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## SADNESS HAS A PREFERENCE FOR BIRTHDAYS: A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON “BIRTHDAY BLUES” QUESTIONNAIRE AND CONSTRUCT DEVELOPMENT

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“Birthday blues” is sometimes used in epidemiological studies to describe occasionally observed effect of higher suicide ratios around birthdays. It is also colloquially used to describe a general feeling of disappointment, anxiety, etc. due to another year passing by, low achievement, or not having the expectations regarding birthday celebration or gifts met. In this study, a preliminary attempt was made to operationalize “birthday blues” as an individual differences construct. First, a questionnaire comprising 68 items was developed. Based on initial tests on a sample of 47 participants, it was reduced to 51 items. That questionnaire version was tested on 285 participants (51.6% male) of the average age of 27.39 ( $SD=8.65$ ) years. Initially, 4-5 dimensions were suspected. Using EFA based on ULS with an iterative process of poor item removal (i.e. low communalities, low loadings, or high loadings on multiple factors), 26 items were retained. The parallel analysis based on polychoric correlation matrix suggested retention of 3 factors (explaining 50.4% of shared variance). These were named as: 1) Birthday Blues, 2) Birthday Socialization, and 3) Wild Birthday Parties. The Birthday Blues factor scores were slightly (but not statistically significantly) higher in females:  $t(283)=1.84, p=.07, d=0.22$ . The Birthday Socialization scores were higher in females:  $t(283)=3.05, p=.002, d=0.36$ . The Wild Birthday Parties scores were higher in males:  $t(283)=-5.02, p<.001, d=0.59$ . Only the Wild Birthday Parties scores differed depending on the closeness to birthdays, in a way that they were lower for participants whose birthdays were in a  $\pm 30$  day interval from the moment of testing:  $t(283)=2.53, p=.012, d=0.45$ . The Birthday Blues dimension correlated with depression ( $r=.38, p<.001$ ), but the other two dimensions did not ( $r=.03, p=.59$ , and  $r=-.02, p=.74$ ). Overall, the ‘Birthday Blues’ questionnaire shows promise, but its predictive value is yet to be determined.

**Keywords:** *Birthday blues, Depression, Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Unweighted least squares (ULS)*

### Introduction

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Words such as “birth”, “birthday”, or “birthday celebration” in most people evoke stirring and positive emotions accompanied by cheerfulness. Wilches-Gutiérrez, Arenas-Monreal, Paulo-Maya, Peláez-Ballestas, and Idrovo (2012) said that social events which distinguish festive time from daily life and are expressed through socially established transfiguration and transgression, create a distinctive symbolic system. Birthdays can be big social events that are accompanied with parties, dancing, alcohol, birthday cake, and receiving gifts, as well as the attention from friends, family, etc., or they can be celebrated with a small gathering of close people and relatives. Birthdays are usually periods that many people look forward to (some

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more, some less), and they are arguably associated with positive things, good times, joy, laughter, reminiscing, and connecting with dear people to most of us (Jessen & Jensen, 1999).

However, for some people, birthdays are not the happiest of times, as they can be associated with the emotional pain, negative feelings, disappointment, anxiety, sadness, and even traumatic experiences (Peña, 2015). That, “not so happy day after all” (as Peña (2015) refers to it in his article’s title), can trigger emotions of neglect, loneliness, low achievement, the disappointment of not having the expectations regarding celebration or gifts met, anxiety caused by another year passing by, and pondering upon the transience of life. Furthermore, not feeling loved, or not having a special person to share that day with can cause distress.

Colloquial, all of these symptoms are labeled as the “birthday blues”. But, the same phrase is sometimes used by researchers, typically in epidemiological studies, to describe the expectation and occasionally observed effect of higher death (Ajdacic-Gross et al., 2012), or more specifically depression and suicides ratios (Peña, 2015; Williams et al., 2011) at or around birthdays. This has been labeled as both the “anniversary reaction” and the “birthday blues” hypothesis (Ajdacic-Gross et al., 2012).

The relation between the day of death and the day of birth has been the subject of research controversy for a long time (Ajdacic-Gross et al., 2012). It has been found that mortality tends to increase or decrease on a daily or weekly basis when various social events are celebrated (Wilches-Gutiérrez et al., 2012). For birthdays specifically, a recent U.S. study conducted by Peña (2015) has revealed that the average excess death rate on birthdays is 6.7%, with younger people having greater average excess death rates on birthdays, reaching up to 25.4% for the 20-29 age group, especially for birthdays that fall on weekends. Although these results are not only linked to suicides, but represent the mortality on birthdays in general, there could be an association between the self-medication (excessive consumption of alcohol, use of drugs, etc.), depression and mortality rates. There are three groups of suicide prediction factors: demographic, clinical, and biological (Balon, 1987), with depression being one of the major demographic factors. Some people might suffer depression symptoms on their birthdays, so the “birthday blues” could lead to suicide (Peña, 2015). Jessen and Jensen (1999), suggested that festive events are usually affectively positive, but may, at times, promise more than they can deliver, with the forthcoming event seen as synonymous with “a new beginning”, in a sense that things will get better then or thereafter. However, if individuals who, for some reason, are especially vulnerable, and therefore at risk of suicidal behavior, build up certain expectations that are unrealistic, and therefore cannot or will not be met, the resulting frustration and disappointment may trigger suicidal reactions (Jessen & Jensen, 1999).

Consistent with this explanation, several studies have found a direct link between birthdays and suicides. For example, supporting results have emerged from the overall analyses on the relationship between the day of birth and the day of death, with a significant effect emerging regarding the suicide ratios (Ajdacic-Gross et al., 2012). Williams and colleagues (2011) found out that there is a significantly increased risk of suicide on a day of birth for males in both general and clinical populations, and especially for those aged 35+ years. Higher suicide ratios were also found at or around birthdays on specific samples, such as professional athletes (Lester, 2005).

There are, however, many mixed and contradicting findings and different proposed explanations (Peña, 2015). For example, there are indications that mortality decreases right before symbolically meaningful events (including birthdays), with a possible increase in mortality afterwards, because such events provide some people with an extra incentive to live a little longer to see that day; this has been referred to as a “postponement of death” hypothesis (Ajdacic-Gross et al., 2012; Peña, 2015; Phillips & Feldman, 1973; Phillips & Smith, 1990). Season and month of birth have also been associated with suicide (Döme, Kapitány, Ignits, & Rihmer, 2010), which offers another possible explanation besides the birthday blues hypothesis.

Salib and Bobrja (2006) have found an increase of 17% in the risk of suicide for people born in the spring or early summer, compared with those born in the autumn or early winter. Those who were born in the highest risk period (July) have an approximately 13.8% higher risk of dying by suicide than those who were born in the low risk period (December) (Döme et al., 2010). Döme and colleagues (2010) explain that a plausible cause of this effect is neurobiological in nature, having to do with the 5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid (5-HIAA) level fluctuations as a function of the season of birth. This offers an arguably more fundamental explanation for the association between birthdays and suicides than the “birthday blues” hypothesis does. Furthermore, significantly more suicides than expected by mere chance were found on the first day of each month (Jessen & Jensen, 1999). However, Jessen & Jensen (1999) did not find a significant excess of suicide risk in two time frames (3 days and 7 days) around birthdays. Reulbach, Biermann, Markovic, Kornhuber, and Bleich (2007) got similar results. They haven’t found any evidence for alteration of suicide ratios in connection to the individual’s birthday, explicitly referring to birthday blues as a myth in their article’s title.

It can be concluded that, while there are some research evidence for it, birthday blues does not appear to be universally replicated phenomenon. However, all of the cited studies were observing the birthday blues through the prism of death and suicide. Links between depression and suicide and potentially increased suicide rates around birthdays led to the implicit equalization of the birthday blues with depression, or treating the whole phenomenon as a manifestation of depression. In everyday life, birthday blues is mentioned in context of aftermath of events leading to birthday, including depression (McGill, 2009, 2010), and it is often being referred to as “birthday depression” or “birthday sadness” (JenBarn, 2013; McGill, 2009, 2010). Thus, popular culture also puts birthday blues in the same basket as depression or it sees it as a gloomy feeling of melancholy, mourning, grief, disappointment and distress caused by birthdays (JenBarn, 2013; McGill, 2009, 2010). However, it also emphasizes birthday attributes such as celebrations/parties, gifts, birthday cakes, etc. (Birthday Depression Resources, n.d.; JenBarn, 2013; McGill, 2009, 2010). So far, to my knowledge, none of the existing studies attempted to take the concept of the birthday blues out of the strict context of depression and suicide and try and study it from the individual differences point of view. Thus, in this study, a preliminary attempt was made to try and operationalize birthday blues as the individual differences construct and questionnaire. Even though I acknowledge and expect that depression might be a big part of the whole birthday blues phenomenon, I attempted to operationalize it following a broader perspective, having regard to its everyday life meaning.

## Method

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### Sample and procedure

First, a preliminary set of 68 birthday blues items was developed. During an item construction phase considered was a broad, colloquial understanding of the birthday blues phenomenon. While the depression associated with birthdays was a main theme, nine broad subject areas related to various potentially relevant birthday thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors were identified, mainly through the search of popular media and online resources. These were: family and relatives, friends and social structure, general birthday attitudes, love partner(s), reflections on the past, birthday blues/depression, birthday expectations, birthday gifts, and birthday parties. For each of the indicators between five and thirteen seven-point Likert type items (1=“completely disagree”, 7=“completely agree”) were created.

The initial 68 items were then tested on a small convenience sample comprising 47 participants (72.3% females) of the average age of 24.70 ( $SD=7.07$ ) years. The data were gathered via an anonymous online survey created in the LimeSurvey program (LimeSurvey

Project Team/Carsten Schmitz, 2012). Based on these initial tests and participants' feedback, the number of items was reduced to 51. Items with low variability (i.e. having four or less answer values on a seven-point Likert scale) were removed, as were the items for which the participants reported poor wording and misunderstanding issues.

The preselected 51 birthday blues items, together with several other questionnaires, were then given to the convenience sample of 285 participants (51.6% male) of the average age of 27.39 ( $SD=8.65$ ) years. The data were again gathered using an anonymous LimeSurvey (LimeSurvey Project Team/Carsten Schmitz, 2012) online survey. For 86% of the participants Bosnia and Herzegovina was clearly stated as a permanent location, while others entered Serbia, Croatia, or diaspora as their residence (with the indication that the majority of these cases were probably Bosni & Herzegovina citizens working or studying abroad).

## Instruments

**PHQ-9 (Kroenke & Spitzer, 2002; Kroenke et al., 2001).** This questionnaire is arguably the most famous public domain depression questionnaire and it is the officially endorsed by the DSM-IV and DSM-V (Moriarty, Gilbody, McMillan, & Manea, 2015). It measures the frequencies of nine common DSM-IV/DSM-V depression symptoms (4-point scale, 0="not at all", 3="every day"; one item per symptom). All items were added up to create a summary score. PHQ-9 showed a good internal consistency reliability (as measured by McDonald's  $\omega$ ; Zinbarg, Revelle, Yovel, & Li, 2005) on this sample ( $\omega=.87$ ).

**Birthday blues questionnaire (BBQ).** The questionnaire was created for the purpose of this research and its psychometric analyses are presented in the "Results" section. The initial analyses were conducted on a preselected set of 51 items, as previously described in the "Sample and procedure" section.

## Results

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The latent structure of the birthday blues questionnaire was determined using the unweighted least squares (ULS) exploratory factor analysis (EFA) based a matrix of polychoric correlations between the starting set of 51 BBQ items. Initially, a polychoric correlation based MRFA parallel analysis (see e.g., Subotić, 2013) suggested a possibility of 4-5 factors. However, after an iterative process of poor item removal (i.e. low commonalities, low loadings, or high loadings on multiple factors across multiple solutions), 26 items were retained in the final, three-factor solution, as suggested by the parallel analysis ( $k=1000$  sets), according to both commonly used criteria (i.e. mean and 95. percentile; Subotić, 2013). Three factors explained a total of 50.4% of the shared variance. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) was .85. The factors were rotated using a Promax rotation. The results of the EFA are given in Table 1.

The first factor encompasses the items which measure feelings of sadness, neglect and loneliness associated with unfulfilled goals, the passing of time, summing up of accomplishments related to the past year and not having the right kind of attention on the birthday (including gifts, a congratulation from 'one special person', and a help from friends in order to regulate the negative mood). In short, this factor includes the majority of manifestations that are generally being described as parts of birthday blues, which is why I named it the "Birthday Blues".

The items of the second factor refer to the communication and socialization aspects of birthdays, with emphasis on the quality of relationships with close friends and relatives. I called this factor the "Birthday Socialization".

The third factor includes only four items related to celebration aspects of birthdays, but emphasizing their uninhibited aspects, namely the alcohol consumption. I named this dimension the "Wild Birthday Parties".

All three factors had good internal consistency reliabilities (McDonald's  $\omega$  coefficients; Zinbarg, et al., 2005) and their factor scores were distributed roughly normally (Table 1).

Table 1. Results of the exploratory factor analysis

Items	Factor loadings			$h^2$
	F1	F2	F3	
In the past, I felt neglected on my birthday.	.79			.62
In the past, I felt lonely on my birthday.	.77			.58
Sometimes I feel sad on my birthday without reason.	.74			.52
Birthdays are a reminder that I haven't accomplished anything in the past year.	.70			.54
On birthdays, I can't shake a feeling that another year is wasted.	.68			.50
Birthdays make me ponder upon the transience of life.	.68			.45
Only on birthdays I realize how alone I am.	.67			.47
Sometimes I cried on my birthdays.	.66			.47
I have a habit of summing up the successes and failures of the past year on my birthday.	.57			.35
If one special person doesn't congratulate me on my birthday, I'll feel bad for the rest of the day.	.53			.33
Birthdays suck if I don't have one special person beside me on that day.	.46			.23
I expect my friends to help me forget my problems on birthday.	.39			.27
Birthday is not a birthday without presents.	.36			.22
I look forward to my birthday because I will see all of the people that are dear to me in one place.		.72		.52
I want to be in a company of dear people on my birthday.		.66		.45
I feel happy when people surprise me on my birthday.		.64		.40
I expect my birthday to be more special compared to other days.		.63		.49
For me, birthday is just another ordinary day.		-.62		.38
My friends make me feel good when it's my birthday.		.60		.38
My birthday is the happiest day of the year.		.56		.37
Birthdays are the right time for a family gathering.		.53		.30
I feel euphoric (excited) before my birthday.		.52		.36
I always get drunk on my birthdays.			.81	.66
My birthday parties can't go without alcohol.			.76	.56
I love wild parties for my birthday.			.76	.61
For me, a birthday is a crazy party.			.69	.57
Eigenvalue	5.34	3.73	2.51	
Skewness	-0.10	-0.11	0.01	
Kurtosis	0.78	0.65	<0.01	
Internal consistency (McDonald's $\omega$ )	.89	.84	.84	
Correlation with F1 – The Birthday Blues	1			
Correlation with F2 – The Birthday Socialization	.13*	1		
Correlation with F3 – The Wild Birthday Parties	.21***	.17**	1	

Notes:  $h^2$ =communalities after extraction; \* $p$ <.05, \*\* $p$ <.01, \*\*\* $p$ <.001; loadings less than .32 were omitted.

Gender differences in three factors were explored using  $t$ -test analyses. As a measure of the  $t$ -test effect size Cohen's  $d$  (Cohen, 1992) were used, with the values of 0.20, 0.50, and 0.80 as cutoffs for small, medium, and large effects. The Birthday Blues factor scores were slightly (but not statistically significantly) higher in females:  $t(283)=1.84$ ,  $p=.07$ ,  $d=0.22$ . The Birthday Socialization scores were higher in females:  $t(283)=3.05$ ,  $p=.002$ ,  $d=0.36$ . The Wild Birthday Parties scores were higher in males:  $t(283)=-5.02$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $d=0.59$ .

To determine if the closeness to birthdays influences the average factor values,  $t$ -tests were also used. The Wild Birthday Parties scores were significantly lower for participants whose

birthdays were in a  $\pm 30$  day interval from the moment of testing:  $t(283)=2.53, p=.012, d=0.45$ .<sup>6</sup> In total, 36 (12.6%) of the participants (16 females, and 20 males) were in the  $\pm 30$  day interval, with only three participants (1.1%) being surveyed on their actual birthday. No significant differences were observed for the Birthday Blues factor scores ( $t(283)=0.53, p=.60, d=0.09$ )<sup>7</sup> and the Birthday Socialization scores ( $t(283)=1.54, p=.12, d=0.27$ ). The latter effect was, however, of small, rather than trivial practical significance (i.e.  $d>0.20$ ), even though it was not statistically significant.

The Birthday Blues dimension correlated moderately (Cohen, 1992) with the depression scores ( $r=.38, p<.001$ ), but the other two dimensions showed no significant associations ( $r=.03, p=.59$ , and  $r=-.02, p=.74$ ). Furthermore, the Birthday Blues showed a slight tendency for decreasing with age ( $r=-.21, p<.001$ )<sup>8</sup>, the same (marginal) tendency was observed for the Birthday Socialization ( $r=-.11, p=.06$ ), while the Wild Birthday Parties scores were uncorrelated with age ( $r=-.02, p=.70$ ).

## Discussion

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This study was a preliminary attempt to try and expand the "birthday blues" beyond the context of depression and suicides around birthdays (Peña, 2015; Williams et al., 2011) and to operationalize it as the individual differences construct. In order to do so, I constructed a questionnaire, following two general principles. First, I acknowledged that depression is the key aspect of the birthday blues phenomenon, but that they are not necessarily one and the same. And second, I also tried and included questions measuring other aspects colloquially associated with the birthday blues, such as celebrations and parties, birthday gifts and cakes, etc. (Birthday Depression Resources, n.d.; JenBarn, 2013; McGill, 2009, 2010).

Using the exploratory factor analysis, three conceptually comprehensive and well defined, internally consistent, and empirically distinct (i.e. only slightly correlated) factors were extracted: the Birthday Blues, the Birthday Socialization, and the Wild Birthday Parties. The first of these factors, in terms of content, operationalizes birthday blues closely, as it includes the majority of manifestations and attributes that are generally associated with the birthday blues. This factor also correlates with the actual depression scores, but in a lower part of medium range. This leads to a conclusion which is consistent with the starting premise: depression and birthday blues are related phenomena, but the latter should not necessarily be viewed simply as a part of the former.

Gender differences were found, such that the Birthdays Blues and the Birthday Socialization factor scores were slightly (as judged by the effect sizes) higher in females (even though only the second effect was statistically significant). In contrast, the Wild Birthday Parties scores were moderately higher in men. This is roughly consistent with known gender differences in responses to emotional distress. For example, Chaplin, Hong, Bergquist, and Sinha (2008) report that women tend to experience greater sadness and anxiety as a result of distress, while men exhibit higher integration of emotional distress systems and reward motivation, such as alcohol craving, which partially explains why women have a greater risk for anxiety and depression than men, while men have a greater risk for alcohol-use disorders

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<sup>6</sup> This effect was not dependant on age, but possible gender influences could not have been reliably studied due to the low number of participants.

<sup>7</sup> There was also no birthday closeness effect for the PHQ-9 depression scores:  $t(283)=0.88, p=.38, d=0.16$ .

<sup>8</sup> Note that controlling for age apparently did not influence the correlation between the Birthday Blues and depression scores ( $pr=.34, p<.001$ ), but controlling for depression did significantly reduce the correlation between the Birthday Blues and age ( $pr=-.11, p=.07$ ).

than women. Alternatively, the significant differences in second and third factor might simply reflect common gender self-stereotyping, self-concept, and differences in perceived social support. For example, women generally score higher on measures related to maintaining harmonious relationships with family and friends, they show more focus on the dyadic aspects of their social world, report more support from friends, etc. (Canty-Mitchell, & Zimet, 2000; Cheng & Chan, 2004; Foels & Tomcho, 2009; Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006; Jackson & And, 1994; Matud, Ibañez, Bethencourt, Marrero, & Carballeira, 2003; Stake, 1992). Men are more likely to perceive fewer social sanctions for alcohol use, to have positive expectancies for drinking, etc. (Nolen-Hoeksema & Hilt, 2006).

Positive correlations between three factors are consistent with the possibility that the Birthdays Blues represents a "stressor", while the Birthday Socialization and the Wild Birthday Parties might serve as coping strategies. Note, however, that these correlations are (very) low (additionally: second and the third factor did not correlate with depression scores), making this assumption only semi-plausible. Regardless, the Birthday Blues did tend to decrease with age, implying that younger people might be more vulnerable, but the effect did diminish almost entirely once depression was controlled for. This suggests a mediating/conditional nature of the relationship between the Birthday Blues, depression, and age, which is something that I plan to address in more details in future research.

The only observed change as a function of closeness to the actual birthday was a decrease in the Wild Birthday Parties factor scores for participants whose birthdays were in a  $\pm 30$ -day interval from the moment of completing a survey. This effect was surprising and, at this moment, the underlying reasons can only be speculated. It seems that this was not a sample age artifact, while gender influences or patterns could not have been tested at this time, due to small group size. It is possible that the effect represents some characteristics of this particular group of participants whose birthdays fell in the  $\pm 30$  days around the birthday bracket, or that it is a function of the observed time frame in which the testing was conducted (i.e. late winter and spring). Finally, it is possible that this effect is due to a memory distortion or simply due to a conscious or unconscious need to appear "cool", but when the actual birthday approaches, a more realistic, i.e. "less wild" birthday celebration usually tends to happen.

The Birthday Blues factor scores (and also the Birthday Socialization scores) did not change around birthdays. Note, however, that with only 36 of the participants being in the interval of  $\pm 30$  days around birthdays, statistical power for detecting such an effect was low. The research which found the increase in suicides around birthdays was epidemiological in nature, meaning that it comprised extremely large samples (e.g., over 50 thousand cases in Williams et al. (2011); almost 2.4 million cases in Ajdacic-Gross et al. (2012); as a comparison point, Reulbach, et al. (2007), which failed to observe a birthday blues effect, had a sample size of over 11 thousand suicides to work with). Granted, suicides around birthdays are arguably much rarer events than mood or attitudes change around birthdays. Regardless, if there is any change in the Birthday Blues around birthdays, chances are that a much larger sample size is required in order to detect it, preferably relying on the sophisticated time series analysis (e.g., Ajdacic-Gross et al., 2012), rather than  $\pm 30$  day (or similar) interval heuristic that was employed here strictly for practical reasons, i.e. due to small sample size. This "before + after birthday" operationalization is problematic for some additional reasons. Namely, it would be better to separately analyze periods before and after the birthday, and the day of the birthday itself, in light of the hypothesis/effects such as the "broken-promise" (Jessen & Jensen, 1999) or the "postponement of death" (Phillips & Smith, 1990). The "broken-promise" states that for major public holidays there appears to be a postponement of a significant number of suicides from before a holiday until after. The "postponement of death" refers to a possibility of mortality decreasing before symbolically meaningful events, but with an increase afterwards. However, separate analysis such as this also requires (much) larger sample size. One thing that probably

can be tested even on smaller samples is a possibility of correlation between the Birthday Blues and depression being moderated by the birthday proximity, which I plan to examine on the expanded sample dataset.

Naturally, the results of this research cannot confirm the birthday blues effect in a form that has been used in epidemiological studies so far (i.e. higher death/suicide ratios around birthdays potentially resulting from an increase in depression) for one obvious reason – death and suicide ratios in this context cannot really be measured by surveying live people. Thus, while this research has nothing to add to the examination of the claim that “death has a preference for birthdays” (as per Ajdacic-Gross et al. (2012) article’s title), it might provide some insight into the claim that “sadness has a preference for birthdays” (as per this article’s title), given that phenomenon of birthday blues can obviously be operationalized as a questionnaire with good psychometric properties and that it can be treated as seemingly meaningful individual differences construct, which goes beyond a simplified equivocation with depression. This is not yet to say that this view of birthday blues has anything meaningful to add to a relevant body of psychological knowledge, and thorough examinations of convergent, discriminative, predictive, and other validity facets should be examined first. How does it relate to other well established individual difference variables such as big personality traits? Does it offer any predictive value over and beyond the depression scores themselves (e.g. for risky behaviors)? Do the second and third questionnaire factors have any theoretical value, rather than being simply heuristics derived from the popular culture views of the phenomenon? These are only some of the questions that need to be answered. However, this research represents only a preliminary insight into this novel topic and I plan to answer at least some of these questions in the extended and follow-up studies.

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## TUGA IMA SKLONOST KA ROĐENDANIMA: PRELIMINARNI IZVJEŠTAJ O KONSTRUKCIJI UPITNIKA I RAZVOJU KONSTRUKTA „ROĐENDANSKOG BLUZA“

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Sintagma „rođendanski bluz“ se ponekad koristi u epidemiološkim studijama da bi se opisao povremeno detektovani efekt povećane stope samoubistava u periodu oko rođendana. Takođe, kolokvijalno se koristi kako bi se opisao generalni osjećaj nezadovoljstva, uznemirenosti, itd. zbog toga što je još jedna godina prošla, zbog niskih postignuća, odnosno zbog neispunjenih očekivanja vezanih za rođendansku zabavu i dobijanje poklona. Ova studija predstavljala je preliminarni pokušaj operacionalizacije „rođendanskog bluza“ kao konstrukta individualnih razlika. Prvo je napravljen upitnik koji se sastojao od 68 ajtema. Na osnovu inicijalnih testova sprovedenih na 47 ispitanika, taj broj je smanjen na 51 ajtem. Ova verzija upitnika je testirana na 285 ispitanika (51.6% muškaraca), prosječnog uzrasta od 27.39 ( $SD=8.65$ ) godina. Inicijalno je postojala indicija o opravdanosti zadržavanja 4-5 dimenzija. Uz pomoć EFA zasnovane na ULS, etapno su uklanjani neadekvatni ajtemi (oni sa niskim komunalitetima, niskim zasićenjima ili visokim zasićenjima na više faktora) nakon čega je zadržano 26 ajtema. Paralelna analiza zasnovana na matrici polihoričnih korelacija je sugerisala zadržavanje 3 faktora (koji objašnjavaju 50.4% zajedničke varijanse). Ti faktori su nazvani: 1) Rođendanski bluz, 2) Rođendanska socijalizacija i 3) Divlje rođendanske zabave. Skorovi dimenzije Rođendanskog bluza bili su blago (ali ne statistički značajno) viši kod žena:  $t(283)=1.84, p=.07, d=0.22$ . Skorovi Rođendanske socijalizacije bili su viši kod žena:  $t(283)=3.05, p=.002, d=0.36$ . Skorovi Divljih rođendanskih zabava su bili više izraženi kod muškaraca:  $t(283)=-5.02, p<.001, d=0.59$ . Samo za skorove Divljih rođendanskih zabava utvrđene su razlike u odnosu na blizinu rođendana; skorovi ove dimenzije bili su niži kod ispitanika čiji su rođendani bili u intervalu od  $\pm 30$  dana od momenta testiranja:  $t(283)=2.53, p=.012, d=0.45$ . Dimenzija Rođendanskog bluza korelirala je sa depresijom ( $r=.38, p<.001$ ), dok preostale dvije nisu ( $r=.03, p=.59$  i  $r=-.02, p=.74$ ). Generalno, konstruisani upitnik „rođendanskog bluza“ djeluje obećavajuće, iako njegova prediktivna vrijednost tek treba da bude utvrđena.

**Ključne riječi:** rođendanski bluz, depresija, eksplorativna faktorska analiza (EFA), neponderisani najmanji kvadrati (eng. ULS)

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