



## A factor-analytic study of cross-cultural differences in emotional rumination and emotional inhibition

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### Abstract

The aim of the present study was to explore cross-cultural differences in emotion control, using the Emotion Control Questionnaire [ECQ — Roger, D., & Najarian, B. (1989). The construction and validation of a new scale for measuring emotional control. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 10, 845–853]. The ECQ has been extensively validated on English samples, but rather than using the original published factor structure to derive mean scores, the study was based on comparisons between new factor analyses of ECQ data obtained from comparable samples of English, Spanish and Korean subjects. Consistent differences emerged, suggesting that the Korean subjects in particular differed in the way they construed emotional behaviour. Subsequent confirmatory factor analyses suggested that a two-factor model comprising emotional inhibition and emotional rumination offered the best fit for the data across all three samples, and new scales based on these findings are proposed. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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### 1. Introduction

The Emotion Control Questionnaire (ECQ — Roger & Najarian, 1989; Roger & Neshsoever, 1987) was developed in response to shortcomings in the instruments available at the time for assessing emotional response style. For example, factor analysis of the Repression-Sensitization

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Scale (Byrne, Barry, & Nelson, 1963) suggested primary factors for depression and sociability, with only a very small cluster of items in the 127-item questionnaire that specifically addressed expressive style (Roger & Schapals, 1996).

The ECQ comprises four empirically discriminable scales entitled rumination (or rehearsal), emotional inhibition, aggression control and benign control. The first of these factors measures the tendency to be preoccupied with emotional upset about past or future events, and since the term rehearsal might imply a narrower focus on preparation only for future events, the name of the scale was changed to rumination. As the name implies, emotional inhibition refers to 'bottling up' or inhibiting the expression of experienced emotion, and is thus distinct from the hypothesized emotional arousal or arousability encompassed by neuroticism. The final two scales, aggression control and benign control, are moderately correlated, and appear to form part of the extraversion constellation. For example, benign control correlates substantially with established measures of impulsiveness (Roger & Neshschoever, 1987), and aggression control has been shown to be related to problems of anger management amongst juvenile offenders (McDougall, Venables, & Roger, 1991). All four scales comprised 14 items in the final version of the ECQ.

Subsequent validation studies of the ECQ has shown that scores on the rumination scale are significantly related to delayed heart-rate recovery (Roger & Jamieson, 1988) and elevations in urinary-free cortisol (Roger & Najarian, 1998) following exposure to stress (Roger & Jamieson), which can be explained by sustained activation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis. The role of emotional inhibition in prolonging physiological activation has also been demonstrated by independent studies of delayed muscle tension recovery following stress (Kaiser, Hinton, Krohne, Stewart & Burton, 1995).

More recently, Nolen-Hoeksema and Morrow (1991) developed the Response Styles Questionnaire to assess ruminative responses to negative emotion, and Nolen-Hoeksema, Parker and Larson (1994) showed that rumination was significantly associated with depression amongst a sample of bereaved adults. New scales for assessing emotional expression or inhibition have included the Emotional Expressivity Scale (Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994) and the Interpersonal Trust Questionnaire (ITQ — Forbes & Roger, 1999). Both scales have been extensively validated, and the fear of disclosure subscale from the ITQ in particular has been shown to contribute significantly to deteriorating health status during periods of stress and adaptation.

Emotional response style clearly has important implications for health and social behaviour. However, the scales described above have been developed and validated primarily amongst samples of American or English subjects, and the question of cross-cultural differences has not been explored. There are certainly widely held intuitive notions about cultural differences in emotion and emotional expressivity (e.g. Oatley & Jenkins, 1996), which as Wierzbicka (1994) has pointed out may be a function of social constructions of emotion. By contrast, Shaver, Wu, and Schwartz (1992) have argued for cross-cultural similarities in emotion. These seemingly contradictory views have been reconciled by Ekman's (1972) research on his neurocultural theory, where similarities in emotional displays between different cultures (Japanese and American) were apparent only when the subjects watched emotional film clips on their own; when others were present the Japanese subjects were seen to inhibit their negative expression. Although Ekman's conclusions have been questioned (e.g. Fridlund, 1994), other researchers have shown that, in comparison with American subjects, anger in particular is seen as unacceptable and is controlled in Japanese and other non-Western cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

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