Development and preliminary validation of a scale to assess managing the emotions of others.

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Abstract

A new scale, the managing the emotions of others scale (MEOS), was developed. Items were derived from real-life examples provided by an initial group of participants. The resulting

scale was completed by 695 participants in a web survey. The factor structure of the scale was examined and a confirmatory factor analysis was also performed on a second sample (*N* =276). Six factors were obtained: mood enhancing (Enhance), mood worsening (Worsen), concealing emotions from others (Conceal), use of inauthentic displays (Inauthentic), poor emotional skills (Poor skills), and use of diversion to enhance another's mood (Divert). Correlations of the factor scores with short measures of the Big Five, the Dark Triad and trait emotional intelligence were examined. Enhance and Divert were strongly correlated with Agreeableness, whilst Worsen and Inauthentic were strongly correlated with all of the Dark Triad. These associations are interpretable in terms of the affiliative nature of Agreeableness and the interpersonally manipulative nature of the Dark Triad. The MEOS factors provide coverage of the different ways (prosocial and non-prosocial) in which people manage the emotions of others.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Managing the emotions of others is viewed as a core component of emotional intelligence (EI). For example, the TEIQue trait EI measure (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007) includes an Emotion Management subscale containing items relating to managing emotions in others. Within EI theory the discussion of managing other's emotions has mainly focussed on its positive aspect, for example calming the other person when an argument occurs. However, it is also possible to deploy emotion management to manipulate others for self-serving purposes, for example to cause another person to behave in a way the instigator wants, or to induce negative feelings in someone they dislike. This non-prosocial aspect of managing the emotions of others forms part of the negative aspect or 'dark side' of EI (Austin, Farrelly, Black, & Moore, 2007; Petrides, Vernon, Schermer, & Veselka, 2011; Kilduff, Chiaburu, & Menges, 2010; Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2009). The manipulation of the emotions of others was examined by Austin et al. (2007), who developed an emotional manipulation scale (EMS). This had a three-factor structure (emotional manipulation, concealing feelings and poor social skills); the emotional manipulation factor was found to be positively correlated with Machiavellianism. Further studies have reported positive correlations of emotional manipulation with psychopathy and self-monitoring (Grieve, 2011; Grieve & Mahar, 2010).

Managing the emotions of others also falls within the domain of emotion regulation (ER); whilst EI and ER have a clear theoretical overlap, they represent distinct research areas. Within the theoretical perspective of ER it is acknowledged that it "can be used to make things either better or worse depending on the context" (Gross & Thompson, 2007, p9); a position which, in relation to regulating the emotions of others, encompasses both improving and worsening another's mood, and prosocial and non-prosocial motives. ER scales

assessing regulating the emotions of others however generally focus on mood improvement; an exception is the nine-item extrinsic subscale of the EROS (Niven, Totterdell, Stride, & Holman, 2011) which assesses both mood-improving and mood worsening.

1.2 Overview of studies and data analyses

The objective of the present series of studies was to create and undertake a preliminary validation of a broad measure of managing the emotions of others (managing the emotions of others scale - MEOS) which would encompasses both mood-improving and mood-worsening and also the prosocial and non-prosocial aspects of managing other's emotions. The items for the earlier EMS were generated by discussion groups comprising Psychology undergraduates (Austin et al., 2007), which may have led to a loss of information about approaches to managing the emotions of others which this group might make less use of. For the present study a broader sample of participants was involved in the item generation process, and the focus was on capturing the salient aspects of real-world behaviour. In Study 1, an initial item pool was generated using participants' free-response descriptions of real-life situations in which one person managed (or attempted to manage) the emotions of another. Study 2 involved a large-scale data collection using an initial set of candidate MEOS items. Because the project aim was to discover the underlying dimensions of managing the emotions of others rather than to validate a pre-existing theory, an exploratory factor analysis of the data was performed. Examination of the results allowed some items to be eliminated and further data (Study 3) allowed a confirmatory factor analysis to be performed. Preliminary validation information for the scale was obtained via the inclusion of measures of personality and EI in Study 2. Recruitment for all studies was via the web, with the study links being widely disseminated. Although the majority of respondents were nonetheless students, the samples also contained older adults and individuals who reported their occupational status as

working, retired or not currently working. This group comprised 32%, 27%, 25% of the sample for Studies 1, 2, 3 respectively.

2. Study 1

2.1 Participants

The study was completed by 206 participants (52 male, 153 female, one undisclosed). The mean age of the sample was 25.8 years, standard deviation 11.8 years.

2.2 Materials

The survey used in this study invited participants to provide their own description of situations involving a person trying to change another's "mood or emotional state". The three items requested descriptions of situations where: (1) the respondent had tried to change the mood/emotional state of another person, (2) they had been the target of a mood/emotional state change attempt, (3) they had witnessed such an attempt in an interaction between others. These three roles (actor, target, witness) were specified in order to encourage participants to generate a wide range of examples, including behaviours of people differing in age, sex etc. from themselves. The target and witness roles were also included to facilitate the reporting of socially undesirable behaviours, which would be likely to be under-represented in first-person reports.

2.3 Procedure

The link to the survey was submitted to research participation websites, and also publicised on the departmental website.

2.4 Results

After exclusion of unclear and irrelevant responses, the core features of each scenario were extracted and converted into one or more self-report items. The candidate items were generated independently by the two authors and the results were then compared, discussed, and reduced to an agreed set of unique items. A similar procedure was used to produce a description of the distinct domains into which the various items fell, and to then reduce the items to a manageable number by selecting those which appeared to best represent each, resulting in the retention of 65 items. The domain descriptors were as far as possible selected to be fine-grained, for example 'divert someone who is unhappy using humour', 'negative use of emotional displays', so it was expected that the items would cluster into a smaller number of factors than the number of domains (33) which were identified at this stage, e.g. domains relating to different ways (humour, diversion, etc.) of trying to improve another's negative mood would be expected to cluster. The selected items were augmented with the 18 high-loading items from the three factors of the Austin et al. (2007) EMS. There were similar numbers of items which could be classified as social/non-prosocial (37/34) in this initial pool, with the remainder falling into other categories such as concealing feelings[1].

2.5 Discussion

The above approach generated items based on a wide range of real-life occurrences of attempts to manage the emotions of others. The scale derived from these was examined in a second study.

3. Study 2

3.1 Participants

There were 695 participants (157 male, 538 female). The mean age of the sample was 24.3 years, standard deviation 9.2 years.

3.2 Materials

In addition to the candidate MEOS items, the following measures were included:

3.2.1 Personality. The Mini-IPIP (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006) was used to measure personality. This 20-item scale provides measures of the Big Five personality dimensions of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.

3.2.2 Dark Triad. The Dirty Dozen scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010) was used; in this scale Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism are measured by three four-item subscales.

3.2.2 EI. The short (30-item) TEIQue (TEIQue-SF; Petrides & Furnham, 2006) was used as a measure of global trait EI.

3.3 Procedure

The web survey was publicised as in Study 1. The first block of survey questions encountered by each respondent contained the candidate MEOS items; the remaining scales were then presented in a randomised order. This allowed any order effects amongst the other scales to be averaged whilst maximising the sample size for the new scale.

3.4 Results

An exploratory factor analysis of the candidate MEOS items was performed. The KMO statistic was .92. Both the scree plot and parallel analysis indicated the extraction of seven

factors. On examination of these, (using oblique rotation, as some correlations between factors were expected), the last factor could not be interpreted. The six interpretable factors were characterised as:

1. Mood enhancing[2] (Enhance) – including offering help or reassurance, showing understanding, allowing the other to express their feelings.
2. Mood worsening (Worsen) – including use of criticism/negative comments, undermining confidence and displaying anger.
3. Concealing emotions from others (Conceal).
4. Use of inauthentic displays for self-serving purposes (Inauthentic) – including using 'niceness' or flattery, sulking, and inducing guilt, sympathy and jealousy in others.
5. Poor emotion skills (Poor skills) - items related to inability to change the mood of or motivate others.
6. Use of diversion to enhance another's mood (Divert) - including being positive, using humour and arranging an enjoyable activity.

The length of the scale was reduced by selecting higher-loading items. All items with absolute loading 0.4 or above on factors three, four, five and six were retained. For the first two factors, which had the largest number of items loading above 0.4, the 12 highest-loading items on each were retained. As a precaution against any loss of information due to possible over-factoring, a six-factor solution (which produced very similar factors) was also examined, and any items meeting the above criteria which had not already been selected were also retained. This process resulted in the retention of 58 items. The factor analysis was then repeated with these items. Both the scree plot and parallel analysis indicated the

extraction of six factors, explaining 48.5% of the variance. These are shown in Table 1, and score internal reliabilities and factor score correlations are shown in Table 2.

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics and internal reliabilities for the Big Five, Dark Triad, and EI, and Table 4 shows their correlations with the factor scores. Amongst the strongest associations of the factors with personality were Enhancement with Agreeableness, and Worsening with all of the Dark Triad, with the Machiavellianism correlation significantly higher than the other two. The Inauthentic factor was strongly correlated with Machiavellianism and psychopathy but significantly less strongly with narcissism. EI was strongly negatively correlated with Poor skills, and also showed a pattern of positive associations with Enhance and Divert and negative associations with Worsen and Inauthentic.

Tables 1,2,3,4 near here

3.5 Discussion

Following an initial factor analysis and selection of the highest-loading items, the reduced set of 58 MEOS items produced six interpretable factors. Of core interest was the emergence of two mood-improving factors (Enhance, Divert), a mood-worsening factor, and a factor (Inauthentic) cutting across the improving/worsening categorisation, since it comprised items relating to inducing both negative and positive emotions, in the latter case by strategies such as flattery and insincere 'niceness'. The two secondary factors from the earlier EMS (concealing emotions, poor emotion skills) also emerged from the item pool, whilst items with content similar to that scale's emotion manipulation factor loaded on the Worsen and Inauthentic factors.

The correlations amongst the core factors showed strong associations between the members of a 'prosocial' pair (Enhance/Divert) and a 'non-prosocial' pair

(Worsen/Inauthentic), but only weak cross-pair associations, suggesting that people who favour prosocial/non-prosocial approaches to managing the emotions of others slightly rather than strongly disfavour the opposite approach. The strong correlations of Agreeableness, a personality trait associated with motivation to maintain positive interpersonal relations (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001), with both members of the prosocial pair of factors would be expected. Similarly, the positive correlations of the non-prosocial pair with all the members of the Dark Triad are in line with the well-established associations of these three traits with interpersonal manipulation (e.g. Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006). Some preliminary indications of differential patterning of associations of the Dark Triad were found, with Machiavellianism having the strongest relationship with Worsen, whilst psychopathy was the most weakly associated with Inauthentic, but this pattern would need to be verified using longer Dark Triad measures.

Having obtained the MEOS factor structure and some preliminary validation evidence for the factors, Study 3 examined the replicability of this factor structure in a second sample.

4. Study 3

4.1 Participants

There were 276 participants (113 male, 162 female, one not stated). The mean age of the sample was 25.64 years, standard deviation 11.11years. Twenty-nine participants completed a retest of the MEOS approximately three months later.

4.2 Materials

The 58-item scale derived from the Study 1 analyses was used in this study.

4.3 Procedure

The scale was incorporated into a web survey which was publicised using social network sites and locally to students via email lists.

4.4 Results

An exploratory factor analysis of the MEOS items was performed. The KMO statistic was .86. Both the scree plot and parallel analysis indicated the extraction of six factors. The factor structure was very similar to that obtained in Study 2.The internal reliabilities of the factors were .91, .88, .82, .85, .68, .81. As previously, the 5th factor (Poor skills) was the least reliable and in this sample fell below the conventional reliability cut-off. The range of test-retest correlations was .71-.83, and the mean factor scores did not change significantly between test occasions.

Due to the lower reliability of the Poor skills factor, confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were conducted both excluding and including it. An item parcelling method was adopted in order to create indicators of each factor with higher reliability and a distribution closer to normality compared to individual items (e.g. Wilkinson, 2007). The items loading on factors 1,2,3,4 and 6 in Table 1 were combined into three parcels per factor, and those for factor 5 into two parcels. This was done by assigning items to parcels in order of loading size using balanced allocation, i.e. labelling the highest-loading item as item 1, the next highest-loading as 2, etc., the parcels were (1,6…), (2,5…), (3,4…). The initial models allowed all the factors to be correlated, but examination of the Wald test for dropping parameters led to a number of these correlations being set to zero. The fit statistics for the final five-factor model were: χ^2 /degree of freedom 2.28, comparative fit index (CFI) .95, standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) .066, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) .068 (95% CI .055, .081). These values meet the generally-accepted criteria for good or acceptable model fit (Schweizer, 2010). The model factor correlations are included in Table 2 and can

be seen to be similar to those found in Study 2. The six-factor model including the Poor Skills factor showed slightly worse fit (χ^2 /degree of freedom 2.37, CFI .94, SRMR .068, RMSEA .070 (95% CI .059, .081)).

4.5 Discussion

CFA reproduced the previous factor structure, but exclusion of the factor with lowest reliability, Poor skills resulted in better model fit. Preliminary evidence for test-retest reliability of the factor scores was also obtained.

5. General discussion

In this paper the factor structure and personality correlates of a scale assessing management of the emotions of others were examined. The items were derived from descriptions of real-life situations. Using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis a six-factor structure was obtained. Two factors (Enhance, Divert) related to improving another's mood. There was one factor (Worsen) relating to mood worsening, one (Inauthentic) relating to the use of inauthentic displays to change another's mood, with the other factors relating to concealing emotions from others and poor emotional skills. Taken together, these factors provide a rich description of the ways in which managing the emotions of others takes place. In particular, the Worsen and Inauthentic factors provide a more detailed picture of the self-serving manipulation of the emotions of others compared to the single composite emotional manipulation factor obtained in the development of the earlier EMS (Austin et al., 2007) or the short extrinsic affect-worsening scale of the EROS (Niven et al., 2011).

The Worsen and Inauthentic factors were positively correlated with all three components of the Dark Triad, which is consistent with the tendency to interpersonal exploitation and manipulation which characterise these traits (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006). Conversely, the

strongest associations of the Enhance and Divert factors were with Agreeableness, a personality trait related to affiliation and positive interpersonal relations (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). The associations of trait EI with the MEOS factors were positive with Enhance and Divert and negative with Worsen, Inauthentic and Conceal. All these correlations were fairly weak, which may be due to the heterogeneous nature of the TEIQue-SF scale, which comprises two items from each of the 15 subscales of the full length TEIQue (Petrides & Furnham, 2006). The correlation pattern amongst the MEOS factors indicated that the (negative) associations amongst prosocial and non-prosocial emotion management dimensions was quite weak, so the use of one type of emotion management appears not to strongly exclude use of the other. This finding is consistent with the moderate association found between the extrinsic mood-improving and mood-worsening factors of the EROS (Niven et al., 2011). The Poor skills factor was less reliable than the other factors, but is of interest as a potential measure of (low) self-efficacy for changing the mood of others.

The correlations of the MEOS factors with other measures provide preliminary evidence for its validity, but the use of very short scales for both the Big Five and the Dark Triad dimensions represent a limitation. Further work is needed to examine how the MEOS factors associated with lengthier global-level measures and to facets of the Big Five. In relation to the Dark Triad there is a similar need to extend the preliminary results presented here using longer and multidimensional measures. Examples of topics that require further study are correlation patterns of the MEOS with measures of both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Miller et al., 2011) and with primary and secondary psychopathy (Levenson, Kiehl, & Fitzpatrick, 1995). Similarly, for trait EI, associations of the MEOS with EI facets (particularly those specifically related to managing the emotions of others) as well as with

global EI score are of interest. Validation of the MEOS scales in experimental studies of mood changing behaviours is also important.

Unusually for a scale assessing part of the EI/ER domain, the MEOS has broad coverage of both the 'bright' and 'dark' aspects of managing the emotions of others. For this reason it is likely to be particularly useful in research which seeks to examine both the negative and positive correlates and outcomes of such emotion management, for example in studies of the effects of expressing emotions in negotiation (e.g. Kopelman, Rosette, & Thompson, 2006).

Notes

[1] A full list of the domains and the items assigned to each is available from the corresponding author.

[2]In naming and describing the factors the term ‘mood’ is used as a shorthand for ‘mood or emotional state’ as in the instructions given to the participants.

Acknowledgement

We thank Sophie Carter and Joshua Holton for assistance with data collection.

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Table 1. Factor analysis of candidate items

	1	2	3	4	5	6
When someone is anxious about a problem, I try to help them work out a solution.	**.79**					
If someone is feeling anxious, I try to calm them down by talking with them.	**.76**					
If someone is anxious, I try to reassure them.	**.75**					
When someone is under stress I try to boost their confidence in their ability to cope.	**.70**					
When someone is unhappy, I show that I understand how they are feeling.	**.64**					
If someone is feeling angry, I try to help them understand their feelings.	**.63**					
When someone is dealing with a difficult situation, I encourage them by reassuring them that they are coping well.	**.62**					
If someone has a problem I offer to help if they need it.	**.62**					
If someone is upset, I try to reassure them by suggesting a possible solution to their problem.	**.62**					
If someone I know is unhappy, I allow them to express their feelings.	**.60**					
If someone is unhappy I make it clear that they have my support.	**.57**					

If someone lacks confidence to do a task, I encourage them to believe they can do it.	**.57**			
If someone is feeling anxious, I try to offer practical help.	**.56**			
When someone is unhappy, I try to help them to take a more positive view of their situation.	**.44**			.41
When someone is unhappy, I reassure them that things will get better.	.38			.37
I sometimes put someone down in public to make them feel bad.		**.73**		
I use criticism to make others feel that they should work harder.		**.70**		
I can make someone feel anxious so that they will act in a particular way. #		**.67**		
I sometimes try to undermine another person's confidence.		**.67**		
If I don't like someone's behaviour I make negative comments in order to make them feel bad.		**.66**		
I sometimes use my knowledge of another person's emotional triggers to make them angry.		**.66**		
I use anger to get others to do things that I want them to do.		**.66**		
I know how to make someone feel ashamed about something that they have done in		**.65**	-.22	

order to stop them from doing it again. #				
I know how to embarrass someone to stop them from behaving in a particular way**. #**	**.65**			-.25
I use displays of anger to motivate others.	**.63**			
I sometimes try to make someone feel bad by blaming them for something which I know isn't their fault.	**.57**			.27
If someone is annoying me, I sometimes retaliate by saying something unkind that will make them feel bad.	**.57**		.23	
I can use my emotional skills to make others feel guilty**. #**	**.55**		.31	
I often conceal feelings of anger and distress from others. **#**		**.77**		
When someone has made me upset or angry, I often conceal my feelings. **#**		**.75**		
I hide my feelings so others won't worry about me.		**.75**		
When someone has made me upset or angry, I tend to downplay my feelings. **#**		**.72**		
I don’t believe in telling others about my problems – I keep them to myself. #		**.69**		
If someone has upset me, I express my anger to them.*	-.39	**.48**		
If someone tries to make me feel better when I am feeling low, I pretend to feel		**.41**	.28	

happier to please that person.				
I sometimes sulk to make someone feel guilty.			**.68**	
I sometimes use flattery to gain or keep someone's good opinion.			**.64**	-.22
If someone says or does something I don't like, I sometimes sulk.			**.64**	.27
I sometimes sulk to get someone to change their behaviour.	.20		**.63**	.20
If I want someone to do something for me, I am especially nice to them before asking.			**.62**	
If someone's behaviour has caused me distress, I try to make them feel guilty about it.		-.21	**.61**	
I can pay someone compliments to get in their 'good books'**. #**			**.60**	-.29
If I want someone to do something for me, I try to elicit sympathy from them.			**.54**	
I sometimes exaggerate a personal or health problem in order to gain sympathy and avoid doing a task.			**.48**	
I sometimes deliberately try to make another person feel jealous.	.33		**.44**	
I am especially nice to people whose friendship is advantageous to me.			**.42**	-.21

I am not very good at motivating people. #			**.70**	
I am not very good at changing someone's mood, even if doing so would make them likely to behave in a way that I want them to**.#**			**.63**	
I feel that I lack emotional skills**. #**		.30	**.60**	
I am not very good at giving positive encouragement to others. #			**.54**	
I am good at reassuring people so that they're more likely to go along with what I say.* #	-.28		**.43**	
If someone is angry, I try to divert their mood by being cheerful.				**.78**
When someone is in a low mood I behave in a happy and cheerful way to make them feel better.				**.76**
When someone is in a bad mood I try to divert them by telling jokes or funny stories.				**.68**
When someone is unhappy I try to cheer them by talking about something positive.	.30			**.58**
When someone is unhappy I try to cheer them up by arranging an enjoyable activity.				**.56**
If someone is being awkward, I try to defuse the situation by being cheerful and				**.50**

pleasant.		
I sometimes use humour to try to lift another person's mood.	-.21	**.45**

Only loadings of magnitude ≥ .2 are shown, loadings above .4 in bold. * Reverse-keyed item, # item from the Austin et al. (2007) scale.

Table 2. Correlations amongst factor scores

	F1 (Enhance)	F2 (Worsen)	F3(Conceal)	F4 (Inauthentic)	F5(Poor skills)	F6 (Divert)
F1	.91					
F2	-.20*** [-.16]	.91				
F3	.02	-.08*	.80			
F4	-.05	.59*** [.61]	-.06	.85		
F5	-.40***	.08*	.19***	.10**	.71	
F6	.61*** [.59]	-.04	.09 [.19]	.10** [.25]	-.30***	.81

N = 695. Internal reliabilities are shown on the diagonal. Correlations in brackets are from the Study 3 CFA.

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for Study 2 measures

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Internal reliability
Neuroticism	652	11.88	3.38	.70
Extraversion	655	12.50	3.93	.83
Openness	652	15.54	3.12	.74
Agreeableness	652	16.23	2.88	.76
Conscientiousness	649	13.12	3.48	.73
Machiavellianism	662	9.36	3.53	.79
Psychopathy	662	7.73	3.22	.74
Narcissism	657	11.16	3.66	.79
EI	599	144.50	22.66	.89

Sample sizes differ because not all participants completed the full survey; minor variations in sample size within personality scales are due to participants omitting one or more items in a sub-scale.

Table 4. Correlations of factor scores with other measures

	Enhance	Worsen	Conceal	Inauthentic	Poor skills	Divert
Neuroticism	-.03	.08	-.05	.23***	.12**	-.12**
Extraversion	.19***	.12**	-.28***	.03	-.40***	.33***
Openness	.23***	-.04	.00	-.09*	-.22***	.12**
Agreeableness	.55***	-.25***	-.05	-.11**	-.38***	.36***
Conscientiousness	.12**	-.10*	-.07	-.17***	-.14***	.03
Machiavellianism	-.14***	.55***	-.01	.59***	-.01	.01
Psychopathy	-.34***	.44***	.07	.26***	.26***	-.24***
Narcissism	-.10*	.40***	-.03	.53***	.03	.01
EI	.37***	-.11**	-.24***	-.25***	-.59***	.27***

N range 599-652

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$