

## **Cognitive Empathy and Emotional Empathy in Managing Others' Emotions**

Kimberly A. Barchard, Radha Messmer, & Karen McVie  
University of British Columbia

### **Reference:**

Barchard, K.A., Messmer, R., & McVie, K. (2001). *Cognitive Empathy and Emotional Empathy in Managing Others' Emotions*. Poster presented at the annual University of British Columbia Undergraduate Conference in Psychology, April, Vancouver, BC.

The following is the re-typed content of the poster presented at the annual University of British Columbia Undergraduate Conference in Psychology, April, Vancouver, BC

---

### **ABSTRACT**

Does a cognitive understanding of others' emotions or a tendency to vicariously feel what others are feeling better facilitate the management of others' emotions? 114 undergraduate Psychology students completed measures on Cognitive Empathy, Emotional Empathy, and Managing Others' Emotions. The results show that Cognitive Empathy has a significantly stronger relationship to the ability to manage others' affective states. This lends support to the idea that the relative neutrality and detachment of cognitive Empathy compared to Emotional Empathy aids the empathizer's ability to accurately perceive and respond to the situation. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study is to determine whether cognitive Empathy or Emotional Empathy has a greater relationship to the social ability of Managing Others' Emotions.

Cognitive Empathy: The ability to recognize and interpret others' emotions.

Emotional Empathy: The tendency to vicariously experience others' emotions.

Managing Others' Emotions: The ability to influence others' affective states.

### **HYPOTHESIS**

Cognitively empathizing people are more neutral and detached when appraising another person's emotions, enabling them to behave in the most effective manner. Vicariously feeling another person's emotions, however, could detract from their ability to be aware of the most effective response. Therefore we anticipate finding a stronger relationship between Cognitive Empathy and Managing Others' Emotions than between Emotional Empathy and Managing Others' Emotions.

## METHOD

### Participants

We recruited 114 subjects (42 males, 72 females; mean age 22) from an upper level psychology course.

### Procedure

As part of a larger study, subjects completed 3 subscales from Tett's Emotional Intelligence Scale (Tett et al., 1997):

Emotion in others: Nonverbal (a measure of Cognitive Empathy)

Empathy (a measure of Emotional Empathy)

Regulation of Emotion in Others (a measure of Managing Others' Emotions)

## RESULTS

The correlation between Cognitive Empathy and Managing Others' Emotions was .64 ( $p < .01$ ). The correlation between Emotional Empathy and Managing Others' Emotions was .34 ( $p < .01$ ). These two assessments were compared using William's (1959) T2 statistic. The correlation involving Cognitive Empathy was significantly larger.  $T_2(111) = 3.13, p < 0.01$ .

## DISCUSSION

This study suggests that Cognitive Empathy plays a greater role in Managing Others' Emotions than Emotional Empathy does. These results could mean that the ability to manage others' emotions is based more on conscious knowledge of these emotions than the tendency to vicariously feel them. This is important for a variety of reasons. For example, knowing what aspects of a person best predict the ability to manage others' emotions is important in selecting employees for jobs that require the ability to effectively influence the emotions of others, such as leadership and counseling roles.

## AUTHOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Radha Messmer: [forgetmenot28@hotmail.com](mailto:forgetmenot28@hotmail.com)

Karen McVie: [karenmcvie@hotmail.com](mailto:karenmcvie@hotmail.com)

## REFERENCES

- Tett, R., Wang, A., Fisher, R., Martinez, A., Griebler, J., & Linkovich, R. (April 4, 1997). *Testing a Model of Emotional Intelligence*. Paper presented at the 1997 Annual convention of the Southeastern Psychological Association, Atlanta, G.A.
- Williams, E.J. (1959). The comparison of regression variables. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series B*, 21, 396-399.