

# The Relationship between Punctuality, Optimism, and Time Perception

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## Introduction

### Punctuality

- Harrison and Prince define being unpunctual or late as arriving after the time of a scheduled event (as cited in Werner, Geisler, & Randler, 2014). The common perception is that those who are unpunctual are inconsiderate, lazy, and unorganized and tend to attribute punctuality as a controllable, behavioral trait (Levine, West, & Reis, 1980).

### Optimism

- Researchers have reported certain personality traits that are associated with punctuality (see for example, Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2006; Furnham & Bramwell, 2006).
- Could punctuality be linked to optimism?

### Time Perception

- Le Poidevin (2015) described the perception of time as perceiving changes or events in time. Is it fair to put controllable blame on someone who psychologically perceives time passing at a slower rate than others?
- Levine et al. (1980) took participants from Brazil and the United States and compared their perception of time and punctuality.
  - Results showed Brazilians were less punctual and less likely to accurately predict the time.
- Could punctuality be linked to our perception of time?



## Hypotheses

1. A person's punctuality trait will be negatively correlated with their level of optimism.
2. People who are more punctual will underestimate the amount of time that has passed whereas those who are not punctual will overestimate the amount of time that has passed.

## Method

### Participants

- 32 participants; 17 men and 15 women
- Age range 18-56 with an average of 26 years old

### Materials and Procedure

- Participants worked on a Sudoku puzzle and were told to stop when they felt that 2 min had passed to assess their time perception. While they were working, I was timing them to get the actual passage of time.
- The difference between participants' perception of 2 min and actual time was used to measure their time perception. The Sudoku puzzle ensured that the participants were not simply counting the amount of time that has passed in their head.
- Participants completed a three-part survey consisting of the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R, Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994), which was used to assess optimism, a self-created Punctuality Survey to assess punctuality, and a few questions to gather basic demographic information about my participants.

#### Sample LOT-R Questions:

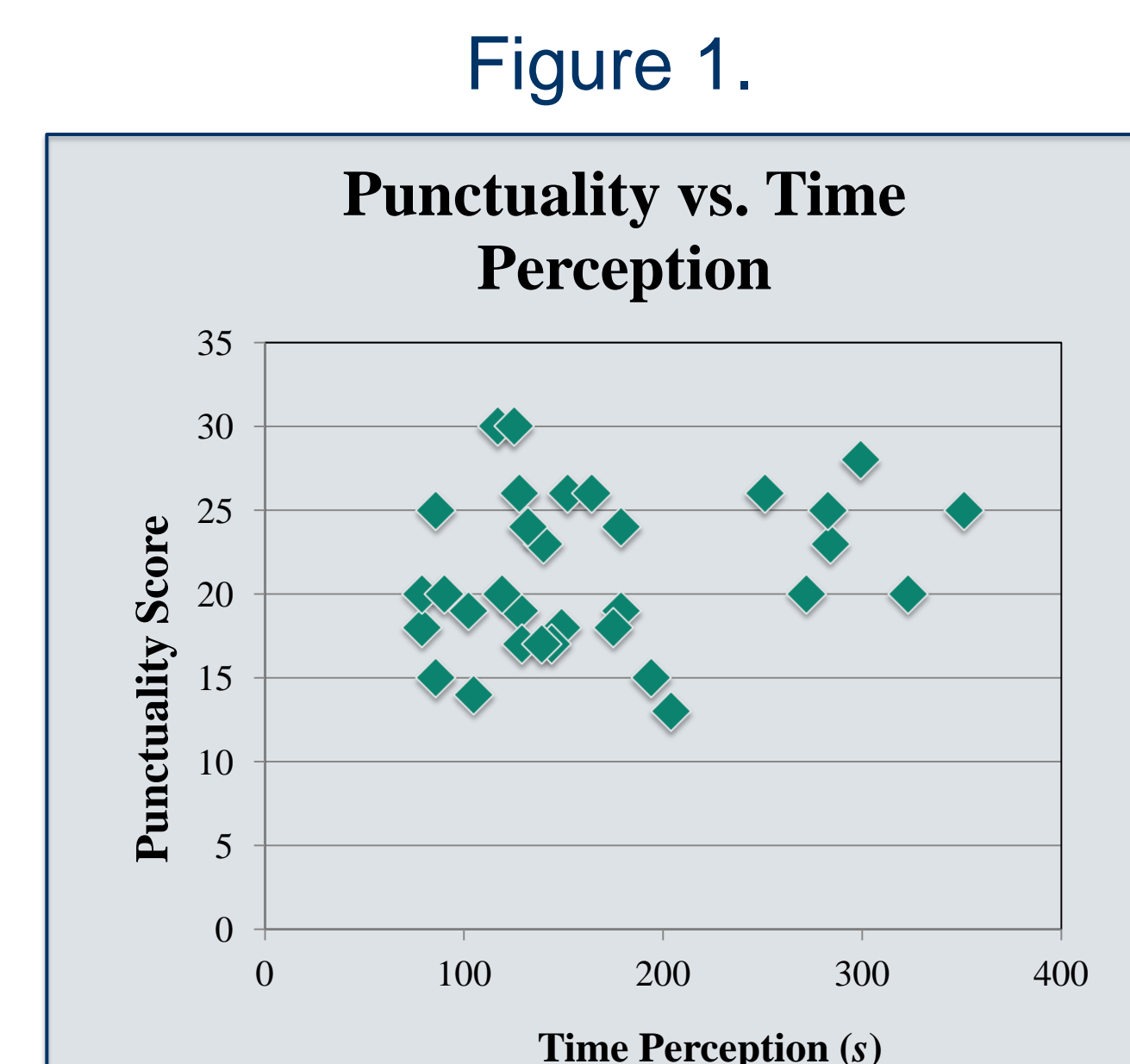
1. I'm always optimistic about my future.
2. I rarely count on good things happening to me.
3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.

#### Sample Punctuality Items:

1. It is important for me to be on-time to work or class.
2. It aggravates me when I am late to work or class.
3. I feel guilty when I am late to work or class.

## Results

- No correlation between punctuality survey scores and optimism scores.
- Participants' time perception and their punctuality survey score had a weak positive correlation (see Figure 1).
- Perception of time and optimism: no correlation between the two variables.



## Discussion

### Conclusion

- The results suggest that there is no relationship between optimism and time perception or punctuality.
- The correlation between time perception and punctuality was weak but in a positive direction.
  - The direction of the correlation was opposite from the proposed hypothesis.

### Limitations

- Small Sample Size
- The data collected for punctuality and optimism was self-report data.

### Future Research

- It would be interesting to repeat the study with a larger sample and a new hypothesis.
  - Is a person's perception of how long it takes to do certain tasks related to their punctuality?
- Brazilian participants rated people who are constantly late as being more likeable and happier (Levine et al., 1980).
  - Future research could examine levels of overall happiness with punctuality to see if there is a correlation as opposed to punctuality and optimism.



## References

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