possible explanations for this discrepancy in factor structure.

We then assessed congruent validity (through correlations with the other two humility measures – the Semantic Differential Scale and the Other Focus scale), convergent validity (through correlation with the Self-Compassion Scale), and discriminant validity (through associations with the dark triad, with the emphasis on narcissism) of the two subscales of the Croatian version of the VIA-IS Humility-Modesty questionnaire.

The first factor, modest self-presentation, measures behavioral manifestations of humility and other focus, whereas the second factor pertains to dispositional humility. As expected, both factors are negatively associated with the dark triad (most strongly with narcissism) and they are positively associated with the other measures of humility. However, modest self-presentation was negatively associated with self-esteem and life satisfaction, and no significant relationship was found with self-compassion suggesting an overlap between modest self-presentation and self-esteem. Item content and correlation analyses pointed to a significant association between these two constructs. In other words, modest self-presentation items describe behaviors that may reflect both humility and low self-esteem. For example, the item "I prefer to let other people talk about themselves" or "I do not like to stand out in a crowd" could be interpreted differently depending on one's view of self. To a humble individual "I prefer to let other people talk about themselves" may mean that they don't have a need to talk about themselves because they are more focused on others (Elliot, 2010). In contrast, individuals with low self-esteem may not want to talk about themselves because they believe they are not interesting enough to be listened to. Similarly, unlike humble individuals who are not self-focused, people with low self-esteem may focus on others with the aim of receiving validation and acceptance. Therefore, both someone who is humble and someone who has low self-esteem might have a high result on the modest self-presentation subscale, although the underlying processes are fundamentally different between the two individuals. Although we did control for the contribution of low self-esteem in the regression model, the negative correlation between the modest self-presentation subscale and life-satisfaction may in part be explained by the conceptual overlap between this construct and self-esteem, at least in the Croatian language.

Dispositional humility consists of items that pertain to an individual's humility, modesty and lack of arrogance. Corresponding to both Tangney's (2009) and Van Tongeren, Davis and Hook's (2014) humility definition, Gregg, Hart, Sedikides, & Kumashiro (2008) define modesty as interpersonal agreeableness, caring for others, non-intrusiveness, and a reluctance to brag. As such the item "I have been told that modesty is one of my most notable characteristics" is a part of dispositional humility. Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell and Finkel (2004), similarly see humility in contrast to aspects of narcissism that include grandeur, entitlement, personal glorification and an overweening opinion of oneself. Narcissistic people score low on humility scales (Exline & Geyer, 2004) which is why the item "No one would ever describe me as arrogant" also constitutes a part of the dispositional humility subscale. Therefore, in accordance with previous literature, dispositional humility was in this study positively related to other humility measures (Rowatt et al., 2006; Wright et al., 2016) and self-compassion and negatively associated with narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy (Lee et al., 2013) and self-esteem.

Finally, multiple regression analysis indicated a small, but significant contribution of VIAIS in ex-

plaining the life satisfaction variance, above and beyond sociodemographic characteristics and other psychological constructs. Although self-esteem and sociodemographic characteristics explain the largest proportion of variance in the model (Diener et al., 1985), the two humility subscales contributed marginally, but significantly to the explanation of the life satisfaction variance. Importantly, however, the contribution of modest self-presentation was negative, supporting the assumption that modest self-presentation measures both humility and behavioral manifestations of low self-esteem. Dispositional humility had a positive contribution in explaining life-satisfaction variance, although it was quite small.

Taken together, our results suggest that VIA-IS might not be an adequate measure of humility in Croatia. First, in contrast to studies conducted in the United States, VIA-IS was found to have a two-factor structure in the Croatian sample. In addition, VIA-IS doesn't seem to encompass all theorized aspects of humility. For example, the measure does not include low self-focus (Emmons, 1999; Exline et al., 2004) or egalitarian values, acceptance of one's limitations and shortcomings, intellectual openness (Davis, Worthington & Hook, 2010), nor an accurate view of self and other focus. Given that this construct may still not be clearly defined or operationalized (i.e. every humility researcher appears to have their own definition) this is not surprising. However, the omission of other focus in VIA-IS appears to be particularly concerning, considering that Tangney (2009) and Worthington, Davis and Hook (2016) theorize that it is other focus that separates humble people from those with low self-esteem. Further on, maybe humility is, despite theory, not a broad enough construct to explain a large percentage of chosen criterion variance. It theoretically overlaps with other constructs such as self-compassion, self-esteem and narcissism that are well-known predictors of life satisfaction, so they might be explaining the same part of life-satisfaction variance. Finally, maybe humility is not relevant or well understood in the Croatian culture. This construct, taken over from individualistic western cultures might require a different operationalization of modest self-presentation in the Croatian setting.

Study contributions and limitations

Validation of the VIA-IS Humility-Modesty in a Croatian sample is the biggest contribution of this study. However, several limitations also need to be mentioned. Compared to paper-pencil research, online surveys are becoming popular because they enable easy access to different populations and have certain financial and organizational advantages. However, the community-based sample used in this study (in which youth, women and highly educated individuals are overrepresented) is not representative of the Croatian population, nor can our results be generalized to the entire Croatian population. Although self-reported data is usually affected by self-enhancement, Landrum (2011) suggested that there are no associations between social desirability and dispositional humility. Furthermore, although this study's results correspond to some of the results reported earlier (such as correlations with other variables), they also suggest that there are important differences between our results and those previously reported in the literature. Specifically, further quantitative and qualitative examinations of the construct should be conducted in order to assess the overlap between humility and other, similar construct—in particular low self-esteem. Since there still lacks a consensus in the literature regarding the definition of humility, such an approach would contribute to the development of a more appropriate humility questionnaire that can be used both in Croatian samples and internationally.

Conclusion

Research has shown that humility is relevant in many areas of life, such as strengthening relationships, (Exline et al., 2003), facilitating conflict resolution and forgiveness (Worthington, 2008), effective self-control (Baumeister & Exline, 1999), focusing on others (Wright et al., 2016), benefitting group well-being (Kunz, 2002) and organizations (Owens, Johnson & Mitchell, 2013). The aim of this study was to validate a Values in Action Inventory of Strengths Humility-Modesty subscale (VIA-IS; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) in a Croatian sample. In contrast to the unidimensionality of the measure that was reported in previous studies, factor analysis yielded two distinct factors—modest self-presentation and dispositional humility. Both factors were negatively associated with the dark triad (most strongly with narcissism) and positively associated with other humility measures assessed in the study. However, modest self-presentation correlated negatively with life-satisfaction, self-esteem and self-compassion, whereas dispositional humility was positively associated with these constructs. In the multivariate assessment, both factors were significantly, albeit in opposite directions, related to life-satisfaction, over and above sociodemographic characteristics, self-esteem, self-compassion, and the dark triad. The percentage of the explained variance was significant, although minor, which may be due to a conceptual overlap between behavioral humility manifestations and low self-esteem (at least in the Croatian language) or it could be due to the fact that some of the key aspects of humility are not included in the VIAIS Humility-Modesty questionnaire. This study's results show the importance of validating constructs across different social settings and call for further research on humility in Croatia and internationally.

References

- Aghababaei, N., Wasserman, J. A., & Nannini, D. (2014). The religious person revisited: Cross-cultural evidence from the HEXACO model of personality structure. *Mental Health, Religion, & Culture*, 17, 24-29.
- Anić, V. (1998). *Rječnik hrvatskoga jezika* [Croatian language dictionary]. Zagreb: Novi Liber.
- Baron, J. (2000). *Thinking and deciding*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Baumeister, R. F. & Exline, J. J. (1999). Virtue, personality, and social relations: Self-control as the moral muscle. *Journal of Personality*, 67, 1165-1194.
- Bushman, B. J. & Baumeister, R. F. (1998). Threatened egotism, narcissism, self-esteem, and direct and displaced aggression: Does self-love or self-hate lead to violence? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 219-229.
- Byrne, B. M. (2009). *Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS*. New York: Routledge.
- Cheng, J. T., Weidman, A. C., & Tracy, J. L. (2018). The psychological structure of humility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 114(1), 153-178.
- Davis, D. E., Hook, J. N., Worthington, E. L., Jr, Van Tongeren, D. R., Gartner, A. L., Jennings, D. J., II & Emmons, R. A. (2011). Relational humility: Conceptualizing and measuring humility as a personality judgment. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 93, 225-234.
- Davis, D. E., Placeres, V., Choe, E., DeBlaere, C., Zeyala, D., & Hook, J. N. (2016). Relational humility. In E. L. Worthington Jr, D. E. Davis & J. N. Hook (Eds.), *Handbook of Humility* (pp. 105-118). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Davis, D. E., Worthington, E. L., Jr, & Hook, J. N. (2010). Humility: Review of measurement strategies and conceptualization as personality judgment. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4, 243-252.

- Davis, D. E., Worthington, E. L., Hook, J. N., Emmons, R. A., Hill, P. C., Bollinger, R. A., & Van Tongeren, D. R. (2013). Humility and the development and repair of social bonds: Two longitudinal studies. *Self and Identity, 12*, 58–77.
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness, and a proposal for national index. *American Psychologist, 55*, 34-43.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J. & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction With Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*, 71-75.
- Elliott, J. C. (2010). Humility: Development and analysis of a scale. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee.
- Emmons, R. A. (1999). *The psychology of ultimate concerns*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Exline, J. J., Baumeister, R., Bushman, B., Campbell, W. K. & Finkel, E. (2004). Too proud to let go: Narcissistic entitlement as a barrier to forgiveness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 87*, 894-912.
- Exline, J. J., & Geyer, A. L. (2004). Perceptions of humility: A preliminary Study. *Self and Identity, 3*, 95-114.
- Exline, J. J. & Hill, P. C. (2012). Humility: A consistent and robust predictor of generosity. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 7*, 208–218.
- Exline, J. J., Worthington, E. L. Jr., Hill, P., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Forgiveness and justice: A research agenda for social and personality psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 7*, 337-348.
- Field, A. (2009). *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Frisch, M. B. (2000). Improving mental and physical health care through quality of life therapy and assessment. In E. Diener & D. R. Rahtz (Eds.), *Advances in quality of life: Theory and research* (pp. 207–241). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Furr, R. M. & Funder, D. C. (1998). A multimodal analysis of personal negativity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*, 1580–1591.
- Gregg, A. P., Hart, C. M., Sedikides, C., & Kumashiro, M. (2008). Everyday conceptions of modesty: A prototype analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 34*, 978-992.
- Hu, L.-t. & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling, 6*(1), 1-55.
- Jankowski, P. J., Sandage, S. J., & Hill, P. C. (2013). Differentiation-based models of forgivingness, mental health and social justice commitment: Mediator effects for differentiation of self and humility. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 8*(5), 412-424.
- Jones, D. N. & Paulhus, D. L. (2014). Introducing the Short Dark Triad (SD3): A Brief Measure of Dark Personality Traits. *Assessment, 21*, 28-41.
- Krause, N. (2010). Religious Involvement, Humility, and Self-Rated Health. *Social Indicators Research, 98*(1), 23-39.
- Krause, N., Pargament, K. I., Hill, P. C., & Ironson, G. (2016). Humility, stressful life events, and psychological well-being: Findings from the landmark spirituality and health survey. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 11*(5), 499-510.
- Kruse, E., Chancellor, J., Ruberton, P. M. & Lyubomirsky, S. (2014). An upward spiral between gratitude and humility. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 5*, 805–814.
- Kunz, G. (2002). Simplicity, humility, and patience. In R. N. Williams & E. E. Gantt (Eds.), *Psychology for the other: Levinas, ethics and the practice of psychology* (pp. 118-142). Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- LaBouff, J. P., Rowatt, W. C., Johnson, M. K., Tsang, J., & McCullough Willerton, G. (2012). Humble persons are more helpful than less humble persons: Evidence from three studies. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 7*, 16–29.
- Landrum, E. (2011). *Measuring Dispositional Humility: A First Approximation*. *Psychological Reports*,

108(1), 217-228.

- Lee, K. & Ashton, M. C. (2012). Getting mad and getting even: Agreeableness and honesty-humility as predictors of revenge intentions. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52, 596-600.
- Lee, K., Ashton, M. C., Wiltshire, J., Bourdage, J. S., Visser, B. A., & Gallucci, A. (2013). Sex, power, and money: Prediction from the Dark Triad and Honesty-Humility. *European Journal of Personality*, 27, 169-184.
- McCullough, M. (2000). Forgiveness as human strength: Theory, measurement, and links to well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19, 43-55.
- Neff, K. D. (2003). The development and validation of a scale to measure self-Compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2, 223-250.
- Newman, D. A. (2003). Longitudinal modeling with randomly and systematically missing data: A simulation of ad hoc, maximum likelihood, and multiple imputation techniques. *Organizational Research Methods*, 6(3), 328-362.
- Owens, B. P., Johnson, M. D., & Mitchell, T. R. (2013). Expressed humility in organizations: Implications for performance, teams, and leadership. *Organization Science*, 24 (5), 1517-1538.
- Peters, A. S., Rowatt, W. C., & Johnson, M. K. (2011). Associations between Dispositional Humility and Social Relationship Quality. *Psychology*, 3(2), 155-161.
- Peterson, C. & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pollock, N. C., Noser, A. E., Holden, C. J., & Zeigler-Hill, V. (2016). Do orientations to happiness mediate the associations between personality traits and subjective well-being? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17, 713-729.
- Quiros, A. (2008). The development, construct validity, and clinical utility of the healthy humility inventory. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 68, 6331.
- Roberts, R. C. (1983). *Spirituality and Human Emotion*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Rowatt, W. C., Powers, C., Targhetta, V., Comer, J., Kennedy, S., & LaBouff, J. (2006). Development and initial validation of an implicit measure of humility relative to arrogance. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(4), 198-211.
- Rowatt, W. C., Ottenbreit, A., Nesselrode, Jr., K. P., & Cunningham, P. A. (2002). On being holier-than-thou or humbler-than-thee: A social psychological perspective on religiousness and humility. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41, 227-237.
- Ryan, D. S. (1983). Self-Esteem: An operational definition and ethical analysis. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 11, 295-302.
- Sandage, S. J. (1999). An ego-humility model of forgiveness: A theory-driven empirical test of group interventions. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 59, 3712.
- Sandage, S. J., Jankowski, P. J., Bissonette, C. D., & Paine, D. R. (2016). Vulnerable Narcissism, Forgiveness, Humility, and Depression: Mediator Effects for Differentiation of Self. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Scherwitz, L., & Canick, J. C. (1988). Self-reference and coronary heart disease risk. In B. K. Houston & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), *Type A behavior pattern: Research, theory, and intervention* (pp. 146-167). New York: Wiley.
- Tangney, J. P. (2009). Humility. In S. J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of Positive Psychology*, (pp. 483-490). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Tangney, J. P. (2007). Moral Emotions and Moral Behavior. *The Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, 345-372.

- Tangney, J. P. (2000). Humility: Theoretical perspectives, empirical findings and directions for future research. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 19*, 70–82.
- Thrive Center for Human Development. (2013). *Intellectual Humility: Request for Proposals*. Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary. [http://www.fuller.edu/uploadedFiles/Academics/Centers_and_Institutes/Thrive_Center/Intellectual%20Humility%20Official%20RFP\(2\).pdf](http://www.fuller.edu/uploadedFiles/Academics/Centers_and_Institutes/Thrive_Center/Intellectual%20Humility%20Official%20RFP(2).pdf) 14.07.2017.
- van de Vijver, F. & Tanzer, N.K. (2004). Bias and equivalence in cross-cultural assessment: An overview. *Revue Européenne de Psychologie Appliquée, 54*, 119-135.
- Van Tongeren, D. R., Davis, D. E., & Hook, J. N. (2014). Social benefits of humility: Initiating and maintaining romantic relationships. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 9*, 313–321.
- Worthington, E. L. (2008). Humility: The quiet virtue. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 27*, 270273.
- Worthington, E. L., Davis, D. E., & Hook, J. N. (2016). *Handbook of Humility: Theory, Research, and Applications*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Wright, J. C., Nadelhoffer, T., Ross, L., & Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2016). Be it ever so humble: An updated account and measurement for humility. Manuscript submitted for publication.