

# Relationship among Humor Style, Self-Esteem and Emotional Intelligence in the Chinese Culture: A Case Study of Junior High School Students in Taiwan

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## Abstract

Junior high school students are faced with escalating pressure in pursuing their education while facing a key crisis arising from self-integration and role confusion. This study explores the skills and capabilities that can best equip students to survive such a crisis successfully. Past studies were primarily concerned with the influence of self-esteem and emotional intelligence (EI); few considered humor. We explored the relationships among self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and Martin et al.'s 4 different types of beneficial and detrimental humor to identify which humor styles help junior high school students in a positive way. Participants for this study were 688 students (359 males and 329 females, age 14-16) from four junior high schools in Taipei County. All participants completed a self-report questionnaire in class, which consisted of humor style, self-esteem, and EI scales. Correlation analysis revealed that (I) affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles, which are considered positive, were highly related to self-esteem and EI, respectively; (II) aggressive humor was not related to self-esteem, but it had a significant negative correlation with EI; (III) self-defeating humor had a small but significant negative association with self-esteem, and was not related to EI. Canonical correlation showed that self-defeating humor was also positively related to EI through emotional adaptation and inner reflection. Positive humor is a good way to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. Further guidance should be provided to help students learn how to express humor positively. Some findings of this study differed from those of Martin et al. We found that those who used a self-defeating humor style could better adapt to their emotions and reflect on them, which may mean that a self-defeating humor style has different cultural implications in Taiwanese and western societies.

Keyword : humor style, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, junior high school students