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**Grade: 92**

11/1/16

PSYC 350

Ideographic Analyses Project

For my first variable, I decided to measure how anxious I feel each day over the 16-day period. I chose anxiousness over any other feeling because I was diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder in the last few years after knowing for a great deal of my life that I experienced feelings of anxiety at a level that was abnormal. While I tend to get anxious quite easily, there are certain scenarios or days where I am more calm and feel less on edge. I wanted to see how tracking my anxiety levels may reveal patterns in my mood or discomfort with certain situations. I have also heard before that caffeine can increase anxiety levels and that anxiety can make it difficult to sleep, so I wanted to see if these relationships would prove true in my case. For my second variable, I chose to measure the amount of caffeine I consume on a daily basis. While I almost never drink caffeinated soft drinks, I do drink coffee regularly either from Starbucks or from my French press at home. Caffeine tends to affect my mood, alertness, ability to sleep, and sometimes my anxiety. More often than not, I try to avoid coffee and take naps instead, but I know so many college students like myself rely on caffeine to finish their work, so I thought this was an important and interesting variable for me to consider. For my third value, I decided to measure how much sleep I get each night over the 16-day period. My sleep schedule is highly irregular due to the fact that I have late-starting classes, three jobs, memberships in several RSOs, and graduate school applications. When I am up very late during the week, I usually try to nap the next day. When this doesn’t work out, I will instead sleep for very long periods of time on the weekends (12+ hours). Just like most college students, my sleeping patterns are not consistent or very healthy for a young adult. I know that lack of sleep makes me unproductive and moody, so I wanted to see how else this may impact my life.

To measure the three variables mentioned above, I completed a three-part survey each night before bed. In order to assess anxiety levels, I responded to the statement “I felt anxious today” with a rating on a four-point scale, with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 4 being “Strongly Agree”. To track my caffeine intake, I responded to the question “How many cups of a caffeinated beverage did you drink today?” with a selection on a numerical scale ranging from “0 Cups” to “4+ Cups”. Finally, I recorded the total number of hours I had slept by answering two questions: “How many hours of sleep did you get last night?” and “If you napped today, how many hours did you nap?”. I responded to each of these questions with a numerical input typically ranging from 0 to 10 hours.

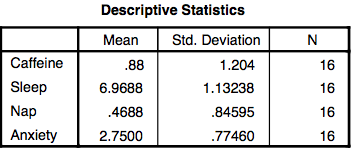


Fig. 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Variables

Figure 1 is a table that lists the means and standards deviations for each item measured in my daily assessment over a 16-day period. In general, these values are fairly close to what I would have predicted for myself. However, I am surprised that my average anxiety levels were below 3 (Agree) because I tend to consider myself a person characterized by high levels of anxiety.

Fig. 2: Anxiety Plot

Fig. 3: Caffeine Plot

Fig. 4: Sleep Plot

Figures 2-4 are plots depicting each of my variables changing over the 16-day period. In Figure 2, my anxiety levels seem to loosely follow a sinusoidal wave pattern, cycling between extremely high and moderately low over time without ever reaching extremely low levels. A similar pattern can be seen in Figure 3 for caffeine consumption as there appears to be a general back-and-forth between no caffeine and moderate amounts. Looking at Figure 4, it is fairly obvious that my sleeping habits are irregular, and my resting hours both at night and during the day follow no real pattern.

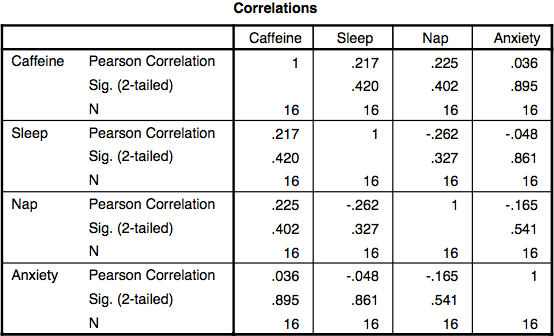


Fig. 5: Within-Person Correlations of Variables

After viewing the results of this study, I felt that it didn’t reveal much about myself and my personality that I did not already know. If anything, it showed me how erratic my behaviors can be and that my life is not as routine as I often view it to be. Taking note of the inconsistencies throughout my plots, I definitely think my anxiety is at fault due to the fact that I am constantly trying to counteract my “panicky days.” When looking at my table of correlations, the strongest relationship is the negative correlation between hours napping and hours sleeping. Although the coefficient is not remarkable, this relationship is hardly surprising in that everyone would expect naps to increase as sleep decreases and vice versa. The next two strongest correlations between the variables I chose are the relationship between caffeine and sleep and the relationship between caffeine and naps. Overall, the correlation between caffeine and total hours of sleep is moderate and positive, which is very counterintuitive. One would expect this relationship to be strongly negative, but instead my results suggest that as I slept more, I also consumed more caffeinated beverages, and as I slept less, I tended to consume less caffeinated beverages. While the correlation with both naps and sleep is hardly above .2, it is still an odd find. My assumption for my individual case is that usually when I am lacking sleep, I am too lazy to go get coffee, soda, or tea, or I wake up too late to prepare it for myself. I also will try to avoid caffeine if I know I am desperately in need of a nap. On the other hand, if I am alert and not groggily walking from class to class, I am more likely stop and meet a friend for coffee or go out of my way to grab lunch and a soda. Considering other correlations from my assessment, I am very surprised that there is not a stronger negative correlation between sleep and anxiety or a stronger positive correlation between caffeine and anxiety. I expected each of these variables to have a stronger influence on my anxiety levels due to the fact that sleep deprivation and high caffeine intake are “tried and true” causes of anxious behaviors for those with GAD, or so I thought. Perhaps I did not observe such strong correlations simply because my case is fairly moderate in that I was never severely lacking in sleep or drinking copious amounts of caffeinated beverages, but it could also be because I only observed my life over a 16-day period and not a longer one. There are many reasons why these correlations may not be as significant as I had assumed they would be, but they would be impossible to identify without doing a more refined version of this study.

Appendix

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Note: Due to the fact that the server for data collection was in a different time zone, dates had to be altered in the final report to reflect the actual date each that each recording corresponds with.