

Osobná viera v spravodlivý svet ako mediátor vzťahu socioekonomického, sociometrického statusu a negatívnych emócií

Personal belief in a just world: mediator of relationship between socio-economic, socio-metric status and negative emotion

Eva Hrušcová¹, Monika Kačmárová¹, Jaroslava Babjáková¹

¹*Inštitút psychológie, Filozofická fakulta, Prešovská univerzita v Prešove*

Abstrakt

Cieľom štúdie je overenie mediačného efektu osobnej viery v spravodlivý svet na vzťah medzi socioekonomickým (SES), sociometrickým (SMS) statusom a subjektívnou pohodou (pozitívne a negatívne emócie). Výskumný súbor pozostával zo 191 respondentov zo Slovenska (73 mužov a 118 žien, vo veku 16 až 48 rokov, $M = 24.47$, $SD = 5.57$). Testová batéria pozostávala z niekoľkých štandardizovaných výskumných nástrojov: Škála emocionálnej habituálnej subjektívnej pohody (Džuka & Dalbert, 2002), Škála osobnej viery v spravodlivý svet (Dalbert, 1999), Škála subjektívneho sociálneho statusu (Adler & Stewart, 2007; Giatti et al., 2012). Výsledky štúdie potvrdili pozitívny vzťah medzi SES, SMS, osobnou vierou v spravodlivý svet a pozitívnymi emóciami a negatívny vzťah medzi SES, SMS, osobnou vierou v spravodlivý svet a negatívnymi emóciami. Osobná viera v spravodlivý svet bola potvrdená ako mediátor vzťahu medzi SES a negatívnymi emóciami a taktiež medzi SMS a negatívnymi emóciami. Osobná viera v spravodlivý svet ako mediátor vzťahu medzi SMS, SES a pozitívnymi emóciami nebola významná.

Kľúčové slová: socioekonomický status, sociometrický status, subjektívna pohoda, osobná viera v spravodlivý svet

Abstract

The main aim of the study is to examine relationship among socio-economic (SES), socio-metric (SMS) status, personal belief in a just world and subjective well-being. Also another aim of the study is to verify mediation effect of personal belief in a just world on the relationship between socio-economic (SES), socio-metric status (SMS) and subjective well-being (positive and negative emotions). Research sample consisted of 191 respondents from Slovakia (73 men and 118 women, from 16 to 48 years old, $M = 24.47$, $SD = 5.57$). The test battery consisted of a number of standardized research tools: Emotional Habitual Subjective Well-being Scale (Džuka & Dalbert, 2002), Personal Belief in a Just World Scale (Dalbert, 1999), The MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler & Stewart, 2007;

* Korespondenční autor: Mgr. Eva Hrušcová, Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, University of Prešov in Prešov, Slovak republic
E-mail: ehrušcova@gmail.com

Giatti et al., 2012). The data was processed using the statistical program SPSS 21.0. For testing mediation was used Hayes's (2016) MACRO process in SPSS. Correlation analysis and mediation were used to verify the main aim of the study. SES and SMS as predictor variables (X), personal belief in a just world as mediator (M), and positive and negative emotions as an outcome variable (Y) were measured by separate calculations. The results of the study confirmed significant positive correlation between SES, SEM and positive emotions and negative correlation between SEM and negative emotions. However, relationship between SES and negative emotions was not confirmed. Also the results confirmed significant positive correlation between personal belief in a just world and SES, SEM and subjective well-being. The results also confirmed indirect effect of SES and SMS on negative emotions via personal belief in a just world. Bootstrapped 95% confidence interval does not contain zero, so the indirect effect is significant at the $p < 0.05$. We also tested the mediation effect of personal belief in a just world on the relationship between SES and positive emotions and between SMS and positive emotions. In both tested models the mediation was not significant. People with higher SES, SMS and personal belief in a just world experience more positive emotions. If people have lower SMS and personal belief in a just world, they experience more negative emotions. The results confirmed that a personal belief in a just world changes the relationship between SES and negative emotions and SMS and negative emotions. Lower SES and SMS people have, they believe less in a just world and experience more negative emotions. It would be recommended for further research to focus on clarifying mediation effect of personal belief in a just world on the relationship between SES, SMS and well-being on representative research sample. Based on unrepresentative research sample in this study, we cannot generalize the outcomes on the whole population, however study represents first view in the research of relationship between SES, SMS, personal belief in a just world and well-being. We believe that this study contributes to existing literature and results can be used also in intervention program for poverty people with lower SES and SMS. In conclusion authors focused also on the importance of investigation poverty topic in context of personal belief in a just world.

Keywords: socio-economic status, socio-metric status, subjective well-being, personal belief in a just world

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Theoretical framework

Recently, belief in a just world has become very popular research topic. The results of studies can be divided into three groups: 1. examination of the relationship between belief in a just world and socio-demographic variables; 2. find out the relationship among belief in a just world and financial situation, unemployment or income; 3. verify relationship among belief in a just world, emotions and well-being. The results of previous studies confirmed that females scored significantly lower in personal belief in a just world in comparison with men, however

in general beliefs in a just world was not detected differences (Furnham & Swami, 2009; Thomas & Mucherah, 2016), on the other hand Durm and Stowers (1998) did not find gender differences in a belief in a just world. According to Furnham and Swami (2009) people with better education do not believe in unjust world and left-wing participants have lower belief in a just world. In comparison with previous statements, Schaafsma (2013) found different results. He did not confirm significant differences in belief in a just world in ethnic background, gender, age and educational level.

Some of the studies focused on the relationship between belief in a just world, financial situation, unemployment or income of respondents. Džuka and Dalbert (2002) found that personal belief in a just world is in positive relationship with life satisfaction. Students with worse financial situation compared to other in same age, have lower satisfaction with life. Long-term unemployed, who scored higher in general belief in just world, were more worried about personal worries, compared to respondents who scored lower in general belief in just world. Also Lucas (2009) confirmed that belief in fair processes is for respondents with low income associated with greater positive affectivity. The effect of income on positive affectivity was moderated by procedural belief in a just world. Moreover, the relationship was not confirmed in the group with high income. The lowest positive affectivity experienced respondents, who had low income and do not believe in fair processes. People with higher income experienced less negative affectivity (Lucas, 2009). SES and SMS were also used like predictors of subjective well-being (Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner, 2012). SES of respondent is indicator of power, prestige and control of power resources and represents position of respondent in power hierarchy. Moreover, is described by indicators as level of education, welfare, income and job position (Diemer et al., 2013). SMS is related stronger with subjective well-being as SES, because SMS is related to respondents' significant person. SMS indicates how respondent admire people, who are members of the same group (Anderson et al., 2012). Anderson et al. (2012) were found that subjective well-being was predicted more strongly by SMS as SES. Also Babjáková et al. (2017) confirmed SMS like predictor of positive emotions, however SES was not confirmed as predictor neither positive or negative emotions.

Third group of research findings are focused on the verification of relationship among belief in a just world, emotions and well-being. Džuka and Dalbert (2007) confirmed positive correlation between personal belief in a just world and subjective well-being in student sample. Their stronger personal beliefs in a just world led to higher satisfaction with their life and furthermore they experience less negative affect and more positive affect. Positive association between personal belief in a just world and subjective well-being was stronger for victims compared to aggressors and extraversion and personal belief in just world were predictors of positive affect. Sutton, Stoeber and Kamble (2017) examined two-dimensional model of belief in a just world (belief in just world for self versus belief in just world for other people) with subjective well-being and social goals in university students sample. The results of their study confirmed positive correlation between belief in a just world for self and affiliative social goals. On the other hand, belief in a just world for other people was in positive correlation with dominance and social demonstration goals. Belief in a just world for self was positive correlated with well-being, however beliefs in a just world for others people was not (Sutton, Stoeber, & Kamble, 2017). Schaafsma (2013) identified belief in a just world for self as mediator of relationship between perceived blatant discrimination and subjective well-being. In many studies

the research sample consisted of students but Khera, Harvey and Callan (2014) focused on refugee workers sample and found that refugee workers reported more life satisfaction and less stress if they had stronger belief in a just world for self. On the other hand, while controlling for just world beliefs for self, stronger belief in a just world for other predicted less positive attitudes towards refugees. Distributive belief in a just world and positive affectivity are in positive relationship, but procedural belief in a just world and negative affectivity are in negative relationship.

Based on a limited number of studies investigating the relationship between SES, SMS and subjective well-being and belief in a just world as mediator of this relationship, our research would introduce a new perspective on this topic. The main aim of the study is to examine the relationship between SES, SMS and subjective well-being (positive and negative emotions). We hypothesized that SES, SMS will be positively associated with positive emotions and negatively associated with negative emotions. Moreover, another goal was to verify if the effect of SES and SMS on subjective well-being (outcome: positive and negative emotions) is operating through mediator personal belief in a just world.

Method

Research sample and procedure

Research sample consisted of 191 respondents from Slovakia (73 men and 118 women) aged between 16 and 48 years ($M = 24.47$; $SD = 5.57$). In terms of marital status, 124 were single, 19 married, 2 divorces, 46 in relationship. In terms of education, 10 participants had only finished primary education, 86 respondents had finished high school, 92 had done a university education and 3 doctoral degree. Data were collected in January 2017 as print or on-line version of questionnaires and all respondents were informed about voluntary participation and anonymity of information. We used the snowball method for data collection: 80 % of the data was obtained by personal administration and 20% on-line.

Measure

The introduction of the questionnaire consisted of demographic questions focused on gender, age of respondents, marital status and education. SES and SMS of respondents were measured by The MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler & Steward, 2007; Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000; Giatti et al., 2012).

SES: “Think of this ladder as representing where people stand in our society. At the top of the ladder are the people who are the best off, those who have the most money, most education, and best jobs. At the bottom are the people who are the worst off, those who have the least money, least education, and worst jobs or no job” (Adler et al., 2000). Respondents valued their status on ladder with 10 points. They marked their subjective position on the ladder in comparison with others, from 1 which represented the lowest status to 10 as the highest status.

SMS: “Think of this ladder as representing where people stand in their communities. People define community in different ways; please define it in whatever way is most meaningful to you. At the top of the ladder are the people who have the highest standing in their community. At

the bottom are the people who have the lowest standing in their community. Where would you place yourself on this ladder? Please place a large ‘X’ on the rung where you think you stand at this time in your life, relative to other people in your community” (Adler & Stewart, 2007, online). It was used modified version of this item according to Slovak version by Babinčák and Adamkovič (2016).

Belief in a just world was measured by using scale: Personal Belief in a Just World scale comprises 7 items designed to capture the belief that, overall, events in one’s life are just (e.g., “Overall, events in my life are just”) (Dalbert, 1999). All items are assessed with a 6-point answer scale ranging from 1 (“totally disagree”) to 6 (“totally agree”).

Emotional Habitual Subjective Well-being Scales (SEHP) (Džuka & Dalbert, 2002) was used to measure emotional component of habitual subjective well-being. This tool is consisted of two scales: positive emotions (4 items) and negative emotions (6 items). Items represent descriptive words expressing body feelings and emotion. Detected is the frequency of their occurrence (the term habitual). The intensity of these emotions is not determined. Respondents answered how often they experience these states. It is used response scale almost always, very often, often, occasionally, rarely and almost never. Tool has a good convergent and divergent validity (Džuka & Dalbert, 2002).

Data Analyses

The data was processed using the statistical program SPSS 21.0. Reliability was verified by Cronbach’s alpha and normality by skewness method. The Cronbach’s alpha (Table 1) pointed to an adequate reliability of research tools and their subscales. For testing mediation was used Hayes’s (2016) MACRO process in SPSS. Descriptive statistic was used to describe the research sample and research variables.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the research variables and Cronbach’s alpha (N=191)

	M	SD	Min	Max	Skew	α
SES	5.91	1.51	2	10	-.16	-
SMS	6.36	1.80	2	10	-.20	-
Personal belief in a just world	26.82	5.63	11	41	-.41	.86
Positive emotions	16.05	3.40	8	21	-.20	.81
Negative emotions	16.76	4.19	10	30	.36	.77

Note: M-mean, SD-standard deviation, Min-minimum, Max-maximum, Skew-skewness

Results

Correlation analysis and mediation were used to verify the main aim of the study. SES and SMS as predictor variables (X), personal belief in a just world as mediator (M), and positive and negative emotions as an outcome variable (Y) were measured by separate calculations. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 2. Figure 1 and Figure 2 present the mediation model for SES, SMS personal belief in a just world and negative emotions.

Table 2: Intercorrelation among variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1 SES	1				
2 SMS	.503**	1			
3 Personal belief in a just world	.295**	.247**	1		
4 Positive emotions	.377**	.425**	.314**	1	
5 Negative emotions	-.090	-.148*	-.384**	-.340**	1

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 2 presents results, which confirmed significant positive correlation between SES, SEM and positive emotions and negative correlation between SEM and negative emotions. However, relationship between SES and negative emotions was not confirmed. Also the results confirmed significant positive correlation between personal belief in a just world and SES, SEM and subjective well-being.

Figure 1: Simple mediation model for SES (X), Personal belief in a just world (M), Negative emotions (Y)

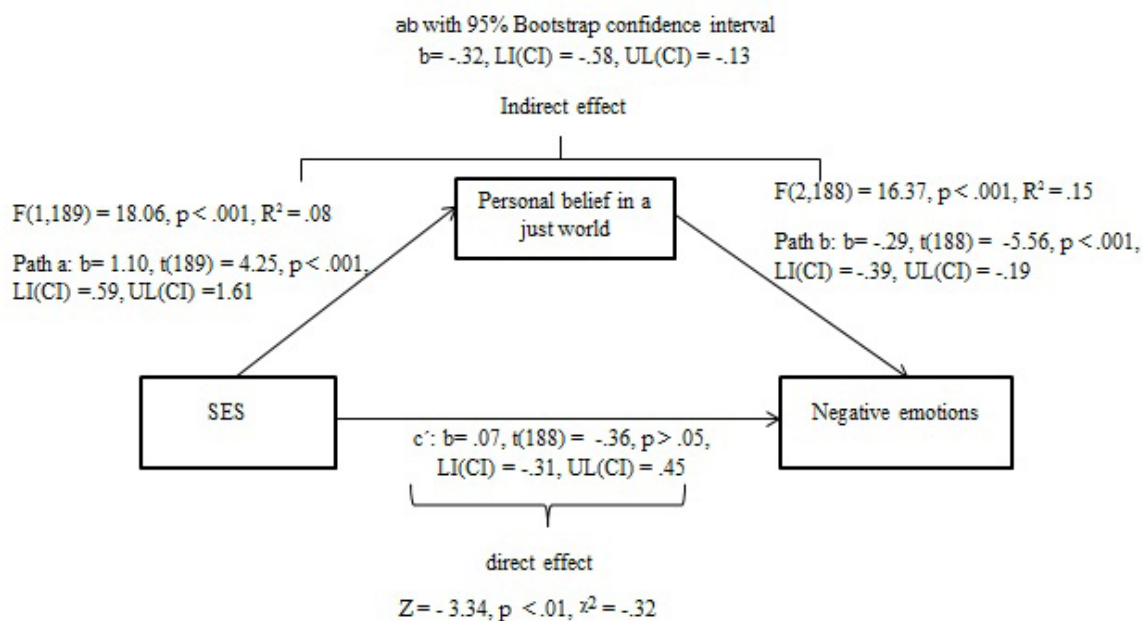


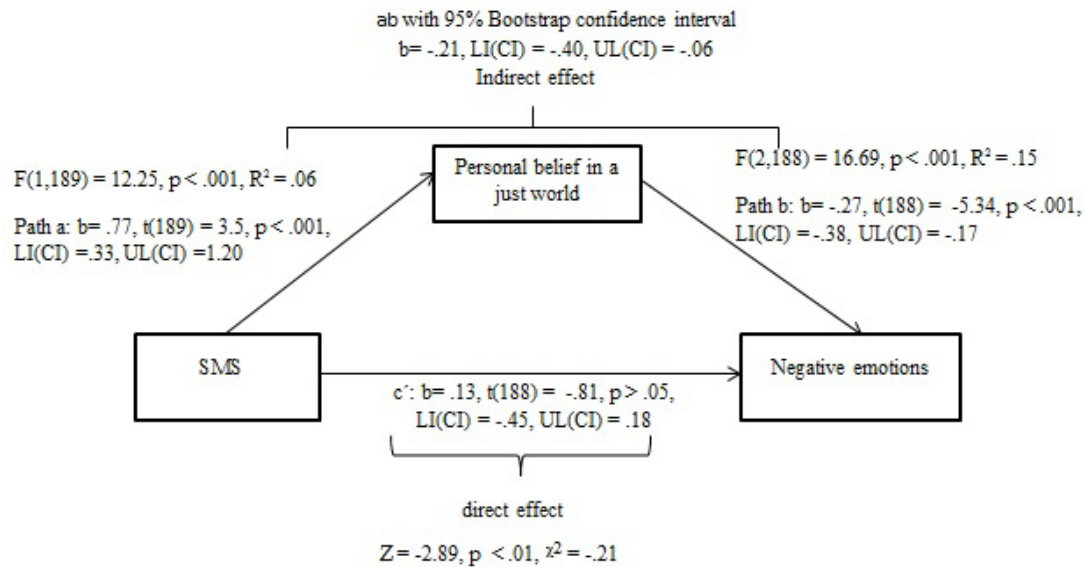
Figure 2: Simple mediation model for SMS (X), Personal belief in a just world (M), Negative emotions (Y)

Figure 1 and 2 present results, which confirmed indirect effect of SES and SMS on negative emotions via personal belief in a just world. Bootstrapped 95% confidence interval does not contain zero, so the indirect effect is significant at the $p < 0.05$. We also tested the mediation effect of personal belief in a just world on the relationship between SES and positive emotions and on the relationship between SMS and positive emotions. In both tested models the mediation was not significant (table 3).

Table 3: Mediation for SMS (X), Personal belief in a just world (M), positive emotions (Y) and SEM (X), Personal belief in a just world (M), positive emotions (Y)

	SES (X)	SMS (X)
Path a	$F(1,189) = 18.06, p < .001, R^2 = .29$ $b = 1.10, t(189) = 4.25, p < .001, LI(CI) = .59, UL(CI) = 1.61$	$F(1,189) = 12.25, p < .01, R^2 = .24$ $b = .77, t(189) = 3.5, p < .01, LI(CI) = .33, UL(CI) = 1.20$
Path b	$F(2,188) = 21.64, p < .001, R^2 = .43$ $b = .13, t(188) = 3.22, p < .01, LI(CI) = .05, UL(CI) = .21$	$F(2,188) = 27.59, p < .001, R^2 = .47$ $b = .13, t(188) = 3.36, p < .01, LI(CI) = .05, UL(CI) = .21$
direct effect	$b = .70, t(188) = 4.52, p < .001, LI(CI) = .39, UL(CI) = 1.00$	$b = .69, t(188) = 5.58, p < .001, LI(CI) = .45, UL(CI) = .94$
indirect effect	abwith 95% Bootstrap confidence interval $b = .14, LI(CI) = .45, UL(CI) = .30$	abwith 95% Bootstrap confidence interval $b = .10, LI(CI) = .02, UL(CI) = .22$
Sobel test	$Z = 2.52, p < .05, \chi^2 = .15$	$Z = 2.37, p < .05, \chi^2 = .10$

Discussion and conclusion

The study was focused on verifying the relationship between SES, SMS, personal belief in a just world, and positive and negative emotions (emotional component of well-being). Another goal was to verify the relationship between predictor variable (SES, SMS) and outcome variable subjective well-being (positive and negative emotions) via mediator personal belief in a just world.

In order to test mediation are the most widely used several conditions described by Baron and Kenny (1986): significant relationship between independent variable and outcome; independent variable and mediator; mediator and outcome variable. However, MacKinnon, Fairchild and Fritz (2007, p. 601) mentioned: „The requirement that there be a significant X to Y relation in the Baron and Kenny causal steps test severely reduces power to detect mediation, especially in the case of complete mediation (i.e. direct effect is zero). There are many cases where significant mediation exists but the requirement of a significant relation of X to Y is not obtained“. Based on that are interpreted as significant only models with significant path a (independent variable and mediator), path b (mediator and outcome variable) and indirect effect, even if relationship between independent variable and outcome variable was not significant. „The recommended test of mediation assesses the statistical significance of the X to M relation, a path, and then the M to Y relation, b path. If both are statistically significant, there is evidence of mediation“ (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007, p. 608). The results of our study confirmed a positive association between SES, SMS, personal belief in a just world and positive emotions, and a negative relationship between SMS, personal belief in a just world and negative emotions. Our results are similar to these of Lucas (2009), that respondents with lower income have also lowest positive affectivity. The association between SES and negative emotions was not confirmed. People with higher SES, SMS and personal belief in a just world experience more positive emotions. If people have lower SMS and personal belief in a just world, they experience more negative emotions. Our findings are similar to those of Lucas (2009) and Babjáková et al. (2017), that SMS is stronger predictor of subjective well-being as SES and also Džuka and Dalbert (2007) confirmed correlation between personal belief in just world and subjective well-being. Similarly, Sutton, Stoeber and Kamble (2017) found positive correlation between subjective well-being and belief in just world for self, but relationship between subjective well-being and belief in a just world for other people was not confirmed. The indirect effect of SES, SMS on negative emotions via personal belief in a just world was significant, however this result was not confirmed in the model with a positive emotions outcome. The results confirmed that a personal belief in a just world changes the relationship between SES and negative emotions and SMS and negative emotions. Lower SES and SMS people have, they believe less in a just world and experience more negative emotions.

Furthermore, it would be recommended for further research to focus on clarifying mediation effect of personal belief in a just world on the relationship between SES, SMS and well-being on representative research sample. Based on unrepresentative research sample in this study, we cannot generalize the outcomes on the whole population. Other limitations of this study may include the non-inclusion of objective SES indicators (e.g. education, income, employment, etc.). Study represents first view in the research of relationship between SES, SMS, personal belief in a just world and well-being. We believe that this study contributes to existing literature and results can be used also in intervention program for poverty people with lower SES and SMS.

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