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# Nezlek *et al.* 2008)

## Appraisal-Emotion Relationships in Daily Life

This study is used to answer questions on emotion and appraisal theory

## Abstract

Participants answered questionnaires every day for 2 weeks about how they were feeling and what situation they were in.

The questionnaire examined 6 situations and 6 emotions to see if there was a relationship.

The researchers found that participants there are common appraisals and emotions, but also that there are individual differences.

## Aim

- To test the relationship between the 6 basic appraisals and emotions
- To test if there are individual differences in the appraisal of the 6 basic appraisals and emotions

## Method

The researchers wanted to test if the following links were dominant (strong) relationships:

- Other-blame leads to feeling Anger
- Self-blame leads to feeling Guilt
- Danger/Threat leads to feeling Fear
- Loss/helplessness leads to feeling Sadness
- Achievement leads to Joy/Happiness
- Positive encounters lead to Love

The participants were 36 students from the University of Leuven. There were 13 men and 23 women, and they were paid 40 Euros. Their average age was 22.

Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to examine how they experience emotion. They were given a watch which they wore for 2 weeks. The watch would beep 9 times during the day and when they heard the alarm, the participant needed to answer a questionnaire. At the end of two weeks, the questionnaires were collected.

Each day was divided into 90-minute blocks and the watch alarm would sound randomly once in each 90-minute block.

## Questionnaire

The participants answered the following questions each time their watch beeped. They were asked to circle the Likert-type questions (emotion) in question 1 and then circle the situation (appraisal) in question 2. Question 3 required them to enter the time they completed the questionnaire to check that they had completed it when the alarm rang. Any times that were more than 15 minutes after the alarm rang were discounted.

1)   At this moment, I feel:

Joy

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |

Love

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |

Anger

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |

Guilt

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |

Fear

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |

Sadness

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |

2)    At this moment (circle an answer)

   a)  I experience a success
   b)  I experience a positive encounter
   c)  I blame someone else
   d)  I blame myself
   e)  I feel threatened
   f)  I experience a loss

3)   At this time, it is……hour……minutes.

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## Results

Nezlek found that the way people appraise (try to understand) situations can lead to specific emotions. While each individual may interpret situations in different ways, it is the way that they appraise them that will cause the emotion.

For example, if a person sees a dog in the street, they may like dogs and appraise the situation as a Positive-Encounter and this would lead them to feeling love and happiness. However, someone else may see the dog and feel Threatened and this would lead them to feeling fear. It is the same situation, but it has been appraised differently and caused different emotions.

The researchers found that there are common emotions linked with situations:

- Blaming others leads people to feeling angry
- Blaming themselves leads people to feeling guilty
- Threat leads to people feeling fear
- Loss leads to people feeling sad
- Positive encounters leads to people feeling love

Joy was more mixed with people feeling Joy both when having Positive encounters and when blaming others. This showed that there are individual differences in the way people appraise situations and the emotions that they feel.

## Other findings

Participants felt more positive emotions during the 2 weeks than negative emotions.

Participants varied their emotions significantly during the day, but were quite stable during the week, suggesting that people commonly feel these emotions and that the testing method was reliable and accurate.

## Conclusion

Nezlek concluded that certain appraisal emotions are stronger than others. If we feel that we have appraised a situation accurately, we will feel an emotion.

They also believed that the dominant relationships are also affected by lesser relationships to make a more complicated appraisal system.



Evaluation

Strengths

Unlike other studies on emotion, this study had people do emotion checks as they were living their normal lives rather than in a laboratory setting (high ecological validity).

The researchers employed standardised methods (controls) such as the random watch timings and detailed instructions to the participants.

The researchers did not interfere in the lives of the participants very much (i.e. they only saw the participants at the start and end of the study) so the participants were unlikely to try to please the researchers.

Weaknesses

Having to complete so many questionnaires (9 questionnaires x 14 days = 126), it is possible participants got bored (fatigue effect) and simply answered randomly.

It is possible that participants guessed the aim of the study and changed their answers according to demand characteristics (Hawthorne effect or Screw You effect).

It is possible that participants started to notice a trend in their emotions and appraisals and this could have affected the answers they put. For example, if they have already experienced the same situation on a previous questionnaire, they may simply mark the same answers as before without really considering their current emotional state.

The sample was only on Westerners (from a University in Holland) and it was quite small. We cannot generalise to other cultures. Other countries may have different emotional responses to the same appraisals.