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**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND HUMOR STYLES IN THE SELF-
ACCEPTANCE AND ACCEPT BY OTHER PROCESS**

PhD Thesis

This dissertation is an empirical study on the relationship between emotional intelligence as a personality trait, preferred style of humour (adaptive or desadaptive), self-acceptance and self-reported acceptance by others.

In the theoretical part are presented the theoretical approaches towards studying emotional intelligence, humour, self-acceptance, and acceptance by others, as well as an overview of the empirical studies on these factors. In the three major paragraphs, theoretical prerequisites and their main directions in the search for connections between the variables are followed. Based on the theoretical overview, it is concluded that self-reported emotional skills (EI), styles of humour used by the person, and the process of self-acceptance and acceptance by others, suggest the existence of a complex model. This calls for the construction of an original model of research, in which emotional intelligence plays a considerable role as a regulatory personality trait, which is connected with all other psychological processes and has a decisive role. Another aspect of the study is in the influence of individual variables such as age, sex, and education.

The main aim of this dissertation has been to research the personal mechanism for regulation of feelings of self-acceptance and acceptance by others, by means of EI or emotionally accepted personal characteristics and the styles of humour, used by the individual. All that is reflected in a structure of tasks, in which the major goal of the work is decomposed: research of the individual's mechanism for regulations of feelings of self-acceptance and acceptance by others, via EI; the connection between the styles of humour used by the individual and the adopted emotional skills (EI); research of the individual's mechanism of regulation of self-acceptance and acceptance by others, via the used styles of humour; the influence of emotional skills and styles of humour in which the individual engages; on the process of self-acceptance and acceptance by others.

The research methods are in accordance with the purposes and tasks of the study and have adequate psychometric characteristics. Two questionnaires are used: a short version of the questionnaire designed to measure EI as a personal characteristic, and the questionnaire designed to measure different humour styles. These two questionnaires are adapted for the Bulgarian population in the context of this study. There are two scales for measuring self-acceptance and acceptance by others, designed especially for the research by Martin Tsenov and docent Ergyul Tair.

The following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) A positive correlation between self-adopted emotional skills (EI) of the individual, and the sense of self-acceptance. This gives ground to the conclusion that via those emotional skills, the individual can control their emotional experiences, which is crucial for the process of self-acceptance.
- 2) A positive correlation between self-adapted emotional skills of the individual, and the sense of acceptance by others. Therefore, individuals with high emotional intelligence not only self-report closer relations with others, but also have a sense of being more important and appreciated within their social circles. The adopted skills help the individual in integrating in new social groups and reducing the sense of emotional distancing and loneliness.
- 3) Self-acceptance and acceptance by others have a positive correlation. The sense of self-acceptance and of being accepted by others have a large significance for social relations with others as well as for personal development and growth.
- 4) A positive correlation between adopted emotional skills of the individual and positive (Affiliative and Self-enhancing humor) styles of humour. Moreover, EI has negative correlation with negative (Aggressive and Self-defeating) styles of humour. Via EI and positive humour styles, the individual can effectively regulate and aim their emotions at affirming their relations with those around them. On the other hand, the lack of emotional skills in combination with negative humour styles lead to a worsening interpersonal relations.
- 5) There is a positive correlation between adaptive (Affiliative and Self-enhancing) styles of humour and self-acceptance. On the contrary, desadaptive (Self-defeating) sense of humour is in a negative correlation with the sense of self-acceptance. This leads to the conclusion that engaging in positive styles of humour is connected with a sense of being

liked, a sense of being liked by others, as well as tolerance towards one's own imperfections.

- 6) There is positive correlation between adaptive (Affiliative and Self-enhancing) styles of humour and the sense of community (being accepted by others). On the contrary, desadaptive (Aggressive and Self-defeating) styles of humour are in negative correlation with the sense of being accepted by others. Individuals who feel accepted by others, use adaptive styles of humour, with which they improve interpersonal relations. They also avoid negative styles of humour and by doing so they don't jeopardise their interpersonal relations and don't use humour to point to their own imperfections and ridicule them.
- 7) There are differences between the sexes. Women mostly report themselves to be more emotional and accepted by others, while men use more Aggressive style of humour. Increase in age also shows an increase in individuals reporting themselves as more emotional but also more emotionally self-regulating. Younger individuals (18-27) more often engage in Affiliative, as well as Aggressive and Self-defeating styles of humour, and individuals with higher levels of education completed show higher emotional intelligence.
- 8) It has been determined that emotional intelligence has a considerable influence over self-acceptance and acceptance by others. Styles of humour have less of an influence over the same factors. Only the Affiliative, Aggressive and Self-defeating styles of humour have a small influence over self-acceptance and acceptance by others. By contrast, self-acceptance as a relatively stable emotional judgment has a considerable influence over the sense of being accepted by others (the sense of being a part of a community).

Additional with the help of the mediation analysis it can be stated that people with a high EQ engage in using more adaptive styles of humour (Affiliative and Self-enhancing), which in turn affect positively on the sense of acceptance by others (sense of community). Last but not least, emotionally intelligent people who accept and like themselves, self-report more acceptance and affinity by others.

The results from the present study confirm the hypothesis that EQ has a considerable influence over the connection between the positive judgement of the individual towards themselves, as well as the individual feeling of being accepted and appreciated by others. This gives ground to

the claim that higher emotional skills are an important factor for achieving personal satisfaction and creating emotionally positive relations with others. The achieved results can be used in study groups, aiming to improve emotional competencies of the individual, used for building positive interpersonal relations. Higher emotional skills can lead to improved understanding of emotional experiences by aiding acceptance of lacking personal qualities and realising strong characteristics with the purpose of personal growth.