

A Brief Version of the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale

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Although the Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) Scale has widespread applicability to many areas of research in personality and social psychology, its utility is sometimes limited by its length. This article presents a brief, 12-item version of the FNE that correlates very highly (.96) with the original scale and that demonstrates psychometric properties that are nearly identical to those of the full-length scale.

People's concerns with being evaluated unfavorably by others have been implicated in a number of social psychological phenomena, including conformity, prosocial behavior, self-presentation, self-serving attributions, social anxiety, self-handicapping, attitude change, compliance, and social facilitation (for example, Schlenker, 1980). Social processes in which evaluation apprehension is a factor should be partly mediated by differences in the degree to which individuals are apprehensive about being negatively evaluated by others. People who are highly concerned about being perceived and evaluated negatively would be more likely to behave in ways that avoid the possibility of unfavorable evaluations and, thus, be more responsive to situational factors relevant to such concerns than individuals who are less apprehensive about others' evaluations of them.

The Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) Scale (Watson & Friend, 1969) is the measure used most commonly to determine the degree to which people experience apprehension at the prospect of being evaluated negatively. As the nature of the construct predicts, people who score high on the FNE scale tend to behave in ways designed to avoid the prospect of being evaluated unfavorably. For example, compared to subjects identified as low in FNE, high FNE subjects work harder on boring tasks when they believe their work will be explicitly approved by others (Watson & Friend, 1969). High FNE subjects attempt to avoid potentially threatening social comparison information to a greater degree (Friend & Gilbert, 1973), and indicate they feel worse about receiving negative evaluations (Smith & Sarason, 1975). High FNEs also prefer to be in a positive asymmetrical relationship—being liked by another more than one likes the

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other—rather than a balanced relationship (Smith & Campbell, 1973). High FNE individuals are also more concerned with making good impressions on others and try harder to do so during face-to-face conversations (Leary, 1980). In addition, FNE scores correlate $+ .77$ ($p < .01$) with social approval-seeking as measured by Jackson's Personality Research Form (Watson & Friend, 1969). Given their apprehension about others' evaluations of them, it is not surprising that high FNEs tend to be more socially anxious than low FNEs (Leary, 1983; Watson & Friend, 1969).

Despite its applicability to many topics in personality and social psychology, the FNE scale has not received the widespread research use that theoretical utility of the construct would suggest. One complaint among its users is that the scale is simply too long. The FNE consists of 30 true-false items and often seems to tax subjects' patience and endurance, particularly when it is administered in conjunction with other scales. The purpose of the present study was to develop a brief version of the FNE without sacrificing its excellent psychometric properties.

METHOD

Twelve items were selected from the FNE from among those that correlated at least .50 with the scale total. In addition to using only 12 of the original items, the response format on the new, Brief-FNE was changed from the original true-false format to 5-point scales. Instructions for the brief FNE asked subjects to indicate how characteristic each statement was of them on a 5-point scale that included the scale labels "not at all," "slightly," "moderately," "very," and "extremely . . . characteristic of me." The 12 items on the Brief-FNE scale, along with their correlations with the Brief-FNE total, are shown in Table 1.

The psychometric properties of the Brief-FNE were examined in a number of ways. First, the full-length FNE was administered to a sample of 150 volunteer undergraduate students, and the correlation between the full scale and the items comprising the brief version was calculated, along with a measure of interitem reliability (Cronbach's α). In order to examine test-retest reliability, a second sample of 75 undergraduates completed the Brief-FNE on two occasions separated by a 4-week interval.

A third sample of 85 undergraduate subjects completed the full-length FNE, and median splits were performed on both the full-length and brief versions of the scale. Since social psychologists often use median splits for subject classification, the congruence between splits performed on the two versions of the scale were of interest. In order to examine construct validity, a fourth group of 76 undergraduates completed the Brief-FNE along with the Social Avoidance and Distress (SAD) Scale (Watson & Friend, 1969) and the Interaction Anxiousness Scale (Leary, 1983). Previous research would predict low to moderate correlations between FNE and these measures.

Finally, 40 additional subjects completed the Brief-FNE during their participation in an unrelated experiment. As part of this study, subjects

TABLE 1 Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale

	<i>Item-Total Corr.</i>
(1) I worry about what other people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference.	.54
(2) I am unconcerned even if I know people are forming an unfavorable impression of me.(R)	.53
(3) I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings.	.64
(4) I rarely worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone.(R)	.57
(5) I am afraid that others will not approve of me.	.67
(6) I am afraid that people will find fault with me.	.66
(7) Other people's opinions of me do not bother me.(R)	.43
(8) When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about me.	.60
(9) I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make.	.68
(10) If I know someone is judging me, it has little effect on me.(R)	.56
(11) Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think of me.	.75
(12) I often worry that I will say or do the wrong things.	.73

Note: Instructions asked respondents to "Read each of the following statements carefully and indicate how characteristic it is of you according to the following scale:" 1 = Not at all characteristic of me, 2 = Slightly characteristic of me, 3 = Moderately characteristic of me, 4 = Very characteristic of me, 5 = Extremely characteristic of me.

Reverse score items were marked (R) before summing.

conversed with another subject for six minutes. Two items included in the postexperimental questionnaire were designed to assess subjects' concerns with being evaluated unfavorably during the laboratory conversation: (a) During the conversation, how much did you think about how well you were coming across to the other subject? (b) How much would it bother you to learn that the other subject had evaluated you unfavorably after the conversation? The correlations between these measures and subjects' scores on the Brief-FNE were examined as additional evidence of validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Brief-FNE was found to have a mean of 35.7 and a standard deviation of 8.10. As desired, the original and Brief-FNE scales correlated quite highly, $r =$

.96, $p < .0001$. Clearly, the Brief-FNE accounts for most of the variance of the longer scale.

The interitem reliability of the Brief-FNE Scale was found to be quite high; Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$. This compares favorably with an obtained reliability coefficient of .92 for the full-length FNE. Watson & Friend in 1969 reported a KR-20 coefficient of .94. The 4-week test-retest reliability coefficient was .75, which also compares favorably to Watson and Friend's reported test-retest coefficient of .68 for the longer scale. The reliability of the FNE scale does not appear to be affected dramatically by the elimination of nearly two-thirds of the original items.

Since researchers commonly perform a median split on subjects' FNE scores in order to classify them as either high or low in FNE, it was of interest to determine whether most subjects would be classified similarly by median splits on the long and brief versions of the scale. Inspection of placement of subjects into low and high groups revealed that 79 (93%) were classified identically by the two versions.

As expected, the Brief-FNE showed the expected relationships with the other measures administered: SAD-anxiety subscale, $+.35$; SAD-avoidance subscale, $+.19$; Interaction Anxiousness Scale, $+.32$, all $ps < .05$.

Finally, subjects' responses to both items obtained after the laboratory conversation correlated significantly with subjects' scores. FNE correlated $.31$, $p < .05$, with the degree to which subjects thought about how well they were coming across; and $.57$, $p < .0001$, with the degree to which subjects would be bothered by an unfavorable evaluation from the other subject.

In conclusion, the brief 12-item version of the FNE appears to be a workable alternative to the 30-item scale developed by Watson and Friend. The correlation with the full-length scale is quite high, as is the internal consistency of the brief scale. Although additional information is needed on the validity of the Brief-FNE, it appears that the shorter scale will serve most research needs quite well and has the advantage of requiring less time for administration than the original FNE.

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