



# Measurement of trait emotional intelligence: testing and cross-validating a modified version of Schutte et al.'s (1998) measure

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## Abstract

The Emotional Intelligence (EI) Scale devised by Schutte et al. (1998) is widely used in EI research. There have been criticisms of this scale, mainly related to its preponderance of forward-keyed items; differing results on its factor structure also exist. We investigated the effect on the scale's psychometric properties of reversing some items and adding some new items. The short form of the Bar-On EQ-i was completed by the same group of participants, comprising 500 Canadian undergraduates. The use of item reversals and additional items was found not to improve the EI scale's internal reliability. In contrast to previous studies, only three factors could be identified for the new 41-item scale: Optimism/Mood Regulation, Utilisation of Emotions and Appraisal of Emotions. Overall EI measured using the 41-item scale and the short EQ-i were highly correlated, whilst correlations between the subscales of the two tests were theoretically interpretable.

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## 1. Introduction

The assessment of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a topic of considerable current interest. EI has been characterised by some researchers as a cognitive ability which should be assessed using problem-solving exercises (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000) whilst other researchers have developed an approach to EI assessment based on self-report questionnaires. Petrides and Furnham

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(2000, 2001) have proposed that these two types of measure should be termed ability and trait EI respectively. The relationships between the two methods of EI assessment require further study; unless one assessment method emerges as the dominant paradigm, further separate lines of enquiry on both approaches will also be required. The present work represents some further developments in the study of the assessment of trait EI.

A short 33-item self-report Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) was developed by Schutte et al. (1998) and has subsequently been used in a number of studies (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Bajgar, 2001; Petrides & Furnham, 2000; Saklofske, Austin, & Minski, 2003; Schutte et al., 2001). Interest in this scale has been in part motivated by its relative brevity compared with the main commercial trait EI instrument, the Bar-On EQ-i (1996), which comprises 133 items. Findings from studies of the EIS suggest that it provides a reliable and valid trait EI measure: test–retest and internal reliabilities are good and group differences in scores and correlations with other measures have generally been found to be accordance with theoretical expectations (Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Saklofske et al., 2003; Schutte et al., 1998, 2001). Nonetheless, this scale has been criticised for a lack of reverse-keyed items (Petrides & Furnham, 2000; Saklofske et al., 2003), which could potentially lead to a confounding of EI score with acquiescent responding. Longer questionnaires such as the EQ-i have also addressed this potential problem through the use of Positive and Negative Impression Scales as well as an Inconsistency Index to detect respondents who respond randomly or who contradict themselves. In addition, whilst Schutte et al. (1998) proposed that their scale was a unidimensional EI measure, two separate studies have suggested that there are four sub-factors (Optimism/Mood Regulation, Appraisal of Emotions, Social Skills and Utilisation of Emotions) in addition to an overall EI factor (Petrides & Furnham, 2000; Saklofske et al., 2003). In this context, it is of interest both to study the possibilities for and effects of the inclusion of a higher proportion of reverse-keyed items.

In the present study a modified version of the Schutte EIS was devised containing a higher proportion of reverse-keyed items. Some new items were also added, mainly to target the Utilisation of Emotions factor, which was previously found to be of lower reliability than the other factors (Saklofske et al., 2003). In addition, a cross-comparison with a new short (51-item) version of the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i:S, Bar-On, 2002) was also performed. For the EQ-i:S measure, the reliabilities of overall EI and EI subscales were obtained, allowing its psychometric properties to be compared with those of the original longer version (Bar-On, 1996). Associations between the two EI measures at the scale and sub-scale level were also investigated. These comparisons are of interest since the two scales are based on different theoretical approaches. Bar-On's EI model was derived from an extensive literature review of the key components of emotional functioning (Bar-On, 1997), whereas the Schutte Scale was derived using a three-component model of EI (appraisal/expression of emotions, regulation of emotions and utilisation of emotions) proposed by Salovey and Meyer (1990).

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Participants*

The participants were 500 Canadian undergraduate university students, of whom 329 were female, 169 were male and two did not specify gender. The mean age of the group was 22.8 years, standard deviation 6.0 years.

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