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THE PSYCHOMETRIC FEATURES OF THE QUIET EGO SCALE AND THE CONSTRUCT VALIDITY OF THE QUIET EGO

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Abstract

The concept of quiet ego is conceived as a personal identity that transcends selfishness without ignoring personal interest at the same time. It is measured through a scale consisting of 14 items. The limited scope of research on this concept in psychological literature, as well as the absence of research for the Macedonian population, is the main motive for this research. This research aims to examine the psychometric properties of the *Quiet Ego Scale* and the validity of the construct of *Quiet Ego* (Quiet Ego Scale, Waymet, Bauer & Slaskia, 2014). Two studies were conducted for the purposes of the study. The first study is a correlational one, in which, in addition to the Quiet Ego Measurement Scale, instruments for measuring of narcissism (Narcissism Measurement Inventory, Raskin & Terry, 1988) and of empathy (Toronto Empathy Questionnaire, Spreng et al, 2009) are been set. In this study the analysis of the main components also take part. The results have shown that the Quiet Ego Scale has satisfactory internal homogeneity and a factor structure that confirms the theoretical solution of the construct, as well as a significant correlation with concepts similar and contrary to the researched concept. Using an experimental design, in the second study the levels of narcissism and empathy were manipulated (increased narcissism vs. reduced narcissism and increased empathy versus reduced empathy), in order to investigate the impact of different levels of narcissism and empathy on the level of quiet ego. The results of the second study confirmed the relationship between quiet ego, narcissism and empathy and justification for using the construct of the quiet ego.

Keywords: quiet ego, psychometric features, validity, empathy, narcissism

Introduction

Bauer and Wayment (Bauer & Wayment, 2008) introduce the concept of *quiet ego* in psychology, in order to describe a model that will cover a real image of themselves and the balance between awareness of their own needs and their satisfaction on the one hand, as well as the needs of others and the level of satisfaction, on the other. This concept is conceived as a personal identity that transcends egoism, without simultaneously ignoring self-interest. The quiet ego is described as quieting the ego so that a person can hear others as themselves, in an attempt to live more humanely and sympathetically (Bauer & Wayment, 2008). The terms *ego*-quieting and *quiet ego* arise precisely from the need to name *the process* of overcoming selfishness, as well as the *state in* which egoism is silenced or reduced at the individual and collective level (Wayment & Bauer, 2017). The concept of *quiet ego* integrates several concepts of positive psychology, for which there is evidence that they have a positive role in mental well-being, but which have not been recognized so far as components of one common concept (Wayment, Bauer & Sylaska, 2014).

The concept of quiet ego refers to personal identity in which there is a place for personal interests and needs, but also for the needs of others. The quiet ego is the balance between selfishness and self-esteem. It is a self-identity that includes others without losing itself. The term *quiet* refers to the constructive quietness of the ego, which allows a person to hear both their own and other people's needs.

Contrary to the quiet ego is the *loud* ego, whose voice basically needs attention and from whose loudness it is impossible to hear others, to see their needs, to understand their worldview (Bauer & Wayment, 2008). The quiet ego, compared to the loud ego, is more balanced in assessing personal strengths and weaknesses, which in turn represents a step towards personal growth, towards greater compassion and better understanding of oneself and others. The loud ego implies a focus exclusively on it's own need at a certain point, that needs to be satisfied immediately, even to the detriment of ones` own goals in the long term. The loud ego focuses on the immediate effects of activity, such as preserving the positive image of oneself or one owns social status. If the loud ego is aimed at long-term goals, that focus is on material or social progress (increasing of material wealth or improving the social status), not on personal growth and development (Mor & Winguist, 2002).

The loud ego is close to narcissism (Boin, & Voci, 2019) and is characterized by unrealistically high self-confidence, a spectacular perception of ones` own importance, followed by the need for attention, approval and confirmation of its own dominance (Campbell, & Buffardi, 2008). People with these characteristics are confident that they deserve special treatment, because they experience themselves as special and unique. It may seem that these positive perceptions of themselves may be positively related to personal well-being – but it is only an illusion (Robins & Beer, 2001), because when confronting the unrealistic image of oneself, negative emotional states occur, which sometimes imply even aggressiveness towards others (Baumeister, Smart & Boden, 1996).

The quiet ego consists of four components (Wayment & Bauer, 2017). The first component is *detached awareness*, which refers to focusing on the present moment, to perceiving and interpreting the present situation, freed from the weight of previous experience and personal expectations of what people or events should be like. Perceiving the situation without judgment about it enables the quieting of the ego (objective awareness).

The second component is *inclusive identity*. It refers to an identity that includes others. It implies perceiving and accepting, first of all, of the similarities between people, and not primarily between their differences. It implies an increased level of compassion and cooperation with others.

The third component is *to take a perspective*, which implies an opportunity to understand the point of view of others, to be empathic and altruistic.

The fourth component is *growth* and it implies perception of situations as an opportunity for personal growth and personal development in the long term.

Structural components of the quiet ego



These four components contribute to a personal orientation towards balancing between themselves and others, as well as to psychological development of themselves and others. The quiet ego interprets and evaluates itself and others through balancing and growing. Balancing implies caring for yourself and others, and growing up refers to both your own psychological growth and the psychological growth of others (Bauer & Wayment, 2008).

Research overview

Problem and aim of the research

The concept of *quiet ego* is from a more recent date in psychology. A limited extent of research on the quiet ego in the world is known so far, and empirical research on this concept is absent in Macedonian context. Hence the need for this research. Its aims are to investigate the psychometric characteristics of the Macedonian adaptation of the Quiet Ego Scale, i.e. to research the structure of the Quiet Ego Scale by analyzing the items and the main components, as well as to investigate the construct validity by comparing the concept of quiet ego with similar (empathy) and opposed (narcissism) concepts. Furthermore, this research aims to experimentally verify that there is an impact of narcissism and empathy on the quiet ego. Therefore, the problem in the study is formulated through the question: *Does the level of quiet ego depend on the level of narcissism and empathy?* The presumed answer to the problem in the study is formulated through the hypothesis: *If the level of narcissism increases, then the level of quiet ego will be reduced, and if empathy levels increase, then the level of quiet ego will increase*. *If narcissism levels decrease, then the level of quiet ego will increase, i.e. if empathy levels increase then the level of quiet ego will increase.*

Two studies have been conducted within this study: correlational and experimental. The first study, the correlational, questioned the reliability and construct validity of the Quiet Ego Scale, while the second study used an experimental design, within which the levels of narcissism and empathy have been manipulated, in order to determine the impact of different levels of narcissism and empathy.

Study 1

Participants. In the first study, a convenient sample has been used consisting of 213 students from different faculties (the Institute for Social Work and Social Policy, the Institute for Psychology and the Institute for Special Education from the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, the Faculty of Tourism in Ohrid, the Faculty of Education in Bitola). Of them, 32 respondents were male, and 181 were female, aged 18 to 49, with an average age M= 21.91.

Procedure. The survey has been conducted from March to May 2022, electronically through the Google Forms program. The respondents were given information about the subject and objectives of the research, as well as instructions for filling in each of the instruments. Anonymity was guaranteed by excluding the possibility of collecting e-mail addresses from respondents. Data were collected by sharing a call to participate in the survey followed by a link to the electronic version of the instruments.

Instruments. The Quiet Ego Scale (Bauer & Wayment, 2015) was used to measure the quiet ego. It consists of a total of 14 items answered on a five point Likert scale (from "1" almost always, to "5" indicating almost never). The highest score is 74 and the lowest is 14. A higher score indicates a higher level of suppressed ego. The measure of internal consistency of the sample from this research is α=0.65.

Narcissism was measured using a shortened version of the *Narcissism Measuring Inventory* (Raskin & Terry, 1988) consisting of 16 dichotomously formulated items. The lowest

score is zero and the highest score is 16. A higher score indicates a higher level of narcissism. The measure of internal consistency of the sample from this research is α=0.60.

For measuring the empathy, the *Toronto Empathy Questionnaire* (Spreng et al, 2009) has been used, which has 16 items answered on a five point Likert scale (1 never, 2 rarely, 3 sometimes, 4 often and 5 always). The lowest score is 16 and the highest score is 80. A higher score indicates a higher level of empathy. The measure of internal consistency of the sample from this research is α=0.64.

Display and interpretation of results

Descriptive statistics of the variables within the survey (lowest and highest score, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics for the variables within the survey N=213

	Min	**Max**	**M**	**SD**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**Cronbach`s α**
Quiet Ego	33	70	49.71	6.18	.190	.546	.650
Narcissism	0	14	5.29	2.88	.600	.203	.626
Empathy	36	75	56.73	7.94	-.026	-.661	.638

Regarding the distribution, from the shown results of skewness and kurtosis, it can be concluded that quiet ego and narcissism are normally distributed with a higher concentration of the scores around the arithmetic mean. Empathy has a negative skewness, which means that most respondents are concentrated on the right side of the distribution, that is, they have mostly higher scores. At the same time, empathy has a negative kurtosis, which indicates that its distribution is platykurtic, that is, its scores are scattered throughout the distribution, without a greater concentration around the arithmetic mean. Regarding the average values, the average value of the scale for measuring the quiet ego is relatively high, that is, it is higher than the theoretical average value, while the average value of the scale for measuring narcissism is lower than the theoretical average value. The results obtained from the descriptive analysis show that the three instruments used in the research have acceptable values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach's α), which indicates an acceptable internal homogeneity of the scales.

In order to check the internal structure of the Quiet Ego Scale, a principal components analysis has been performed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was .67, while the Bartlett's test of sphericity value was statistically significant ($\chi 2 = 533.676$, $df = 91$, $p < .001$), indicating that the factor analysis criterion was met.

Table 2

Characteristics of the individual items of the Quiet Ego Scale

Item	M	SD	Total r of that item	α without that item
1	4.71	.599	1.154	.650
2	3.41	1.177	1.138	.606
3	3.41	1.115	.764	.613
4	4.10	.951	1.061	.626
5	4.61	.723	1.154	.643
6	2.86	1.232	1.138	.612
7	2.80	1.193	.764	.612
8	3.32	1.194	1.061	.615
9	4.47	.792	1.154	.656
10	3.15	1.350	1.138	.629
11	2.70	1.154	.764	.671
12	3.61	1.138	1.061	.614
13	4.25	.764	1.154	.650
14	1.72	1.061	1.138	.651

Table 3

Factor saturation of the Quiet Ego Scale items with an orthogonally Varimax rotated matrix

Item	1	2	3	4
1				.382
2		.718		
3			.807	
4	.762			
5	.456			
6		.792		
7			.650	
8	.717			
9				.787
10		.716		
11	.421			
12			.719	
13	.648			
14				-.765

From table 3 it can be seen that all items have satisfactory factor saturation greater than .30. The factor structure with the method of principal components extracted 4 factors, which coincides with the factor model proposed by the authors of the Quiet Ego Scale. The isolated 4 factors explain 53.71% of the total variance, which is considered an acceptable proportion.

Table 4 shows the correlations between the variables: quiet ego, narcissism, and empathy.

Table 4.
Correlations between variables in the research

	Quiet ego	Narcissism	Empathy
Quiet ego	1		
Narcissism	-.136*	1	
Empathy	.307**	.009	1

The results shown in Table 4 show a significant positive correlation between the quiet ego and empathy (r=.307; p<0.01). The quiet ego is significantly negatively related to narcissism (r=-.136; p<0.05). The results for the association of the quiet ego with empathy and with narcissism indicate that with an increase in empathy, the quiet ego also increases, and with an increase in narcissism, the level of the quiet ego decreases.

Study 2

Participants. In the second research, a convenient sample consisting of 112 respondents, all students from the Faculty of Security, was used. Of them, 73 respondents were female, and 39 respondents were male. The respondents were between the ages of 18 and 44, with an average age M=21.07.

Instruments and procedure. In this study, the quiet ego was measured under conditions where narcissism and empathy were intentionally manipulated (high vs. low narcissism; high vs. low empathy). Narcissism and empathy were manipulated through different instructions given to subjects. Namely, subjects were randomly given half a page of text with one of four different instructions: to decrease narcissism, to increase narcissism, to decrease empathy, and to increase empathy. The purpose of this manipulation was to test the hypothesis that a higher level of narcissism causes a decrease in the level of quiet ego, a lower level of narcissism causes an increase in the level of quiet ego. At the same time, the hypothesis that a higher level of empathy increases the level of quiet ego and a lower level of empathy decreases the level of quiet ego was also tested. The instructions were created for the needs of this research and they were inserted in the introductory part, immediately after the given instructions for giving answers to the measuring instruments included in the research. Before starting to answer the measuring instruments, all participants had to read half a page of text that differed for each of the four groups. The group with increased narcissism received a text emphasizing the role of each young individual as a key actor in the future of the society. The group in which narcissism was reduced received a text that emphasized the equality of all people and minimized interpersonal differences. The group that increased empathy contained text that emphasized the importance of closeness, caring, and warmth in relationships with others. The empathy-decreasing group received text that emphasized individual responsibility for one's own life and the primary role of self-care over caring for others. After the instructions, all subjects were given three measuring instruments: the Quiet Ego Scale, the Narcissism Inventory and the Empathy Scale. In doing so, account was taken of the order of giving the measuring instruments. The groups that contained instructions to increase narcissism, that is, to decrease empathy, first responded to the Narcissism Inventory, while the groups that received instructions to decrease narcissism, that is, to increase empathy, were first given the Empathy Scale.

The research was conducted during the exam period as well as during the period of regular lectures of the students from the Faculty of Security. The period of data collection was from June to October 2022, at the Faculty of Security in Skopje. The participants were familiar with the objectives of the research, that is, that it is a question of research that is carried out

within the framework of doctoral studies. The questionnaires were anonymous. Only those questionnaires that were completely answered were taken for processing the results.

Presentation and interpretation of results

The results obtained from the descriptive analysis of the second study are shown in Table 5.

Table 5.
Descriptive statistics for the variables within the research for all respondents N=112

	Min	**Max**	**M**	**SD**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**Cronbach`s α**
Quiet ego	22	68	46.79	7.36	-.378	.671	.732
Narcissism	0	12	5.14	2.95	.501	.501	
Empathy	44	74	59.51	8.32	-.222	-.472	

Regarding the distribution, from the shown results of skewness and kurtosis, it can be concluded that narcissism is normally distributed with a higher concentration of the scores around the arithmetic mean. Quiet ego and empathy have a negative skewness, which means that most respondents are concentrated on the right side of the distribution, that is, there are mostly higher scores for these variables. At the same time, empathy has a negative kurtosis, which indicates that its distribution is platykurtic, that is, its scores are scattered throughout the distribution, without a greater concentration around the arithmetic mean. A scale for measuring the quiet ego in the second study has a Cronbach's coefficient (Cronbach`s α = .732) indicating a high internal homogeneity of the scale (higher compared to the first study).

The results obtained from the descriptive analysis of the second study are shown in Table 6.

Table 6.
Arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the dependent variable quiet ego in conditions of manipulated independent variables

Groups	**M**	**SD**	**N**
1 Increased narcissism	42.40	7.46	25
2 Reduced narcissism	48,48	7.12	31
3 Increased empathy	48.26	6.26	27
4 Reduced empathy	47.17	6.73	29
Total			112

Table 7.
ANOVA

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Treatments	700.462	3	233.487	4.753	.004
Inside	5305.815	108	49.128		
Total	6006.277	111			

The results obtained from data processing with the ANOVA method show a statistically significant Fisher's statistic F(3)=4.753, p<.005, which means that the null hypothesis can be rejected and the hypothesis that if the level of narcissism increases will decrease the level of quiet ego, and if the level of empathy decreases, the level of lent ego will increase, as well as, if the level of narcissism decreases, the level of quiet ego will increase, that is, if the level of empathy increases, the level will increase of quiet ego.

Discussion

The results of the first study should also be interpreted in terms of the characteristics of the sample included in the research. Namely, most of the sample in the first study consists of respondents from the supporting study areas (special education, psychology, social work and social policy) where the respondents expectedly show a higher level of empathy, compared to their colleagues from the non-assisting study areas.

The empirical analysis of the data obtained with the Quiet Ego Scale shows that it is, in general, usable in the Macedonian context, because it has an acceptable internal homogeneity and factor structure as defined by its authors. At the same time, the results of the second study showed an acceptable validity of the concept of quiet ego itself. It is recommended to repeat the research in the future on a larger sample and on a sample of a larger age range.

The quiet ego as a concept that refers to the personal identity that includes others, without losing oneself, is inevitably related to two other important concepts in psychology: empathy and narcissism. Empathy refers to the capacity of a person to understand the needs, emotions and thoughts of others, that is, the ability of a person to take the position of other people. The quiet ego, as a four-component structure, includes a part called perspective taking, which refers precisely to the possibility of a person to understand and to experience the experiences and thoughts of another person. Empathy is the basis of successful interpersonal relationships, without which the experience of closeness and connection with another person is not possible. In that sense, the research findings are congruent with the conceptual relationship of the quiet ego and empathy.

Opposite to quietness as one pole of the quiet ego variable is the loud ego, which is conceptually close to narcissism. Namely, the loud ego consists of a grandiose perception of one's own importance and unrealistically high self-esteem, which is followed by a need for attention, approval and confirmation of one's own dominance (Campbell & Buffardi, 2008). Hence, the results obtained in the first study of the research, which refer to the significant negative association between the quiet ego and narcissism, confirm the assumptions that the possession of an extremely high need for attention and a grandiose positive self-image are exclusive to the quiet ego.

Conclusion

The concept of the quiet ego in psychology refers to the balance between egoism and self-silence, that is, to the personal identity in which there is a place for both personal interests and needs, as well as for the needs of others. The scale that measures the quiet ego has an acceptable internal homogeneity and a factor structure identical to that defined by the authors of this concept and is applicable in the Macedonian context.

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