RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND THE BIG SIX INTERESTS

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present the relationship between Emotional Intelligence, the Big Five personality traits and the Big Six vocational interest domains. A total of 100 Bulgarian secondary and university students (42% males, 58% females, mean age – 19 years) were included in the study. The Big five questionnaire and the Big six method for career choices were administered and adapted for Bulgarian conditions by S. Karabelyova (Karabelyova, 2015). Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF) was used for the purpose of the study. The Bulgarian version was translated and adapted for Bulgarian sociocultural context by Antonina Kardasheva (Kardasheva, 2012). The results showed that all of the big five facets and five of the big six interests (the investigative, the artistic, the social, the enterprising and the conventional one) correlated significantly with the four factors of emotional intelligence. The results were substantial for both men and women.

Key words: *emotional intelligence, the big five, the big six, secondary students, university students*

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of emotional intelligence has drawn great attention in both the popular literature and academia for the last two decades. There was a strong controversy about the definition and nature of emotional intelligence in the years but currently there seems to be an agreement among psychologists that there are two types of emotional intelligence: ability emotional intelligence, proposed by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer who defined emotional intelligence as: "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions"[1]. The second, termed trait emotional intelligence, is a construct first proposed by Konstantinos Petrides and "describes our perceptions of our emotional world: what our emotional dispositions are and how good we believe we are in terms of perceiving, understanding, managing, and utilizing our own and other people's emotions" [2]. Trait emotional intelligence relates to personality, and represents a combination of personality traits, particularly effective in situations with emotional and social implications. In the current study we will use Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF), made by Konstantinos Petrides. The factors of the questionnaire are well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability. Trait emotional intelligence can be described as a complex of emotional perceptions, measured via questionnaires and rating scales [3]. Considered in this way, emotional intelligence refers to a person's ideas about his inner world.

Personality refers to a combination of characteristic models of behavior, thoughts and feelings which form individual features. A widely accepted model of personality traits is the "Big Five" Personality Factor Model. The Big Five Personality Factor Model, often called the "Big Five" or the "Five Factor Model", is an empirically derived model of personality based on the early work on traits by [4]. It proposes that personality can be divided into five domains: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. It is believed that a person can fall between the two opposites of each dimension. One of the leading models, which considers personality as a set of five dimensions and is measured most frequently with the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R), is the one of Costa and McCrae [5]. They found out that the big five personality traits are remarkably universal.

Nowadays most of the organizations face serious challenges with which they have to cope in the fast changing environment. A lot of companies are affected by instability related to globalization, rapid technological development, permanent innovations and the constant changes in stakeholder expectations. Many studies show significant differences in human behavior when there are changes in the environment [6]. Most of these differences are related to personality and emotional intelligence. There is empirical evidence that personality and emotional intelligence have played a key role in achieving the organizational goals as well as success in the changing environment [7].

Emotional intelligence and personality traits are interconnected as the prior is important for understanding and control of emotions, which are essential in personality construction. Bracket and Mayer [8] found a significant correlation between Bar-On's emotional coefficient and extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism, and a moderate correlation with openness from the Big Five. This coincides with another research made by Sala [9] who discovers that Goleman's instrument for emotional intelligence correlated significantly with three out of the five personality factors: extraversion, openness and conscientious. According to a study by Petrides and colleagues [10] emotional intelligence correlates considerably with extraversion and openness only. The results have been confirmed by other studies, too. Other research findings have shown relationships between trait emotional intelligence and the big five, and especially between Neuroticism and Extroversion and trait EI [11] [12]. Psychologists have recently taken a great interest in the relationship between emotional intelligence, personality traits and career paths or occupational interests. Originally, the question of personality match with career choice has been examined within Holland's theory of career interests [13]. Holland suggested that vocational interests reflect individuals' personality and skills, and decisions about career choice based on those interests are influenced by personality characteristics. Holland's theory identified six major personality types that can describe the different vocational preferences: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. Results from different studies show that science students score higher on personality indices of emotional stability [14], control [15] and lower sociability and extraversion [15]. Social science students, on the other hand, demonstrate higher sociability, openness to experience [16] [17] and agreeableness [19]. With regards to business students, Tokar and Swanson found that enterprising interests were negatively related to neuroticism and positively to conscientiousness [18].

This paper reports on a psychological study which examines the relationship between trait emotional intelligence, big five personality traits and big six vocational interests in Bulgarian high-school and university settings in different cities. The study had two specific objectives: (1) to identify the dominant factors of emotional intelligence, personality traits and career preferences in Bulgarian sociocultural context in adolescence and early adulthood; (2) to test if trait emotional intelligence, the Big Five Traits and the Big Six Interests are significantly interlinked.

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

The sample consisted of 100 adolescents and adults in early adulthood (42% males, 58% females) from schools and universities in Sofia and Pravets. Respondents' mean age is 19 years. The study was conducted between October and December 2020.

2.2 Measure

One of the main constructs in our study is emotional intelligence. We have focused on trait emotional intelligence and Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF) was used for the purpose of the study. Its author is Petrides whose model reflects the subjective processes of emotional experiences and perceptions of the inner world. The factors of the questionnaire are well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability. It contains 30 statements with a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 ("it doesn't apply to me at all") to 7 ("it completely applies to me"). The questionnaire was translated in Bulgarian by Antonina Kardasheva [19]. The Big Six method for career choices was administered and adapted for Bulgarian sociocultural context by S. Karabelyova [20]. This is a version

of Parkison's method for career choices The questionnaire was created by M. Parkison and was based on the theoretical model of P.Costa and R.McCrae for the big five personality traits [21]. The Bulgarian version, which was used, comprised 48 statements responded to on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 ("it doesn't apply to me at all") to 4 ("it completely applies to me"). M Parkison identifies six dimensions; five of them measure the big five factors for personality traits, based on the model of P.Costa and R.McCrae and the sixth dimension appraises social desirability. The Big Five questionnaire is the short form of Goldberg's questionnaire for measuring the Big Five personality traits [22]. It was developed by Donnellan and colleagues [23]. The questionnaire measures five traits-extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness - and consists of 20 items with a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 ("it doesn't apply to me at all") to 5 ("it completely applies to me"). For the purpose of this research paper, we have used a version, adapted for Bulgarian conditions by S. Karabelyova [20].

2.3 Procedure and statistical analysis

The purpose and rationale of the study were explained to the respondents in advance. All participants were given the instruction that they participated voluntarily in an anonymous study about their emotional intelligence, personality traits and career interests. The study in the schools was conducted after consent of the principals and class teachers. The respondents were informed that their data was only going to be used for scientific purposes. After a brief explanation on confidentiality and the instructions, the participants were asked to fill out anonymous paper-based self-report questionnaires including the research instrument and sociodemographic questions. All the data was then transferred to and analysed with the computer program SPSS-21.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Descriptive statistics

The analysis of the results obtained from the methods of descriptive statistics shows the mean scores of the four factors of trait emotional intelligence. The data is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the factors of emotional intelligence (N=100)

Emotional intelligence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
Self-control	100	4.78	0.70	-.436	.241	.073	.478
Well-being	100	5.29	1.09	-.676	.241	.098	.478
Sociability	100	4.38	0.82	.538	.241	.176	.478
Emotionality	100	5.04	0.87	-.449	.241	-.055	.478

The examination of the mean scores indicated that they were relatively high, regarding the factors well-being and emotionality of emotional intelligence and well-being is with the highest score. The feeling of well-being shows that the respondents find life as pleasant and are generally satisfied with it. They have a positive self-image, believe in their abilities and are well-disposed towards most things around them. In terms of the factor emotionality, the results mean that the individuals have no difficulties in expressing their emotions. The respondents can show affection and love to their relatives and friends. The participants think about their feelings and maintain close relationships with their loved ones. Similar results have also been found in other studies [24].

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the Big Five factors and their mean scores.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the Big Five Traits and mean scores (N=100)

The Big Five Traits	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
Extraversion	100	12.86	3.39	.271	.241	-.685	.478
Agreeableness	100	**15.39**	2.84	-.859	.241	.843	.478
Conscientiousness	100	14.07	3.02	-.418	.241	.225	.478
Neuroticism	100	12.49	3.17	-.283	.241	-.058	.478
Openness	100	**14.52**	2.08	-.260	.241	-.298	.478

Note: Mean scores that are significantly different from one another are displayed in bold

Regarding the Big Five model, the results show that the mean score of the factor agreeableness is the highest (mean = 15.39; SD = 2.84). This could be explained by the fact that the respondents in the study are adolescents and adults in early adulthood. People at this age usually have a positive attitude towards others and life in general. Individuals in these periods tend to treat others equally and are excited to help them. There is a strong probability that they have not faced much injustice and have not suffered great disappointment so far. The second place is for the factor openness. Again, adolescents and young adults are generally open and inquisitive. They are eager to learn new things and to acquire useful skills.

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics on the scale of the Big Six Interests and their mean scores.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the Big Six Interests and mean scores (N=100)

The Big Six Interests	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
Realistic	100	14.00	31.00	24.090	3.893	-.447	.241	-.407	.478
Investigative	100	18.00	32.00	**26.200**	3.333	-.282	.241	-.444	.478
Artistic	100	17.00	32.00	25.380	3.615	-.237	.241	-.679	.478
Social	100	13.00	32.00	25.100	3.483	-.576	.241	1.116	.478
Enterprising	100	11.00	32.00	**23.370**	4.017	.086	.241	-.016	.478
Conventional	100	15.00	32.00	25.720	3.364	-.454	.241	.041	.478

Note: Mean scores that are significantly different from one another are displayed in bold

The analysis of the results for the dominant career interests distinguishes the following main tendencies. It can be seen that the standard deviation is within the acceptable range for normal distribution of data. The examination of the mean scores indicated that the most preferred type among students and young adults was the Investigative one (26.20), followed by the Conventional (25.72) and the Artistic one (25.38). The high mean score of the Investigative type means that the respondents are characterized by curiosity and precision. The type is associated with solving abstract problems and demonstration of scientific competence. Taking into account the young age, it is understandable why this career orientation is leading. To some extent this personality type in the model of J. Holland resembles the career anchor of E. Schein's "Autonomy / Independence" [25]. Similar results have been obtained by other studies, too [26]. The least preferred type is the enterprising one. It is characterized by qualities such as self-confidence, and an orientation to developing leadership skills. It is similar to the career anchor of the E. Schein's Challenge / Diversity model, linked to the desire to overcome obstacles, deal with challenges and desire for competition [25]. The result is possibly due to the fact

that the participants are students and undergraduates and such people are not interested in managerial positions and competitiveness.

3.2 Correlations

In order to answer the second research question, we examined the interrelationship between trait emotional intelligence, the Big Five Traits and the Big Six Interests. Results showed that the aforementioned constructs significantly impact each other. A correlation analysis was applied, the data of which is shown in table 4.

Table 4. Correlations between emotional intelligence, the Big Five Traits and the Big Six Interests

Factors	**Self-control**	**Well-being**	**Sociability**	**Emotionality**
Extraversion	.324**	.317**	.532**	.163
	.001	**.001**	**.000**	.105
Agreeableness	.278**	.235*	.118	.422**
	.005	**.018**	.243	**.000**
Conscientiousness	.441**	.358**	.224*	.268**
	.000	**.000**	**.025**	**.007**
Neuroticism	-.392**	-.383**	-.183	-.111
	.000	**.000**	.068	.273
Openness	.246*	.230*	.136	.239*
	.014	**.021**	.177	**.017**
Realistic	.152	.091	.050	.056
	.132	.367	.619	.579
Investigative	.232*	.178	.107	.127
	.020	.077	.290	.208
Artistic	.308**	.221*	.219*	.375**
	.002	**.027**	**.029**	**.000**
Social	.297**	.315**	.099	.438**
	.003	**.001**	.327	.000
Enterprising	.378**	.399**	.525**	.090
	.000	**.000**	**.000**	.371
Conventional	.241*	.280**	.058	.220*
	.016	**.005**	.564	**.027**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The data presented in Table 4 shows that all of the big five facets and five of the big six interests (the investigative, the artistic, the social, the enterprising and the conventional one) correlated significantly with the four factors of emotional intelligence. On the one hand there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and the dimensions of extraversion, conscientiousness,

agreeableness and openness. On the other hand there is a negative relationship between the components of emotional intelligence and neuroticism, especially emotional intelligence and well-being. These results were confirmed in other studies, too [27] [28] [29] [30]. The artistic type has a significant correlation with all of the four factors of trait emotional intelligence. Artistry is usually associated with a high level of emotionality, so this correlation is understandable. There is not a correlation between the realistic type and the components of trait emotional intelligence. A possible reason for this may be the fact that the type is characterized by orientation to work with objects, not people. The preferred work allows application of technical skills and emotional competence is not needed in this vocational field. In addition, the young age of the participants is connected to ambitions for accomplishments and professional growth.

Regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and gender, the results are shown in table 5.

Table 5. Correlations between the components of emotional intelligence and gender

Emotional intelligence	Gender	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Self-control	Males	42	4.71	0.66	.696	.406
	Females	58	4.83	0.73		
Well-being	Males	42	5.21	1.15	.331	.567
	Females	58	5.34	1.06		
Sociability	Males	42	4.37	0.77	.004	.951
	Females	58	4.38	0.86		
Emotionality	Males	42	4.86	0.82	3.139	.080
	Females	58	5.17	0.90		

There is a difference in the results among males and females, regarding the factor emotionality of emotional intelligence. Psychologically speaking, there is much evidence that women are more emotional than men. They have been found to feel a greater variety of emotions and have a bigger need for close contacts than the opposite sex. The scores in the other factors are alike.

In terms of the relationship between The Big Five traits and gender, the results are shown in table 6.

Table 6. Correlations between the components of the Big Five Traits and gender

The Big Five Traits	Gender	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Extraversion	Males	42	13.57	3.775	3.255	**0.074**
	Females	58	12.34	3.018		
Agreeableness	Males	42	15.05	2.955	1.057	0.307
	Females	58	15.64	2.745		
Conscientiousness	Males	42	13.50	3.329	2.629	0.108
	Females	58	14.48	2.722		
Neuroticism	Males	42	11.74	3.163	4.197	**0.043**
	Females	58	13.03	3.095		
Openness	Males	42	14.45	2.121	0.076	0.783

Females	58	14.57	2.061	

Note: Mean scores that are significantly different from one another are displayed in bold.

In terms of the relationship between The Big Five Traits and gender, a high degree of significance can be seen in and neuroticism and a relatively high degree of significance in extraversion. On the one hand the mean scores for neuroticism are higher among women than among men. This could be explained by the greater emotionality in females and the bigger tendency for them to feel fear, anxiety or unrest. On the other hand the mean scores in extraversion are a bit higher among males than among the fair sex. A possible reason for this may be the fact that men are usually more active and vigorous. They like showing and proving themselves around other people. In addition, they love excitement and adventures. The other scores are similar among men and women.

Correlations between The Big Six Interests and gender can be seen in table 7.

Table 7. Correlations between the components of the Big Six Interests and gender

The Big Six Interests	Gender	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Realistic	Males	42	24.19	3.83	.048	.827
	Females	58	24.02	3.97		
Investigative	Males	42	26.00	3.43	.259	.612
	Females	58	26.34	3.29		
Artistic	Males	42	24.83	4.01	1.667	.200
	Females	58	**25.78**	3.28		
Social	Males	42	24.52	3.59	2.002	.160
	Females	58	**25.52**	3.37		
Enterprising	Males	42	23.55	4.36	.140	.709
	Females	58	23.24	3.78		
Conventional	Males	42	25.21	3.48	1.647	.202
	Females	58	26.09	3.26		

Note: Mean scores that are significantly different from one another are displayed in bold

As it can be seen from the table, the mean scores for the artistic and social types are quite higher among females than among the strong sex. The women reported higher scores on the Artistic and Social type than the men did. These results are logical and are also comparable to studies in other sociocultural settings. The high scores for the artistic type are related to emotionality and work requiring unsystematic activities in which the end product is a piece of art by manipulating human, physical or verbal material. These are characteristics which are more distinctive for the fair sex. It emphasizes on human relationships and the desire to work in a team, responsibility and concern for the well-being of others. The gender-role stereotype of women to be more oriented towards careers related to the care of others- in the field of education, health and social services- was confirmed. Similar results were reported by A. Bandura and colleagues [31]. The high scores for the artistic type mean that women consider themselves as emotional and open to communication.

4. DISCUSSION

To sum up, the present study has been an attempt to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence, the Big Five Traits and the Big Six Interests in adolescence and early adulthood in Bulgarian schools and universities. The present study provides insights into the strong correlation between the three constructs which have been measured. All five factors of the Big Five model and five of the six vocational preferences are interlinked with the four factors of trait emotional intelligence. Similar results were found in other cultures, too. These results are valid for all participants in terms of gender and are substantial for both men and women. However, the current study has some limitations. It was conducted on a sample of 100 Bulgarian students and undergraduates from two cities, so findings may not necessarily be generalized to the larger population. In spite of this, the authors believe that the provided work has important implications for further research in the field of personality psychology. The current study could support psychologists and counsellors in the process of finding the appropriate career type, based on the level of emotional intelligence and the personality factors so that people can feel satisfied in their professional life.

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