

# THE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE EMOTIONAL ENTITLEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE (EEQ)

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## Abstract

Beliefs about what one is entitled to emotionally may make a unique contribution to emotional and interpersonal experiences. In the current study we introduce the concept of emotional entitlement, the degree to which people believe they have the right to experience different emotions (e.g., the right to feel happy, angry etc.). Our aim was to develop and validate the emotional entitlement questionnaire (EEQ). In a series of 3 studies, we constructed and validated a 3-factor, 15-item emotional entitlement questionnaire (EEQ), in Hebrew and in English: emotional entitlement to positive emotions (EEP), to negative emotions (EEN), and the maladaptive aspect of emotional entitlement which we termed uncompromised emotional entitlement (EEU). Different dimensions of the EEQ were related to different levels of life satisfaction and loneliness. The results indicate that emotional entitlement is a multidimensional construct and that the EEQ is a reliable and valid tool with good psychometric properties and that overall, we would suggest that EEP represents an adaptive aspect of emotional entitlement, EEU represents a maladaptive aspect, and EEN has both adaptive and maladaptive aspects.

**Keywords:** *Emotional entitlement, emotions, factor analysis, scale.*

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## 1. Introduction and objectives

Emotions are central to human functioning, influencing thoughts and actions across various life domains (McRae & Gross, 2020). To better navigate emotions, it is suggested that individuals should acknowledge and accept their right to experience positive and negative emotions rather than dismissing them (McRae & Gross, 2020). This paper introduces a new concept, *emotional entitlement*—the belief that one has the right to experience a full range of emotions, including happiness, anger, and sadness.

Drawing on research on general entitlement (Zemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2015) and beliefs about emotions (Ford & Gross, 2019), emotional entitlement is proposed as a multidimensional construct potentially linked to emotional processes, interpersonal dynamics, and well-being (Edwards & Wupperman, 2019). This paper introduces and validates the Emotional Entitlement Questionnaire (EEQ), designed to assess adaptive and maladaptive aspects of emotional entitlement across both positive and negative emotions.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Materials and procedure

**Study 1:** Two hundred participants were recruited through convenience sampling via social networks and completed an online survey after providing informed consent. A 41-item Hebrew Emotional Entitlement Questionnaire (EEQ) was developed and refined to 25 items with input from social psychology experts. A 15-item, 3-factor version of the EEQ was finalized in Hebrew.

**Study 2:** Total of 672 participants were recruited via social networks to complete the 15-item EEQ derived from Study 1. Test-retest reliability was assessed one month later with 518 participants.

**Study 3:** Four hundred ninety-five participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants completed the English version of the 15-item EEQ, translated using a back-translation method. To assess convergent and divergent validity, participants also completed the **Entitlement Questionnaire – Short Form** (Zemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2015), **Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS)** (Watson et al., 1988), and **Interpersonal Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (IER)** (Williams et al., 2018). To explore the predictive value of the EEQ dimensions, participants also completed the **Life Satisfaction Scale**

(SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985), **Loneliness Scale** (De Jong Gierveld & Kamphuis, 1985) and Sociodemographic data, including gender, age, and years of education, were collected in all studies.

### 3. Results

In the first study, we constructed a 3-factor, 15-item emotional entitlement questionnaire (EEQ), in Hebrew. Factor analysis revealed a 3-factor structure of emotional entitlement to positive emotions (EEP), to negative emotions (EEN), and the maladaptive aspect of emotional entitlement which we termed uncompromised emotional entitlement (EEU) with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  .85–.88. The second study, replicated this 3-factor structure in a new independent sample and established test-retest reliability. EEU showed the highest stability (ICC = 0.85), followed by the EEN (ICC=0.75) and the EEP (ICC=0.62). Initial validity was established showing that the three subscales of the EEQ were related to but different from the measure of global sense of entitlement, positive and negative affect, and interpersonal emotion regulation ( $.01 < r < .56$ ).

In the third study, it was found that the three dimensions of the EEQ were related to life satisfaction and loneliness, above and beyond global entitlement. Mediation model indicated that EEP predicted higher levels of IER ( $\beta=.46^{**}$ ), which in turn predicted more positive emotions ( $\beta=.07^{*}$ ) and lower levels of loneliness ( $\beta=-.38^{**}$ ). Moderation model indicated that EEU was positively associated with loneliness,  $b = .16^{**}$ , IER was negatively associated with loneliness,  $b = -.12$ , and that IER significantly moderated the association between EEU and loneliness,  $b = -.06^{**}$  whereas the association between EEU and loneliness was positively significant for low ( $b = .26^{**}$ ) and medium ( $b = .16^{**}$ ) levels of IER, it was not significant for high levels of IER ( $b = .05$ ).

### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The findings suggest that emotional entitlement is a multidimensional construct and that the EEQ is a reliable and valid measure with strong psychometric properties. This scale evaluates beliefs about entitlement to positive emotions, negative emotions, and uncompromised emotional entitlement. The EEP subscale reflects an adaptive aspect of emotional entitlement, linked to lower loneliness and higher life satisfaction. Conversely, the EEU subscale captures a maladaptive aspect, associated with increased loneliness. The EEN subscale may reflect maladaptive tendencies depending on specific conditions, warranting further investigation in future research.

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