

VALIDATION OF THE MIND-WANDERING QUESTIONNAIRE IN SPANISH ADULTS AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH PERSONALITY



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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this study was to validate the Mind-Wandering Questionnaire (MWQ) for its use with adults and to explore its association with self-esteem, personality, mindfulness, and happiness. The data was obtained from a total of 104 participants. The results indicated that mind-wandering correlated with low self-esteem and low dispositional mindfulness. The personality dimensions that predicted mind-wandering were (low) conscientiousness and neuroticism.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings do not always have the tendency to focus completely on the activities they undertake. This phenomenon is called mind-wandering, and it is defined as the interruption of a task that we are performing by thoughts not related to it (Mrazek et al., 2013). In order to measure mind-wandering in adults, we used the MWQ scale. According to previous studies, mostly in adolescents (Luo et al., 2016), it is hypothesized that it would be related to low mindfulness, low happiness and low self-esteem. However, we did not find any study that related it to the five-factor model of personality. Previous studies found an association with low positive affect and high negative affect (Salavera et al., 2017). We expected to find an association with low emotional stability, low extraversion, conscientiousness and openness.

RESULTS

Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis, descriptive statistics and internal consistency of the Mind-Wandering Scale.

	Loading	Mean	SD
1. I have difficulty maintaining focus on simple or repetitive work	.79	2.45	1.02
2. While reading, I find I haven't been thinking about the text and must therefore read it again	.79	2.81	1.07
3. I do things without paying full attention	.75	2.61	.89
4. I find myself half listening while thinking about something else at the same time	.71	3.06	.96
5. I mind-wander during lectures and presentations	.67	2.89	.98
% explained variance	55.21		
Total score		2.76	.98
Alpha		.79	

1. Me resulta difícil mantener la concentración en trabajos sencillos o repetitivos. 2. Mientras leo, me doy cuenta de que no he estado pensando en el texto y que, por lo tanto, tengo que leerlo otra vez. 3. Hago las cosas sin prestar total atención. 4. Me encuentro escuchando a medias al mismo tiempo que estoy pensando en otra cosa. 5. Me distraigo durante conferencias y presentaciones.

Table 2. Correlations among mind-wandering, personality, self-esteem, and subjective well-being.

MWQ	BFPTSQ					Total score	FFMQ				RSES	SHS	
	O	E	A	C	ES		Observing	Describing	Acting with Awareness	Non-Judging			Non-Reactivity
	-.02	-.02	-.16	-.46***	-.32**	-.41***	.05	-.24*	-.54***	-.26**	-.16	-.26**	-.12

Note. MWQ = Mind-Wandering Questionnaire; BFPTSQ = Big Five Personality Trait Short Questionnaire; O = openness; E = extraversion; A = agreeableness; C = conscientiousness; ES = emotional stability; FFMQ = Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire; RSES = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; SHS = Subjective Happiness Scale.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to examine the psychometric properties of the MWQ in adults and to explore its relationship with personality. The factor loadings and the internal consistency of the items were sound (see Table 1) and replicated the results in adolescents (Salavera et al., 2017). The correlations with the variables studied (see Table 2) show, as we expected, associations between mind-wandering and low mindfulness (especially low acting with awareness) and low self-esteem (Lou et al., 2016), but it was not related to happiness. Among personality factors, the best predictor of mind-wandering was (low) conscientiousness, and this was also associated with neuroticism. Unlike dispositional mindfulness, mind-wandering was not related to openness. We also found no association with introversion, which was expected from their previous correlations with low positive affect (Mrazek et al., 2013). Our study indicated that the MWQ evaluates mind-wandering satisfactorily in adults and that neuroticism, and especially (low) conscientiousness (see Table 3), were the best personality predictors of mind-wandering.

METHOD

Participants: 104 adults, of whom 68 were female and 36 male, aged between 18 and 68 years.

Measures: The Big Five Personality Trait Short Questionnaire (BFPTSQ; Ortet et al., 2017), the Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; Cebolla et al., 2012), the Mind-Wandering Questionnaire (MWQ; Salavera et al., 2017), Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), and the Rosenberg Self-Steem Scale (RSES; Martín et al., 2007).

Procedure: We posted the scales on the Internet, using social media (e.g., Facebook).

Table 3. Multiple Linear regression analysis predicting mind-wandering (MWQ) with the Big Five Personality Trait Short Questionnaire (BFPTSQ).

	Mind-wandering	
	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	.08*	
Gender		.06
Age		-.26**
Step 2	.21***	
Openness		.01
Extraversion		.10
Agreeableness		-.04
Conscientiousness		-.40***
Emotional Stability		-.23*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

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