

Original Papers

Polish Psychological Bulletin
2013, vol.44(2), 127-129
DOI - 10.2478/ppb-2013-0014

Aneta Przepiórka
Agata Blachnio

A Closer Look at Emotions

Research on emotions has a long tradition. Darwin, who wrote about the expression of emotions in the 19th century, can be identified as a pioneer in that area. His first attempt to define emotions appeared in his book *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. He claimed that emotions come from habit that had been useful in the evolutionary past. The recent interest and its influence on the tangible increase of research and theorizing on emotions can be observable especially in the last decade. The subject of emotions raises an interest not only among researchers, practitioners, or psychology students but also among ordinary people who want to understand emotions and behaviours motivated by them better. Despite the fact that emotions are a very crucial issue, there is still no single definition of this phenomenon: in the psychological literature we can find a diversity of definitions of emotions. The questions of whether there are basic emotions and what is the nature of emotions still remain unanswered (Ekman & Davidson, 1999). When debating on basic emotions, do we conceive of them as genetic potentialities (Panskepp, 1999) or rather as transcendental interpretive schemas (Shweder, 1999)? Ekman (1999) underlines the role of evolution in shaping the features that are common for all emotions. However, we cannot undervalue the influence of culture and language (Shweder, 1999) that changes the understanding and expression of emotions. No consensus has been reached on this issue. To describe emotions, we can use several approaches (Cabanac, 2002). First, we can consider the neural structures of the brain and the neurotransmitters linked with emotion, as was done in the research of LeDoux (1996). Second, we can ask about the causes of emotions, as Zajonc (1985) did. Next, we can explore the specific roles of emotions, for example as part of communication (see Ekman, 2007). Last but not least, the phylogeny of emotions can be investigated, as in the work of Cabanac (2002).

The purpose of this volume is to inspire other researchers interested in the psychology of emotions and to show the current trends in research. The papers identify research opportunities and chart the directions for future studies.

They cover different aspects of emotions, ranging from sport and work contexts, through methodological issues such as adaptation of methods and the problem of their validity and utility, to the issues of emotional intelligence and self-esteem. As editors of this special issue on emotions, we invited an international group of contributors, including scientists from the University of Wolverhampton, Bowling Green State University Firelands College, Goethe University Frankfurt, Southwest Minnesota State University, Cranfield University in the UK, the School of Psychology at Massey University in New Zealand, as well as from the Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities, the University of Lodz, the University of Warsaw, Jagiellonian University, the Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education, and the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. We firmly believe that the articles will guide the search for an understanding of the psychology of emotions. Each author makes a thorough review of existing findings, outlines the challenges of research, and makes their own contribution to the existing knowledge.

This special issue is a continuation of the previous three volumes edited in the form of books that contain a wide range of articles on emotions, entitled *Closer to Emotions*; it is intended to be a complement to the knowledge gathered in these previously published books. We wanted to follow up the idea of showing to readers the abundance of research in the field of psychology of emotions. What is more, we are preparing a special issue of Polish journal *Psychologia Społeczna*, which is going to explore this topic. We want to bring the reader closer to the current research by presenting twelve articles that concern different subjects. The array of subjects reflects the actual diversity of ideas and methods as well as both past and future directions in the study of emotions.

In the paper entitled *If I Want to Perform Better, Then How Should I Feel?* opening this special issue, Andrew Lane focuses on the influence of emotions on sports performance. He examines the research on emotional profiles and on how they are related to successful performance. He indicates the practical implications of the studies as well

as their limitations. He suggests that intervention strategies based on individual preferences of athletes may be helpful in improving their performance. The author concludes that identifying the emotions that athletes feel during their best and worst performance as well as identifying their thoughts and beliefs may serve as a basis for practitioners' help.

In the next article, *The Effect of Automatic vs. Reflective Emotions on Cognitive Control in Antisaccade Tasks and the Emotional Stroop Test*, Kamil Imbir and Maria Jarymowicz describe empirical studies verifying how whether the effectiveness of cognitive control depends on the participants' type of emotional state. They examine the differences between automatic and reflective emotions. The authors assumed that, being diffusive, automatic emotions decreased the effectiveness of cognitive control. They estimated the level of performance for the Antisaccade Task and the Emotional Stroop Test. The author supported the hypothesis that the level of performance in both task would be lower in the automatic-emotion electing condition than in the reflective-emotion electing condition, irrespective of the valence of emotions.

Ana Tibubos, Kerstin Schnell, and Sonja Rohrmann, the authors of the paper entitled *Anger Makes You Feel Stronger: The Positive Influence of Trait Anger in a Real-Life Experiment*, take up the subject of the positive side of experiencing state anger that is becoming part of the current research on emotion regulation. The authors wanted to avoid the effect of gender in their research and invited only women to participate. They reveal that an anger situation can evoke not only negative reactions such as upset or irritation but also positive effects, e.g. a feeling of strength. They indicate that the relationship between anger and positive anger can be explained by individual differences in anger disposition.

The next article in this volume, Chris Mruk's *Defining Self-Esteem as a Relationship between Competence and Worthiness: How a Two-Factor Approach Integrates the Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of Self-Esteem*, takes up the issue of research on self-esteem and presents the arrays of definitions of this term as well as underlines the challenge in defining this construct. The author presents examples of measures of self-esteem. In his paper, Mruk refers to the two-factor approach to self-esteem and examines the relationship between its two components: competence and worthiness, as well as two dimensions of self-esteem – cognitive and affective. He discusses the advantages of this two-factor model over unidimensional approaches.

Sylwiusz Retowski and Aleksandra Fila-Jankowska, the authors of *The Effects of Attitudes Toward the Occupation and Emotional Labour on Employee Well-Being*, pose the question of whether attitude towards occupation could buffer the negative effects of emotional labour. The participants in their research were 173 teachers. The authors use several kinds of methods: individual interview, computer-

aided task, and self-report questionnaire. Attitude towards occupation is related to indicators of employees' well-being. The authors have shown that attitude towards occupation can be a moderator of the relationship between surface acting and job satisfaction.

In his article *The Validity and Utility of Global Measures of Subjective Well-Being*, William Pavot deals with the issue of subjective well-being and addresses some critiques of global measures of SWB. His paper begins with a description of subjective well-being and other constructs related to it. He presents global measures of SWB in terms of their strengths and limitations as well as summarizes important findings obtained by using them. He proposes some methodological procedures and strategies in order to enhance the validity and utility of global measures of SWB. Pavot concludes with a proposition of future research that can be applied to the context of subjective well-being.

Agata Błachnio, Aneta Przepiórka, Mark Sullman, and Joanne Taylor, in their paper *Polish Adaptation of the Driving and Riding Avoidance Scale*, discuss the issue of driving anxiety. The authors review existing research on this topic and present a study on the adaptation of the Driving and Riding Avoidance Scale (DRAS). With 210 drivers as participants, the study assessed avoidance behaviour, anxiety, self-esteem, and mood regulation skills. The authors make references to the results of other adaptations conducted on American and New Zealand samples. They examine the psychometric properties of the DRAS. They also discuss gender differences in the context of avoidance behaviour.

The validation of the test measuring anxiety is presented by Kerstin Schnell, Ana Tibubos, Sonja Rohrmann, and Volker Hodapp in their article entitled *Test and Math Anxiety: A Validation of the German Test Anxiety Questionnaire*. The participants of their study were fifth and sixth-grade German students. The authors have found that there are correlations between test anxiety and math anxiety. They also revealed that math and general achievements at school can be predicted by test anxiety but not by math anxiety. They claim that the test anxiety and math anxiety can have a common part but there are not one construct. These results can be applied in school life.

Dorota Szczygieł and Róża Bazińska, in their article *Emotional Intelligence as a Moderator in the Relationship Between Negative Emotions and Emotional Exhaustion Among Employees in Service Sector Occupations*, investigate the role of emotional factors in the context of work. Their article is an empirical proposition that investigates the impact of individuals' affective traits and affective states on occupational burnout. It provides an overview of research on burnout and its antecedents. In order to verify their assumptions on the moderating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between negative emotions and emotional exhaustion, the authors conducted a study on 137 service sector employees. Their findings proved the role of dispositional affectivity in the burnout process.

Emotional intelligence was shown to be a kind of a buffer against emotional exhaustion. The authors present some practical implications of their study, such as trainings on emotional intelligence and coping strategies.

In the next paper, *Personality Traits and Subjective Health in Retirement Age – The Role of Personal Resources*, Maria Finogenow takes up the important and contemporary issue of the aging of society and the rapidly growing number of retirement-aged people. She makes an attempt to identify the role of personal resources in the subjective health of people in the retirement period. To achieve this aim, she examines the relationship between five-factor personality traits and subjective health. She presents a study of 240 older adults at a retirement age or approaching it. In her study she reveals the association between personality traits and subjective health. The importance of mediating role of personality resources (e.g. self-efficacy, self-esteem, dispositional optimism, and the sense of coherence) between personality traits and subjective health is also emphasized. These findings may be applicable in the process of helping in a better adaptation to old age.

The subject of *Anxiety and Self-Esteem Before Surgery in Patients Suffering from Cancer*, the paper by Aleksandra Fila-Jankowska and Urszula Stachowiak, is implicit self-esteem compensation in ego-threatening conditions. The authors considered whether levels of anxiety and self-esteem are different in a group of cancer patients than in other patients before surgery. A total of 120 people with or without diagnosed cancer took part in the study. The authors have found that cancer patients feel higher level of anxiety than other patients. What is more, persons who have been

in hospital longer experience high level of anxiety regardless of diagnosis. The authors suppose that the link between anxiety and implicit self-esteem is predictable.

Władysław Łosiak and Joanna Siedlecka contributed a paper entitled *Recognition of Facial Expressions of Emotions in Schizophrenia*. The participants of their study were schizophrenia patients and controlled groups took part. The study focuses on the process of recognizing facial expressions in schizophrenia. The authors have found that schizophrenia patients have problems with the recognition of facial expressions as well as positive and a majority of negative emotions. They show that there are the differences in the impairment of particular expression of emotions.

We are hopeful that this special issue provides a general picture of the debate on emotions in psychology. Even though William James claimed in the 19th century that emotions are impossible to embrace and describe, we do also hope that the present volume will inspire new hypotheses in future research on the phenomenon of emotions.

References

- Cabanac, M. (2002). What is emotion? *Behavioural Process*, 60, 69-83.
- Ekman, P. (2007). *Emotions revealed, second edition: Recognizing faces and feelings to improve communication and emotional life*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- Ekman, P., & Davidson, R. (1999). *Natura emocji. Podstawowe zagadnienia*. Gdańsk: GWP.
- LeDoux, J. E. (1996). *The emotional brain: The mysterious underpinning of emotional life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Zajonc, R. (1980). Feeling and thinking: Preferences need no inferences. *American Psychologist*, 35(2), 151-175.