

BEHAVIORAL-SITUATIONAL APPROACH TO EXAMINING SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE*

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Abstract: The paper presents findings obtained by the use of the SIPS questionnaire (Solution of interpersonal problem-oriented situations). Methodologically, the SIPS questionnaire starts from the situational approach and from assessing the behavior. The presented analysis of the data obtained focuses on characterizing preliminary, but essential psychometric parameters of the SIPS. The research was executed on sample of 150 respondents (54 men and 96 women), mean age 20.9 years. The factor analysis of the results enabled us to revise the original four-factor concept and confirmed the existence of the internal structure of the described forms of behavior, within the framework of which we may define two factors: socially negative solution and socially positive solution. Psychometric indicators of the SIPS, as well as the results of the validation study support the fact that we may consider it a suitable point of departure for constructing the diagnostic tool for measuring social intelligence.

Key words: social intelligence, situational approach

INTRODUCTION

One of the basic spheres of concentration of attention in psychological research and in practice-oriented psycho-diagnostic activity is an endeavor regulated by a general tendency, which resides in an endeavor at predicting the behavior of man in specific interpersonal situations.

Research into man's psychic processes and behavior which are to be solved in a certain way, has a long-standing tradition in psychology. It constitutes one of the basic spheres of research with both researchers and practice-oriented psychologists.

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Each of us has found and will find himself in interpersonal situations, the solving of which requires us to mobilize all of our powers with greater or lesser success in mastering them. The way people solve such situations and behave in them differs with each individual. Social intelligence is a substantial characteristic which is employed in psychology in describing and predicting the above type of behavior. Even though social intelligence is a realistic individual characteristic and the first endeavors at its measuring reach far back to Thorndike (Kihlstrom, Cantor, 2000), we still encounter certain difficulties in our attempts at its precise definition (Silvera, Martinussen, Dahl, 2001).

There exist several sources of the above difficulties. One of these is the problem of distinguishing social intelligence and similar constructs, such as academic intelli-

gence, emotional intelligence and practical intelligence also named social competence, and the like. Individual authors failed to reach agreement in this respect. Despite this, it is obvious that there do exist opinions according to which social intelligence is an individual category.

Another problem is that in defining social intelligence, various components are customarily emphasized. Some of the definitions emphasize cognitive aspects, i.e. the ability to understand other people (cf. Barnes, Sternberg, 1989). Other definitions concentrate more on behavior, i.e. the ability to create successful impressions on other people (cf. Ford, Tisak, 1983) and emphasize rather the behavioral aspect.

One cannot doubt the multi-dimensional character of social intelligence. Some of its dimensions are closely related to academic intelligence, other come closer to personal traits such as extraversion as pointed out by D.H. Silver, M. Martinussen, and T.I. Dahl (2001). The basic lines of research into social intelligence essentially distinguish two fundamental directions represented by psychometric or personal approaches (Kihlstrom, Cantor, 2000).

The psychometric approach conceptualizes and makes operative social intelligence as a property or a group of properties, whereas people may be compared on the dimension of low versus high, in which case the difference from the research into academic intelligence rests only in focusing on social sphere.

Unlike the above, the representatives of personal approach study social intelligence as differences among people, concentrating on how people behave in various interpersonal situations. The behavior of people is not evaluated strictly on the dimensions of effectiveness. Considerable attention is devoted to the aspect of subjective evaluation of particular situations.

METHOD

This paper presents findings acquired by employing the SIPS questionnaire (Solution of Interpersonal Problem-oriented situations). As we have already stated in our previous paper (Baumgartner, Frankovský, 2004), in designing this, we abstained from employing the situational approach, whereas in the pre-defined situation, emphasis was laid on this situational approach. We have been inspired by some of the concepts prepared in the context of study of social intelligence and the methods established on this basis. The concepts concerned included those of Getter and Nowisko (Lorr, Youniss, Stefic, 1991), devoted to determining interpersonal skills, the concept of Maesen de Sombreffa (2000) focused on the issue of recording social appearance, the concept of Gresham and Elliott (Lorr, Youniss, Stefic, 1991) in which attention is focused on assessing and self-assessment of social behavior, and finally the concept of Lorr, Youniss, and Stefic (1991), oriented toward the study of social relations.

Methodologically, the SIPS questionnaire departs, as has already been stated, from the situational approach and from assessing behavior. The respondents are presented with a specific social situation illustrated by 18 forms of possible behavior in that situation. Each respondent assesses them here in the sense of accepting or refusing them on a 6-point scale of the interval type (definitely yes, yes, rather yes than no, rather no than yes, no, definitely no).

Description of the situation:

You greet a good acquaintance of yours in the street, whom you have not seen for a longer period of time. He/she shall not return your greeting. What shall you do?

Examples of the forms of behavior:

- *I shall stop him/her and ask him/her what the matter is;*

- *I shall not notice it and continue walking;*

- *I shall complain about him/her to our common acquaintances.*

150 respondents participated in the research, out of that number 96 were women and 54 men. Their mean age was 20.9 years (age span between 18 and 36 years).

RESULTS

The presented analysis of the data obtained focuses on characterizing preliminary, but essential psychometric parameters of the SIPS methodology. We consider the above parameters to be preliminary, since we presuppose their confirmation on a larger and socio-demographically bigger and more diversified sample of the respondents.

The factor analysis of the results obtained enabled us to revise the original four-factor concept (Baumgartner, Frankovský, 2004) and confirmed the existence of the internal structure of the described forms of behavior, within the framework of which we may define two factors (Table 1, Figure 1).

As to their content, the factors specified may be defined as follows:

F1 - *socially negative solution* - the respondents scoring high in the above factor prefer a negative emotional response to the situation, become angry at the person concerned, shall not greet him/her first the next time or shall pretend not to see him/her or shall not return the greeting.

F2 - *socially positive solution* - the respondents scoring high in the above factor shall not leave the situation unnoticed, they shall contact the person concerned once again by repeating their greeting or they would find out directly from the person the reasons for his/her not having returned the greeting.

Table 1. Factor structure of the SIPS methodology

Items	F1	F2
I shall not take any notice of this and shall continue on my way		-0.545
I shall stop, turn away from him/her, but will not say anything		
I shall greet him/her once again	-0.588	0.453
I shall stop him/her and ask what is wrong		0.636
I shall not tell about it to anyone		
I shall tell it to a good friend of mine		
I shall complain about him/her to our common acquaintances	0.501	
I shall not greet him/her as the first the next time	0.793	
I shall greet him/her the next time again as the first one	-0.698	
It shall not spoil my mood		

Table continues

Table 1 (continued)

Items	F1	F2
I shall get angry about him/her	0.704	
If I meet him/her again, I shall pretend not to see him/her	0.714	
I shall ask our acquaintances what the matter is with him/her		0.631
I shall speculate on what may have happened to him/her		0.624
I shall feel foolish	0.416	
I shall ask him/her in a loud voice whether he/she does not see me		0.553
When I meet him/her the next time, I shall not return his/her greeting	0.658	
I shall muse on whether I had hurt him/her		0.472
Eigenvalue	4.01	2.98
% total variance	23.9	14.9

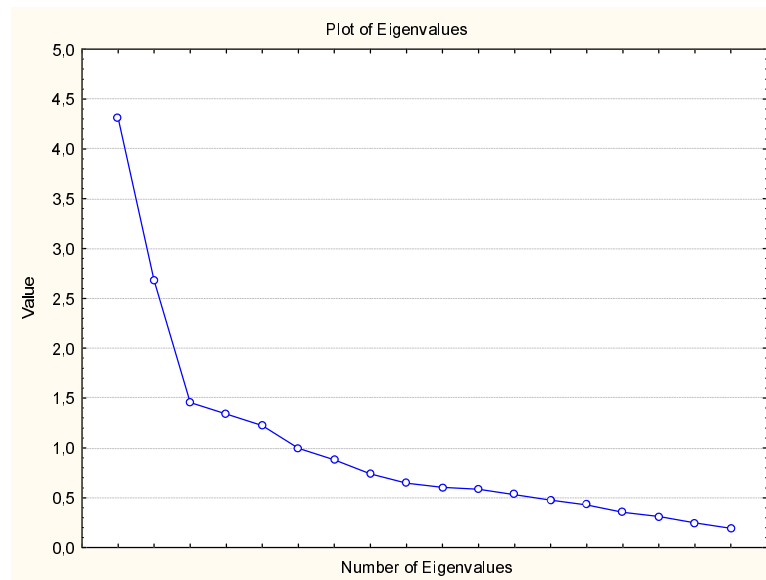


Figure 1. Factor analysis of the SIPS methodology (scree plot)

Internal consistency of individual factors as an indicator of reliability of the methodology has been determined by the calculation of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Table 2).

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha values for the SIPS methodology defined factors

	F1	F2
Cronbach's alpha	.79	.77

The detected values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient testify to the fact that internal consistency of the items saturating specified factors is within the acceptability scale. However, generating other items, which would better represent the entire scale of individual factors, may still reinforce the above indicator.

The proposed structure of the SIPS methodology factors defined is also supported by the values calculated from inter-correlation coefficients among individual factors, as well as by the correlation of those factors with the resulting score in the methodology, which, however, has been obtained on the basis of situational-behavioral approach as the difference between the socially positive and socially negative solutions (Table 3). The indicator of the overall score represents a view on social intelligence as a performance parameter, even though we may rather characterize the original approach as personal.

Table 3. Values of inter-correlation coefficients among the SIPS methodology factors

	F1	F2
F1	-	-0.43**
F2		-
Total score	-0.84**	0.86**

The validity of the presented SIPS methodology has been detected in relation to the Tromso social intelligence scale methodology - TSIS (Silvera, Martinussen, Dahl, 2001). Comparison of the results obtained by this questionnaire and the SIPS methodology has brought along significant pieces of knowledge for certifying the contentual validity and verification of the methodology being currently developed (Table 4).

The TSIS methodology contains 21 self-evaluation items to which the respondents answer on a 7-point scale (1 - this defines me very poorly, 7 - this defines me very well) and enables them to specify 3 factors: SP - processing the social information; SS - social competences; SA - social awareness.

Internal validity of those factors is given as follows: SP - 0.79, SS - 0.85 and SA - 0.72 (Silvera, Martinussen, Dahl, 2001).

The relationship between the factor *socially positive solution* of the SIPS questionnaire and the scale of *social awareness* of the TSIS methodology has been shown quite clearly (-0.28). The above finding means that the inclination toward socially positive (constructive) solution of the social situation is related to the higher degree of social awareness. Polarization of the remaining correlations (even though statistically insignificant) supports the validity of the methodology currently being developed (positive relations between the socially negative solution and the lower level of processing the social information and social competences).

Statistically significant is also the result of the overall score of the SIPS methodology (the difference between the socially positive and the socially negative solutions) and the value of social awareness. This means that the higher level of social

Table 4. Correlation coefficients between the SIPS and TSIS factors

Strategies	SP - processing the social information	SS - social competences	SA - social awareness
F1	0.08	0.16	0.16
F2	-0.08	-0.03	-0.28
Total score	-0.10	-0.11	-0.26

awareness relates to the prevalence of socially positive solutions over the negative solutions.

The findings presented support the fact that the SIPS methodology stands closest to the scale of social awareness of the TSIS methodology, which in relation to the content of solving the social situation appears pretty logical.

CONCLUSION

An interpretation of the results obtained, also comprising the size of the research sample involved in the development of the SIPS methodology, permits certain partial generalizations to be made.

It is assumed that the use of the behavioral-situational approach to the study of social intelligence is at least as productive as are the cognitive or the dispositional approaches.

Inclusion of the structural approach in relation to the problem studied is considered to be one of the most important points of departure to its theoretical definition, but also in relation to the methodology of tool construction for measuring attributes of social intelligence.

The quality of social intelligence cannot be thought of uniquely at a generalized level. Quite the contrary, it is indispensable to take into account the various structural-situational elements within the context of social intelligence.

In keeping with this line of thought, it will be absolutely necessary to consider the meaningful measure of generalizing the conclusions and predictions in relation to the various interpersonal situations or types of such situations.

The psychometric indicators of the SIPS methodology as also the results of the validation study support the fact that it can be taken as a suitable starting point for the construction of a diagnostic tool for measuring social intelligence.

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BEHAVIORÁLNO - SITUAČNÝ PRÍSTUP K SKÚMANIU SOCIÁLNEJ INTELIGENCIE

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Súhrn: V príspevku prezentujeme zistenia, ktoré sme získali použitím dotazníka RIPS (Riešenie interpersonálnych problémových situácií). Pri jeho koncipovaní sme vychádzali z uplatnenia situačného prístupu, pričom akcentovaný bol aspekt správania vo vymedzenej situácii. Analýza získaných údajov je zameraná na charakterizovanie predbežných, ale podstatných psychometrických parametrov metodiky RIPS. Výskum bol realizovaný na vzorke 150 respondentov (54 mužov a 96 žien) s priemerným vekom 20,9 rokov. Faktorová analýza získaných výsledkov umožnila revidovať pôvodnú štvorfaktorovú koncepciu a potvrdila existenciu vnútornej štruktúry popísaných foriem správania, v rámci ktorej môžeme vymedziť dva faktory: sociálne negatívne riešenie a sociálne pozitívne riešenie. Psychometrické ukazovatele metodiky RIPS ako aj výsledky validizačnej štúdie svedčia o tom, že ju môžeme považovať za vhodné východisko konštrukcie diagnostického nástroja merania sociálnej inteligencie.