

Polish Version of the Managing the Emotions of Others Scale (MEOS): Psychometric Properties and Validation

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Abstract

The present study aimed to test the psychometric properties of the Polish version of the managing the emotions of others scale (MEOS). MEOS consists of six dimensions: mood enhancing (Enhance), mood worsening (Worsen), concealing emotions from others (Conceal), use of inauthentic displays for self-serving purposes (Inauthentic), poor emotion skills (Poor skills), and use of diversion to enhance another's mood (Divert). The results showed that among MEOS dimensions, Enhance was the most strongly related to performance-based emotional intelligence. Among the Dark Triad, Narcissism was related to the greatest number of MEOS subscales—all except Poor skills. The results indicated that the MEOS has a similar factor structure, reliability, and pattern of correlations with personality and emotional intelligence in Poland as in previous studies.

Keywords

emotion regulation, emotions, scale development, emotional intelligence, personality

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Introduction

Managing emotions of others might be an important factor shaping personal relationships and is viewed as a component of emotional intelligence (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007) and emotion regulation (Niven, Totterdell, Stride, & Holman, 2011). Nevertheless, there are not many psychometric tools allowing for multidimensional assessment of managing the emotions of others. The existing ones, at best, propose two dimensions measuring mood enhancement and worsening (Niven et al., 2011).

A novel approach has been recently proposed by Austin and O'Donnell (2013), who explored various behaviors eventually influencing others' emotions. Based on psychometric analyses, they found six dimensions describing behavioral tendencies to manage emotions of others: mood enhancing (Enhance), mood worsening (Worsen), concealing emotions from others (Conceal), use of inauthentic displays for self-serving purposes (Inauthentic), poor emotion skills (Poor skills), and use of diversion to enhance another's mood (Divert). The above subscales constitute managing the emotions of others scale (MEOS) and measure individual tendencies to undertake the mentioned behaviors.

All the subscales distinguished in MEOS indeed were related to emotional intelligence (EI). Namely, higher EI was linked to greater self-confidence with own emotional skills (Poor skills), more pronounced tendencies to enhance others' mood (Enhance), more use of diversion (Divert), less inauthentic displays (Inauthentic), less concealing (Conceal), and less pronounced tendencies to worsen others' mood (Worsen) (respectively from the strongest to the weakest correlations; Austin & O'Donnell, 2013). Here, it should be noted that in the previous study, a self-report measure of EI was used and such an approach has been questioned for measuring only beliefs about one's abilities (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999) and reflecting personality rather than actual emotional abilities; thus performance-based measures of EI are advocated (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008).

The MEOS subscales were also compared to Dark Triad traits (Austin & O'Donnell, 2013). Overall, greater Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism were related to lower Enhance, more Worsen, and Inauthentic, whereas poorer emotional skills and less diversion were linked only to psychopathy.

The present studies aimed to test psychometric properties of the Polish translation of MEOS and to validate it in a similar manner to the Austin and O'Donnell (2013) study. Specifically, the six factor structure of the Polish MEOS, reliability of its subscales, and its relationships with ability-based EI, and Dark Triad traits were assessed.

Method

Measures

The original MEOS from Austin and O'Donnell (2013) was translated into Polish by three experts using parallel blind technique, and then it was back-translated to assure the accuracy of the translation with the source version (Behling & Law, 2000). Next, the translation was revised and approved by the authors of the present study. MEOS consists of six subscales, and details about the subscales are provided in the Introduction section, see Table 1 for items.

The Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2010) in the Polish version (Czarna & Jonason, 2014) was used to assess the Dark Triad traits: psychopathy defined by high callousness, thrill-seeking, interpersonal antagonism and manipulation, and by low empathy, remorse, and anxiety; narcissism characterized by self-absorption, dominance, and feelings of entitlement, and Machiavellianism characterized by self-interest and the tendency toward deception, manipulation and the exploitation of others (Jonason & Webster, 2010). The test comprises 12 items (4 per scale). Participants are asked how much they agreed with statements such as: "I tend to want others to admire me" (narcissism; $\alpha = .88$), "I tend to lack remorse" (psychopathy; $\alpha = .65$), and "I have used deceit or lied to get my way" (Machiavellianism; $\alpha = .85$).

The Emotional Intelligence Test (TIE; Śmieja, Orzechowski, & Stolarski, 2014) was used to assess four aspects of emotional intelligence distinguished in the model of Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2002). These are Perception (the ability to detect and decipher emotions of other people taking into account cultural specificity, as well as to identify one's own emotions; $\alpha = .70$), Understanding (the ability to comprehend emotions in language, to recognize the structure of complex emotions, and how they evolve over time; $\alpha = .68$), Assimilation (the ability to use emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities, such as thinking and problem solving; $\alpha = .62$), Management (the ability to regulate one's own and others' emotions and to manage emotions to achieve intended goals; $\alpha = .60$), summing up to General Score ($\alpha = .88$). TIE consists of 24 items describing various situations that may evoke emotions and respondents are asked to assess what are these emotions or what would be the best way to deal with a given situation, on a five-point Likert scale. Below is a sample item:

Sophie hits the table with a fist. She frowns, her face is glowing, and her teeth are clenched. Most probably:

(a) She is watching a popular show on TV. 1 2 3 4 5

Table 1. Polish version of MEOS.

Odnieś się do każdego stwierdzenia zaznaczając cyfrę, która najlepiej oddaje to, w jakim stopniu się z nim zgadzasz. Postaraj się odpowiadać możliwie dokładnie, nie poświęcając zarazem zbyt wiele czasu na każdą odpowiedź. Nie ma dobrych ani złych odpowiedzi. Istnieje pięć możliwych odpowiedzi na każde stwierdzenie:

- 1 - zdecydowanie nie zgadzam się
- 2 - nie zgadzam się
- 3 - ani się zgadzam, ani się nie zgadzam
- 4 - zgadzam się
- 5 - zdecydowanie zgadzam się

LP	Stwierdzenie
1	Kiedy ktoś jest smutny, próbuję go rozweselić organizując jakieś przyjemne zajęcie.
2	Jeśli chcę, by ktoś coś dla mnie zrobił, jestem dla niego wyjątkowo miły, zanim go o to poproszę.
3	Czasem żartuję, aby poprawić komuś nastrój.
4	Czasem udaję obrażonego, aby ktoś poczuł się winny.
5	Jeśli czyjeś zachowanie sprawia mi przykrość, próbuję wywołać w nim poczucie winy.
6	Jeśli ktoś jest smutny, zapewniam go o moim wsparciu.
7	Dobrze mi idzie przekonywanie innych do tego, co mówię.
8	Kiedy ktoś mnie zdenerwuje lub rozżołości, często ukrywam swoje uczucia.
9	Jeśli ktoś mówi lub robi coś czego nie lubię, czasami ostentacyjnie się obrażam.
10	Kiedy ktoś jest smutny, pocieszam go, że wszystko dobrze się ułoży.
11	Jestem szczególnie miły dla ludzi, których przyjaźń jest dla mnie korzystna.
12	Jeśli chcę, by ktoś coś dla mnie zrobił, próbuję wzbudzić w nim współczucie.
13	Wiem jak kogoś zawstydzić, aby przestał zachowywać się w określony sposób.
14	Kiedy ktoś jest smutny, próbuję pomóc mu spojrzeć na całą sytuację bardziej pozytywnie.
15	Gdy komuś brakuje śmiałości do zrobienia czegoś, dodaję mu odwagi, aby uwierzył, że da sobie radę.
16	Celowo okazuję gniew, by zmotywować innych.
17	Jeśli ktoś kogo znam jest smutny, pozwalam mu na wyrażenie swoich uczuć.

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

LP	Stwierdzenie
18	Kiedy ktoś mnie zdenerwuje lub rozżłości, zazwyczaj kamufluję swoje uczucia.
19	Zdarza mi się kogoś upokorzyć publicznie po to, aby poczuł się źle.
20	Jeśli nie podoba mi się czyjeś zachowanie, krytycznie to komentuję, aby ta osoba poczuła się źle.
21	Wyrażam złość, aby skłonić innych do robienia tego, co chcę.
22	Kiedy ktoś jest smutny, próbuję go rozweselić, opowiadając o czymś przyjemnym.
23	Nie wierzę, że mówienie innym o moich problemach ma sens, więc zachowuję je dla siebie.
24	Jeśli ktoś mnie zdenerwuje, okazuję mu swoją złość.
25	Czasem próbuję podkopać czyjąś pewność siebie.
26	Jeśli ktoś próbuje mnie pocieszyć, kiedy mam zły nastrój, udaję, że mi to pomogło, aby sprawić tej osobie przyjemność.
27	Czasem próbuję sprawić, by ktoś poczuł się źle, oskarżając go o coś, co wiem, że nie jest jego winą.
28	Jeśli ktoś jest zaniepokojony, próbuję go uspokoić.
29	Celowo krytykuję innych, by poczuli, że powinni ciężiej pracować.
30	Często ukrywam przed innymi złość i zmartwienia.
31	Kiedy ktoś jest smutny, okazuję mu zrozumienie.
32	Wiem jak wywołać u kogoś wstyd za popełniony czyn, tak aby w przyszłości już tego nie robił.
33	Kiedy ktoś jest w złym nastroju, próbuję rozweselić go, opowiadając dowcipy lub zabawne historie.
34	Czasem wykorzystuję znajomość czyichś słabych punktów, aby go rozżłościć.
35	Kiedy ktoś jest w stresującej sytuacji, próbuję wzmocnić jego pewność, że sobie poradzi.
36	Ukrywam swoje uczucia, aby inni nie martwili się o mnie.
37	Czasem używam pochlebstw, aby zdobyć lub podtrzymać czyjeś dobre zdanie na mój temat.
38	Kiedy kogoś niepokoi jakiś problem, próbuję pomóc mu wypracować rozwiązanie.

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

LP	Stwierdzenie
39	Jeśli ktoś czuje złość, próbuję pomóc mu zrozumieć jego uczucia.
40	Kiedy ktoś znajduje się w trudnej sytuacji, wspieram go, zapewniając, że dobrze sobie radzi.
41	Jeśli ktoś mnie irytuje, czasem biorę odwet mówiąc coś niemiłego, co sprawi, że ta osoba poczuje się źle.
42	Czasami próbuję specjalnie wywołać czyjąś zazdrość.
43	Jeśli ktoś jest niespokojny, próbuję go uspokoić poprzez rozmowę.
44	Czasem ostentacyjnie obrażam się, aby zmusić kogoś do zmiany zachowania.
45	Jeśli ktoś popełnia gafę, próbuję rozładować sytuację poprzez bycie pogodnym i miłym.
46	Jeśli ktoś się złości, próbuję zmienić jego nastrój poprzez radosne zachowanie.
47	Potrafię wywołać u kogoś niepokój po to, aby zachował się w określony sposób.
48	Nie umiem skutecznie motywować ludzi.
49	Potrafię prawić komplementy, by zyskać czyjeś względy.
50	Jeśli ktoś czymś się martwi, próbuję zaoferować mu praktyczną pomoc.
51	Nie za bardzo potrafię wpływać na nastrój innych, nawet jeśli dzięki temu zachowywaliby się tak, jak chcę.
52	Nie za bardzo potrafię dodawać odwagi innym.
53	Kiedy ktoś ma kiepski nastrój, jestem wesoły i pogodny, aby sprawić, by ta osoba poczuła się lepiej.
54	Jeśli ktoś jest zdenerwowany, próbuję uspokoić go, sugerując możliwe rozwiązanie problemu.
55	Mogę skorzystać z moich umiejętności emocjonalnych, by sprawić, żeby ktoś poczuł się winny.
56	Czasem wyolbrzymiam problemy osobiste lub zdrowotne, chcąc zyskać czyjeś współczucie i uniknąć wykonania powierzonego mi zadania.
57	Jeśli ktoś ma problem, oferuję mu pomoc, jeśli jej potrzebuje.
58	Czuję, że brakuje mi umiejętności emocjonalnych.

Source: adapted from Austin and O'Donnell (2013) with authors' permission.

Table 2. Correlations among subscales and Cronbach's alphas on the diagonal ($n = 472$).

	Enhance	Worsen	Conceal	Inauthentic	Poor skills	Divert
Enhance	.93					
Worsen	-.19***	.88				
Conceal	-.12**	-.02	.77			
Inauthentic	-.06	.55***	-.03	.82		
Poor skills	-.35***	-.21***	.25***	.07	.78	
Divert	.66***	-.04	.02	.03	-.31***	.82

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

(b) Once again she hurt her finger while cutting bread. 1.....2.....
3.....4.....5

(c) She was just told by a colleague that he will not help her to prepare an important project, because he is leaving for a last-minute holiday. 1.....2.....
3.....4.....5.

Scoring is based on the similarity of a test taker responses with answers provided by a panel of experts. Correctness of responses is rated based on expert criteria, similarly as in the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (Mayer et al., 2002).

Participants and procedure

Paper-pencil data collection was used in all studies. Study 1 aimed to test the factor structure, internal consistency of the Polish translation of MEOS and its relationships with Dark Triad traits and EI while Study 2 examined test-retest reliability. Study 1 was completed by 472 university students from Warsaw (283 women, 187 men, 2 undisclosed) aged 18–58 years ($M = 22.0$, $SD = 4.4$). They filled in the Polish translation of MEOS just before classes. A subsample of 346 students (228 women, 118 men), aged 18–47 years ($M = 21.1$, $SD = 2.8$), after completing the MEOS, were also tested with the EI test and the Dark Triad measure. Study 2 was conducted to assess test-retest reliability of the MEOS and was completed by 38 psychology students from University of Warsaw (31 females, 4 males, 3 undisclosed) aged 20–23 ($M = 20.9$, $SD = .9$). They filled in the Polish translation of MEOS just before classes twice within a 1-week interval. Cases with missing responses were excluded from analyses, thus smaller sample sizes appear in the results section (Table 2). The analyses were conducted using SPSS 21.

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test whether the original structure of MEOS appears in the Polish sample. The model comprised of six intercorrelated factors. The fit indices were: χ^2 /degree of freedom 2.67, comparative fit index (CFI) 0.774, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) 0.081, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) 0.060 (90% CI = 0.057–0.062). These fit indices were similar to those obtained by Austin and O'Donnell (2013), with the exception of CFI, which in the original study was 0.95. However, CFI is considered meaningless if RMSEA of the null model is less than 0.158 (Kenny, 2014), and in the present study, RMSEA of the null model was 0.123. Thus, overall the original model showed acceptable fit in the Polish sample (Kenny, 2014).

The strongest intercorrelations (Table 2) were observed for the pairs Enhance–Divert and Inauthentic–Worsen. The former intercorrelation does not surprise as Divert reflects using of diversion to enhance another's mood, thus the two constructs overlap to some extent (correlation in the original version was .61; Austin & O'Donnell, 2013). Internal consistency (Table 2) ranged from .77 (Conceal) to .93 (Enhance), while test–retest reliability was between .69 (Inauthentic) to .85 (Enhance, Conceal, and Divert).

Among the Dark Triad, Narcissism was related to the highest number of MEOS subscales—all but Poor skills (Table 3). Interestingly, Enhance was also the MEOS dimension most strongly related to all performance EI facets and the EI total score (Table 3).

Discussion

The current research tested the factor structure of the Polish version of MEOS, reliability of its subscales and relationships with EI and Dark Triad traits.

Table 3. Correlations among MEOS subscales, dark triad ($n = 328$) and EI ($n = 268$).

	Enhance	Worsen	Conceal	Inauthentic	Poor skills	Divert
Machiavellianism	-.12*	.55***	.05	.44***	-.15**	.05
Psychopathy	-.01	.36***	-.09	.46***	-.06	-.02
Narcissism	-.27***	.39***	.19***	.17**	.04	-.18***
EI general	.48**	-.24**	-.12*	-.04	-.12*	.22**
EI perception	.36**	-.19**	-.10	.01	-.04	.19**
EI understanding	.37**	-.09	-.07	.04	-.08	.13*
EI assimilation	.45**	-.23**	-.08	-.08	-.13*	.21**
EI management	.41**	-.30**	-.12*	-.08	-.10	.22**

EI: emotional intelligence.

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

The original six-factor model (Austin & O'Donnell, 2013) showed acceptable fit in the Polish sample with fit indices, compared to the original study: slightly better considering RMSEA, and slightly worse considering the remaining statistics. According to Hu and Bentler's (1999) two-index presentation strategy for acceptable models, RMSEA should be 0.06 or less, and SRMR should be 0.09 or less, and this was achieved in the present research (0.06 and 0.08, respectively). Moreover, the relevance of the six-factor solution was further strengthened by internal consistencies at least of .77, which were similar to those reported by Austin and O'Donnell (2013). The test-retest reliability was also acceptable, although this result should be replicated in a larger sample tested with a longer time interval between two measurements.

Most of the findings reported by Austin and O'Donnell (2013) were replicated, which is crucial from the point of view of the MEOS theory. First, the Worsen and Inauthentic factors, regarded as non-prosocial, were positively correlated with all Dark Triad dimensions. This replicates previous findings with MEOS (Austin & O'Donnell, 2013) and corroborates the theory of Dark Triad involving the tendency for interpersonal exploitation and manipulation (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006). Secondly, similar to Austin and O'Donnell's (2013) correlations of MEOS with general score of EI test were obtained. Specifically, in the present study, EI was positively correlated with Enhance and Divert and negatively with Conceal and Poor Skills. Additionally, the correlation between EI and Inauthentic scale was close to zero. These results are in agreement with previous investigations exploring the possible "dark side" of EI (Austin, Farrelly, Black, & Moore, 2007; Petrides, Vernon, Schermer, & Veselka, 2011), suggesting that high EI is related to prosocial behavior, such as enhancing mood of others, rather than manipulating others' emotions. Especially interesting in this context is the result related to Enhance and two EI subscales: Assimilation and Management. It is worth noting that these subtests of EI are assessed differently than Perception and Understanding. In particular, in Assimilation and Management test takers are asked to indicate the most advisable action that a protagonist should implement in order to solve the problem. This suggests that social interaction might be an important factor underlying the association between discussed EI subtests and Enhance, and our results might be explained in two ways. First, it is possible that people high on Enhance acquire the knowledge on successful managing emotions and assimilation from practice. In other words, because they positively regulate others' mood, they learn how emotions might facilitate thinking and how to manage them. Secondly, the knowledge about effective methods of emotion assimilation and management may motivate people to engage more often in regulating emotions of others by enhancing their mood. Since the study was correlational, further investigations are necessary to assess which mechanism explains this relationship.

It is also worth noting that the prosocial and non-prosocial emotion management dimensions from the MEOS were negatively associated, but the correlation magnitudes were rather low. Similar results were obtained by Austin and O'Donnell (2013), which may suggest, according to those authors, that the use of one type of emotion management does not exclude use of the other.

The current results extend previous findings on MEOS in a few ways. As was suggested by Austin and O'Donnell (2013), it would be important to see the specific correlations between the MEOS and components of EI, especially, those related to emotion management. In the current study, EI was measured as an ability with a tool which allows for distinguishing four branches of EI. First, Enhance and Divert factors were positively associated with all components of EI. It seems that prosocial behavior is an important feature of EI. Secondly, Conceal was correlated only with emotion management from EI. Perhaps, the effective regulation and management of emotions requires honesty in relationships with others. Surprisingly, Poor skills factor was only weakly correlated with the Assimilation component of EI. The latter describes an ability to use emotions to facilitate thinking. On the other hand, Poor skills scale from MEOS includes items asking how good an individual is at motivating people or at changing someone's mood, which may require some knowledge about the relationship between emotional state and thinking.

In the present study, the MEOS had a similar factor structure in Poland as in the UK. Moreover, reliability of the Polish MEOS subscales and the pattern of correlations with personality and EI measures was similar as for the original version. Previous data were extended, showing more nuanced associations between MEOS and ability-based EI components. Future investigations might focus on other determinants of MEOS, such as, for instance, general intelligence, which was shown to correlate differently with adaptive and maladaptive personality traits (Austin et al., 2002). Additionally, it would be also interesting to examine the consequences of a specific type of emotion management for quality of life. Future studies could also seek for further validation of MEOS using various concepts that apparently form bases for the ability to influence others' affective states, including Theory of Mind (Abu-Akel & Shamay-Tsoory, 2011) or Levels of Emotional Awareness (Lane & Schwartz, 1987).

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