

## Measuring chronic regulatory focus in Romania: adaptation of the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire

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Received 30.09.2015; Received revised 2.12.2015; Accepted 4.12.2015  
Available online 28.12.2015

One of the most influential constructs in recent social psychology is regulatory focus. However, the Romanian literature on this subject is sparse. After back-translating the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ), we explored its factor structure and construct validity in two different studies. In Study 1, 401 students completed the RFQ and the BIS/BAS scales. After excluding one item due to its small loadings on both factors, the exploratory factor analysis and also the confirmatory factor analysis showed that a two-factor structure had the best fit. Results also showed that promotion focus and prevention focus were associated with BAS and BIS in the expected direction. In Study 2, using 198 students, besides the Romanian form of the RFQ we also used the two scales from IPIP 50 for extraversion and emotional stability, and PANAS. We replicated through confirmatory factor analysis the two-factor solution and also found that the instrument has acceptable temporal stability. We also discovered that the relationships between the promotion and the prevention scales with all the other four variables were as reported in other previous studies. The Regulatory Focus Questionnaire – Romanian form holds adequate psychometric properties and certainly can be used in future research, especially on student samples.

Keywords: RFQ, chronic regulatory focus, promotion focus, prevention focus.

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Acknowledgements: This paper is a result of a research made possible by the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project POSDRU/159/1.5/S/132400 - "Young successful researchers - professional development in an international and interdisciplinary environment".

### Introduction

One of the most influential constructs in recent social psychology is regulatory focus (Higgins, 1997; Higgins, Roney, Crowe & Hymes, 1994; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997), which extends the classic achievement motivation model (e.g. Atkinson, 1964) by positing a dichotomous view of motivated human behavior, based on two types of reference end-states. It was conceived as applicable in a broad range of domains, from communication to more complex decision making processes, and is still gaining popularity in educational and organizational settings. In short, the concept proposes a double motivational system or two types of strategic regulatory orientations which are usually thought to be developed during early socialization experience and

reinforced by experiences of achievement in certain domains. The system can manifest either towards seeking pleasure (called promotion focus), or towards avoiding pain (named prevention focus) (Higgins, 1997; Keller, 2008).

While the promotion focus is aimed towards striving for positive end states, such as gains, personal growth, and possible accomplishments, the prevention focus emphasizes advancing towards a goal by avoiding losses. Prevention focus also revolves around security concerns and fulfilling commitments and responsibilities (Brendl, Higgins, & Lemm, 1995). Another difference is that in promotion focus goals are framed as ideals, wishes, hopes, and aspirations to be achieved, while in prevention focus goals are conceived as minimizing non-gains or avoiding losses. The first are characterized by vigilant strategies (as

opposed to carelessness), while the latter are eager (as opposed to apathy) strategies (Crowe & Higgins, 1997).

Experimental studies show that people can enter momentary regulatory modes after a priming or an induction procedure of either type of focus (Freitas & Higgins, 2002; Higgins, Friedman, Harlow, Idson, Ayduk, & Taylor, 2001). The two foci might also be a consequence of different environmental factors. One such factor may be the leadership style the person is exposed to. A study by Kark and Van Dijk (2007) indicated that transformational leaders are more likely to induce a promotion focus in their employees.

Moreover, the two types of strategic orientations are reflected not only in the process of decision making but also in the quality of everyday experiences (Higgins et al., 2001). Therefore promotion focused individuals will react more emotionally intense after success, while prevention-focused counterparts will strengthen their vigilance after failure (Idson & Higgins, 2000; Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2000; Shu & Lam, 2011).

Although people can enter different regulatory modes, depending of the environment which can facilitate engaging one type of focus or the other, knowing a person's chronic regulatory style may help teachers, managers and leaders. It is conceivable that managers and other persons in a position of power will be able to adjust the environment where individuals work and develop methods that will match the individuals' preferences, or in other words that they will ensure regulatory fit (Higgins, 2005). Regulatory fit is the compatibility between the person's regulatory focus and the degree to which the environment sustains the regulatory orientation. The fit ensures engagement during goal pursuit (Spiegel, Grant-Pillow, & Higgins, 2004), performance (Keller & Bless, 2006; Spiegel, et al., 2004), supposedly via effort and persistence (Forster, Higgins, & Idson, 1998).

The proponents of the model advocate a dispositional view of these two alternative orientations, and as such have developed a self-report measure of chronic regulatory focus (Higgins et al., 2001). Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ) proposed by Higgins and colleagues (2001) specifically aims to investigate the strategic and reactive responses of individuals in their goal-directed behavior. The 11-item RFQ scale, built to "assess an individual's subjective histories of success or failure in promotion and prevention of self-regulation" (Higgins et al., 2001, p. 7), seems to meet satisfactory reliability, with internal consistency values of 0.73 for Promotion, and 0.80 for Prevention (Higgins et al., 2001). The correlation between the two orthogonally conceptualized scales is usually a low one. A meta-analysis conducted by Gorman and colleagues (2012) suggested that the mean corrected correlation between the two factors is .10. Moreover, as Haws, Dholakia, and Bearden (2010, p. 979) stated: "RFQ emerges as the most suitable measure for general purpose theory testing [...] it alone is adequate in internal consistency, homogeneity, and stability, and it performs the best in terms of predictive validity and representativeness".

#### *The present study*

In the Romanian context, the literature is sparse on this subject. We found that there were either few systematic attempts at adapting any of the regulatory focus scales, or that they used limited samples and investigated limited

aspects of the construct validity and reliability (e.g. Teodorescu, 2011). Thus, we identified a need to adapt one of the well-known regulatory focus scales, namely the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ; Higgins et al., 2001). In order to reach our goal, after translating the instrument in Romanian based on the back-translation technique, we explored its factor structure and construct validity in two different studies. We expected to find that the questionnaire follows the two factor structure as hypothesized by the authors (Higgins et al. 2001) and that it displays convergent correlation patterns in relation to other measures of similar constructs. More precisely, in Study 1 we focused on testing the relationships between RFQ dimensions and BIS/BAS (Carver & White, 1994), expecting a convergence between promotion focus and behavioral approach tendency (BAS) and between prevention focus and behavioral inhibition tendency (BIS). These expectations are based on the fact that both scales revolve around the same conceptual constructs. However, contradictory results regarding the aforementioned relationships are also to be expected since previous studies reported a lack of convergence between different measures of chronic regulatory focus (e.g., Haws et al., 2010; Summerville & Roese, 2008).

In Study 2 we aimed at testing the replicability of the factorial structure, and at broadening the assessment of RFQ Romanian form's construct validity. In this regard, we tested the pattern of relationships with extraversion and emotional stability from the Five Factor Model, which correspond to approach and avoidance motives (Elliot & Trash, 2002), and to positive and negative affectivity. Since approach tendency (which is also associated with trait positive affect) corresponds to promotion, and avoidance (with is associated with trait negative affect) to prevention, we could expect a pattern of significant associations in this direction. Yet, Summerville and Roese (2008) found that RFQ is unrelated to affect valence, and thus we could also expect this type of findings.

### **Study 1 Method**

#### *Participants and procedure*

A total of 401 students enrolled in the Faculty of Law and in the Faculty of Geography from "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Romania, participated in this study in exchange for course credit. Their mean age was 21.6 years ( $SD = 1.43$ ) and 80.3% of them were females. After agreeing to participate in the study, they received the two questionnaires described below. Data collection took place at the end of a semester during a final class of Educational Psychology.

#### *Measures*

The *Regulatory Focus Questionnaire* (RFQ; Higgins, Friedman, Harlow, Idson, Ayduk, & Taylor, 2001) is an 11-item measure reported on 5-point scales (1 – never or seldom / never true / certainly false; 5 – very often / many times / always / certainly true). Six questions capture promotion focus (e.g. "Compared to most people, are you typically unable to get what you want out of life?") while the remaining 5 items form the prevention scale (e.g., "Growing up, would you ever 'cross the line' by doing things that your parents would not tolerate?").

The *BIS/BAS* scales (Carver & White, 1994; Romanian version by Sava & Sperneac, 2006) measure sensitivity to punishment and sensitivity to reward based on Gray's Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory (Gray, 1981, 1987). In terms of regulatory focus, BIS corresponds to prevention while BAS represents the promotion tendency. The instrument is comprised of 20 items (6 for BIS, and 24 for BAS) reported on a 4-point Likert scale (1 – *very true for me*, to 4 – *very false for me*). Both scales had satisfactory internal consistency on the present sample ( $\alpha = .73$  for BIS, and  $\alpha = .77$  for BAS).

**Results**

*Factorial structure*

In order to assess the factor structure of the RFQ we used exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Thus, first of all, parallel analysis (Horn, 1965) suggested the extraction of 2 distinct factors. Afterwards we applied Principal Axis Factoring and Direct Oblimin rotation which revealed an as expected factor pattern matrix, except for item 8 from Prevention (i.e., "Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times."). This item loaded similarly on both factors, and in both cases with small loadings ( $< .40$ ). Hence, we decided to exclude it. After excluding item 8 and repeating the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), we found that a two-factor structure emerged once more, accounting for 37.98% of cumulated variance (22.88% accounted by the prevention scale and 11.06% by promotion).

**Table 1.** Results of the EFA

Item	Promotion	Prevention	$h^2$
RFQ_1	<b>.57</b>	.01	.33
RFQ_3	<b>-.40</b>	-.03	.16
RFQ_7	<b>-.56</b>	-.05	.32
RFQ_9	<b>.65</b>	.06	.44
RFQ_10	<b>-.59</b>	-.00	.36
RFQ_11	<b>.42</b>	-.03	.18
RFQ_2	.09	<b>.77</b>	.56
RFQ_4	.03	<b>.72</b>	.53
RFQ_5	.04	<b>-.61</b>	.37
RFQ_6	.14	<b>.69</b>	.54
% Variance	11.06	22.88	-
$h^2 =$ Communality			

Furthermore, we used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in order to certify the adequacy of the altered version of the instrument. Thus, we tested three different models (i.e., one factor, two uncorrelated factors, and two correlated factors) for each of the two versions of the instrument (original 11-item version, and altered, 10-item version). All three models were without correlated errors. The best model-data fit was achieved by the 10-item two-factor models (Table 2), with the correlated-factors one being significantly superior to the uncorrelated one ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 11.03$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Even so, the differences regarding the other fit indices are nonexistent (i.e., *RMSEA*) or negligible (i.e., *GFI*, *CFI*, *TLI*). Hence, CFA results were in line with those previously revealed by EFA and suggested that the 10-items model distributed in two correlated factors represented the optimal solution.

**Table 2.** Results of the CFA

Model	$\chi^2$	$df$	RMSEA [90% CI]	GFI	CFI	TLI
One factor <sup>a</sup>	472.72**	44	.16 [.14, .17]	.76	.56	.45
Two uncorrelated factors <sup>a</sup>	187.70**	44	.09 [.08, .10]	.92	.85	.81
Two correlated factors <sup>a</sup>	172.12**	43	.09 [.07, .10]	.92	.87	.83
One factor <sup>b</sup>	414.99**	35	.16 [.15, .18]	.78	.56	.44
Two uncorrelated factors <sup>b</sup>	112.05**	35	.07 [.06, .09]	.94	.91	.89
Two correlated factors <sup>b</sup>	101.02**	34	.07 [.06, .09]	.95	.92	.90

Notes: <sup>a</sup>The 11 items form; <sup>b</sup>The 10 items form. \*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Table 3.** Means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis and reliability estimates for the 10-item RFQ

Scale	$M$	$SD$	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Promotion	2.26	.66	.32	-.47	.69
Prevention	2.48	.88	.33	-.43	.79

*Scale statistics*

Descriptive statistics along with normality indices and internal consistencies are displayed in Table 3. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients showed satisfactory reliability, being slightly lower than those reported by Higgins and colleagues (2001). More precisely, on our sample, the coefficient for the promotion scale reached .69, and for prevention reached .79, while Higgins and his colleagues (2001) reported a value of .73 for promotion and .80 for prevention. Also, both regulatory focus dimensions had normal distributions.

*Convergent and discriminant validity*

Table 4 displays the pattern of correlations among RFQ scales and BIS/BAS. First of all, there is a small, but statistically significant correlation between promotion and prevention ( $r(399) = .15$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Furthermore, on one hand, promotion was significantly associated with BAS, which was expected due to their conceptual similarity ( $r(399) = .15$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but also with BIS ( $r(399) = -.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ). On the other hand, prevention was also significantly associated with BAS ( $r(399) = .19$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and unrelated to BIS ( $r(399) = -.04$ ,  $p = .412$ ).

**Table 4.** Correlation matrix between RFQ scales and BIS/BAS

	1	2	3	4
1. Promotion	-			
2. Prevention	.15**	-		
3. BAS approach	.31**	-.19**	-	
4. BIS avoidance	-.23**	.04	-.01	-

Notes: \*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Study 2 Method

### Participants and procedure

The sample included 198 students enrolled in the Faculty of Psychology from "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Romania, who took part in the study in exchange for course credit. Their mean age was 22.1 years ( $SD = 2.07$ ) and 91.4% of them were females. The entire testing procedure was conducted online after they consented to participate in the study and gave their personal email addresses. A subsample of 91 participants ( $M_{age} = 21.8$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) also agreed to fill in the RFQ measure at one month after the study. The data provided by this subsample helped in testing the temporal stability of the instrument.

### Measures

The tailored version of the *Regulatory Focus Questionnaire* (RFQ; Higgins, Friedman, Harlow, Idson, Ayduk, and Taylor, 2001), as resulted from Study 1 was used. Thus, the only alteration to the original version consisted in the exclusion of item 8.

*Extraversion and emotional stability* were measured with the two 10-item scales from IPIP 50 (Goldberg, 1992; Romanian version by Rusu, Maricuțoiu, Macinga, Virgă, & Sava, 2012). Participants had to rate on a 5-point Likert scale (1 - *Very inaccurate*, to 5 - *Very accurate*) the degree of agreement with each of the 20 items. Cronbach's  $\alpha$

**Table 5.** Results of the CFA

Model	$\chi^2$	df	RMSEA [90% CI]	GFI	CFI	TLI
One factor	214.64**	35	.16 [.15, .18]	.79	.59	.48
Two uncorrelated factors	70.96**	35	.07 [.05, .10]	.93	.92	.89
Two correlated factors	64.58**	34	.07 [.04, .09]	.94	.93	.91

Notes: \*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Table 6.** Means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis and reliability estimates for the 10-item RFQ

Scale	$M$	$SD$	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Promotion	3.25	.42	.04	-.19	.66
Prevention	2.99	.69	.11	-.61	.80

**Table 7.** Correlation matrix between RFQ scales, extraversion, emotional stability and PANAS

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Promotion	-					
2. Prevention	.12	-				
3. Extraversion	.30**	-.24**	-			
4. Emotional stability	.39**	.01	.29**	-		
5. Positive affect	.58**	.03	.44**	.28**	-	
6. Negative affect	-.53**	.11	-.29**	-.73**	-.35	-

Notes: \*\*  $p < .001$ .

coefficients suggested excellent reliability for both scales (.88 for extraversion, .87 for emotional stability).

The *Positive and Negative Affect Schedule* (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) was used to measure trait affect. The instrument consists of two lists of 10 positive, and respectively negative, affects. Using a 5-point Likert scale (1 - *very slightly or not at all* to 5 - *very much*) the participants had to rate the extent to which they generally experienced each of the 20 emotions. Both scales showed satisfactory reliabilities ( $\alpha = .77$  for PA, and  $\alpha = .89$  for NA).

## Results

### Factorial structure

In order to test the replicability of the factorial structure obtained in Study 1, we used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Once more, we tested multiple models: a one-factor solution, a two uncorrelated factors solution and two correlated factors solution. As shown in Table 5, we successfully replicated our previous findings, revealing that the best model for the data is the one with two correlated factors.

### Scale statistics

On the present sample, the internal consistency coefficient for promotion decreased at .66, while the coefficient for prevention increased to .80 (see Table 6). Thus, the promotion scale still holds modest reliability as compared to the prevention scale which seems to be more stable. Consistent with our previous findings, we found that both regulatory focus dimensions had normal distributions.

### *Convergent and discriminant validity*

As in the previous study, the relationship between the promotion and the prevention scales was weak ( $r(196) = .12, p = .081$ ). Promotion was positively associated with the both personality factors and positive affect, while negatively with negative affect. Prevention was significantly (negative) associated only with extraversion. Moreover, promotion's associations were medium and large in intensity, while the association between prevention and extraversion was small. For the complete correlation matrix, see Table 7.

### *Temporal stability*

The temporal stability of the RFQ's Romanian version was verified by the means of test-retest reliability. Thus, the correlation coefficients between time 1 and time 2 measurements indicated acceptable reliability ( $r(89) = .75, p < .001$  for promotion, and  $r(89) = .79, p < .001$  for prevention). These results, alongside with the internal consistencies, suggest that RFQ is a reliable measure.

## **Discussion**

Our two studies analyzed the psychometric properties of a measure for chronic goal orientations, Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ; Higgins et al. 2001). The instrument showed satisfactory evidence regarding its psychometric quality on our samples, indicating that it consists of two distinct dimensions, promotion and prevention, as indicated by the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Moreover, the two dimensions are weakly related, result that subscribes to what was meta-analytically revealed by Gorman and colleagues (2012), who reported a mean corrected correlation between the factors of .10. In order to reach the clearly distinct two factor solution we had to eliminate one item from the prevention sub-scale which had equal (small) loadings on both factors. Thus, in comparison to the original version, the Romanian one suffered a small alteration, being reduced to 10 items (6 for promotion and 4 for prevention). Moreover, as revealed from both studies' internal consistency estimates and by the test-retest analysis, the scales showed satisfactory reliability.

In analyzing the nomological network of the instrument, we explored the relationships with another regulatory focus measure (BIS/BAS; Study 1), and also with extraversion, emotional stability and trait affectivity (Study 2). The associations with BIS/BAS (Carver & White, 1994) are similar with those revealed in the study of Summerville and Roese (2008), who suggested that RFQ represents a unique construct, closer to the self-guided definition. Moreover, all correlations were small in magnitude, a finding that is also in line with previous results (Haws, Dholakia, & Bearden, 2010; Summerville & Roese, 2008). Hence, as Haws and colleagues (2010) noted, there is a lack of convergence between different measures of chronic regulatory focus. Moreover, the authors also found that RFQ-prevention is unrelated to affect valence. These results are also consistent with Summerville and Roese's (2008) ones, who revealed that while RFQ-promotion items loaded on the same factor as the items from the promotion scale of another regulatory

focus measure (General Regulatory Focus Measure; Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002), the RFQ-prevention items formed a distinct factor.

In other words, the patterns of correlations obtained in both studies are not offering support to our theoretically derived expectations, but are concordant to what was previously empirically revealed. We replicated the findings that indicate RFQ to be a distinct regulatory focus measure that may better capture the key principles of regulatory focus theory. The lack of emotional content in some of RFQ's items is also one of its weaknesses. Thus, future research could also take into account adapting the composite measure of chronic regulatory focus proposed by Haws and colleagues (2010), with the cautionary note that this instrument needs further evidence regarding its psychometric properties.

However, some limitations have to be acknowledged in order to correctly understand our studies' results. First of all, both samples were mostly based on female students, thus limiting the generalizability of our findings to this particular population. More diverse and gender balanced samples are needed to make more firm assumptions regarding the way in which the scales behave in the Romanian culture. Moreover, various psychometric properties, especially from the point of view of criterion validity, should also be explored.

Overall, based on the findings from two cross-sectional studies we revealed that the Romanian form of the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire presents appropriate classical psychometric properties. Our data certifies its use especially with research purposes on student samples.

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**Appendix**  
Regulatory Focus Questionnaire – Romanian Form

Următoarea serie de întrebări va face referire la situații specifice din viața dumneavoastră. Vă rugăm să indicați răspunsul dumneavoastră încercuind varianta pe care o considerați potrivită.

1. În comparație cu majoritatea oamenilor, consideri că nu ești în aceeași măsură să obții ce îți dorești de la viață?				
1	2	3	4	5
Niciodată/rareori		Uneori		Foarte des
2. Înaintând în vârstă, ai depășit vreodată măsura, făcând lucruri pe care părinții tăi nu le tolerau?				
1	2	3	4	5
Niciodată/rareori		Uneori		Foarte des
3. Cât de des ai realizat lucruri care te-au mobilizat să lucrezi chiar și mai mult?				
1	2	3	4	5
Niciodată/rareori		De câteva ori		De mai multe ori
4. Ți-ai scos des părinții din sărite fiind în creștere?				
1	2	3	4	5
Niciodată/rareori		Uneori		Foarte des
5. Cât de des respectai regulile și ordinele stabilite de părinții tăi?				
1	2	3	4	5
Niciodată/rareori		Uneori		Mereu
6. Înaintând în vârstă, te-ai comportat vreodată în moduri pe care părinții tăi le considerau condamnabile?				
1	2	3	4	5
Niciodată/rareori		Uneori		Foarte des
7. Reușești deseori să faci bine lucrurile pe care le încerci?				
1	2	3	4	5
Niciodată/rareori		Uneori		Foarte des
8. Când este vorba de a obține lucrurile care contează cu adevărat pentru mine, consider că nu reușesc să obțin rezultatele pe care mi le doresc în mod ideal.				
1	2	3	4	5
Nu este adevărat		Uneori adevărat		Deseori adevărat
9. Simt că am făcut progrese spre a fi de succes în viață.				
1	2	3	4	5
Cu siguranță fals		Uneori adevărat		Cu siguranță adevărat
10. Am găsit foarte puține hobby-uri sau activități în viața mea care să îmi capteze interesul sau să mă motiveze să depun efort pentru realizarea lor.				
1	2	3	4	5
Cu siguranță fals		Uneori adevărat		Cu siguranță adevărat