

Exploring the Nexus between Emotional Intelligence and Self-Presentation Strategies among Psychology Undergraduates

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Abstract

The study proves the significance of emotional intelligence and self-presentation tactics for the development of personal and professional qualities of a competitive university student. The research pioneers the interconnection between the components of emotional intelligence (the N. Hall test and the D. V. Lyusin questionnaire test Emln) and self-presentation tactics (the S. Lee, B. Quigley scale).

The analysis of various points of view on the subject of the study allows us to define emotional intelligence as a combination of cognitive and non-cognitive skills, given the personal characteristics of the individual. Based on this view we can determine the following structural components: perceiving and understanding emotions, managing emotions and using emotions in thinking and other cognitive activities. These components of emotional intelligence influence the optimization of professional training of future psychologists in modern university, whereby they involve the formation of students' professional core competencies enabling them to be competitive in their professional activities.

General intelligence is a factor of academic achievements, whereas developed emotional intelligence and self-presentation contribute to the success in life and profession. This research deals with modern educational paradigms, wherein a series of general and specific competencies are translated into particular requirements a professional psychologist is to meet. However, it does not include the students' EI formation and self-presentation abilities necessary for future competitive professionals.

The Institute of Psychology and Pedagogy, (Tyumen, Russia) provides the evidence base of the research. The study involves 147 students aged from 17 to 22 (I-IV years of education) majoring in psychology. The research includes three objectives:

- to review theoretical and empirical studies in this area;
- to diagnose the structural components of emotional intelligence, as well as the students' selfpresentation tactics;
- to carry out a comparative analysis of empirical data and draw conclusions.

The survey of the students has shown that the subjects with high and low levels of emotional awareness tend to resort to intimidation and managing emotions as well as such assertive selfpresentation tactics as entitlement and blasting. The students with developed abilities to manage their emotions more frequently manifest their strengths and past achievements. The subjects with low and high abilities to control their emotional states tend to provide negative and critical evaluations of others. The authors emphasize the research prospects of individual human resources where emotional intelligence, as one of the components of the behavioral control, is seen as a predictor of various self-presentation tactics, protective and assertive in particular.

Keywords: Intelligence, emotional intelligence, the structure of emotional intelligence, self-presentation tactics.

1 INTRODUCTION

The society currently places an increasing demand for the educational domain, the quality of bachelor's programs and the level of competencies underlying professional development. There has been an increased demand for qualified psychology graduates capable of solving challenging problems through such personal and professional qualities as emotional intelligence (EI) and selfpresentation.

The recent study of M. Gutierrez-Moret and R. Ibanez-Martinez [1] highlights the importance of students' EI assessment. Furthermore, Zhou Jiang's study [2] shows that EI can influence career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) through goal commitment (GC) and professional commitment, and male students exhibit a stronger relationship between EI and GC compared with female students. As demonstrated in H.S. Afshar and M. Rahimi's study [3], there is a significant positive association among: reflective thinking, emotional intelligence, and speaking ability. Additionally, the results of multiple regression analyses indicate that both reflective thinking and emotional intelligence significantly predict speaking ability with the latter being a stronger predictor. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in emotionally difficult decision-making tasks, as revealed by A. Alkozei, S. J. Zachary, W. D.S. Killgore [4]. They hypothesized that higher EI would correlate with greater utilization of socially relevant facial cues during emotional decision-making. Findings suggest that individuals with higher ability EI were more likely to utilize the available but limited social information (i.e. facial features) when completing an emotional decision-making task than those with lower EI. In addition, contemporary analyses of learning experience prove the importance of EI formation and development through actualization of students' creative potential in educational environment [5]. Besides, the data yielded by Russian studies provide convincing evidence that emotional intelligence defines the students' choice of self-presentation tactics [6].

In a number of theories originated in Russia and elsewhere, emotion is regarded as special knowledge, which forms the basis for categorizing emotional intelligence as a new approach to the evaluation of an individual's success. This concept is reflected in the works by J. Caruso, John. Mayer, P. Salovey [7], who were the first to introduce *emotional intelligence* as a group of mental abilities, promoting awareness and recognition of their own and other's emotions. Professional success of the individual is associated with the level of his or her general intelligence. According to H. Gardner [8], however, individuals with a high level of general intelligence, are not at times competitive, experiencing a number of career difficulties. Perhaps this is due to their inability to distinguish and name feelings easily, and to translate them into symbolic codes useful for behavior management. *Emotional intelligence* is better understood as a further development of social intelligence (J. Guilford [9], G. Allport [10], A. Savenkov [11] *et al*). Presently, emotional intelligence is regarded as an independent ability or trait. The reason for such changes is the discrepancy between the level of general intelligence and a person's ability to interact with his or her social environment [12], [13]. Russian psychologists consider EI as:

- 1 the ability to understand human attitudes represented by emotions, and to manage emotions through intellectual analysis and synthesis [14];
- 2 a person's ability to understand and manage their own and others' emotions [15], [16];
- 3 a person's subjective characteristic such as regulation of both internal and external human mental activity, emotional understanding, cognition of one's states and the states of other participants of the communication process; management of one's actions toward a conscious goal; regulation of the internal state (needs and desires) connected with the experience of the events and situations influencing their participants [17].

EI is based on the ability to discern various emotions. The final product of emotional intelligence is a decision-making process based on the reflection and discernment of emotions as differentiated evaluations of events that have acquired personal meaning. Emotional intelligence produces nonobvious ways for achieving the individual's goals and needs. In contrast to abstract and concrete types of intelligence that reflect the laws of the outside world, emotional intelligence reflects the inner world in its relation to human behavior and interaction with reality. Emotional intelligence in its broadest sense combines a person's ability to communicate effectively by understanding their own emotions and the emotions of others as well as the ability to adjust to their emotional state and to control their emotional manifestations. Such ability of self-control and well-organized interaction is indispensable when it comes to the scope of work, which implies direct contact with others, which is the key to the work of a psychologist. Equally important is the ability of self-presentation in various situations, which is determined by the choice of the individual communication style and unique image.

1.1 The Purpose of the Research

General intelligence is a factor of academic achievements, whereas developed emotional intelligence and self-presentation contribute to the man's success in life and profession. This research deals with modern educational paradigms, wherein a series of general and specific competencies are translated

into particular requirements a professional psychologist is to meet. However, it does not include the students' EI formation and self-presentation skills necessary for future competitive professionals.

The research includes three objectives:

- to review theoretical and empirical studies in this area;
- to diagnose the structural components of emotional intelligence, as well as the students' self-presentation tactics;
- to carry out a comparative analysis of empirical data and draw conclusions.

1.2 Participants

The Institute of Psychology and Pedagogy, (Tyumen, Russia) provides the evidence base of the research. The study involves 147 students aged from 17 to 22 (I-IV years of education) majoring in psychology.

1.3 The Concept of Emotional Intelligence and its Structure

The key aspect of the theoretical part of the study was to consider the concept of *emotional intelligence* and to determine its structure. The structure of the EI is based on the idea that emotions have information about a person's associations with other people or objects. Changes in these associations entail, in turn, changes in emotions including the way they are controlled and regulated (superstructure). The ability to produce emotional states leading to success is one of the aspects of regulating emotions.

The analysis of various points of view on the subject of the study allows us to define emotional intelligence as a combination of cognitive and non-cognitive skills, given the personal characteristics of the individual. Thus, we can determine the following EI structural components: perceiving and understanding emotions, managing emotions and using emotions in thinking and other cognitive activities. These components of emotional intelligence influence the optimization of professional training of future psychologists in modern university, whereby they involve the formation of students' professional core competencies enabling them to be competitive in their professional activities.

1.4 Self-Presentation Tactics

The analysis of the structural components of emotional intelligence stirred our interest in the way they influence the choice of students' self-presentation tactics. Self-presentation consists of three components: 1) the subject of self-presentation; 2) the subject for self-presentation; 3) the object of self-presentation. These components are combined by a desirable goal of the subject of self-presentation. The second participant of the interaction is often perceived as an object of influence. Another factor is the environment, which sets the communication rules. One of the key objectives of the study is to identify self-presentation tactics, which are defined as a set of individual's behavioral acts distributed in time and space, aimed at creating a certain image in the eyes of others. The strategy of self-presentation is a set of different tactics. Under the tactics of self-presentation, we imply the technique of constructing the desired image. One of the first classifications of self-presentation tactics was developed by E. Jones and T. Pittman [18]. They identify five major tactics: self-promotion (demonstration of competence); intimidation- (demonstration of force); ingratiation (the goal seems agreeable); exemplification- (the goal appears morally impeccable); supplication- (demonstration of weaknesses in order to receive assistance from others).

We have opted for the classification proposed by S. Lee, B. Quigley [19], which includes twelve self-presentation tactics, seven of which refer to the assertive type: *ingratiation; enhancement; entitlement; blasting; intimidation; exemplification; supplication*; and five defensive tactics: *justification; disclaimer; apologies; excuse; self-handicapping* (see Table 1). Our choice has been stipulated by the fact that this classification has a set of strategies, containing both defensive and assertive tactics that allow us to make a more detailed range of psychology students' typical behavioral responses.

1.5 Procedure

The experimental part of the study was carried out in stages and was aimed at identifying the level of development of the structural components of emotional intelligence and the way they are related to the students' self-presentation tactics.

2 METHODOLOGY

To measure the subjects' emotional intelligence and self-presentation tactics we used the scales proposed by D. Lyusin, N. Hall, S. Lee and B. Quigley.

N. Hall's Emotional Intelligence Scale measures the level of EI structural components by the sum of the following scales:

- Emotional Awareness
- Managing One's Emotions
- Self-Motivation
- Empathy
- Coaching Others' Emotions.

D. Lyusin's Emln Questionnaire is designed to identify the structural components of emotional intelligence, which is defined as the ability to understand and manage emotions. The test consists of 46 questions and measures the following areas of emotional intelligence: interpersonal emotional intelligence (i.e. understanding and managing other's emotions), intrapersonal emotional intelligence (i.e. understanding and managing one's emotions), the ability to understand emotions, the ability to manage emotions.

S. Lee and B. Quigley's Self-Presentation Tactics Scale was used to identify the subjects' SPT indicators. The participants completed Lee et al.'s (1999) self-presentation tactics scale, a 64-item self-report inventory that measures the frequency with which individuals use 12 self-presentation behaviors. Responses are made on a nine-point scale, from "Very Infrequently" to "Very Frequently". The SPT yields scores on defensive and assertive self-presentation dimensions which sum for an index of total self-presentation (see *Table 1*).

Table 1. Classification of Self-Presentation Tactics.

Defensive tactics:	Assertive tactics:
Excuse - "When things go wrong, I explain why I am not responsible"	Ingratiation - "I express the same attitudes as others so they will accept me"
Justification - "I justify my behavior to reduce negative reactions from others"	Intimidation - "I behave in ways that make other people afraid of me"
Disclaimer - "When I believe I will not perform well; I offer excuses beforehand"	Supplication - "I use my weaknesses to get sympathy from others"
Self-handicapping - "I put obstacles in the way of my own success"	Entitlement - "I point out the positive things I do which other people fail to notice"
Apology - "I express remorse and guilt when I do something wrong"	Enhancement - "I tell people when I do well at tasks others find difficult"
	Blasting - "I exaggerate the negative qualities of people who compete with me"
	Exemplification - "I try to get others to act in the same positive way I do".

2.1 Stage 1

At the first we identified the level of development of the structural components of students' emotional intelligence, using a *questionnaire test Emln* proposed by D. Lyusin [16] and the N. Hall test [20]. According to the survey, the most developed component is *emotional awareness*, associated with the ability to differentiate between one's own emotional experience and the emotional experience of others. At the middle level of development there are such components as self-motivation; empathy; recognition of emotions of others. The least developed component was *managing emotions*. In order to establish statistical differences in indicators we applied the Mann-Whitney U test. Significant differences were obtained for *emotional awareness* ($p = 0.049$); which is higher for the 3^d-year students compared to the 1st-year students. This is due to the fact that 1st-year students have fewer practice-oriented classes at this stage of education. As far as other components of emotional intelligence are concerned, no significant differences have been found.

2.2 Stage 2

The second stage of the experimental work involved the identification of the university students' self-presentation tactics in the educational process. To achieve this goal, we used a self-presentation tactics scale proposed by S. Lee and B. Quigley. Upon the completion of this phase we have concluded that the students resorted to *ingratiation* most frequently due to the choice of their profession, which implies producing a favorable impression, for example, in establishing contacts with others. The other tactics were used by the students with regard to the context of the situation.

2.3 Stage 3

The third stage involved evaluating the degree of influence of the components of emotional intelligence on self-presentation tactics, using the Kruskal-Wallis H test. There are differences in the data measured on 1st-year students' *emotional awareness* and such self-presentation tactics as *intimidation* ($p = 0.047$) and *exemplification* ($p = 0.038$). These differences are not random and differ in the level of values, i.e. the subjects with high levels of *emotional awareness* are more likely to use *exemplification* as their self-presentation tactic, while the subjects with low levels of this component tend to use *intimidation* as their self-presentation tactic. These findings can be explained by the following: the students capable of understanding the causes of their emotions and the consequences of particular emotional states can easily display their behavior as moral, attractive and respectable, even if the situation is not in their favor. The subjects who fail to analyze their own emotions and predict their consequences tend to resort to threats in complicated situations to intimidate the object of self-presentation. In processing the data of 2^d-year students, we found significant differences between such components of EI as *managing emotions*, *empathy* ($p = 0.048$) and a self-presentation tactic *disclaimer* ($p = 0.03$). These differences are not random and suggest that the students are incapable of controlling their emotional states. Moreover, the students who have a low level of empathy are likely to resort to the use of such tactic of self-presentation as *disclaimer*, which involves the subjects' explanation of the reasons for their conduct before an embarrassing situation occurs. Thus, they seem to be trying to prevent any charges against them. While processing the data on the Kruskal-Wallis H test done by III-IV - year students, no statistically significant results have been found. The final step of the study was to assess the results using univariate analysis between the components of emotional intelligence and self-presentation tactics.

3 RESULTS

The results of the research work are summarized in *Table 2*.

Table 2. The Impact of the Components of Emotional Intelligence on Psychology Students' Self-Presentation Tactics.

EI component	self-presentation tactics											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Emotional awareness	p= 0.4	p= 0.34	p= 0.31	P= 0.09	p= 0.1	p= 0.5	p= 0.01	p= 0.3	p= 0.47	p= 0.35	p= 0.28	p= 0.12
Managing emotions	p= 0.19	p= 0.08	p= 0.32	p= 0.08	p= 0.53	p= 0.98	p= 0.07	p= 0.52	p= 0.02	p= 0.1	p= 0.03	p= 0.98
Selfmotivation	p= 0.86	p= 0.86	p= 0.68	p= 0.89	p= 0.26	p= 0.12	p= 0.21	p= 0.63	p= 0.92	p= 0.98	p= 0.5	p= 0.01
Empathy	p= 0.27	p= 0.25	p= 0.42	p= 0.42	p= 0.93	p= 0.18	p= 0.88	p= 0.63	p= 0.69	p= 0.57	p= 0.19	p= 0.49
Understanding emotions	p= 0.03	p= 0.11	p= 0.34	p= 0.31	p= 0.28	p= 0.86	p= 0.1	p= 0.27	p= 0.04	p= 0.03	p= 0.17	p= 0.34

According to the results of the univariate analysis, significant differences have been found between the components of emotional intelligence and self-presentation tactics: *emotional awareness* and an assertive self-presentation tactic 7 - *intimidation* ($p = 0.01$), *managing emotions* and assertive self-presentation tactics 9 - *entitlement* ($p = 0.02$) and 11 - *blasting* ($p = 0.03$). The students with the developed ability to manage their emotions tend to declare their strengths and past achievements more

frequently than other subjects. The subjects with the low and high abilities to control their emotional states are characterized by their negative and critical assessments of other people. These estimates are different by nature, for instance, the students, who are able to manage their emotional states, will criticize other people for the inability to control their emotions, whereas the subjects, who lack this ability, will display *intimidation* as a response to any situation, which they regard as negative; *self-motivation* and an assertive self-presentation tactic 12 - *exemplification* ($p = 0.01$). The result suggests that the subjects with a developed ability for self-motivation can display their behavior as more attractive and worthy, even if it is not meaningful to them; perceiving and understanding emotions of other people and assertive self-presentation tactics: 9 - *entitlement* ($p = 0.049$) and 10 - *enhancement* ($p = 0.03$). The subjects demonstrating the ability to determine and explain emotional states and moods of other subjects including their own, can easily use the information obtained for their own purposes. Thus, for instance, in order to invoke sympathy and approval of the object of self-presentation, the subjects (at a time when the object of self-presentation is in a good mood) can report about their strengths and past achievements, or try to convince him/her that the results of their activities are more positive; perceiving and understanding emotions of other people and a defensive self-presentation tactic 1 - *excuse* ($p = 0.03$). The result suggests that the students with high and low levels of this component of EI tend to use *excuse* as their self-presentation tactic. The reason for the choice of tactics can be different, for example, the subjects with developed ability to recognize other people's emotions determine the emotional state of the object of self-presentation and resort to this tactic, where appropriate, in order to avoid the liability for the committed negative actions. Furthermore, this tactic can serve as the behavior pattern in any negative situation that requires taking responsibility for the actions. Applying univariate analysis to the sample, we have observed the following pattern: the students with high and low levels of development of the structural components of emotional intelligence tend to use similar self-presentation tactics.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the research provide confirmatory evidence that defensive self-presentation tactics are connected with the low development levels of the component of emotional intelligence – *managing emotions*, while assertive tactics are used by the students with a high level of *emotional awareness*. Therefore, *emotional intelligence* is a complex structure, which requires special development. The structural components of emotional intelligence influence self-presentation tactics. The analyzed phenomena are interrelated and considered to be professionally important characteristics of psychology students.

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