



Articles

The Relationship of Sensation Seeking and Social Desirability With Humor Styles Among Iranian Salespersons

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Abstract

Given the different effects of adaptive and maladaptive humor on social interactions especially on workplaces, contradictory findings of sensation seeking for forming new relationships, and salespersons' tendency for being demanded and suitable for more sales, it is important to investigate how sensation seeking and social desirability along with background characteristics predict humor styles. The study sample included 150 Iranian salespersons selected through cluster sampling. The study had a correlation research design which drew on the three instruments of Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking (AISS), Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) and Humor Style Questionnaire (HSQ). The regression analysis findings showed that income level and gender were significant predictors of the humor style of affiliative. Additionally, only sensation seeking was found to be a significant predictor of self-enhancing. The humor style of aggressive was predicted by education level, gender, and social desirability. The humor style of self-defeating was also predicted by job experience, education level, gender and social desirability. It seems that personality traits such as sensation seeking along with social status can predict humor styles.

Keywords: humor styles, sensation seeking, social desirability

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The use of humor in verbal communication is common to all languages and cultures. A good sense of humor is generally regarded to be a socially valuable characteristic to have (Cann & Calhoun, 2001). Although it is the type of meetings which to a great extent determine the acceptable range and intensity for humor use, no business meeting is devoid of some sense of humor (Rogerson-Revell, 2007). Humor has some massive advantages such as building and maintaining relationships among the staff (Cooper, 2008), dealing with work stress (Doosje, De Goede, Van Doornen, & Goldstein, 2010), and increasing the creativity for problem-solving at work (Holmes, 2007).

Although humor use could have its own advantages at the workplace, the manner in which it is conceptualized is also of utmost importance. It has been generally defined as appreciating jokes which are assessed through the rate of funniness perception (Vernon, Martin, Schermer, & Mackie, 2008). Some studies have investigated the positive and negative effects of humor use in organizations. For example, positive humor style was reported to be associated with variables such as job satisfaction and commitment (Cann, Watson, & Bridgewater, 2014); on the other hand, negative humor style was found to be related to the subscales of Symptomatic Index of the

SCL-90 including somatization, obsessive-compulsive, anxiety, hostility, and paranoid ideation (Chen & Martin, 2007), and emotional exhaustion (Guenter, Schreurs, Van Emmerik, Gijbers, & Van Ijerson, 2013).

Since conceptualizing humor as positive or negative did not result in useful findings in the last decade, scholars such as Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, and Weir (2003) introduced a humor model which specifies four humor styles including Adaptive and Maladaptive styles focusing on others or self. As an adaptive style, Affiliative humor is employed to form or reinforce the relationship among people and to amuse others without annoying them. On the contrary, Aggressive humor, as a maladaptive humor, is used for seeking superiority over others, and diminishing their value through using sarcasm, teasing and disrespecting. These two humor styles are other-oriented. In contrast, self-enhancing and self-defeating are self-oriented ones. Self-enhancing includes the use of humor for reappraising potential stressors to cope with challenges. Self-defeating is regarded to be a maladaptive style because it is an attempt to attract others and to obtain their confirmation via self-humiliation. Although affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles are considered to be potentially helpful for forging interpersonal relationships, aggressive and self-defeating humor styles are regarded as to be quite harmful.

Some researchers have reported that humor styles are related to various personality characteristics. For instance, aggressive humor was found to be associated with variables such as higher neuroticism and lower agreeableness (Vernon et al., 2008), higher levels of Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Veselka, Schermer, Martin, & Vernon, 2010), and a lower rate of social competence (Yip & Martin, 2006). Additionally, maladaptive humor styles are reported to be positively correlated with insecurity attachment (Cann, Norman, Welbourne, & Calhoun, 2008). By the same token, adaptive humor styles are associated with optimism (Cheung & Yue, 2013) and life satisfaction (Zhao, Wang, & Kong, 2014).

Other personality characteristics such as sensation seeking are also regarded to be associated with humor styles. More specifically, sensation seekers may use a good sense of humor, especially in the form of a self-enhancing style to counter with varied, novel, complex and intense sensations and experiences (Zuckerman, 1994). Sensation seeking has been hypothesized as a possible way to manage stressful conditions. Put more clearly, sensation seekers may use adaptive humor styles to cope with the novel, complex and intense experiences and not to interpret them as risky or threatening. For example, self-enhancing style allows a person to worry less and to take a more light-minded view of life (Cann & Cann, 2013). In addition, it has been proclaimed that the individuals with higher rates of sensation seeking may use aggressive humor because it is related to a lower perception of risk, and higher rates of predicted and actually risky behaviors (Cann & Cann, 2013). In a similar manner, sensation seeking was found to be correlated with psychoticism among prisoners, drug addicts, and alcoholics (Eysenck & Zuckerman, 1978).

Humor styles are also assumed to be associated with social desirability. The individuals with higher rates of social desirability may use adaptive humor styles to obtain other individuals' confirmation. Markey, Suzuki, and Marino (2014) found that affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles were strongly associated with the personality trait of gregarious-extraverted. Using adaptive humor could lead to social acceptance. In an empirical study was indicated that perceived social support was positively related to adaptive humor styles and negatively related to maladaptive humor styles (Zhao et al., 2014).

The present study aimed at testing the relationship of humor styles with sensation seeking and social desirability among a sample of Iranian salespersons. During a work day, salespersons have many business

interactions with customers. In the course of their business interactions, they use various communicative skills such as humor to satisfy and persuade their customers into buying goods. The salespeople usually do their best to keep the customers for more sales. While salespersons' social interactions abound with humorous verbal and non-verbal signs, no previous study has investigated them for this. However, it seems that humor styles can be predicted by personality characteristics such as sensation seeking, and social desirability.

Sensation Seeking and Humor

Sensation seeking can be one of the most effective variables in social relationships. Zuckerman (1994, p. 27) described sensation seeking as a "trait defined by the seeking of varied, novel, complex and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal and financial risks for the sake of such experiences". Sensation Seeking Scale Form V (SSS-V) (Zuckerman, Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1978) is one of the most frequently used instruments for assessing sensation seeking. This scale has been criticized by Arnett (1994) for containing some items about drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexual behaviors, and severe physical activity. Arnett (1994) stated that sensation seeking is not only the potential for risk-taking but also is related to intense and novel issues in different fields. Consequently, he designed Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking. Franken, Gibson, and Mohan (1990) found that the individuals with high rates of sensation seeking not only try to form new friendships, but also to preserve their old friendships. Accordingly, they self-disclose and encourage others to do so.

The relationship between sensation seeking and humor has been investigated in several ways. One approach has used Situational Humor Response Questionnaire (SHRQ) to measure humor (Martin & Lefcourt, 1984). In this approach, the respondents refer to some probable responses in hypothetical situations. Deckers and Ruch (1992) and Lourey and McLachlan (2003) reported that Sensation Seeking Scale was positively correlated with the SHRQ.

The second approach for investigating the relationship between sensation seeking and humor has drawn on a 3WD test of humor appreciation that measures the funniness and aversiveness of jokes and cartoons varying both in content and structure (Ruch, 1992). The 3WD test provides a profile containing six scores: three for funniness including incongruity-resolution, nonsense and sexual humor and three for aversiveness. Using 3WD test and Sensation Seeking Scale, Ruch (1988) found that experience seeking and boredom susceptibility were significant predictors of low appreciation of humor with a mildly surprising punch line. Additionally, disinhibition (DIS) was correlated with funniness and (low) aversiveness of sexual humor. Forabosco and Ruch (1994), using the 3WD test, SSSV, and the C-Scale, found that the funniness of incongruity-resolution humor was negatively correlated with all the subscales of Sensation Seeking Scale. They also found that the nonsense and sexual humor were positively correlated with general sensation seeking.

In a more recent study, Carretero-Dios and Ruch (2010) investigated the relationship between sensation seeking and humor appreciation using different measures. They used 3WD and EAHU (Escala de Apreciación del Humor, Carretero-Dios & Ruch, 2010) to measure humor appreciation, and AISS and SSS to measure sensation seeking. Their findings showed that experience seeking and novelty were significant predictors of low appreciation of incongruity-resolution humor and high appreciation of nonsense humor. Disinhibition and intensity were also positively correlated with sexual humor and negatively correlated with aversiveness.

The third approach to the study of the relationship between humor and sensation seeking has relied upon humor styles. No study has already investigated the probable relationship between humor style and sensation seeking. As for the relationship between humor styles and risky experiences, [Cann and Cann \(2013\)](#) found that the maladaptive aggressive humor style was related to a lower perception of risk, and higher rates of predicted and actually risky behavior.

Generally, contradictory results have been found for the relationship between humor and sensation seeking. For example, [Deckers and Ruch \(1992\)](#) and [Lourey and McLachlan \(2003\)](#) found that sensation seeking was positively correlated with humor. However, [Ruch \(1988\)](#) and [Forabosco and Ruch \(1994\)](#) found that sensation seeking was predictive of low appreciation of humor. [Carretero-Dios and Ruch \(2010\)](#) showed that some subscales of sensation seeking (experience seeking and novelty) were significant predictors of low humor while other subscales such as disinhibition and intensity were positively correlated with sexual, and negatively with aversive humor.

Social Desirability and Humor

As a personality characteristic, social desirability has received both theoretical and practical attention. It is demonstrated in the overestimation and underestimation of the desired traits or behaviors ([Motl, McAuley, & DiStefano, 2005](#)). It is also identified as the tendency to distort self-reports for being demanded and suitable ([Paulhus, 1991](#)). Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) as instrument for measuring social desirability contains items on behaviors that are subject to cultural confirmation, but have the minimum of unsociability implied ([Crowne & Marlowe, 1960](#)). The initial studies on social desirability have indicated that some individuals tend to respond in a socially acceptable manner ([Crowne & Marlowe, 1960](#)). [Kuiper and Leite \(2010\)](#) found that affiliative humor had the highest degree of relationship with desirability. Contrastively, self-enhancing, self-defeating, and aggressive humor had lower rates of relationship with social desirability. [Cann and Matson \(2014\)](#) used Humor Style Questionnaire (HSQ) to predict the sense of humor in some individuals and their partners. They found that the behaviors relevant to adaptive humor were similarly more socially appraised. On the contrary, maladaptive humor was found to be associated with social undesirability.

This Study

With regard to fact that the theoretical and empirical underpinnings for the link between humor appreciation and sensation seeking have been widely reflected in the literature, this study seeks to address the identified gaps in the research. The suggestion that humor styles could be related to sensation seeking that did not investigate the association between the two. Thus, the current research will use the HSQ to quantify individual differences in humor styles. In addition, the role that sensation seeking could play in these humor styles will be explored. Since sensation seekers are dauntless in social interactions and do not try to form new friendships or preserve old friendships ([Franken et al., 1990](#)), they may use more sarcasm, teasing and disrespecting in their humor. Therefore, it is hypothesized that sensation seeking can predict aggressive humor.

Also, it has been found that self-enhancing style relates to worrying less about threats and risky behavior ([Cann & Cann, 2013](#)). Therefore, individuals with high level self-enhancing may less worry about social interactions and may strengthen only positive self-concept. In this manner, it is anticipated that sensation seeking may predict self-enhancing style.

However, the relationship of sensation seeking with self-defeating and affiliative humor may be similar. Sensation seekers search risky experiences and are dauntless in social interactions, also self-defeating style related to higher levels of worry (Cann & Cann, 2013), it is predicted that sensation seeking may anticipate negatively self-defeating humor. Also, it is predicted that sensation seeking may anticipate negatively affiliative humor. Since affiliative humor associated with cheerfulness and related to amuse others without annoying, who use more affiliative humor, their social interactions and friendship relations are important while sensation seekers may not invest on these relations for.

With regarding humor style can effect differently on others, it is judged behaviors associated with adaptive humor styles (affiliative, self-enhancing) as more socially desirable and behaviors associated with maladaptive humor (aggressive, self-defeating) as clearly socially undesirable (Cann & Matson, 2014). As adaptive humor relates to warm and accepting to be seen in a more positive light. In contrast, maladaptive humor relates to ridicule and put-down self and others may be perceived as being much more negative. As such, it is predicted that adaptive humor styles related to higher levels of socially desirable and maladaptive humor styles relate to lower levels of socially undesirable.

According to findings of Kuiper and Leite (2010), affiliative humor associated with significantly socially desirable more than self-enhancing humor. Such affiliative humor is focused on the very positive interpersonal, but self-enhancing humor is focused on psychological coping (Martin et al., 2003). In addition, it is predicted that aggressive humor associated with more socially undesirable than self-defeating humor. Such aggressive humor associated with sarcasm and disrespecting but self-defeating humor associate with self-humiliation to confirm by others.

It seems that background characteristics related to humor styles. For example, males in compare to females used more aggressive (Cann & Cann, 2013; Cann & Matson, 2014; Chen & Martin, 2007; Falanga, De Caroli, & Sagone, 2014; Hampes, 2006; Kazarian & Martin, 2006; Martin et al., 2003) and self-defeating humor styles (Chen & Martin, 2007; Kazarian & Martin, 2006; Martin et al., 2003). Also, older individuals used affiliative and aggressive humor styles less than younger people (Chen & Martin, 2007; Kazarian & Martin, 2006; Martin et al., 2003). Some research has suggested that age, gender, and socioeconomic status predict humor styles (Chen & Martin, 2007; Cheung & Yue, 2013; Kazarian & Martin, 2006). Therefore, background characteristics are necessary to serve as control factors in the analysis and test of hypotheses. Given that Iran is a collectivist society and contradictory findings have been found about presented variables, the present study seeks to investigate the predictive role of sensation seeking, social desirability, and background characteristics on humor styles among Iranian salespersons.

Method

Participants

The population of this study included all the salespersons who did business in Bojnord town-the center of the North Khorasan province, in the northeast of Iran with a population of 207.196 people (Statistical Center of Iran, 2011). This town is economically weak and there are five arcades. As we want to select homogeneous sample demographically, using a cluster sampling method, we randomly selected two arcades from the Bojnord town. The number of salespersons in these two arcades was 173 people. From this group, 23 persons did not

participate in this study. One hundred and fifty salespersons (115 males and 35 females) working at arcades recruited for the current study. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 70 years old ($M = 32.85$, $SD = 8.27$), and had from 1 to 40 years' experience in job ($M = 8.50$, $SD = 6.22$). The income level of participants was different, with weak level ($n = 14$), average level ($n = 79$), good level ($n = 55$), and very good level ($n = 2$). The sample comprised different education levels, with sub diploma ($n = 3$), diploma ($n = 56$), associate ($n = 36$), bachelor ($n = 54$), and master ($n = 1$).

Procedure

We went to shops in selected arcades and explained about research to the salespersons. Salespersons volunteer to participate in the current study was given an informed consent form prior to completing the questionnaire booklet. Next, we informed of the confidentiality of the research findings. The questionnaires were presented in random order in the booklets to salespersons in their shops. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaires. After one week, the booklets were collected. No financial remuneration was offered to the participants.

Measures

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale

Developed by Crowne and Marlowe (1960), this instrument comprises of 33 items requiring true/false responses. The scale measures both acceptable but improbable and unacceptable but probable behaviors. Crowne and Marlowe (1960) reported an internal consistency of .88 and a one-month time interval test-retest reliability of .89 for the instrument. In Iran, this scale was translated by Bagheri (2006) into Persian. She reported that the correlation between Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) and MCSDS was .52 and Cronbach's alpha was .74. The Cronbach's alpha for the instrument was .70 in the present study.

Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking

Arnett (1994) designed the inventory as a measure of sensation seeking. In designing this inventory, he tried to ignore the presupposition that participants have preferences for risk. The scale includes 20 items measuring the subscales of novelty and intensity. All items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = describes me very well, 4 = does not describe me at all). In Iran, Pour Vafayi (1997) translated AISS to Persian. Its correlation with SSS obtained to be .41 and Cronbach's alpha was .65. The Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was .70 in this study.

Humor Style Questionnaire

The HSQ was designed by Martin et al. (2003) to measure the four humor styles of affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating. This 32-item questionnaire measures humor styles on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (7)". The respective Cronbach's alpha reported by Martin et al. (2003) for affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating were .80, .81, .77, and .80. As for the Iranian context, Alinia Karou-ei, Doosti, Dehshiri, and Heidari's (2009) have translated HSQ to Persian, then Persian version HSQ was back-translated into English that confirmed by the designer. They reported that Cronbach's alphas for affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating were .78, .77, .54, and .64, respectively. Additionally, their test-retest reliability over a three-week time interval for the respective subscales

was .74, .75, .58, and .65. In the present study, Cronbach's alphas were .75, .82, .64, and .72 for the four respective subscales.

Data Analysis

As the present study was trying to examine the relationships of sensation seeking, and social desirability with humor styles, the Pearson and Spearman correlation were used. In the next, independent variables including sensation seeking, social desirability, and background characteristics were used to predict humor styles. In this study, we used stepwise regression analysis to find out how sensation seeking and social desirability predict humor styles. We also entered age, job experiences, gender, and socioeconomic status (income level and education level) in the model to predict humor styles. We used SPSS to analyze the collected data.

Results

As shown in Table 1, self-enhancing and self-defeating had the highest and lowest means among the four humor styles, respectively, 35.61 and 30.15. The means for aggressive and affiliative styles were 30.87 and 34.57, respectively. The correlation results also showed that social desirability had a significant relationship with the humor styles of affiliative, $r = .20, p < .05$, aggressive, $r = -.26, p < .01$, and income level, $r_{ho} = -.18, p < .05$. Similarly, Total sensation seeking was significantly correlated with self-enhancing, $r = -.51, p < .01$, gender, $r_{ho} = .27, p < .01$, age, $r = -.33, p < .01$, and education level, $r_{ho} = .30, p < .01$. About differences between females and males in humor styles, we found that females obtained a higher score than males in self-defeating, $t(148) = -3.30, p \leq .001$, and self-enhancing, $t(148) = -2.61, p \leq .01$. However, they were not different significantly in affiliative humor, $t(148) = 1.64, p \geq .14$, and aggressive humor, $t(148) = -1.75, p \geq .08$.

Table 1

The Descriptive Statistics and Results for Correlation Analyses

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Social desirability	14.26	3.93	-					
2. Sensation seeking total	52.35	5.67	.05	-				
3. Self-defeating Humor	30.15	9.51	.12	.13	-			
4. Aggressive humor	30.87	9.35	-.26**	.03	.57**	-		
5. Self-enhancing Humor	35.61	11.86	-.11	.51**	-.06	-.16*	-	
6. Affiliative Humor	34.57	10.56	.20*	.15	-.21**	-.30**	.41**	-
Age	32.85	8.27	.02	-.33**	-.22*	-.002	-.12	.04
Job experience	8.50	6.22	.11	-.11	-.29**	-.13	.04	.08
Income level ^a			.18*	.15	.05	-.06	-.04	.36**
Education level ^b			.12	.30**	-.08	-.32**	.10	.34**
Gender ^c			.15	.27**	.22**	-.01	.23**	-.02

^aIncome level coded as 1 = weak. 2 = average. 3 = good. 4 = very good. ^bEducation level coded as 1 = sub diploma. 2 = diploma. 3 = associated. 4 = bachelor. 5 = master. ^cGender coded as 1 = male and 2 = female.

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Table 2 summarizes the results for regression analysis.

Table 2

The Results of Stepwise Regression Analysis

Step and predictor variable	R	R ²	F	df	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Affiliative Humor									
Step 1	.39	.15	26.20	(1, 148)					
Income level					6.27	1.23	.39	5.11	≤.001
Step 2	.42	.17	15.57	(2,147)					
Income level					5.21	1.32	.32	3.95	≤.001
Education level					1.95	.95	.17	2.08	≤.001
Step 3	.47	.22	13.90	(3,146)					
Income level					4.83	1.29	.30	3.57	≤.001
Education level					3.05	.98	.26	3.10	≤.002
Gender					-5.86	1.96	.23	-2.98	≤.003
Enhancing humor									
Step 1	.41	.17	3.56	(1,148)					
Sensation seeking					.86	.16	.41	5.23	
Aggressive humor									
Step 1	.28	.08	12.61	(1,148)					
Education level					-2.85	.80	-.28	-3.55	≤.001
Step 2	.38	.15	12.82	(2,147)					
Education level					-3.92	.83	-.38	-4.70	≤.001
Gender					6.27	1.80	.28	3.47	≤.001
Step 3	.43	.18	10.79	(3,146)					
Education level					-3.47	.84	-.34	-4.13	≤.001
Gender					5.69	1.79	.26	3.18	≤.002
Social desirability					-.44	.18	-.19	-2.42	≤.020
Self-defeating humor									
Step 1	.29	.08	13.26	(1,148)					
Job experience					-.44	.12	-.29	-3.64	≤.001
Step 2	.35	.12	9.97	(2,147)					
Job experience					-.46	.12	-.30	-3.92	≤.001
Education level					-2.0	.80	-.19	-2.49	≤.010
Step 3	.44	.19	11.41	(3,146)					
Job experience					-.33	.12	-.22	-2.74	≤.007
Education level					-3.06	.83	-.29	-3.69	≤.001
Gender					6.74	1.89	.30	3.56	≤.001
Step 4	.47	.22	10.16	(4,145)					
Job experience					-.29	.12	-.19	-2.41	≤.020
Education level					-3.51	.84	-.34	-4.18	≤.001
Gender					7.51	1.89	.33	3.96	≤.001
Social desirability					.43	.18	.18	2.32	≤.020

The results of stepwise regression analysis showed that income level alone predicted the most percent of the variance for affiliative humor style. In the second step, income level along with education level was significant predictors of 17 percent of the variance for affiliative humor style. Finally, in the third step, income level and

education level along with gender significantly predicted 22 percent of the variance for affiliative humor style. However, social desirability and sensation seeking couldn't predict affiliative humor. As for self-enhancing, sensation seeking could explain 17 percent of the total variance.

It was also found that education level was the strongest variable for the prediction of aggressive humor. Additionally, education level and gender along with social desirability significantly predicted 18 percent of the variance for aggressive humor. As for self-defeating, in the first step, job experience significantly predicted 8 percent of the variance. In the second step, job experience and education level could predict 12 percent of the variance, and in the third step, job experience, education level, and gender predicted 19 percent of the variance. Finally, in the fourth step, job experience, education level, gender, and social desirability predicted 22 percent of the variance for self-defeating humor style.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between sensation seeking and social desirability with humor styles. The results indicated that affiliative humor style was significantly related to social desirability. This finding is consistent with those of [Cann and Matson \(2014\)](#) and [Kuiper and Leite \(2010\)](#). Whoever use affiliative humor try to amuse others and to ease interpersonal tension ([Martin et al., 2003](#)). The individuals who use affiliative humor tend to have favorable interpersonal relationships and change their responses towards the demanded behavior to tell jokes, funny stories and witticism to amuse others. For such individuals, social interactions are so valuable that they try to maintain and increase them through excessive use of affiliative humor. This is in tune with [Kuiper and McHale's \(2009\)](#) finding who reported that affiliative humor could benefit social self-esteem. In a similar manner, [Zhao et al. \(2014\)](#) indicated a significant path from affiliative humor to life satisfaction through social support and self-esteem. It seems that the individuals' affiliative humor needs social support and conformity to lead to an increase in their self-esteem and life satisfaction.

The strongest relation was found to be between affiliative humor and social desirability. This finding could be attributed to the fact that salespersons usually use more affiliative humor to attract and preserve the customers. It also could be attributed with the social setting of the study which was conducted in a collectivist society. The features of a collectivist society could concurrently increase the use of affiliative humor and the tendency towards social desirability. [Kazarian and Martin \(2004\)](#) who studied Lebanese university students found that horizontal collectivism was significantly correlated with affiliative humor and affiliative humor which involves the use of humor to promote group cohesiveness.

The regression analysis showed that income, education level, and gender significantly predicted affiliative humor; the participants with high levels of income and education used affiliative humor more than others. This could be attributed to the fact that these people have higher social status and use more humor to have higher social acceptance. Although no research has been carried out to investigate the relationship between affiliative humor style and sensation seeking, this result is consistent with those of [Cann and Cann \(2013\)](#) who found that affiliative humor had no significant relationship with perceived risk and behaviors risk.

The results also indicated that social desirability had no significant relationship with self-enhancing humor. Self-enhancing, as a coping strategy, is a tendency to take a humorous position in stressing situations. The use of self-enhancing humor in social interactions may cause people not to obtain conformity and desirability. It seems

that people with positive self-appraisal do not change their beliefs for social desirability. This piece of finding is in tune with the result by [Martin et al. \(2003\)](#) and [Zeigler-Hill and Besser \(2011\)](#) who reported a significant positive relationship between self-enhancing humor and self-esteem. In addition, [Falanga et al. \(2014\)](#) reported that self-enhancing humor was positively correlated with empathic/social self-efficacy. Moreover, self-enhancing humor has been reported to be positively related to life satisfaction ([Çalışandemir & Tagay, 2015](#)). [Zhao et al. \(2014\)](#) revealed a significant path from self-enhancing humor through social support and self-esteem to life satisfaction. In business situations, the individuals who use self-enhancing humor don't tend to have high social acceptance in favor of more sales; however, [Cann and Matson \(2014\)](#) found that self-enhancing humor was significantly correlated with social desirability. This contradictory finding could be due to the fact that the present study was conducted among salespersons in general public interactions, but [Cann and Matson's \(2014\)](#) study was conducted in intimate domestic interactions.

The present study also showed that sensation seeking could significantly predict self-enhancing humor. Although no study has previously investigated the relationship between sensation seeking and humor styles using the HSQ and the AISS, [Ruch \(1988\)](#) found that experience seeking and boredom susceptibility were significant predictors of funniness and (low) aversiveness of humor in which the punch line is largely unpredictable. Additionally, Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) along with its subscales had been found to be positively correlated with Situational Humor Response Questionnaire (SHRQ) ([Deckers & Ruch, 1992](#)). Therefore, high sensation seekers find more fun in various situations and more explicitly show their humor in those situations ([Lourey & McLachlan, 2003](#)). [Cann and Cann \(2013\)](#) also found that self-enhancing humor was related to less worrying about threats. Inconsistency with [Cann and Cann's \(2013\)](#) findings, it can be stated that the individuals with higher rates of self-enhancing humor interpret events as less threatening and choose riskier situations. As a result, they would have higher rates of sensation seeking.

The results also showed that aggressive humor styles were negatively correlated with social desirability. Since aggressively humorous individuals usually criticize others ([Martin et al., 2003](#)), they usually have lower rates of social desirability. Additionally, since this subscale is negative, respondents had no tendency for the underestimation of undesired traits or behaviors ([Motl et al., 2005](#)).

The results showed that aggressive humor was not significantly correlated with sensation seeking. Although no previous study has examined this relationship, [Cann and Cann \(2013\)](#) found that aggressive humor style was related to a lower perception of risk, and a higher rate of actual risky behavior. This contradictory finding can be attributed to Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking (AISS) which is not designed for measuring actual risky behavior.

Aggressive humor style was significantly predicted by education level, gender, and social desirability; the females with low levels of education and social desirability used more aggressive humor. Aggressive humor is defined in terms of the tendency to use humor to improve self-concept and to damage others through sarcasm and disparagement. Accordingly, it could be stated that the salespersons with low education not only don't tell jokes with customers for more sales but also may ridicule them. It is assumed that most of the individuals with low education level don't attend to other people and may tease them because they have lower rates of communicative skills.

It was also found that self-defeating humor style was significantly predicted by job experience education level, gender, and social desirability; the individuals with low job experience, low education level, and women used

more self-defeating humor. Self-defeating is defined as a humor style which is used to enhance the relationships with others at one's own expense, characterized by ridiculous behaviors or telling funny stories about oneself (Martin et al., 2003). It seems that these people's low social status motivates them into using this humor style to increase relationships with others.

As for the predictive power of social desirability, it can be stated that respondents had tendency towards the underestimation of undesired traits or behaviors (Motl et al., 2005) and the users' self-defeating humor inclined to be demanded and suitable, because researchers found that self-defeating humor was positively correlated with depression symptoms (Dozois, Martin, & Bieling, 2009) and negatively with perceived social support and self-esteem (Zhao et al., 2014).

Regarding the lack of relationship between self-defeating humor and sensation seeking, it could be stated that the sensation seekers have higher levels of extraversion, autonomy, boldness, and recklessness in the expression of emotions. It seems quite normal that the individuals with high sensation seeking have high self-confidence and don't contempt oneself in order to amuse others. On the other hand, higher levels of self-defeating humor were found to be associated with greater perceived stress (Cann & Cann, 2013) while sensation seekers prefer varied, novel, complex and intense sensations and experiences (Zuckerman, 1994). Therefore, it can be claimed that people use self-defeating humor not to seek novel experiences and intense emotions.

With regard to gender differences, it was found that women obtained significantly higher scores for self-enhancing and self-defeating humor styles. This result has not been reported for other cultures. Kazarian and Martin (2006) found that men use more aggressive and self-defeating humor styles than women. In societies such as Iran, women appear less than men in business situations. This could be the reason why they have focused on self-directed humor.

Significant correlation between self-defeating and aggressive humor in the current study is consistent with studies of Caird and Martin (2014), Cann and Matson (2014), Kazarian and Martin (2006), Zhao et al. (2014) and Zhao, Kong, and Wang (2012), and who have reported correlations of .56, .55, .41, .76, and .41, respectively. Just as Çalişandemir and Tagay (2015) and Cayirdag and Acar (2010) have reported that negative correlation between aggressive and affiliative humor, also this study obtained a negative correlation between them. A significant correlation between affiliative and self-enhancing in this study is similar to the research of Caird and Martin (2014), Cann and Matson (2014), Cayirdag and Acar (2010), Zhao et al. (2012), Zhao et al. (2014) that reported correlations in range of .29 to .49. Also, negative and significant between self-defeating and affiliative is consistent with Zhao et al. (2014). In this study, similarly to Zhao et al. (2014), self-defeating do not relate to significantly self-enhancing. However, research showed that age related to aggressive humor (Chen & Martin, 2007; Kazarian & Martin, 2006; Martin et al., 2003) but this study did not show it. In addition to, we found that age associate negatively with self-defeating.

Just like all studies of the type, the present study had its own limitations. The first limitation is concerned with the small sample size. The findings of the present study must be cautiously generalized to the whole Iranian community. The second limitation of the study is concerned with the data collection method which only drew upon self-report questionnaires. More studies are suggested to replicate the present study relying on more qualitative data collection methods to gather richer data. The third limitation is about the data analysis techniques which only included correlation and regression which could not let for any causal interpretation of

the findings. Another limitation is the sampling procedure. More specifically, the participants were only selected from two arcades of Bojnord. This does not let the generalization of the findings to other Iranian cultural contexts. Further comparative studies in different cultural contexts are suggested to explore the probable relationship between sensation seeking and humor styles.

This study provides valuable guidance for job counselors to consider sensation seeking in the recruitment of employees because it is related to self-enhancing humor which has been confirmed to be associated with positive consequences in the mental health field. The positive correlation of income level with affiliative humor in this study indicates that individuals with high affiliative level attract more customers; therefore, it is suggested that firms in the recruitment of employees pay attention to this humor style and also instruct it for employees in the humor programs.

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