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A TEST OF EXISTENTIAL MOTIVATIONS IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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We developed a questionnaire with the intention of measuring existential fulfillment in interpersonal relationships. The paper presents the purpose, methodological basis, and structure of the Test of Existential Motivations in Interpersonal Relationships (TEMIR), as well as the validation process and research findings which were obtained using the TEMIR.

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Introduction

There have been recent major efforts in existential analysis to create psychometric tools that will supplement qualitative phenomenological studies for quantitative data. Längle's school of developed methods which could be used in both research and counselling. The Existence Scale (ESK) developed by Längle and Orgler (Längle, Orgler, Kundi 2000) and based on Frankl's theory was designed to "assess existential fulfillment as it is subjectively experienced by a participant" (Krivtsova, Längle, Orgler, 2009, 142). The Test of Existential Motivations (TEM) created by Längle and Eckhard (Eckhard 2001) is based on Längle's concept of four fundamental existential motivations and assesses the integral factors of personal existence, "an integral subjective representation of one's quality of life" (Koryakina 2010, 140). These questionnaires are currently being validated and standardized using a Russian-speaking sample (Mainina, 2009; Koryakina, 2009, 2010; Petrova, 2010).

Our aim was to develop an original method to assess the extent to which fundamental existential motivations in close interpersonal relationships were established. In other words, we tried to move from the integral factors of personal existential fulfillment to the assessment of existential fulfillment in a specific area of life; close interpersonal relationships. In our opinion, The Test of Existential Motivations in Interpersonal Relationships (TEMIR) can supplement the existing ESK and TEM in the research and counselling spheres. This paper reports the validation steps and our research findings obtained during the validation process of the TEMIR.

Theoretical background

Perhaps the most naïve and simultaneously deepest question about human life and psychology as a science is: Why do people initiate close relationships? What keeps them together? According to psychoanalytical theories, people tend to build relationships mainly to satisfy the body and soul's basic needs, to compensate for their deficits, due to unconscious childhood complexes, a sense of inferiority and to achieve pragmatic aims. According to the existential analytical approach, humans are not designed to live alone, and relationships form the essence of existence. People find each other mainly because their personal existence can only be actualized in close interpersonal relationships. Frankl maintained that «the ego can become an ego only through a Thou» (Frankl 1988, 12) echoing Buber's thoughts (Buber 2010). An Encounter occurs in close

interpersonal relationships, which allows both people to experience a more authentic existence. In other words, in a close relationship with another person, I may become more of who I really am, in my essence, and move to a personal level of existence. Similarly, the other person may become more him or herself, thanks to our encounter.

Using Längle's concept of fundamental existential motivations (Längle 2006) we can describe the structural elements of close interpersonal relationships that establish humans' personal origins . The first fundamental existential motivation in relationships is the need to trust another individual in close interpersonal relationships. For this, relationships must offer space, protection and support. Space is established by the relationship's framework, through the terms and conditions accepted by both partners. These could be financial and housing conditions, rights and duties or assignment of roles. Protection and support are manifested through fidelity and partner reliability.

The second fundamental existential motivation as it is experienced in an interpersonal relationship is the need to enjoy the relationship and the capacity to experience the value of life through it. Relatedness, time and closeness create conditions for partners to be emotionally open and for their relationships to be filled with mutual feelings and values.

The third fundamental existential motivation is the need to be real authentic when people are with their partner, the need to be oneself. To experience this fully, people need attention, justice and appreciation from their partner. On the one hand, partners in these relationships share intimate feelings and experience emotional closeness whilst on the other, each partner retains their own individuality and autonomy. This is termed «closeness at a distance», when there is a mutual respect of each other's interests and actions to form a perfect environment for authenticity and personal growth.

The fourth fundamental existential motivation is the need for meaningful collaboration with a partner. A *field of common activity*, a *structural context* of the future that includes both partners, their common vision of values and their *future together* can lead to common goals, projects and aims. This mutually shared horizon of becoming keeps partners together and creates a common meaning perspective and a common world, in which partners need each other because together they can do better than on their own.

Structure of the questionnaire

Based on Längle's concept of the fundamental existential motivations, the TEMIR is designed to measure the degree of actualization of fundamental existential motivations in a particular close relationship between two people (love, friendship or other types of partnerships).

The questionnaire has 4 main scales describing the four fundamental existential motivations:
- Trust in interpersonal relationships (T_{ir})
- Value of life in relationships (V_{ir})
- Authenticity in relationships (A_{ir})
- Meaning of relationships (M_{ir})

Each scale has three sub-scales describing prerequisites for fundamental existential motivations:
- Trust (T_{ir}) = Support (T_{sup}) + Protection (T_{prot}) + Space (T_{sp})
- Value of life (V_{ir}) = Relatedness (V_{rel}) + Time (V_{time}) + Closeness (V_{cl})
- Authenticity (A_{ir}) = Attention (A_{att}) + Justice (A_{just}) + Appreciation (A_{appr})
- Meaning (M_{ir})= Field of common activity (M_{field}) + Structural Context (M_{struct}) + Common Future (M_{fut})

The total EF_{ir} index reflects the existential fulfillment in certain interpersonal relationships:

$EF_{ir} = T_{ir} + V_{ir} + A_{ir} + M_{ir}$

Below are some examples of questionnaire items:

Support (T_{sup}): Our relationship has a firm base

Protection (T_{prot}): I feel protected thanks to this relationship

Space (T_{sp}): I do not have enough personal space in this relationship

Relatedness (V_{rel}): I can sense my partner's joys and sorrows

Time (V_{time}): The more time we spend together, the more connected we feel

Closeness (V_{cl}): I always feel that I am connected with my partner

Attention (A_{att}): I feel that my partner often offends me

Justice (A_{just}): In our relationship my partner and I have equal rights

Appreciation (A_{appr}): My partner appreciates my uniqueness and individuality

Field of common Activity (M_{field}): The horizons of my life have broadened thanks to this relationship

Structural Context (M_{struct}): I find reference points in my life thanks to this relationship

Common Future (M_{fut}): I feel that something really valuable may arise out of our relationship

Firstly, 80 items for a TEMIR questionnaire were formulated. The sample for testing the questionnaire's internal structure consisted of 634 respondents, collected by Snowball Sampling. There were 241 males (38%) and 393 females (62%), with a mean age of 23.7 years, ranging from 15-60, and with SD=21.4. The respondents were asked to estimate questionnaire statements in the context of their relationships with a particular person of the opposite sex with whom, in their opinion, they were in a close relationship. 41% of the respondents (260 people) indicated that they were in "free" relationship, 26% (165 people) were in a "civil" marriage, 22% (139 people) were officially married and 11% (70 people) indicated "other" when describing their relationship.

The questionnaire's structure was investigated using an exploratory factor analysis and a hierarchical cluster analysis. At this stage, we aimed to identify distinct parcels of items with a theoretically substantive meaning, where they corresponded to the theoretically defined components of each fundamental motivation.

As a result, we selected a set of 36 items, 3 items per component, as recommended by methodologists of confirmatory factor analysis (Byrne 2012), aiming to form 12 scales. The confirmatory factor analysis (Mplus 7.2 software package with a robust MLM estimator) was used to work out how the questionnaire would be structured.

First, we used a first-order measurement model (12 correlated factors, 3 indicators per factor), which demonstrated a good fit to the data (see Table 1). There were no pronounced outliers among the modification indices, suggesting no need to introduce additional parameters (such as cross-loadings or correlated errors) into the model. The values of the fit indices (RMSEA<.05, CFI=.95) suggested that the model fit the data well. All the factor loadings were significant and high, in the .71-.92 range.

Based on the measurement model, we investigated the second-order structure. As theoretically expected, a single-factor second-order model exhibited a poor fit to the data. A theory-based 4-factor model fit the data better, and the fit indices were within the acceptable range (RMSEA<.06, CFI>.90). The strongest modification indices for the second-order structure concerned cross-loadings of the "Closeness" (V_{cl}) subscale on the second-order factors corresponding to the 1st and 3rd motivations. For example, the addition of a cross-loading to the

third motivation would have improved the fit (CFI=0.934, RMSEA=0.050)[3], but we kept the questionnaire simply structured for theoretical reasons.

Tab. 1. Fit indices for the confirmatory models

Model	χ^2 (df)	SCF	CFI	RMSEA (90% confidence interval)	SRMR
Measurement model (12 first-order factors)	1228.28 (528)	1.479	0.949	0.046 (0.042-0.049)	0.037
1-factor second-order	2015.94 (582)	1.477	0.895	0.062 (0.059-0.065)	0.057
4-factor second-order	1595.53 (575)	1.476	0.925	0.053 (0.050-0.056)	0.049

Notes: SCF = scaling correction factor, CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root of mean residual.

All the resulting scales and subscales exhibited high reliability (see Table 2).

Tab. 2. Psychometric properties of the questionnaire

Scale / subscale	N items	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
T_{ir} (1st mot)	9	0.89	40.93	11.27	-0.75	-0.57
T_{sup}	3	0.86	13.25	4.60	-0.72	-0.69
T_{prot}	3	0.85	13.36	4.46	-0.88	-0.37
T_{sp}	3	0.83	14.32	4.13	-1.32	0.86
V_{ir} (2nd mot)	9	0.95	43.84	11.64	-1.35	0.98
V_{rel}	3	0.86	14.47	4.07	-1.32	0.84
V_{time}	3	0.86	15.07	3.98	-1.51	1.40
V_{cl}	3	0.88	14.30	4.24	-1.15	0.27

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[3] Apparently, the "Closeness" subscale reflects the more general overall quality of any relationship.

A_{ir} (3rd mot)	9	0.92	47.65	11.60	-0.81	-0.47
A_{att}	3	0.85	20.69	4.40	-0.91	-0.39
A_{just}	3	0.84	13.10	4.27	-0.81	-0.40
A_{appr}	3	0.89	13.86	4.31	-0.94	-0.24
M_{ir} (4th mot)	9	0.94	38.88	12.75	-0.69	-0.64
M_{field}	3	0.87	12.89	4.48	-0.62	-0.74
M_{struct}	3	0.83	12.41	4.42	-0.53	-0.76
M_{fut}	3	0.91	13.58	4.81	-0.91	-0.45
Overall	36	0.97	171.30	43.84	-0.82	-0.47

All the correlations between the 12 subscales were significant (in the .37-.87 range). The correlations between the 4 scales ranged between .74 and .86 and were also significant. This suggests that respondents tended to rather easily discriminate between a relationship experienced in a positive way and a negative relationship. The distributions on the scales were right-skewed (skewness ranged from -1.51 to -.53), suggesting that most respondents described a healthy relationship.

External validity

The respondents were also asked to rate their relationship, answering on the TEMIR questions on a 2-point scale:

1. "Our relationship is successful. There is a depth to it and I feel satisfaction and confidence, that my relationships are good and right."

2. "I don't think that our relationship is successful. I experience it as not very rich or not fulfilling me for some reason, but still important to me."

Those who said their relationship was fulfilling (N=248) exhibited higher scores on all scales and subscales of the TEMIR (p<0.001), compared to those who reported their relationship as not entirely satisfying (N=148).

The correlations between the TEMIR scales and the TEM and Existence Scale are presented in Table 3. The TEMIR scale correlated more strongly with the self-transcendence scale of the Existence Scale.

The correlations of the TEMIR with TEM did not show a theoretically predicted pattern, suggesting that the Russian version of TEM needs additional psychometric work. Using multiple regression and path analysis, we found that all 4 TEM scales were significantly predicted only by the TEMIR's 3rd and 4th motivation. This may suggest that frustration of the 3rd motivation in a relationship has the most detrimental effect on fulfilling all 4 fundamental motivations.

Tab. 3. Correlations of the TEMIR scales with the Existence Scale and TEM (N=303)

	ESK				TEMIR					TEM		
	SD (self-distance)	ST (self-transcendence)	F (freedom)	V (responsi-bility)	T_{ir}	V_{ir}	A_{ir}	M_{ir}	TEM_1 (trust)	TEM_2 (fundamental value)	TEM_3 (self-value)	TEM_4 (meaning)
SD												
ST	0.61											
F	0.59	0.63										
V	0.61	0.62	0.79									
T_{ir}	0.16	0.37	0.30	0.25								
V_{ir}	0.21	0.39	0.27	0.23	0.83							
A_{ir}	0.19	0.40	0.37	0.33	0.84	0.73						
M_{ir}	0.23	0.44	0.30	0.23	0.83	0.83	0.73					
TEM_1	0.45	0.67	0.67	0.58	0.42	0.34	0.48	0.41				
TEM_2	0.39	0.74	0.52	0.43	0.38	0.32	0.43	0.38	0.78			
TEM_3	0.42	0.62	0.67	0.59	0.35	0.29	0.45	0.35	0.83	0.75		
TEM_4	0.53	0.71	0.65	0.61	0.30	0.27	0.35	0.35	0.75	0.73	0.77	

Note: all correlations are significant (p<.01)

We also used another way to confirm the TEMIR's external validity. We attempted to check whether it was possible to quantitatively distinguish between the interpersonal relationship phenomena that respondents obviously differentiate between in their life experience. The fact that the questionnaire differentiates these phenomena should be considered as a proof of external validity.

We set the following research goals:

1. To test whether the TEMIR distinguishes between the phenomena of friendships and romantic relationships in youths.
2. To test whether the TEMIR could be used to distinguish between love, amorousness and unrequited love phenomena in women.

The sample for testing the questionnaire's internal structure consisted of 120 students from different faculties at the NRU HSE[4] aged between 17-23 years old. Respondents were asked to evaluate to what extent the TEMIR's statements corresponded to their friendships or romantic relationships. At the same time, no objective criterion was set to distinguish between friendships and romantic relationships, and so the respondents were guided only by their own ideas.

The data we received using the Mann-Whitney U-test showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the subjective experience of friendships and romantic relationships on the "Trust" and "Authenticity" scales. Therefore, the TEMIR data suggest that in youth, the first (space, protection, support) and the third (attention, justice, appreciation) fundamental existential motivations are embodied in friendships to a greater extent than in romantic relationships. In other words, friendship is experienced as a more reliable relationship. Besides, these kinds of relationships allow individual to be more aunthetic.

The second study consisted of two stages. First, we used a phenomenological method described by Spinelli (Spinelli 2007) to select the main psychological characteristics of phenomena such as love, amorousness and unrequited love. For this we conducted in-depth interviews with 30 females aged from 18-40 years old.

Second, we showed the resulting descriptions to the potential respondents so that they could identify phenomena that they were experiencing in their current relationships with their partners. Overall, 90 females (30 for each phenomenon) aged from 18-40 were selected. The respondents

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were asked to evaluate to what extent the TEMIR statements corresponded to a certain kind of relationship with their partner.

The data was processed using a Kruskal-Wallis test, and provided evidence to indicate to what extent all the fundamental existential motivations were embodied in a significantly different way for love, amorousness and unrequited love phenomena. In other words, personal existential fulfillment is maximized when a person experiences love, and minimal when a person experiences unrequited love. These results once again confirm the TEMIR's external validity.

We also used a Mann-Whitney U-test to compare pairs of values for each of the test sub-scales, across the three phenomena. In most cases, we found significant differences between them. There were no statistically significant differences between love and unrequited love phenomena, aside from in the "Time" and "Closeness" sub-scales from the "Value of life in relationships" scale (V_{ir}) for the second fundamental motivation. This finding might suggest that a person in love and a person who loves unrequitedly spend a lot of time with the one they love either in real closeness (love) or in imaginary, virtual closeness (unrequited love).

Gender differences

When the gender differences were compared, the scores suggested that females perceive relationships in a more positive way. The only scale we did not find differences for was the 3rd motivation, suggesting that it might be most difficult for a woman to be herself in the relationship.

Table 4. Gender differences obtained by the TEMIR (N=432)

	Male (N=176)		Female (N=256)		Student	Mann-Whitney	
	M	SD	M	SD	t	U	Z
EF_{ir}	164.02	44.10	176.31	43.03	2.89**	18227.00	3.37***
T_{ir}	38.56	11.23	42.56	11.03	3.68***	17197.00	4.18***
V_{ir}	41.98	12.05	45.11	11.20	2.77**	18060.50	3.52***
A_{ir}	46.75	11.45	48.27	11.68	1.34	20191.50	1.83
M_{ir}	36.73	13.07	40.36	12.33	2.93**	18571.50	3.11**

	M	SD	M	SD	t	U	z
T_{sup}	12.45	4.69	13.79	4.46	3.01**	18417.00	3.25**
T_{prot}	12.60	4.45	13.89	4.40	2.99**	17907.50	3.65***
T_{sp}	13.52	4.44	14.88	3.81	3.41***	17759.50	3.79***
V_{rel}	13.80	4.22	14.93	3.91	2.86**	18176.50	3.46***
V_{time}	14.47	4.26	15.49	3.72	2.64**	18951.50	2.92**
V_{cl}	13.72	4.35	14.70	4.12	2.38*	18886.00	2.91**
A_{att}	20.85	4.18	20.57	4.55	0.63	22207.00	0.25
A_{just}	12.65	4.30	13.42	4.22	1.85	19836.50	2.12*
A_{appr}	13.26	4.42	14.28	4.18	2.45*	19106.00	2.71**
M_{field}	12.21	4.60	13.36	4.34	2.64**	19119.00	2.69**
M_{struct}	11.87	4.47	12.79	4.36	2.13*	19745.00	2.19*
M_{fut}	12.65	5.07	14.21	4.53	3.34***	18314.00	3.36***

Note: M – mean value, SD – standard deviation

Conclusion

In conclusion, we believe that the studies conducted confirm the Test of Existential Motivations in Interpersonal Relationships' reliability and validity

The questionnaire could be used in:

- counselling and psychotherapy, focusing on problems in close interpersonal relationships. The questionnaire might be used at the beginning and the end of the therapeutic process to assess a person's initial state and changes that occurred over the course of the therapy;
- further research into the phenomena of close interpersonal relationships.

We invite our colleagues to discuss and critically evaluate our test. We would be glad to receive any comments or suggestions and we hope that the test will be widely used for research and counselling by specialists in Existential Analysis and other psychological schools.

Appendix

Dear respondent,

Please use the scale below to estimate to what extent the following statements correspond to your relationship with a close person (a friend, a loved one).

Does not correspond at all	Mainly does not correspond	Slightly does not correspond	Slightly corresponds	Mainly corresponds	Completely corresponds

o---------------o---------------o---------------o--------------o-------------o

Answer spontaneously, do not leave any statements out.

STATEMENT	To what extent does this statement correspond to your relationships? Does not correspond at all — Completely corresponds
1) I feel that my partner appreciates me as a person	o----o----o----o----o----o
2) My partner treats me fairly	o----o----o----o----o----o
3) This relationship makes my life more structured	o----o----o----o----o----o
4) I feel protected thanks to this relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o
5) There is closeness in our relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o
6) I often feel that my partner does not pay attention to me	o----o----o----o----o----o
7) As time passes, our relationship fills up with new important content	o----o----o----o----o----o
8) I feel cramped in this relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o
9) The more time we spend together, the more connected we feel	o----o----o----o----o----o
10) I feel that my partner neglects me	o----o----o----o----o----o
11) My partner appreciates my uniqueness and individuality	o----o----o----o----o----o
12) I do not have enough personal space in this relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o
13) My horizons have been broadened thanks to this relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o
14) I feel warmth in our relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o

15) Negative moments in our relationships do not destroy them	o----o----o----o----o----o
16) I feel that there is a complete understanding between us	o----o----o----o----o----o
17) Thanks to this relationship, I discovered lots of new and interesting things about the world and myself	o----o----o----o----o----o
18) I feel that my partner is always on my side, no matter what happens	o----o----o----o----o----o
19) This relationship makes me feel part of something important	o----o----o----o----o----o
20) I can sense my partner's joys and sorrows	o----o----o----o----o----o
21) I feel that my partner often offends me	o----o----o----o----o----o
22) I feel that something really valuable may arise out of our relationships	o----o----o----o----o----o
23) Thanks to this relationship, I feel that I am not alone in life	o----o----o----o----o----o
24) My partner and I have equal rights in this relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o
25) I have found new opportunities thanks to this relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o
26) I would say that our relationship is a lasting one	o----o----o----o----o----o
27) When my partner is nearby I feel that life is good	o----o----o----o----o----o
28) I find reference points in my life thanks to this relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o
29) Our relationship has a firm base	o----o----o----o----o----o
30) I do not regard my time in this relationship as spent in vain	o----o----o----o----o----o
31) I am glad to devote a lot of time to this relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o
32) I feel that I need a more distance in this relationship	o----o----o----o----o----o
33) This relationship plays a vital role in my life	o----o----o----o----o----o
34) I feel that my partner respects me and those things that are important to me	o----o----o----o----o----o
35) I always feel I am connected with my partner	o----o----o----o----o----o
36) I think our relationship has a future	o----o----o----o----o----o

Please, indicate your age _____ and gender _____

Thank you for your participation!

TEMIR scoring key

Scale	Sub-scale	Item number
Trust in interpersonal relationships (T_{ir})	Support (T_{sup})	15, 26, 29
	Protection (T_{prot})	4, 18, 23
	Space (T_{sp})	8*, 12*, 32*
Value of life in relationships (V_{ir})	Relatedness (V_{rel})	20, 27, 31
	Time (V_{time})	9, 30, 33
	Closeness (V_{cl})	5, 14, 35
Authenticity in relationships (A_{ir})	Attention (A_{att})	6*, 10*, 21*
	Justice (A_{just})	2, 16, 24
	Appreciation (A_{appr})	1, 11, 34
Meaning of relationships (M_{ir})	Field of Common Activity (M_{field})	13, 17, 25
	Structural Context (M_{struct})	3, 19, 28
	Common Future (M_{fut})	7, 22, 36

* - reverse-scored items

To calculate test score all direct statements are added together using the following key: « does not correspond at all » — 1, «mainly does not correspond» — 2, «slightly does not correspond» — 3, «slightly corresponds» — 4, «mainly corresponds» — 5, «completely corresponds» — 6. Reverse-scored items are added together using the opposite key: «does not correspond at all » — 6, «mainly does not correspond» — 5, «slightly does not correspond» — 4, «slightly corresponds» — 3, «mainly corresponds» – 2, «completely corresponds» — 1.

All scores for each of the 12 sub-scales and for each of the 4 scales (T_{ir}, V_{ir}, A_{ir}, M_{ir}) were subsequently added together. The total for all scales is the general EF_{ir} index, which shows a person's existential fulfillment in certain interpersonal relationships.

$$T_{ir} = T_{sup} + T_{prot} + T_{sp}$$
$$V_{ir} = V_{rel} + V_{time} + V_{cl}$$
$$A_{ir} = A_{att} + A_{just} + A_{appr}$$
$$M_{ir} = M_{field} + M_{struct} + M_{fut}$$
$$EF_{ir} = T_{ir} + V_{ir} + A_{ir} + M_{ir}$$

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