The Relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and EFL Learners' Speaking Achievement

Houssam MERMOUL[1]*

Imene BILOUK [2]

[1] Ali Lounici, Blida 2 (Algeria),

eh.mermoul@univ-blida2.dz

[2] Ali Lounici, Blida 2 (Algeria),

i.bilouk@univ-blida2.dz

Research Laboratory: Linguistique et Sociodidactique du Pluriliniguisme

ABSTRACT

The present study purports to explain the nature of the relationship between trait emotional intelligence (TEI) and EFL learners' speaking achievement. It sets out to explore the predictive ability of trait emotional intelligence in the achievement of speaking pertinent to third year EFL learners at the University Center of Mila in Algeria. Besides, it aims at examining the correlation between the four factors of trait emotional intelligence (well-being, adaptability, self-control, and sociability) and speaking results. To these ends, a quantitative approach to the collection and analysis of data is adopted. Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue- SF) and students' speaking exam scores were utilized as research tools through which the study, at issue, is undertaken. The results obtained from the simple linear regression analysis indicated that trait emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of speaking achievement. In the same line, the results of the Pearson Correlation Test revealed that the four factors of trait emotional intelligence are positively correlated with the achievement in speaking. Ultimately, the yielded results imply that prominence needs to be attributed to the concept of trait emotional intelligence in the teaching of speaking and in future research related to language teaching.

Keywords: trait emotional Intelligence; speaking achievement; correlation; factors of trait emotional intelligence; predictor.

* Corresponding author

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INTRODUCTION

A surfeit of research agendas has continually accounted for the most vital elements that are likely to have positive bearings on the process of language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). As long as the latter is concerned, the speaking skill is arguably one salient component of learners' competence which lends itself to much attention among researchers in the field (Thornbury, 2005). In order for learners to become high achievers in such a crucial skill, affective factors cannot be overlooked being largely acknowledged as one determining factor in every skill honing process (Benesch, 2012). In this respect, the concept of trait emotional intelligence (TEI) has recently gained currency, and it has been introduced as a type of intelligence that goes against the conceptualizations of traditional cognitive intelligence (Petrides & Furnham, 2000). It is a construct that has closely been linked to achievement in various fields including language learning and the skills pertinent to it (Chen, Zhang, Lin, & Li, 2021). A palpable dearth is, however, noticed with regard to the relationship that conjoins trait emotional intelligence and the speaking skill of EFL learners in the Algerian context, which is the main motive of carrying out the current research.

In an attempt to contribute to filling in this gap, the current research is devised with the purpose of answering the following research questions:

1) What is the profile of Trait emotional intelligence of third-year EFL learners at the University Center of Mila?

2) Is trait emotional intelligence a predictor of EFL learners' speaking achievement?

3) How correlated are trait emotional intelligence factors (well-being, adaptability, sociability and self-control) and achievement in speaking?

2. Review of the Literature

2.1 Emotional Intelligence (EI)

In his milestone book "*Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*", the American psychologist Daniel Goleman paved the way for propagating the concept of emotional intelligence as a remedy leading to

success in every domain (Zeidner & Matthews, 2018). By way of elaboration, Goleman (1996) argued that people's emotional quotient (EQ) has a more important role to play in comparison with their intelligence quotient (IQ) which cannot be the only predictor of success. The concept of emotional intelligence is commonly referred to as the ability of understanding one's emotions and others' emotions in addition to managing the use of this understanding in favor of generating positive thinking (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). According to Bar-On, EI is to be described as "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (1997, p. 14). The wide variety of definitions that are linked to the concept indicates the existence of different models of emotional intelligence which diverge on a variety of accounts (Zeidner & Matthews, 2018).

In essence, there are two main approaches to the study of EI namely, ability and trait models of emotional intelligence. The ability model (AEI) defines the concept in terms of cognitive abilities (perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions and managing emotions) that can only be assessed through veridical tests such as the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). As regards the trait model, EI is far removed from being a cognitive ability; it rather falls within the orbits of the personality domain as advocated in the subsequent account.

2.2 Trait Emotional Intelligence

The theory of trait emotional intelligence construes emotional intelligence as a set of personality facets which embodies the subjectivity of the human emotional experience (Petrides, 2010). It found inception in the demarcation between TEI and AEI in the sense that trait emotional intelligence focuses on consistencies that are demonstrated in behaviors such as empathy and optimism, while ability EI is concerned with information processing abilities such as the ability to identify and express emotions (Petrides & Fuenham, 2000). In a widely acknowledged definition, (Petrides, Trait Emotional Intelligence Theory, 2010) introduced TEI as "a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies". This goes in conformity with what (Austin, 2018) posits about the construct, indicating that supporters of TEI agree on conceptualizing it as a dispositional trait that belongs to the emotion-related facets of the personality field (Petrides, Pita, &

Kokkinaki, 2007).

In his well-known model, Petrides (2001) conceptualizes TEI as a set of 15 facets which can be categorized into four salient categories termed as trait emotional intelligence factors. It is worth mentioning that there are two facets, namely adaptability and self-motivation, which do not fall under any of the four factors; they are, rather, included within the global trait emotional intelligence level (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018). The rest are keyed as follows:

1) Emotionality: empathy, emotion perception, emotion expression, relationships.

2) Sociability: emotion management, assertiveness, social awareness.

3) Well-Being: self-esteem, happiness, optimism.

4) Self-Control: emotion regulation, impulse control, stresses management.

Shuttes et al (1998) postulate that EI can be assessed through the use of self-report tests presuming that people are adequately aware of their emotional state and functioning (as cited in (Zeidner & Matthews, 2018)). Thus, the process of measuring emotional intelligence is predominantly contingent on the use of self-report questionnaires such as Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue), Wong and Law EI Scale (WLEIS), and the Emotional Intelligence Quotient Inventory (EQ. I 2.0) (Austin, 2018). Notwithstanding its being criticized by many scholars who raised the issue of personal bias in such type of measurement (Zeidner & Matthews, 2018), there are firm grounds to its use in research as several studies were presented to confirm the validity of trait emotional intelligence as a personality-related construct (Petrides et al., 2007).

2.3. EFL Learners' Speaking Skill

It cannot be denied that the speaking skill holds an essential place in the language learning enterprise (Harmer, 2007). It is a productive skill by which most of learners' language performance is judged (Brown & Yule, 1983). As put by Brown (1994), speaking refers to an interactive process which involves the construction of meaning by means of the production, receival and processing of information. In the same line, Quianthy deems speaking a process of oral transmission of ideas in a multiplicity of contexts (1990). This is to denote that this skill requires one to produce given instances of oral language on the basis of the appropriate situations to which these instances fit.

According to Harris (1974), the overall speaking skill is made up of five main components which are:

1) Comprehension: the ability of eliciting the intended meaning of a given instance of language use (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

2) Grammar: the set of underpinning rules which govern the language and on the basis of which sentences are judged as grammatically accepted or not (Freeman & Freeman, 2004).

3) Vocabulary: the ability of recognizing words belonging to a given language in addition to the knowledge of their meanings (Diamond & Gutlohn, 2007).

4) Pronunciation: the way sounds of a given language are pronounced and as perceived by the hearer (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

5) Fluency: the ability to speak the language correctly, appropriately, idiomatically and without undue pauses or an intrusive accent (Thornbury, 2017).

Achievement in speaking requires learners to be able to express themselves fluently without breaking the flow of communication. Added to this, speaking relies heavily on the ability of mastering the use of vocabulary items congruently to specific patterns ruled by grammar. Of course, these requirements cannot be considered if comprehension on the part of learners is not there (Harris, 1974). EFL teachers are, therefore, called upon to be aware of the demands of such a skill when designing oral expression activities as part of their teaching process (Chuen & Burns, 2012).

2.4. Trait Emotional Intelligence and EFL Learners' Speaking Skill

According to Chen and Zhang (2020), much prominence has recently been accorded to unpacking the potential role that trait emotional intelligence can play in the field of second language acquisition and the various aspects of language learners' performance. As such, the speaking skill has, in turn, been brought to the limelight as to whether it is linked to learners' trait emotional intelligence in a multiplicity of accounts. In pursuit of examining the relationship between TEI and EFL learners' performance, Abdolrezapour (2018) revealed that positive correlations were found as regards students' oral performance and their levels of TEI. The results of the study indicated that learners with higher scores of TEI were able to perform more complex spoken

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language in addition to being more fluent and accurate. In the same line, the
complexity of speaking performance is influenced by global TEI as it was
found in a study carried out by Khooei (2014), as cited in (Chen & Zhang,
2020).

In a Chinese context, Chen and Zheng (2020) conducted a correlational
study through which it was aimed at exploring the correlation among TEI and
the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). The results show that
global TEI is correlated with speaking and listening merely, as opposed to the
other two skills. Ergo, this is to be in congruence with what the aforementioned
findings suggest denoting that the literature provides some insightful glimpses
into the relationship between TEI and speaking as a language skill. As regards
the Algerian context, it is of essence to highlight the paucity of studies
addressing the issue per se. Indeed, there have been several studies which have
accounted for emotional intelligence in the domain of language learning and
teaching such as (Alghorbany & Bin Hamzah, 2019). Nevertheless, trait
emotional intelligence and its subdimensions are presumably not adequately
tackled in relation to Algerian EFL learners' performance in general and the
speaking skill in particular.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The subjects of the study were 85 third year EFL students at the
University Center of Mila. The aggregate of these informants constitutes 75
female (88.23%) and 10 (11.77 %) male participants. The demographics
pertinent to the sample are better demonstrated in table 1:

Table1. Demographics

	N	%
Gender		
Male	75	88.23
Female	10	11.77
Age		
19-21	70	82.35
22-24	12	14.12
Above 24	3	3.53

Total	85	100

3.2 Instruments

1) Students' Exam Scores: The participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire with the scores they achieved in the exam of Speaking of the first semester of the university year of 2021-2022. These scores are utilized in this research as an indicator of students' achievement in the speaking skill. Students' scores range between 9 (minimum score) and 13.75 (maximum score). The skewness and Kurtosis values (0.673 and – 0.621 respectively) are ranged between -1 and 1 which indicates normality in the distribution of these scores.7

Table 2. Descriptives of Speaking Scores

	statistics	Std error
Mean	10.5647	.14953
5% Trimmed Mean	10.4869	
Median	10.0000	
Variance	1.901	
Std. Deviation	1.37860	
Minimum	9.00	
Maximum	13.75	
Range	4.75	
Interquartile Range	2.00	
Skewness	.673	.261
Kurtosis	-.621	.517
Mean	10.4869	.517

2) Trait Emotional Questionnaire- Short Form (TEIQue-SF)
The TEIQue-SF is made up of 30 items that assess the global trait emotional intelligence in addition to the four main factors of trait emotional intelligence known as well-being, adaptability, sociability, and self-control (Petrides, 2009). The thirty items are diffused on the four factors as follows: Well-being (5, 9, 20, 24, 12, 27); self-control (4, 7, 15, 19, 22, 30); emotionality (1,2,8,13,16,17,23,28); sociability (6 ,10, 11,21,25, 26). The scale of response is a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "*completely agree*" to 7 "*completely disagree*". As such, TEI score is calculated through dividing the sum of all items by 30. Meanwhile, the score of each TEI factor is calculated by means of dividing the sum of the items pertaining to each factor by the

number of items. For example, adaptability is calculated through dividing the sum of the responses to items (1,2,8,13,16,17,23,28) by 8 (Petrides, 2009).

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The data pertinent to the current study were collected at the beginning of the second semester of the year 2021-2022. The procedure took place on the span of one week starting from March 20th, 2022 until 24th, 2022. Third year EFL learners at the Department of Letters and Languages at the University Center of Mila were provided with a pencil and paper questionnaire to fill in. The participants were informed about the aim of the questionnaire in addition to its being voluntary and anonymous by nature. The process took the respondents about half an hour to finish answering the whole questionnaire.

3.4. Data Analysis

The process of data analysis in the current study relied on the software of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) - version 26.

- The analysis of The TEIQue- SF Scores

Table3. Descriptive Statistics of TEI Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Global TEI	85	3.69	6.02	4.5467	.48995
Well-Being	85	3.42	6.33	4.7051	.65284
Emotionality	85	3.38	5.89	4.6266	.66876
Sociability	85	3.23	6.16	4.4997	.64105
Self-Control	85	3.00	5.98	4.4456	.64845
Valid N (listwise)	85				

As demonstrated through the descriptive statistics derived from the SPSS software, the informants revealed an above average (>4) score of trait emotional intelligence (Mean= 4.5467). Likewise, the same applies to the four TEI scales where the students have an above average level in which well-being (Mean=4.7051) is the highest factor in comparison to emotionality (Mean=4.6266), sociability (Mean=4.4997), and finally self-control (Mean=4.4456). Of note, there is a balance in the scores of the four factors. This is due to the fact that the differences amongst the means of each factor are not significant (the means are ranged within the narrow range of [4.4456 - 4.7051]).

- Correlation Between Global Trait Emotional Intelligence Scores and
  Speaking Scores

**Table4.**Correlation Between Global TEI Scores and Speaking Scores

		Speaking Scores	Global TEI
Speaking Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	.671**
	N	85	85
Global TEI	Pearson Correlation	.671**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85

In order for the research to explore the probe of an existing correlation between
global TEI scores and Speaking achievement, Pearson correlation was
conducted. The results of the Pearson correlation revealed that global trait
emotional intelligence and speaking are positively correlated (r=0.671,
p=0.000). This correlation is deemed significant (p =0.000) and strong (r>0.5).

- Linear Relation Between Speaking Scores and Global TEI

As an initial step, it was opted for generating a scatterplot with line of fit to
graphically explore the nature of the linear relationship, if any, which links the
variables of the regression analysis, namely speaking achievement and global
TEI.

Fig.1. Linear Relation Between Speaking Scores and Global TEI
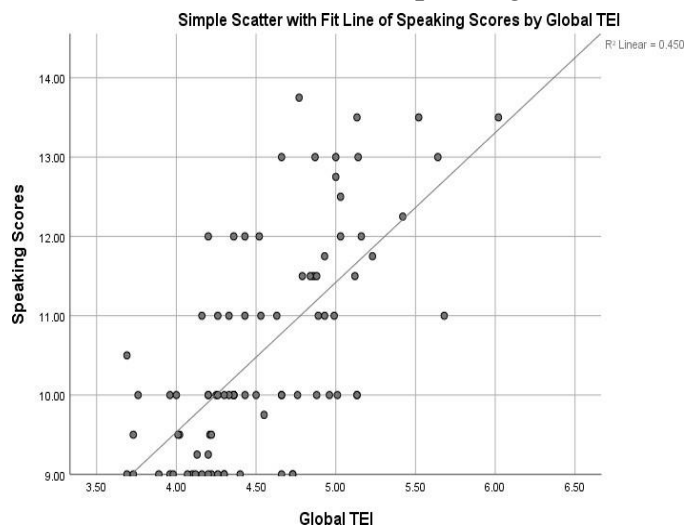
The scatterplot with line of fit shows that the data follow a roughly linear relationship. This latter appears to be positive as the data move up towards the right.

- Simple Linear Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression was conducted with the purpose of unpacking the predictive relationship between global TEI and speaking achievement. Hence, it was highlighted when processing data in SPSS that speaking achievement is the dependent variable (outcome variable) while global TEI is the independent variable (predictor variable).

Table5. Model Summary of the Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.671 [a]	.450	.443	1.02851

The model summary reveals the existence of a linear relationship between scores of global TEI and the scores of speaking (R^2= .450). By this, it is meant that. 45% of the variation in the scores of speaking is explained by differences at the level of scores of global TEI.

Table 6. ANOVA Analysis Summary

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	71.843	1	71.843	67.915	.000[b]
	Residual	87.801	83	1.058		
	Total	159.644	84			

a. Dependent Variable: Speaking Scores

b. Predictors: (Constant), Global TEI

The ANOVA analysis is run to find out about the significance of the linear regression. As such, the ANOVA output demonstrates that the linear relationship at issue is significant (significance level< 0.05).

Table 7. Coefficients of the Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.982	1.047		1.893	.062
	Global TEI	1.888	.229	.671	8.241	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Speaking Scores

The data obtained from the model summary(table5), the ANOVA summary table (table 6), and the coefficients summary (table7) indicate the following: A significant regression equation was obtained (F (1,83) =67.915, p<0.001) with an R² of .450. The informants' predicted speaking score is equal to 1.982 + 1.888 (Global TEI Score).

- Correlation Between Speaking Achievement and TEI Factors

Table8. Correlation Summary of Speaking Achievement and TEI Factors

		Speaking Scores	Well-Being	Emotionality	Sociability	Self-Control
Speaking Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	.423**	.387**	.368**	.505**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.001	.000
	N	85	85	85	85	85
Well-Being	Pearson Correlation	.423**	1	.225*	.272*	.486**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.039	.012	.000
	N	85	85	85	85	85
Emotionality	Pearson Correlation	.387**	.225*	1	.326**	.266*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.039		.002	.014
	N	85	85	85	85	85
Sociability	Pearson Correlation	.368**	.272*	.326**	1	.302**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.012	.002		.005
	N	85	85	85	85	85
Self-Control	Pearson Correlation	.505**	.486**	.266*	.302**	1

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.014	.005	
	N	85	85	85	85	85

Pearson correlation was undertaken to explore the correlation between speaking scores and the scores of the four factors of trait emotional intelligence. The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to yield the following outcomes:

-Speaking Scores and Well-being: a moderate positive correlation was found (r= .423, p<0.001).

-Speaking Scores and Emotionality: a moderate positive correlation was found (r=.387, p<0.001).

-Speaking Scores and Sociability: a moderate positive correlation was found (r=.368, p<0.001).

-Speaking Scores and Self-control: a moderate positive correlation was found (r=.505, p<0.001)

3.5. Discussion of Results

The results obtained through the process of data analysis served at finding answers to the present research questions.

1) The profile of trait emotional intelligence of Third year EFL learners at the University Center of Mila:

Students show that they perceive their level of trait emotional intelligence as above average (Mean= 4.5467). That is to say, third year EFL learners, who constitute the participants of the study, hold the perspective that their emotional traits are construed as optimal, not adhering to the perceptions of extremes (very high/ very low). This perspective is clearly epitomized in what the students report as regards their levels of the four factors of TEI. The obtained results reveal the absence of significant disparities in the scores of these factors as the means range between 4.4456 and 4.7051. In this regard, it worth stating that the four factors are ordered, in terms of value according to the participants' perceptions, as follows: 1) Well-being 2) Emotionality 3) Sociability 4) Self-control.

2) Global TEI as a predictor of Speaking Achievement:

By means of the simple linear regression analysis, it was concluded that trait emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of Speaking achievement of a moderate strength. Simply put, it was statistically proven that the variation, which students' scores of speaking demonstrate, can be explained to a certain

level by the commensurate variation they show in the scores of global trait emotional intelligence. This is confirmed by dint of the obtainment of the subsequent linear regression equation:

Speaking Achievement =1.982 + 1.888(Global TEI).

In spite of the different contexts in which the studies were undertaken, these results go in conformity with findings of Chen and Zheng (2020). They implied that global trait emotional intelligence predicts the overall speaking skill significantly in a Chinese context.

3) The correlation between Speaking achievement and TEI Factors:

It was elicited through the Pearson correlation that a positive significant correlation links speaking achievement and the four factors of trait emotional intelligence. In this respect, it is of essence to note that this correlation is statistically significant; nevertheless, it cannot be labeled as strong since the value of the "r" does not surpass 0.7 with regards of the four factors. By way of addition, it was indicated that self-control is the factor with the strongest correlation with Speaking achievement followed by well-being, emotionality, and sociability, respectively. In relation with previous research, this sets out to confirm what was found by Chen and Zheng (2020) who reported the existence of positive correlations among the four factors of trait emotional intelligence and Chinese EFL learners' speaking skill.

The results that the current investigation yielded allowed for one to generate a multiplicity of implications for pedagogy and future research. In this regard, teachers of speaking are required to pay heed to the importance of emotional intelligence in their teaching practices. This can be achieved through considering the emotional factors related to learners in the planning and the execution of their oral expression lessons. Besides, the stakeholders are called upon to favor the integration of trait emotional intelligence training in the enterprise of language teaching to invest in the positive bearings it can have on learner's achievement. As for future research, it is acknowledged that the correlational nature of the methodology utilized in the current research does not suggest a causative relationship between trait emotional intelligence and the speaking achievement. By dint of this, future research is needed to account for this issue in different and, more importantly, creative ways. This can potentially be fulfilled through deploying experimental designs to the study of such an intricate relationship.

4. CONCLUSION

The current study is a tentative attempt to getting into terms with the prospect of an existing relationship between the level of trait emotional intelligence of third year EFL learners at the University Center of Mila and their Speaking achievement. In the course of it, it was shown that global trait emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of Speaking achievement, in addition to the existence of significant correlations amongst the latter and the four factors of TEI. These results are called upon to pave the way for future research agendas to bring into play further studies on the perennial issue of trait emotional intelligence as a contributor to speaking achievement and to academic achievement in general. Empirical studies are, therefore, required to compensate for the deeply felt dearth characterizing research on trait emotional intelligence and language learning in the Algerian context.

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6. Appendices

Students Questionnaire

Dear Student,

You are kindly asked to fill in the present questionnaire. Please bear in mind that your participation is voluntary anonymous and used for research purposes merely.

Section One: Background Information

Gender:

a) Male ☐   b) Female ☐

Age:

1) 19-21   ☐

2) 21-24   ☐

3) Above 24   ☐

Section Two: Speaking Achievement
Exam Mark of Speaking:
……. / 20

Section Three : Trait Emotional Intelligence (Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire- Short Form)

> ➢ Please circle the number corresponding to the degree to which you agree with the provided statement.

1= Completely Agree .... 7= completely Disagree

1. Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I often find it difficult to see things from another person's viewpoint	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. On the whole, I'm a highly motivated person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I usually find it difficult to regulate my emotions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. I generally don't find life enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I can deal effectively with people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I tend to change my mind frequently	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Many times, I can't figure out what emotion I'm feeling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I feel that I have a number of good qualities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I often find it difficult to stand up for my rights	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I'm usually able to influence the way other people fee							
12. On the whole, I have a gloomy perspective on most things	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Those close to me often complain that I don't treat them right	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I often find it difficult to adjust my life according to the circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. On the whole, I'm able to deal with stress	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I often find it difficult to show my affection to those close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I'm normally able to "get into someone's shoes" and experience their emotions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I normally find it difficult to keep myself motivated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I'm usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. On the whole, I'm pleased with my life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I would describe myself as a good negotiator	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

22. I tend to get involved in things I later wish I could get out of	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I often pause and think about my feelings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I believe I'm full of personal strengths	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I tend to "back down" even if I know I'm right	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I don't seem to have any power at all over other people's feelings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I find it difficult to bond well, even with those close to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Generally, I'm able to adapt to new environments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Others admire me for being relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Thank You for Your Cooperation