

Emotional Awareness and Personality: Is There a Clear Difference?
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Abstract

Emotional Intelligence has been defined as the ability to perceive, interpret, and cope with one's own and others emotions (Van Der Zee, Thijs, & Schakel, 2002, p. 105). Given that emotions are an integral part of personality, it is not surprising that Emotional Intelligence correlates with personality (Van Der Zee et al., 2002; Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998). However, some measures of Emotional Intelligence have such high correlations with personality that researchers have questioned whether they measure anything distinct (Davies et al., 1998).

Emotional Awareness is an important component of Emotional Intelligence. Emotional Awareness is defined as the ability to recognize and describe emotion in oneself and others (Lane & Schwartz, 1987). The purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship between Emotional Awareness and personality. A total of 335 undergraduate students completed the Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale (Lane, 1991) and the IPIP-50 Item marker test (Goldberg, 1999), which measures the Big Five Personality dimensions (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism). Emotional Awareness correlated positively with Openness and Agreeableness and negatively with Neuroticism, and these results were replicated for both hand scoring and computer scoring of the LEAS. The AllSum-AllinOne scoring method had the strongest relationships with the personality variables. However, the largest correlation with any personality variable was only .30. Emotional Awareness, unlike some measures of Emotional Intelligence, is clearly distinct from personality.

Introduction

Emotional Intelligence is defined as "the ability to perceive one's own and other's emotions, to interpret one's own emotions and the emotions of others, and to cope with emotions of self and others effectively" (Van Der Zee, Thijs, & Schakel, 2002, p. 105). Many studies have focused on the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and personality. For example, Barchard and Hakstian (2004) found that the Emotional Independence factor (which had its highest factor loadings from self-report measures of the ability to repair negative moods) correlated -.69 with Neuroticism, and the Social Confidence factor (which had its highest factor loadings from self-report measures of the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in others) correlated .64 with Extraversion. Similarly, Van Der Zee et al. (2002) found that Empathy had a correlation of .39 with Extraversion, and Autonomy had a correlation of .69 with Emotional Stability. Some measures of Emotional Intelligence have such high correlations with personality that researchers have questioned whether or not they measure anything distinct (Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998).

Emotional Awareness is a subpart of Emotional Intelligence. Emotional Awareness is the ability to recognize and describe emotion in oneself and others (Lane & Schwartz, 1987). The Lane and Swartz (1987) model of Emotional Awareness consists of six levels: (0) no awareness, (1) physical sensations, (2) action tendencies, (3) single emotions, (4) blends of emotions, and (5) blends of blends of emotional experience (the ability for one to appreciate the fact that the self and other may experience complex emotions that are different from each other). Lane (2000) hypothesized that the ability to function with higher levels of Emotional Awareness (Levels 3-5) would allow for higher functioning at lower levels as well. In other words, if a person is able to recognize specific emotions such as happy or sad, that person can also provide a more detailed description of their physical sensations and action tendencies.

The aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between Emotional Awareness and personality. We hope to find only small to moderate correlations, which would indicate that Emotional Awareness is distinct from the Big Five Personality dimensions.

The most commonly used measure of Emotional Awareness is the Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale (LEAS; Lane, Quinlan, Schwartz, Walker, & Zeitlin, 1990). This test can be scored by hand (Lane, 1991) or by computer (Leaf & Barchard, 2007). Because computer scoring may someday replace hand scoring of this test, we examined the relationship between Emotional Awareness and personality using both scoring methods.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of 335 undergraduates (194 female, 141 male), who participated for course credit. Ages ranged from 18 to 50 (mean 19.89, standard deviation 3.35). Participants identified themselves as follows: 60.1% Caucasian, 12.3% Hispanic, 10.8% Asian, 8.4% African American, 5.1% Pacific Islander, and 3.3% other.

Measures

Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale

The Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale (LEAS; Lane et al., 1990) consists of 20 short scenarios that involve two people, the self and another person. Each item was designed to evoke one of four emotions: anger, fear, happiness, or sadness. For each item the respondent answers two questions, "How would you feel?" and "How would the other person feel?" Participants used the paper version of the LEAS (Lane, 1991). The LEAS has strong construct validity and correlates positively with measures of ego development and cognitive complexity (Lane et al., 1990). Also, greater Emotional Awareness is associated with greater openness to feelings (Lane et al., 1990), emotion recognition ability (Lane, Sechrest, Riedel, Weldon, Kaszniak, & Schwartz, 1996; Lane, Sechrest, Riedel, Shapiro, & Kaszniak, 2000), and empathy (Barchard & Hakstian, 2004). Two methods were used to score the raw data: hand scoring and computerized scoring.

Hand Scoring

The LEAS was hand scored according to instructions given in the scoring manual (Lane, 1991). Item scoring consists of three stages. First, the scorer reads each response to identify words and phrases that denote emotional reactions, and then calculates the scores for these words and phrases. Second, the scorer calculates the score for emotions attributed to the self and the score for emotions attributed to the other person in the scenario. Finally, the scorer calculates the total score for the item, based upon the self and other scores. The total scores for the items are added together, to obtain the total score for the test.

Computerized Scoring

Program for Open-Ended Scoring (POES; Leaf & Barchard, 2009a) version 1.4.0 is a computer program used for automated scoring of open-ended tests. To calculate scores the program compares the raw data file from participants to a Wordlist. For this study, we used LEAS Wordlist 2.3 (Barchard, 2009), which contains the words and phrases from the LEAS hand scoring glossary, and the values that each word or phrase would be assigned during hand scoring. POES uses nine different methods to calculate scores: All-Sum, Highest-4, 334, 3345, AllSum-AllinOne, Highest80-AllinOne, Highest60-AllinOne, Highest40-AllinOne, Highest20-AllinOne. Detailed information about these scoring methods can be found in the POES User Manual (Leaf & Barchard, 2009b).

50 Big-Five Factor markers

The 50-Item IPIP Big-Five factor markers (Goldberg, 1999; Goldberg et al., 2006) consist of 50 statements that participants rate on a 5 point scale: 1 = Very Inaccurate and 5 = Very Accurate. Each statement is designed to measure one of the Big Five Personality dimensions (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness or Neuroticism). For each scale, half of the items are reverse-coded. The internal consistencies of these scales are high, ranging between .79 and .87 (Goldberg, n.d.).

Procedures

Participants completed the LEAS and 50 Big-Five factor markers over the Internet as part of a larger study. The measures were divided into two testing sessions, which each took approximately 90 minutes.

Results

We correlated the ten LEAS scoring methods with the Big Five Personality traits (see Table 1). Emotional Awareness has small positive relationships with Openness and Agreeableness, and a small negative relationship with Neuroticism. Hand scoring had smaller correlations with personality than most of the POES scoring methods. In general, the method with the largest correlations with personality was AllSum-AllinOne. However, the largest correlation between the 10 LEAS scores and the five personality dimensions was only .30.

Table 1

Correlations between 10 LEAS Scoring Methods and the Big Five Personality Constructs

Scoring Method	Personality Dimension				
	Openness	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism
Hand Scoring	.09	.06	-.05	.17**	-.14*
Scores Calculated for Each Item and Summed over Items					
All-Sum	.20**	.07	-.01	.20**	-.18**
Highest-4	.19**	.08	.02	.27**	-.18**
334	.11*	.06	.05	.20**	-.10
3345	.16**	.08	.01	.23**	-.15**
Scores Calculated using All Responses Together					
AllSum-AllinOne	.29**	.10	.03	.27**	-.21**
Highest80-AllinOne	.21**	.08	.02	.30**	-.20**
Highest60-AllinOne	.20**	.08	.03	.29**	-.17**
Highest40-AllinOne	.17**	.07	.08	.26**	-.10
Highest20-AllinOne	.03	-.02	.10	.09	-.02

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

Previous research has found that some measures of Emotional Intelligence have high correlations with personality, leading some researchers to question whether they are distinct constructs. The purpose of this study was to determine if the related construct of Emotional Awareness is distinct from personality. Using both hand scoring and computer scoring of the Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale, we found low to moderate correlations with the Big Five Personality Dimensions. Thus, Emotional Awareness does appear to be distinct.

Hand scoring of the Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale is time consuming. To facilitate and speed scoring, Leaf and Barchard (2009) developed Program for Open-Ended Scoring (POES). Although this is one of the first studies to use POES, the results are promising. In this study, the computer scoring methods demonstrated discriminant validity that was comparable to the discriminant validity demonstrated by hand scoring. Additionally, Barchard, Lane, and Watson (2010) showed that POES scoring has comparable levels of convergent validity, compared to hand scoring. Additional research with the computerized scoring methods is warranted.

These findings suggest that Emotional Awareness may be helpful in understanding and predicting variables that are related to personality. For example, previous research has found that self-reported Emotional Intelligence (including self-reported ability to understand one's own and other's emotions) predicts job satisfaction and job performance, and the relationship with job satisfaction remains even after partialling out the Big Five Personality Factors (Sy, Tram, & O'Hara, 2006). Given that Emotional Awareness is distinct from personality, it, too, may be able to predict job performance and job satisfaction. Because the Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale is a maximum performance measure, it does not share method variance with personality measures, and could be a more powerful predictor of these criterion variables.

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