

# Improving the Criterion Validities of the Big Five with Job and Relationship Satisfaction using Metaperceptions

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## Background

Should personality psychologists be interested that people describe their personality traits differently in different social contexts? Research participants often report that personality items are difficult to rate because context may affect their responses. An important question for personality psychologists is therefore whether they should attend to this information in personality assessment methodology?

**Metaperceptions** are perceptions of how a person thinks he or she is seen by others (e.g. Kenny, 1994). Metaperceptions are often rated using traits from the Big Five model of personality, yet little research had compared the criterion correlations of metaperceptions versus general self-reports. Woods (2004) compared the prediction of job performance from general self-reports and metaperceptions of the Big Five. The study found that associations with job performance criteria were strongest when the Big Five were rated as work supervisor metaperceptions.

Higher criterion validities may have been observed for the work supervisor metaperceptions because the social domains of the criterion (job performance) and predictors (work supervisor metaperceptions) were consistent (i.e. in a work context). This interpretation was tested in this study.

## Study Overview

The study compared the criterion correlations of the Big Five rated as general self-reports and metaperceptions with job satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. These criteria were selected to represent work and non-work social domains respectively.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were a community sample of 135 working adults (64% male; mean age = 35.5 years).

### Measures

**Big Five Inventory (BFI).** The BFI (John, Donahue, and Kentle, 1991) is a 44-item measure of the Big Five personality traits. (e.g., "I see myself as someone who is talkative"; 1 = Disagree strongly; 5 = Agree strongly; mean  $\alpha$  = 0.76).

Participants provided four ratings of the Big Five, comprising a general self-report and three metaperceptions (rated from the perspective of a work supervisor, a close friend, and a romantic partner). The general self-report rating used the original BFI questionnaire stem. Metaperceptions were operationalized by changing the orientation of the original stem to reflect the three social contexts.

So for example, the supervisor metaperception was rated using the stem "my supervisor would say that I am someone who" (e.g., "Is full of energy"; 1 = Disagree strongly; 5 = Agree strongly).

**Criteria.** Job satisfaction was assessed using the 15-item scale proposed by Warr, Cook and Wall (1979;  $\alpha$  = 0.90). The 7-item Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (Hendrick, Dicke and Hendrick, 1998) was used to assess relationship satisfaction ( $\alpha$  = 0.90).

## Results

Patterns in metaperception means showed that people tended to rate themselves as more conscientious, less neurotic and open, and equally extraverted and agreeable in the work supervisor metaperceptions compared with the non-work social context metaperceptions.

The work supervisor metaperception emerged as the most predictive of job satisfaction in the multiple correlation analyses (multiple  $R$  = 0.35  $p$  < 0.01). Interestingly, the multiple correlation was markedly higher than that for the general self-report (multiple  $R$  = 0.24  $p$  < 0.05).

The romantic partner and close friend metaperceptions exhibited similar multiple correlations with relationship satisfaction (multiple  $R$  = 0.29 and 0.30 respectively). Both were higher than the general self-report (multiple  $R$  = 0.22 and 0.17 respectively).

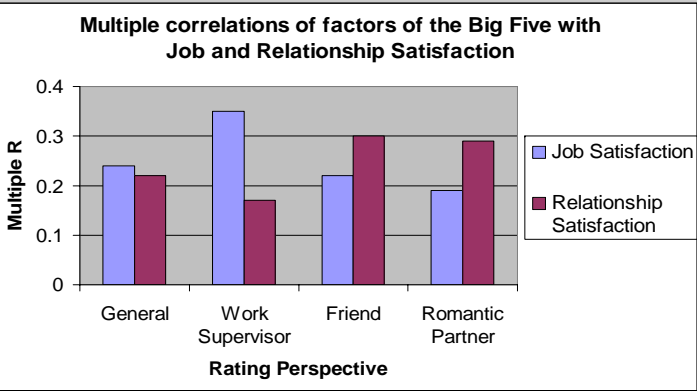


Table 1. Regressions of job satisfaction on factors of the Big Five rated as general self-reports and metaperceptions

	Metaperceptions			
	General	Work Supervisor	Friend	Romantic Partner
R	.24*	.35**	.22	.19
R <sup>2</sup>	.06*	.12**	.05	.04
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.04*	.10**	.03	.01
βE	.06	.10	.09	.14
βC	.22*	.33**	.19*	.11
βN	.02	.07	.06	.03

\* $p$  < 0.05; \*\* $p$  < 0.01; Entries in the last three rows are standardized beta-weights for Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism respectively.

Table 2. Regressions of relationship satisfaction on factors of the Big Five rated as general self-reports and metaperceptions

	Metaperceptions			
	General	Work Supervisor	Friend	Romantic Partner
R	.22	.17	.30*	.29*
R <sup>2</sup>	.05	.03	.09*	.09*
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.03	.01	.07*	.07*
βE	.07	.05	.07	.13
βA	.15	.13	.24*	.18*
βN	-.08	-.04	-.11	-.10

\* $p$  < 0.05; Entries in the last three rows are standardized beta-weights for Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism respectively.

## Discussion

The work supervisor metaperceptions clearly emerged as the strongest predictor of job satisfaction compared with the general self-report and the non-work metaperceptions. Conversely, the non-work metaperceptions (friend and romantic partner) were stronger predictors of relationship satisfaction than the work supervisor metaperceptions and the general self-report. This provides evidence to support the proposition that criterion correlations for the Big Five are strongest when they are rated with reference to the social context of the criterion.

The increases in validity resulted from simple changes to the item stems of the personality surveys. Rating survey items as metaperceptions may offer substantial benefits for researchers from only small changes in assessment methodology.

## Conclusion

Should personality psychologists be interested that people describe their traits differently in different social contexts? The results of this suggest that they should: how people thought they were seen by others predicted their job satisfaction and relationship satisfaction more strongly than overall self-perceptions of personality.

## Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge the support of Tarisayi Ndengu at the University of Nottingham for her support with data collection for this study.

## References

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