



The Big Five Questionnaire for Children (BFQ-C): A French validation on 8- to 14-year-old children



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ABSTRACT

This study examined the five-factor structure, reliability and validity of the Big Five Questionnaire for Children (BFQ-C) on a French sample of children from 8 to 14 years old. This questionnaire is a self-report measure for assessing the basic personality dimensions of Extraversion/Energy, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism/Emotional instability, and Openness/Intellect (Barbaranelli, Caprara, Rabasca, & Pastorelli, 2003). A sample of 386 children completed the BFQ-C and the HiPIC, as did their parents (for BFQ-C only). Results showed that the BFQ-C had a clear five-factor structure, good internal consistency, and good validity.

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1. Introduction

Describing individual differences in human personality is one of the most important goals carried on by personality psychologists (Hansenne, 2007). Many models have emerged detailing three (Eysenck, 1990), five (Costa & McCrae, 1992), seven (Cloninger, 2008) or sixteen different dimensions (Cattell, 1994).

Even though the debate is not closed, the Five Factor Model (FFM) seems to have reached a consensus to describe the human personality (Digman, 1990). For decades, a great number of authors have agreed to distinguish five superordinate factors, classically named dimensions, although the name of these dimensions may vary among researchers. According to Costa and McCrae, the most common appellation of the big five is: Neuroticism, which refers to a lack of adaptation and emotional stability; Extraversion, which can be defined as sociability, self-confidence and activity; Openness, which concerns intellectual curiosity as well as imagination; Agreeableness, which regards social relations and altruism; and Conscientiousness, which deals with determination, willpower and achievement.

The FFM is particularly useful to describe the relations between personality traits and a great number of other variables such as achievement (Bratko, Chamorro-Premuzic, & Saks, 2006; Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2008; Conard, 2006; Lubbers, Poropat, 2009; Van Der Werf, Kuyper, & Hendriks, 2010; Ziegler, Danay, Schölmacher, & Bühner, 2010), well-being (Weiss, Bates, & Luciano, 2008), courage (Muris, Mayer, & Schubert, 2010), mental health (Van der Linden, Vreeke, & Muris, 2013), locus of control (Rossier, Rigozzi, & Berthoud, 2002),

defence mechanisms (Furnham, 2012), coping strategies (Allen, Frings, & Hunter, 2012), empathy (Del Barrio, Aluja, & Garcia, 2004), self-esteem (Ramsdal, 2008) or emotion regulation (Gresham & Gullone, 2012).

The personality of children, less studied than the adult ones, can also be described with the FFM. This can be done with parent ratings, teacher ratings and less frequently with self-reports. The only available French tool to evaluate these five main factors is the Hierarchical Personality Inventory for Children or HiPIC (Rossier, Quartier, Enescu, & Iselin, 2007), adapted from the Dutch original version (Mervielde & De Fruyt, 2002). It consists of 144 items permitting the emergence of the referred factors, namely Extraversion, Benevolence, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Imagination. However this version was designed for a hetero-evaluation by the parents and the teachers. The authors have also derived a version for an auto-evaluation (Quartier & Rossier, 2008) but it only involves 32 items. In this way some dimensions like imagination or emotional stability are only evaluated from 5 items. That is why it seemed interesting to proceed to the validation in French of the Big Five Questionnaire for Children (BFQ-C), a tool composed of 65 items, with 13 items dedicated to each dimension.

The BFQ-C is not just a simple adaptation of the BFQ for adults (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Perugini, 1993). The authors worked from 285 adjectives on personality traits and asked parents and teachers to choose those describing the children the best, in their opinion. The 104 adjectives thus selected were inserted in sentences describing behaviours, items that were then reduced to 65 after several pilot experiments (Barbaranelli, Caprara, Rabasca, & Pastorelli, 2003).

The BFQ-C appears to be a good candidate to evaluate the personality of children based on the FFM as it has been used successfully in several occasions (Gresham & Gullone, 2012; Muris, Meesters, & Diederens, 2005; Muris et al., 2010; Van der Linden et al., 2013).

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One can find many validations in the Italian (Barbaranelli et al., 2003), Spanish (Ortiz, Tello, & del Barrio Gandara, 2005) or Dutch literature (Muris et al., 2005). There is also a French translation (Bouvard, 2008), but, to our knowledge, there is no French validation.

The aim of the present study is the validation of the BFQ-C based on a French sample of 8- to 14-year-old children.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Three-hundred-and-eighty-six children (178 boys and 208 girls) agreed to respond to the questionnaire. The mean age of pupils was 11.4 years old (SD = 1.9): 49 were 8 year-olds, 58 were 9 year-olds, 51 were 10 year-olds, 69 were 11 year-olds, 76 were 12 year-olds, 41 were 13 year-olds and 42 were 14 year-olds. The 8, 9 and 10 year-olds were in their last three years of primary school and the 11, 12, 13 and 14 year-olds were in their four first years of secondary school. They came from six elementary and two secondary schools near Reims and Paris (France).

All parents agreed to their children's participation, and 378 of them agreed to complete a questionnaire.

2.2. Questionnaires

2.2.1. BFQ-C

The BFQ-C (Barbaranelli et al., 2003) is a 65-item questionnaire based on the five factors model. Each of the five dimensions is then evaluated by 13 items. We used the French translation published by Bouvard (2008).

One set of items assesses Openness/Intellect, which refers to imagination or intellectual curiosity ("I have quite a little imagination"); Conscientiousness deals with attention, willingness to work hard or order ("I do things with much care and attention"); Extraversion/Energy evaluates activity or facility with other people ("I like meeting other people"); Agreeableness concerns friendliness, empathy or kindness ("I share my things with the others"); finally Neuroticism/Emotional instability assesses anxiety, anger or mood ("I get angry for little things"). The same sentences worded in the third person form were used to obtain the parents' ratings.

For each of the 65 items, children and parents rated a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Almost never true") to 5 ("Almost always true"). The children were asked to respond referring to their own behaviour, while the parents were asked to respond referring to their child's behaviour.

2.2.2. HiPIC

The children's version of the Hierarchical Personality Inventory for Children or HiPIC (Quartier & Rossier, 2008) was used to evaluate the convergent validation of the BFQ-C. It is a 32-item questionnaire that evaluates the big five dimensions, namely: Extraversion (6 items), Benevolence (9 items), Conscientiousness (7 items), Emotional stability (5 items) and Imagination (5 items).

According to their behaviour, children were invited to respond to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Not at all") to 5 ("Just like").

2.3. Procedure

After the agreement of the academic inspectors, the school headmasters and the teachers, the parents were given information about the research and were asked for agreement and participation. Parents completed the questionnaire at home and children did it at school.

Table 1

Results of factor analysis of the BFQ-C (principal components with oblimin rotation) only factor loadings > .30 are shown.

	I	II	III	IV	V
<i>Conscientiousness</i>					
3	.40				.36
7	.52				
20				.43	
22	.53				
25	.58				
28	.44				.31
34				.33	
37	.41				
44	.58				
48	.51				
53	.61				
56					
65	.44				
<i>Neuroticism</i>					
4		.61			
6		.47			
8		.46			
15		.72			
17		.59			
29		.59			
31		.56			
39		.42			
41		.45			
49		.59			
54		.46	-.37		
58		.56			
61		.48			
<i>Extraversion</i>					
1			.45		
9			.41		
14	.31		.51		
19			.53		.37
23			.53		
26			.58		
35			.39		
40			.51		
42			.38	.39	
50			.30	.32	
55			.44		
57			.61		
63			.45		.35
<i>Openness</i>					
5				.52	
10				.32	
12				.72	
18				.67	
24	.45				
30				.73	
33	.42				
36	.41				
43			.41		
46				.57	
52	.59			.44	
59			.39		
62				.74	
<i>Agreeableness</i>					
2					.36
11					.47
13			.30		.41
16	.36				.44
21	.35				.40
27					.55
32					.59
38	.35				.49
45	.39				.38
47					.55
51	.45				.49
60					.42
64					.40

Bold in table 1 corresponds to the saturation on the expected factor.

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