Being playful and smart? The relations of adult playfulness with psychometric and self-estimated intelligence and academic performance

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Abstract

The study examines the relation between subjectively assessed adult playfulness and psychometric and self-estimated intelligence in a sample of 254 students. As expected, playfulness existed widely independently from psychometric intelligence. Correlations pointed in the direction of higher expressive playfulness and numeric intelligence and lower creative playfulness and figural intelligence. However, the size of the coefficients suggests that the results should not be over-interpreted. The same was true for self-estimates of intelligence. Those scoring lower in the total score of all self-estimates (median split) yielded higher scores in creative playfulness but those with higher self-estimates were higher in the silly-aspects of playfulness (i.e., childlike or unpredictable). Playfulness was associated with better academic performance (i.e., better grades in an exam). Also, students who described themselves as playful were more likely to do the extra reading that went beyond what was needed to pass the exam. This can be seen as first evidence of a positive relation between playfulness in adults and academic achievement. Data are interpreted within current literature and future research directions are given.