

The person who eases your mind “Ibasyo” and emotional intelligence in interpersonal adaptation

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Abstract: The present study was carried out to examine the effect of the “Ibasyo” (the person who eases one’s mind) and emotional intelligence (EI) on self-esteem and loneliness. Five hundred and eight Japanese undergraduates were asked to choose one of the alternatives (e. g., myself, mother, friend) to answer the question “Who is the person that eases your mind?” Then, they were asked to rate items from scales corresponding to EI, self-esteem and loneliness. Multiple regression analyses indicated that both *Ibasyo* and EI explained 25% of loneliness, but only EI explained 25% of self-esteem. The analyses also showed differences of sub-abilities in EI that determined the level of loneliness and self-esteem among *Ibasyo* groups. These results are interpreted as showing the importance of EI in adaptation.

Key words: *ibasyo*, emotional intelligence, adaptation, self-esteem

Oseba, ki te pomiri “Ibasyo” in emocionalna inteligentnost kot prediktorja prilagojenosti

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Povzetek: Raziskava proučuje pomembnost “*ibasyo*” (osebe, ki te pomiri) in emocionalne inteligentnosti (EI) za samospoštovanje in osamljenost. V raziskavi je sodelovalo 508 Japonskih študentov, ki so morali najprej odgovoriti na vprašanje “Kdo je oseba, ki te pomiri?” tako, da so izbrali eno od alternativ (npr. jaz sam, mama, prijatelj). Nato so izpolnili vprašalnike EI, samospoštovanja in osamljenosti. Regresijska analiza je pokazala, da *Ibasyo* in EI skupaj pojasnjujeta 25 % variance osamljenosti, medtem ko je za samospoštovanje pomembna samo EI, ki sama pojasnjuje 25 % variance. Analiza je tudi pokazala razlike med posameznimi lestvicami EI, ki določajo stopnjo osamljenosti in samospoštovanja med *Ibasyo* skupinami. Rezultati kažejo na pomembnost EI za posameznikovo prilagojenost.

Ključne besede: “*ibasyo*”, čustvena inteligentnost, prilagoditev, samospoštovanje

CC = 3120

Ibasyo is an idiosyncratic word in the Japanese culture, and is defined as the space (e. g., my room), the time (e. g., after dinner) or the person (e. g., my mother) that eases your mind. According to Toyota & Shimazu (2006), the person who eases your mind (PEM) or one feels comfortable with, such as “myself”, “mother”, “father”, “brother”, “sister”, “friend” and so on, is the most critical factor in determining the interpersonal adaptation and satisfaction in daily life. Most of the researches on *Ibasyo* stressed the contrast between “myself” and “others (e. g., mother, father, friend, and so on)”. Namely it is critical whether someone depends on others or not. The oldest research by Kato (1977) examined the answer to the question: “Who is the person one feels comfortable with?”, and indicated that female and male undergraduates select themselves most often, and that females secondly often selected their mothers whereas male undergraduates did their friends. Although there were individual differences in choosing the person that eases your mind, most participants select “myself”, “mother” or “friend” as PEM.

Recently our researches (Okamura & Toyota, 2002; Toyota & Okamura, 2001, 2002) have indicated that PEM is related to interpersonal emotions. Namely, the participants who selected “myself” as PEM (“myself” groups) were inferior in two interpersonal emotions (the level of confidence in others and subjective distance between myself and others) than those who selected “mother” or “friend”.

The previous studies mentioned above suggested that providing the *Ibasyo* as PEM, not as the place or space, was particularly important to students’ adaptation. The influence of PEM on interpersonal emotions was critical but it was mediated by some factors. These studies (Toyota & Shimazu, 2006; Toyota, Oga, & Okamura, 2007) examined the factors that determine the influence of PEM on loneliness as a negative aspect of interpersonal adaptation, and indicated that the emotional intelligence (EI) determined the influence of PEM on loneliness.

More recently, EI has been an interesting topic of research (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004). Salovey and Mayer (1990) proposed that EI was “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p.189). This definition of EI was followed by many other proposals (e.g. Davies, Stankov, & Robert, 1998; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000) which although not identical with each other, contained only minor differences. The common elements of all of the definitions were as follows: an ability to understand one’s own, or others’, emotions or feelings; the ability to express one’s own emotion or feelings; and the ability to regulate or control one’s own emotion or feelings.

Takšić (1998), who developed the Emotional Skills & Competence Questionnaire (ESCQ), also followed the definitions of Salovey and Mayer (1990). Therefore, the ESCQ has three subscales corresponding to the following three sub-abilities: the ability to perceive and understand emotion (PU); the ability to express and label emotion (EL); and the ability to manage and regulate emotion (MR). Based on ESCQ developed by Takšić (1998), Toyota, Morita, and Takšić (2007) have developed the Japanese version of ESCQ.

The present study used J-ESCQ as the measure for assessing EI. If EI has great effect on emotion based on the adaptation for interpersonal relationships, the effect size of PEM on loneliness would depend on the level of EI. It is predicted that students with higher EI levels would be lower in the level of loneliness than those with low EI ones. Toyota (2008) examined this prediction and showed the significant effect of EI on loneliness. However, as mentioned before, EI has three sub-abilities, PU, EL and MR. Among these abilities, MR is the most important to restrain the loneliness, because one has to control or regulate some unpleasant, stressful, or sad events that were the cause of feeling of loneliness by themselves. The ability to regulate or control one's own emotions or feelings about such events, namely MR, would determine the level of loneliness. If so, it is predicted that MR has a significant effect on the level of loneliness. The first purpose of the present study is to examine this prediction.

The previous studies (Toyota, 2005; Toyota et al., 2007) did not examine the positive aspects of adaptation in daily life. Meanwhile, the present study used the self-esteem as an index of positive adaptation. Deci and Ryan (1985) explained the self-esteem in the context of self-determination theory (Vickey, Sepeshri, & Evans, 2008). Namely they suggested that each person's internal standards determined his or her level of self-esteem. If internal standards were critical to self-esteem, it is predicted that the differences in the level of self-esteem would not be observed among "myself", "mother" and "friends" groups, and that EI have significant effects on self-esteem in all of three groups.

Toyota (2008) showed that the effects of EI on the level of loneliness varied among the three groups. Namely the loneliness in myself group was strongly influenced by EI, in contrast to the mother or "friend" groups. However, the individual influences of the three sub-abilities, PU, EL and MR in EI (Takšić, 2001) on loneliness had not been examined. The third purpose of the present study is to examine the differential impacts of the three sub-abilities on loneliness and self-esteem.

Method

Participants

The participants were 508 Japanese undergraduates, 79 of whom were males, 410 were females and 19 were unknown. The mean age was 18.8 ($SD = 0.75$), ranging from 18.0 to 22.6 years old, and belonging to four different universities located in Kansai Area of Japan.

Instruments

Ibasyo Choice Index (ICI). *Ibasyo* (person who eases one's mind) of each participant were assessed by the ICI. This index was developed by Toyota and Okamura

(2002). ICI includes the question, “Who is the person that eases your mind?” and eight alternatives of choice, namely “myself”, “mother”, “father”, “grand father or mother”, “brother or sister”, “friend”, “lovers”, and “others”. Participants were asked to choose one of the eight alternatives as the answer to the previous question.

Japanese version of the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (J-UCLA). This scale was originally developed and revised by Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980). Moroi (1985) developed the Japanese version of this scale with high-schoolers as participants, and then adapted it to undergraduates (Moroi, 1987). This scale consisted of 20 items with a 4-point rating scale, ranging from “never” to “often”, indicating how often participants feel or think about the statement expressed in each item. Moroi (1985, 1987) evidenced the positive correlation of loneliness with social anxiety and the negative correlation with self-esteem. These correlations were regarded as indicators of the concurrent validity of the scale.

Japanese version of Self-esteem Scale (SES). The Japanese version of the self-esteem scale (SES) was adapted from the original one, developed by Rosenberg (1965), by Yamamoto, Matsui, and Yamanari (1982). The SES has 10 items with a 5-point rating scale, from 1 “disagree” to 5 “agree”.

Japanese version of the Emotional Skills and Competence Questionnaire (J-ESCQ). The original version of this scale was developed by Takšić (1998) using Croatian participants and is based on the theoretical framework of the emotional intelligence model (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The original version includes 45 items divided into three subscales mentioned above: (1) PU (e. g., I notice when somebody feels down.), (2) EL (e. g., I am able to express my emotions well), and (3) MR (e. g., I try to keep up a good mood.). Studies using the original version of the ESCQ (Takšić, 2001; 2002; Takšić, Tkalčić, & Brajković, 2001) indicated that the coefficient alphas of the subscales were satisfactory to enable the confirmation of the reliability of the ESCQ. Toyota et al. (2007) used exploratory factor analysis and presented the J-ESCQ. J-ESCQ consisted of eight items per subscale (24 items). The alphas for the three subscales (PU, EL and MR) were .91, .88, and .65, respectively. The present study used J-ESCQ as a tool for measuring the level of EI. Participants rated each item on a 5-point rating scale (“never”, “seldom”, “occasionally”, “usually”, and “always”), indicating how often they feel or think about the statement expressed in each item.

Procedure

Participants in four different classes completed the above mentioned scales in the author and co-researchers classes. Participants were distributed the sheets of paper containing ICI, J-UCLA, SES, and J-ESCQ separately. They were asked to answer each scale following author’s instructions. Four possible order of answering the four scales (ICI, J-UCLA, SES, and J-ESCQ) were assigned for each of the four classes.

Results

Effects of PEM and EI on loneliness and self-esteem

As Toyota (2008) indicated, the participants' choices for each of eight alternatives in ICI were counted. Table 1 indicated the number of each choice. As participants frequently chose the "myself", "mother" and "friend" options, the following analyses were conducted to these three groups. Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the J-UCLA (loneliness), SES (self-esteem) and J-ESCQ (EI) scores for each group. As it was critical whether someone depends on others or not in *Ibasyo* researches, the first main analysis focused on the contrast of "myself" versus "mother" or "friend".

Table 1. *The number of choice for each alternative of ICI*

	myself	mother	father	grandfather or grandmother	brother or sister	friend	lover	others
Male	21	12	3	0	3	25	13	2
Female	48	181	13	10	31	91	32	4
Unknown	7	6	1	0	0	3	2	0
Total	76	199	17	10	34	119	47	6

Table 2. *Scores and their SDs for Loneliness, Self-esteem and EI as a function of group*

	Type of group		
	"myself" <i>N</i> = 76	"mother" <i>N</i> = 199	"friend" <i>N</i> = 119
Loneliness			
<i>M</i>	43.64	35.83	36.26
<i>SD</i>	10.45	8.03	9.39
Self-esteem			
<i>M</i>	29.63	31.09	30.15
<i>SD</i>	8.27	6.86	7.01
EI PU			
<i>M</i>	23.00	23.97	24.10
<i>SD</i>	6.52	5.26	5.51
EI EL			
<i>M</i>	22.70	23.42	23.27
<i>SD</i>	7.44	5.77	6.17
EI MR			
<i>M</i>	25.36	27.13	27.10
<i>SD</i>	5.11	4.12	4.38

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the effects of PEM (“myself” = 1, “mother” and “friend” = -1) and EI on loneliness, and self-esteem, respectively. In each analysis, the EI score was the total one. Table 3 shows the results showing that both of the two factors, namely PEM and EI, have significant effects on loneliness and explain 25% of loneliness variance. Whereas for self-esteem, PEM have no significant effects on it, and only EI explained 25% of self-esteem variance.

Table 3. *Multiple regression analysis on Loneliness and Self-esteem by PEM (myself vs. mother or friend) and EI*

Independent variable	Loneliness		Self-esteem	
	β	t	β	t
PEM	0.28	6.29	-0.01	0.13
EI	-0.40	9.08	0.49	11.30
R	.50		.50	
R^2	.25		.25	
F	68.04***		64.81***	

Effects of PU, EL and MR in EI on loneliness and self-esteem

A multiple regression analyses was performed to determine the effects of PEM (“myself” = 1, “mother” and “friend” = -1) and EI, PU, EL and MR, on loneliness and self-esteem, respectively. Table 4 shows that three factors, PEM, EL and MR, have significant effects on loneliness and explain 29% of loneliness variance. Table 4 also shows that two factors, EL and MR, have significant effects on self-esteem and explain 27% of self-esteem variance. These analyses indicate that PU has no significant effects either on loneliness and self-esteem.

Table 4. *Multiple regression analysis on Loneliness and Self-esteem by PEM (myself vs. mother or friend) and EI (PU, EL and MR)*

Independent variable	Loneliness		Self-esteem	
	β	t	β	t
PEM	0.26	5.94**	-0.00	0.10
EI PU	-0.08	1.74	0.06	1.46
EI EL	-0.15	3.00**	0.35	7.17**
EI MR	-0.32	6.83**	0.23	4.90**
R	.54		.52	
R^2	.29		.27	
F	39.61**		36.67**	

Table 5. Multiple regression analysis on loneliness by EI subscales (PU, EL and MR) in each group

Type of group	"myself"		"mother"		"friend"	
	β	t	β	t	β	t
PU	-0.19	-1.59	-0.00	-0.06	-0.13	-1.53
EL	0.05	0.45	-0.24	-3.09**	-0.24	-3.29**
MR	-0.39	-3.67**	-0.39	-3.67**	-0.29	-3.94**
R	.41	.41	.47	.47	.47	.51
R ²	.17	.17	.21	.21	.21	.24
F	6.19***	15.87***	18.11***	27.30***	13.35	18.66***

Table 6. Multiple regression analysis on self-esteem by EI subscales (PU, EL and MR) in each group

Type of group	"myself"		"mother"		"friend"	
	β	t	β	t	β	t
PU	0.23	2.20*	-0.05	-0.73	0.12	1.40
EL	0.30	2.85**	0.39	5.20***	0.38	5.24**
MR	0.33	3.38**	0.18	2.43*	0.17	2.35*
R	.60	.49	.49	.49	.54	.53
R ²	.34	.23	.23	.23	.27	.27
F	13.71***	20.74	30.93***	15.88***	22.64***	

Effects of PU, EL and MR in EI on loneliness and self-esteem in each of PEM groups

To examine the differences of the effect of PU, EL and MR on loneliness and self-esteem among “myself”, “mother”, and “friend” groups, a multiple regression analysis was performed to each of these groups. The results on loneliness are shown in Table 5. For the “myself” group, only MR explained 17% of loneliness variance. Whereas for “mother” and “friend”, both factors, EL and MR, explained 21% and 24% of loneliness variances, respectively. The results about self-esteem are shown in Table 6. For the “myself” group, each of the three subscales, PU, EL and MR have significant effects on self-esteem and explained 34% of self-esteem variance in all. Whereas for “mother” and “friend” one, both factors, EL and MR, explained 23% and 27% of self-esteem variances, respectively.

Discussion

The first purpose of the present study was to examine the prediction that MR has a significant effect on the level of loneliness. Consistent with this prediction, the results showed that MR predicted the level of loneliness in all of the three PEM groups. Although Toyota (2008) indicated the importance of EI on loneliness, the present study showed that MR was especially critical to the level of loneliness. As predicted, the ability to regulate or control emotion about some events has a function to restrain the level of loneliness. However, not only MR but also EL has significant effects on loneliness. This result suggests that the ability to express and label emotions has also an important function to restrain the level of loneliness. Someone with higher EL could express his or her emotions, in turn expression of his or her emotion would lead to reduction in loneliness. Previous studies (Toyota, 2008; Toyota et al., 2007) had indicated the difference between “myself” group and “mother” or “friend” groups. The consistency among these researches strongly supports that it is critical whether someone depends on others or not in adaptation.

The second purpose of the present study was to examine the prediction that the differences in the level of self-esteem would not be observed among “myself”, “mother” and “friends” groups, and that EI has a significant effect on self-esteem in all these groups. The results supported the above mentioned prediction. The level of self-esteem did not vary among the three groups but EI has a significant effect on self-esteem. These results could be explained in a way that self-esteem was determined by internal standard (Deci & Ryan, 1985), whereas for loneliness as mentioned above, social standards (namely the dependence on others) determine the level of it (Toyota, 2005; Toyota et al., 2007). Contrary to loneliness, EL has larger effect on self-esteem than MR. This suggests that the ability to express and label emotion led to higher self-esteem. In real situation with others, it is possible that expressing his

or her emotion to others brought the confidence of his or her ability to him or her. Such confidence would lead to higher self-esteem.

The third purpose of the present study was to compare the effects of three sub-abilities of EI on loneliness and self-esteem among the three groups. Toyota (2008) indicated that "myself" groups was strongly influenced by EI contrasted to "mother" or "friend" groups. In the present study, although the effect size of EI (total of PU, EL and MR) did not varied among the three groups, the differences of sub-ability that was critical to loneliness and self-esteem were observed. Namely for the loneliness, only MR had a significant effect in "myself" group, but both of EL and MR have significant effects in "mother" and "friend" groups. These results strongly suggested the importance of ability to regulate or control emotion of one's own, especially in "myself" group.

For self-esteem, all the sub-abilities, PU, EL and MR, had significant effects in "myself" group, but EL and MR had effects in "mother" and "friend" groups only. Fujiwara (1981) indicated that Japanese adolescents with higher self-esteem have lower level of social anxiety. According to Fujiwara's suggestion, the results were interpreted as follows: as the participants in "myself" group have no person who eases their mind, they might feel social anxiety for others more often than those in "mother" or "friend" groups. In such situation, perceiving and understanding others' emotions would be great help to reduce the social anxiety. The reduced anxiety, in turn, would lead to self-confidence in relation to others. This self-confidence could lead to higher self-esteem. The participants in "mother" and "friend" groups have the person who eases their mind. So they were not so anxious about others, in comparison with "myself" group. Therefore their self-esteem was determined by internal standard produced by EL and MR. Namely they might be considered as the persons that could express and regulate their emotion excellently.

Finally, there was differences of determinants for interpersonal adaptation (The present study used loneliness and self-esteem as index of adaptation) between "myself" and "mother" or "friend" groups. As loneliness is one of the main topic in adolescence (Uruk & Demir, 2003), so many researches were conducted to find the critical factors for loneliness (Deniz, Hamarta, & Ari, 2005; DiTommaso, Bran-nen-McNulty, Ross, & Burgess, 2003). But they only showed the factor that have relations with loneliness, but did not show the suggestion for reduction of loneliness (Toyota, 2008). The present study leads to one of the unique suggestion, indicating that it is not critical to enhance the total level of EI but to concentrate to enhance the level of MR. As it is a task for the present study to provide the precise educational suggestion to enhance the level of MR, we would like to introduce Toyota and Shimazu (2006). They examined the relationships among the perceived experiences of contingency, EI and self-esteem, and indicated that the perceived experiences of contingency enhanced the level of MR in EI, which in turn led to higher self-esteem. Contingent experience is one of the most successful predictors. If someone made effort to the goal, the effort brought success to him or her. The result of Toyota and

Shimazu (2006) research provided us useful suggestion about enhancing level of MR. Namely we should provide the opportunity to feel the contingency in the activity to the participants in educational program. Flexible utilization of such educational program is necessary to be established in further investigation.

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