



The Role of the Quiet Ego in Promoting Benefits from Social Participation: A Win-win Game for Sustained Social Participation

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Abstract

In this paper, we argue that the quiet ego, defined as an inclusive identity oriented toward long-term growth in desirable and adaptive ways for oneself and others, can be expressed and developed by participating in the social sphere. The objectives of this study are: 1) to analyze the measurement quality of the Quiet Ego Scale (QES) in a sample of Spanish individuals with different levels of prosocial participation (Study 1; N=238); and 2) to analyze how the QES is related to participants' perceived benefits and costs and their intention to continue participating in prosocial activities, in a new sample of individuals who actively participate as volunteers, community leaders, activists, and so on (Study 2; N=288). Our findings showed that the QES has adequate psychometric properties for use in samples of Spanish individuals who perform various social activities. Furthermore, the results suggest a positive chain of relationships, that is, a quiet ego is related to individuals' perception of three specific benefits associated with prosocial participation (Benefits from the activities, Benefits of giving, and Benefits of sharing with similar people), and these benefits to their intention to continue performing such activities. These findings can help non-profit organizations sustain social participation based on perceived personal benefits and the dimensions of a quiet ego.

Keywords Quiet ego · Social participation · Benefit · Costs · Volunteers · Quiet Ego Scale

Social participation can adopt several different formats, such as associationism, volunteerism, and activism, with varying degrees of regulation, all of which are associated with numerous positive effects, including psychological effects for the people who participate (Binder & Freytag, 2013; Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003; Gherghel et al., 2018; Lawton

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et al., 2020; Meier & Stutzer, 2008; Piliavin & Siegl, 2007; Stephen, 2005) and social effects for others around them and their communities (Gray & Stevenson, 2019; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2011; Wayment & Bauer, 2018a; Zanbar, 2019). These positive effects are especially relevant in the current context of the decline of social capital and deterioration of a sense of community (Putnam, 2000; Ryan, 2011), as well as in the particular context of nonprofit organizations, as most of them report a lack of resources to achieve their aims and adopt business-like approaches to be more effective (Buonomo et al., 2020; Evans et al., 2011; Kellner et al., 2017; Ma & Konrath, 2018; Maier et al., 2014; Searing et al., 2021). In this paper, we examine whether a quiet ego or a kind of inclusive identity that balances personal needs with others' can be expressed and developed by performing diverse activities of pro-social participation. Particularly, we explore the role of the quiet ego as a link in the chain to promote personal benefits and sustained prosocial participation.

1 Why the quiet ego?

A quiet ego is a non-defensive identity that considers personal development within a social dimension including the growth of others (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The quiet ego is not necessarily a personality trait but a set of skills that can be acquired and would reflect a consciously integrated, compassionate, and growth-oriented interpretation of one's own needs and the needs of others (Wayment et al., 2015). In Bauer's words, such an identity "*incorporates others without losing the self*" (Bauer & Wayment, 2008, p. 8). In this paper, we argue that the characteristics of a quiet ego can be best expressed when people transcend their personal interests and become involved in prosocial participation, which, in essence, implies working for and with others to bring about improvements for the entire society.

From a theoretical point of view, the quiet ego and the meanings included in it, could describe people performing prosocial activities in organizational contexts. *Inclusive Identity* refers to the degree to which one identifies with others, considers oneself to share personal qualities with them, and includes others within one's sense of psychosocial identity (Aron et al., 1992; Leary et al., 2008). Empirically, this kind of identity has been shown to increase the likelihood of cooperation (Montoya & Pittinsky, 2011), which is necessary and is present in many activities performed by volunteers, activists, and people who work for the well-being of others. *Perspective Taking* involves the ability to shift attention away from the self (Davis, 1983), which does not merely facilitates compassion but also a conceptual understanding of the social conditions of those for whom one feels compassion. This understanding is pivotal to overcome traditional approaches to aid exclusively focused on charity instead of social factors that must be treated in an organized and systematic way. *Detached Awareness* is considered a non-defensive sort of attention, similar to concepts such as mindfulness (K. W. Brown & Ryan, 2003) and flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002); a focus on the immediate moment without preconceived notions of what should be or ideals about how the moment will turn out helps prevent defensiveness (Brown et al., 2008) and allows experiences characterized by absorption, concentration, and enjoyment (Tse et al., 2022). This kind of attention may allow social participants to cope and deal with social reality, which is sometimes hard and disappointing, in a way that the present costs associated with activities may no longer be perceived as such. Last, *Growth-Mindedness* focuses on the joint process of long-term psychological growth of oneself as well as others, understood as

eudemonic well-being (Bauer & Wayment, 2008; Ryff, 2014). This understanding fits with the ultimate goal of people who conceive social participation as a means to overcome the various manifestations of social injustice and to make a meaningful positive social impact (Piliavin, 2003).

All of these characteristics are related to humanistic models of spiritual growth that also seek social justice (Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002; Steger et al., 2008). Some of these characteristics, such as humility, compassion, gratitude, honesty, justice, caring, generosity, and interdependence have been generally associated with prosocial behaviors and social harmony (Ali et al., 2021; Chancellor et al., 2018; Kosloff et al., 2008; Michie, 2009). Therefore, a strong relationship between this quiet ego orientation and the many benefits reported by people performing prosocial activities can be hypothesized, and stimulate social participation itself over time.

2 Subjective benefits and costs in social participation

Research on prosocial participation has gone tangentially through the cost/benefit approach, probably because what some consider to be costs for social participants may even be benefits (Chinman & Wandersman, 1999; Jamison, 2003; Lee & Brudney, 2009; Smith, 1994). To better understand why people volunteer despite the obvious material costs present in organizational contexts, it has recently been proposed a new classification of benefits and costs (Vecina et al., 2021). The benefits are conceptualized as subjective and mainly grouped in three categories: benefits from performing challenging activities, giving the best of oneself, and sharing values and interests with people. The costs are also considered as subjective and may arise from: negligent organizational management, personal impotence to effectively make a significant contribution, and lack of personal competence. In light of these, it would be expected that volunteers continue performing the activities they are involved in as long as their subjective benefits outweigh the subjective costs.

To measure this imbalance of benefits and costs for each volunteer or group of volunteers, a short 22-item instrument has been proposed, the Subjective Index of Benefits in Volunteering (SIBiV) (Vecina et al., 2021). It includes three scales measuring specific benefits (Benefits from the activities, Benefits of giving, and Benefits of sharing with similar people) that have been empirically related to the intention to continue volunteering and other positive outcomes such as engagement, organizational commitment, eudemonic well-being, and satisfaction. Simultaneously, the three scales measuring costs (Costs of impotence to effectively help, Costs from organizational management, and Costs from lack of competence) were negatively related to the same outcomes, leading to the inference of good external and discriminant validity.

Although the SIBiV was validated in a sample of volunteers working in the social sector, its application to other types of prosocial participation, such as activities performed by activists, community leaders, or members of associations or foundations with social aims, is also feasible. In all these cases, a positive balance toward benefits may constitute a legitimate way to sustain the permanence of those who, freely and without any monetary payment, participate to improve negative social conditions in organizational contexts (Vecina et al., 2013). Furthermore, the subtraction of the costs from the benefits in particular situations may have significant practical implications, allowing organizational managers to assess how

each individual or group of individuals feel in these situations, and adopt appropriate strategies in case of negative balances to sustain their participation.

3 Overview of the studies

In this paper, we propose that the specific characteristics of a quiet ego, which include attending to the present moment with a broad perspective of the joint growth of oneself and others (Wayment et al., 2015a, b), can promote the benefits of giving, the benefits of doing, and the benefits of sharing with similar people; furthermore, these benefits may promote continued participation in prosocial activities in a kind of win-win relationship. Our assumption rests on the idea that participation in organizations with prosocial aims itself facilitates the expression and development of the characteristics of a quiet ego. Following this rationale, we highlight the nature of participants' experiences at the social level (Collier et al., 2016; Gray & Stevenson, 2019), where the interaction of psychological and social variables produces novel effects that once again influence these individuals and their social contexts. In other words, it can be said that variables can be at the same time dependent and independent variables and develop over time or change across contexts (Ellemers et al., 1999).

The two specific objectives of this study are to: (1) analyze the psychometric quality of the Quiet Ego Scale (QES) in a sample of Spanish individuals with different levels of prosocial participation (Study 1; $N=238$); and (2) analyze how the QES is related to the perceived benefits and costs in a new sample of individuals who actively participate in prosocial activities as volunteers, community leaders, activists, and so on (Study 2; $N=288$).

In this second study, we further proposed a model in which the QES positively relate to the benefits perceived by prosocial participants and negatively to the costs. In other words, we assumed that the characteristics of a quiet ego help manage the negative aspects of prosocial participation (costs) while promoting the positive ones (benefits). Furthermore, we also hypothesized that the perceived benefits and costs for each prosocial participant at any given time, positively and negatively relate to participants' intention to continue to be involved in prosocial activities, respectively.

4 Study 1

Given that the validity of the QES has never been tested in a Spanish sample, we first examined the factorial structure of the QES as proposed by Wayment, and colleagues (2015). Thus, we tested a model with four first-order factors (Detached Awareness, Inclusive Identity, Perspective Taking, and Growth-Mindedness), and one second-order factor, that is, the quiet ego (Hypothesis 1). Furthermore, we compared this higher-order latent factor model with a second one with only four latent variables (without the second-order factor).

Additionally, we expected to obtain indirect support for the idea that prosocial participation is a context where the characteristics of quiet ego can be expressed and take the shape of benefits from social participation itself. So, we hypothesized greater scores on the QES among participants who were involved in prosocial activities compared with those who had never been formally engaged in organizational contexts to perform prosocial actions. Fol-

lowing the same rationale, we anticipated that among the participants who had never been engaged in such activities, we would find positive relationships between the quiet ego and the future intention to perform prosocial activities. Therefore, we developed the following additional hypotheses:

H2 Participants who were involved in activities of prosocial participation at the time of data collection will show higher scores on the Quiet Ego Scale than participants who had never been formally engaged in such activities.

H3 Among participants who had never been formally engaged in activities of prosocial participation, there will be a positive relationship between the Quiet Ego Scale and the intention to perform these activities in the future.

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Participants and Procedure

Two hundred and thirty-eight participants were recruited for this study; 39% of them reported that they had never been formally engaged in activities of prosocial participation, while 61% were involved in some kind of prosocial participation activity as volunteers, activists, or members of associations with social aims, including environmental activities, defense of the rights of minorities (for example, LGTBQ), providing care in emergency social situations, accompanying people from various vulnerable groups, and so on. None of them received any amount of money for their prosocial contribution and all of them performed these activities regularly, not sporadically (at least once a month). Their average time of previous Permanence was 36 months ($SD=42.17$; minimum of 1 month and maximum of 240 months). The total sample were aged from 18 to 67 years ($M=26.70$, $SD=11.03$), and 62% were female.

All these data were gathered online during three months in 2019. We contacted key informants in different sectors (environmental, social assistance, claiming LGTBQIA+rights, community development, etc.) and asked them to distribute the questionnaire among their contacts. We warned them that it was not necessary to be an activist or volunteer to be able to participate in the research. From there, the snowball method was used.

The administration of the protocol was anonymous and confidential. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form, which clarified that the researchers were independent from their organizations, if any, and that only the researchers would have had access to the data. Overall, these procedures were expected to address a potential social desirability bias. Forty-two incomplete questionnaires were eliminated, leaving the total sample in two hundred and thirty-eight participants.

4.1.2 Measures

Quiet ego was measured using the QES (Wayment et al., 2015a, b), which includes Detached Awareness (3 items), Inclusive Identity (3 items), Perspective Taking (4 items), and Growth-Mindedness (4 items). The 14 items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale

(1 = *Totally disagree*, 7 = *Totally agree*). Some sample items are: “*I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I’m doing*” (Detached Awareness); “*Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place*” (Perspective Taking); “*I feel a connection between myself and all living things*” (Inclusive Identity); and “*I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world*” (Growth-Mindedness). To ensure the translation of the items was faithful to the original, a bilingual person translated them into Spanish and another one, also bilingual, translated the items back into English.

The intention to continue participating was measured using two items in each group. Participants who were involved in prosocial activities were asked whether they intended to pursue their prosocial participation activities in the next year as well as the probability to continue involved in 5 years. Participants who had never been formally engaged in organizational contexts to perform prosocial actions were asked about the probability to do so in the next year and in 5 years. The items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 7 = Surely).

4.1.3 Data Analysis

The plan of analysis encompassed four steps: (1) analysis of the psychometric properties of each scale item; (2) Two Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs); (3) ANOVA to verify differences between the two groups based on their social participation; and (4) Pearson’s correlations to determine the relationships between the Quiet Ego Scale and future intention for social participation. Steps 1, 3 and 4 were performed using SPSS v.24 and Step 2 through MPlus version 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017).

In Step 1, the item analysis included the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis for each item to support the robustness of the analyses. Skewness and kurtosis values were considered optimal when less or equal to 2 (Brown, 2015).

In Step 2, CFAs (Kline, 2011) were performed to assess the factorial structure of the QES as proposed by Wayment and colleagues (2015). More specifically, we tested two models: (1) a model with four first-order factors, corresponding to Detached Awareness, Inclusive Identity, Perspective Taking, and Growth-Mindedness, and one second-order factor, that is, quiet ego; and (2) a model with the four first-order factors only. The Robust Maximum Likelihood Approach (MLR) was used to deal with non-normality in data (Wang & Wang, 2012). According to a multifaceted approach to the assessment of the model fit (Bollen, 1993; Tanaka, 1987), the following indices were used to evaluate the goodness-of-fit: Chi-square likelihood ratio statistic, Tucker and Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) with its confidence intervals, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). It should be noted that, according to Kline (2016), the Chi-square index may be significant because of a sample size-sensitive bias. We accepted TLI and CFI values greater than 0.90, RMSEA values lower than 0.08, and SRMR values lower than 0.08 (Hooper et al., 2008). We compared models 1 and 2 using a χ^2 difference. Given the use of MLR as an estimator, we computed the χ^2 difference value using the Satorra-Bentley correction (Satorra & Bentley, 2010). The Satorra-Bentley scaled χ^2 takes into account χ^2 values, degrees of freedom and scaling corrector factors for MLR of the models and provides a χ^2 difference scaled value with the relative degrees of freedom. If the χ^2 value is significant, the models are significantly different. In case the models are

significantly different, we will perform the remaining steps of analyses for both the models. If not, we will maintain the model proposed by Wayment and colleagues in 2015.

Before Step 3, the following procedures of data exploration were applied: (a) univariate and multivariate outlier analyses (Mahalanobis's distance was set to $p < .001$) (Gath & Hayes, 2011); (b) score distribution analysis (skewness and kurtosis cut-off points were set to ± 2) (George & Mallery, 2003); and (c) missing values analysis (missing values were skipped leastwise) (Roderick, 1992). At the end of these procedures, we obtained the sample described above. In Step 3, a univariate ANOVA was used to assess differences between the two groups of participants, divided on the basis of their social participation: (a) participants who had never been involved in prosocial participation activities, and (b) participants who were involved in such activities at the time of data collection. Before the ANOVA, Levene's test for variance homogeneity was computed to ensure that the ANOVA was the possible option to test between-group differences. As Levene's test was not significant for all QES subscales, a univariate ANOVA was computed with Tukey's post-hoc tests.

Finally, in Step 4, Pearson's correlational coefficients were computed to verify whether the Quiet Ego Scale was associated with intention to be involved in prosocial activities of participation in the future among those who had never been involved in the past.

4.2 Results

The results of the item analysis and the skewness and kurtosis values are shown in Table 1. All of the items had a normal distribution. Figures 1 and 2 show CFA models 1 and 2, respectively. Model 1 (which includes the second-order factor; see Fig. 1) showed a good fit to the data: $\chi^2(73) = 162.472$, $p = .000$, CFI = 0.923, TLI = 0.904, RMSEA = 0.065 (90% CI = 0.052–0.079, $p = .032$), and SRMR = 0.069.

Similarly, model 2 (with the four first-order factors only; see Fig. 2) showed also a good fit to the data: $\chi^2(71) = 161.251$, $p = .000$, CFI = 0.922, TLI = 0.901, RMSEA = 0.066 (90% CI = 0.053–0.080, $p = .024$), and SRMR = 0.068. To compare the two models, we used the Satorra-Bentley scaled χ^2 , which equals 1.394 (with 2 degrees of freedom) and has an asso-

Table 1 Item analysis for the Quiet Ego Scale

	M		SD		Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Value	Value	Statistics	Standard Error	Statistics	Standard Error	Statistics	Standard Error
DA1	3.93	1.568	0.006	0.158	-0.811	0.314	-0.811	0.314
DA2	3.71	1.590	0.124	0.158	-0.968	0.314	-0.968	0.314
DA3	3.49	1.547	0.291	0.158	-0.867	0.314	-0.867	0.314
II1	4.39	1.573	-0.199	0.158	-0.706	0.314	-0.706	0.314
II2	3.83	1.719	-0.067	0.158	-1.092	0.314	-1.092	0.314
II3	5.25	1.435	-0.728	0.158	0.112	0.314	0.112	0.314
PT1	5.53	1.362	-0.984	0.158	0.636	0.314	0.636	0.314
PT2	4.94	1.587	-0.535	0.158	-0.536	0.314	-0.536	0.314
PT3	4.69	1.759	-0.437	0.158	-0.957	0.314	-0.957	0.314
PT4	5.58	1.246	-0.827	0.158	0.196	0.314	0.196	0.314
GR1	6.23	1.028	-1.441	0.158	1.827	0.314	1.827	0.314
GR2	6.33	0.960	-1.448	0.158	1.563	0.314	1.563	0.314
GR3	6.07	1.053	-1.184	0.158	1.295	0.314	1.295	0.314
GR4	5.71	1.419	-1.363	0.158	1.498	0.314	1.498	0.314

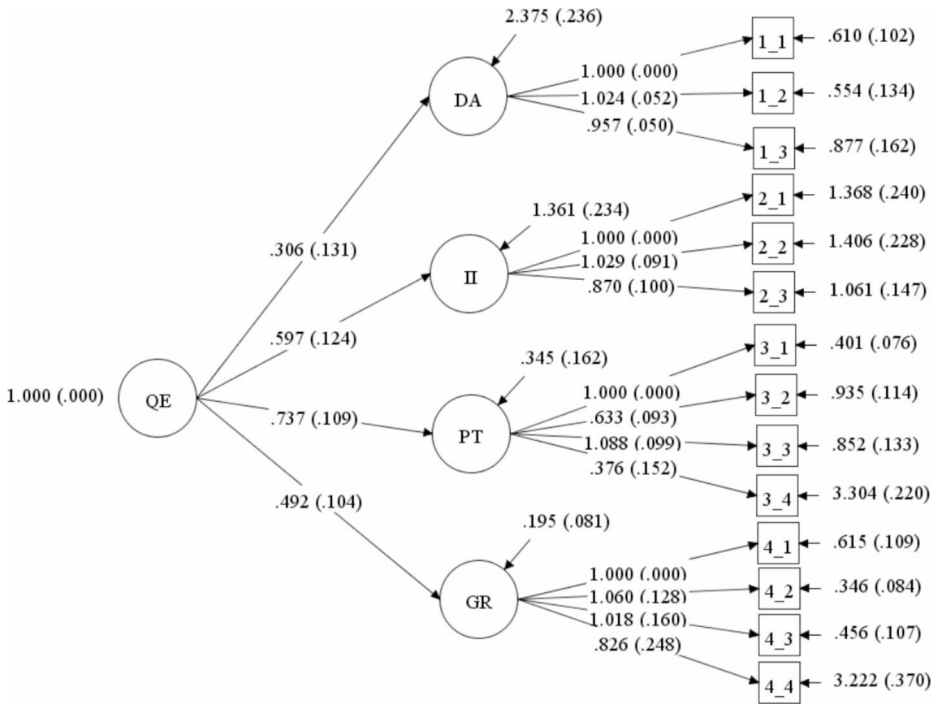


Fig. 1 Results of the Confirmatory Factorial Analysis of the Quiet Ego Scale – Model 1. Standardized direct effects are reported. DA=Detached Awareness; II=Inclusive Identity; PT=Perspective Taking; GR=Growth-Mindedness

ciated p -value=0.498. Thus, the two models were not significantly different. Given this result, we maintained the model originally published by Wayment and colleagues (2015) for the following steps of the analyses.

Regarding the comparison between participants with different levels of participation (participants who were involved in activities of prosocial participation at the time of the data collection and participants who had never been formally engaged in organizational contexts to perform prosocial actions), we observed significant differences in the Quiet Ego Scale among the groups ($F_{2,235}=6.148, p=.002$). When considering post-hoc differences, the significant F value was due to the group currently involved in social participation; that is, participants currently involved in prosocial activities showed a significantly higher quiet ego than those who had never been involved in such activities. This result confirms Hypothesis 2.

Finally, among the participants who had never been formally engaged in organizational contexts to perform prosocial actions, the correlation between the Quiet Ego Scale and participants' future intention to participate in prosocial activities was not significant both short and long term. Thus, our Hypothesis 3 was rejected.

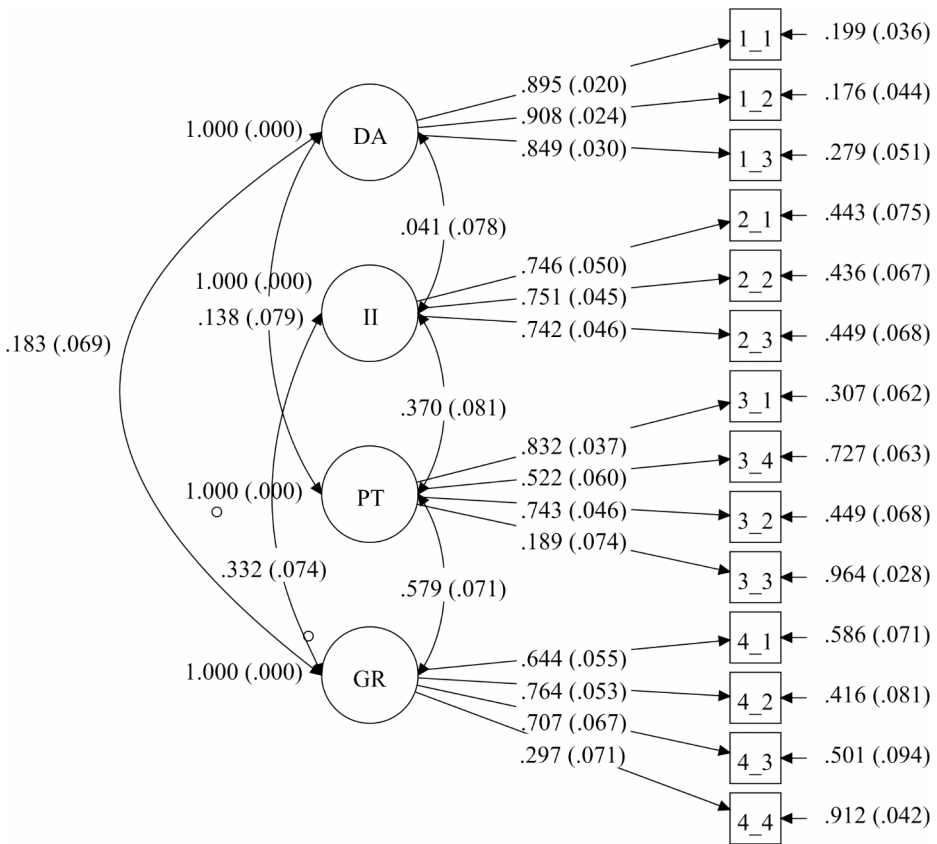


Fig. 2 Results of the Confirmatory Factorial Analysis of the Quiet Ego Scale – Model 2. Standardized direct effects are reported. DA=Detached Awareness; II=Inclusive Identity; PT=Perspective Taking; GR=Growth-Mindedness

Table 2 ANOVA test and Tukey post-hoc tests for QES in participants with different levels of social participation

Groups	M	N	SD	F	Differences between the groups	p
Never been involved (1)	4.86	80	0.59		(1) vs. (2)	0.002
Currently involved (2)	4.98	94	0.61		(2) vs. (3)	ns
Have been involved in the past (3)	4.67	64	0.49		(3) vs. (1)	ns
Total	4.82	238	0.58	6.148	among groups	0.002

Note. N=Number of people in each group and in total; M=mean; SD=Standard Deviation; F=F values in the ANOVA test; ns=not significant. Differences between groups were computed with Tukey post-hoc tests

4.3 Discussion

While a positive relationship between quiet ego and well-being has already been supported in a large number of studies (Collier et al., 2016; Gherghel et al., 2018; Wayment & Bauer, 2018b; Wayment et al., 2015a, b), much less attention has been devoted to the relationship between the quiet ego characteristics and social contexts (Perlin & Li, 2020) where precisely these characteristics can be expressed and developed. Taking into account the problem faced by social organizations in attracting new members and retaining others, and the relevance of this issue in the literature on nonprofit organizations management (Buonomo et al., 2020; Searing et al., 2021) this gap in knowledge needs to be addressed if we aspire to have individuals willing to participate within effective prosocial organizations for the good of all.

Study 1 helped us conclude that the QES presented a good fit to the data in a Spanish sample, thus confirming the original structure of the QES reported by Wayment and colleagues (2015) in a sample from the United States. More specifically, we can conclude that both the higher order factor model and the four-first-order-factor model fit equally well to the data. This may allow us to understand the quiet ego as the intersection between the four first-order characteristics or as an addition of these characteristics.

Confident in the quality of the measurement, we used the total scale to indirectly test the hypothesized association between a quiet ego and prosocial participation, and obtained an interesting result regarding the significant role of the quiet ego in distinguishing between people who were involved in prosocial activities and those who were not and never were. However, among participants who had never been formally engaged in activities of prosocial participation the Quiet Ego Scale was not related with their future intention to participate in prosocial activities. This result could be interpreted by saying that those who have never carried out prosocial participation activities do not seem to anticipate the benefits of prosocial participation for their ego.

These results indirectly and partially support the idea that social participation constitutes a privileged context that allows people to express their ability to take others' viewpoints, experiences, and needs into account, and include them within their own sense of identity. However, it remains unknown what the mechanism that could be making this possible is.

5 Study 2

This study can be considered as a replication of the internal validity of the QES in a new sample composed of individuals who actively participate as volunteers, activists, or members of associations and foundations with social aims. Additionally, it can also be considered as an extension of Study 1 to test the external validity of the instrument. In this respect, we analyzed the relationships between the QES and the specific benefits and costs potentially present in prosocial participation, and proposed a model to explain participants' intention to continue participating.

Taking into account that individuals in our sample were actively engaging in prosocial activities when data were collected, we hypothesized that the characteristics of a quiet ego would increase the perceived benefits of social participation and decrease the perceived costs present in each particular situation. We also hypothesized that the three specific ben-

efits would positively, and the three specific costs negatively, explain the intention to continue participating in the future. To sum up, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H4 A quiet ego will be positively related to benefits and negatively related to costs perceived by prosocial participants.

H5 The benefits will be positively, and the costs negatively, linked with the intention to continue performing prosocial activities.

5.1 Methodology

5.1.1 Participants and Procedure

Two hundred and eighty-eight volunteers (female=46%) were recruited for this study with the same procedure as in Study 1. They were aged 18 to 68 years ($M=23.11$, $SD=7.25$). All of them were either volunteering or engaged in some kind of social participation as volunteers, activists, or members of various nonprofit organizations working in various fields (environment, defense of the rights of minority groups such as LGBTQ, or representation of the interests of groups and collectives). Their experience as prosocial participants ranged from 4 to 84 months ($M=21.32$, $SD=14.65$), and the hours spent monthly as social participants ranged from 1 to 720 h ($M=35.92$, $SD=78.49$).

5.1.2 Measures

This study involved four variables: quiet ego, subjective benefits and costs perceived by social participants, and intention to continue participating. Quiet ego and intention to continue participating were measured as in Study 1.

Benefits and costs were measured using the Subjective Index of Benefits in Volunteering (SIBiV; Vecina, 2021). Its 22 items measure, on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Totally disagree*, 7 = *Totally agree*), three benefits (Benefits from the activities, Benefits of giving, and Benefits of sharing with similar people) and three costs (Costs of impotence to effectively help, Costs from the organizational management, and Costs from lack of competence). Some item examples are: “*When I do my voluntary activity I feel that I give the best of myself*” (benefit of giving); “*For me it is important to know and be with people who think the same as me and who are willing to give their time to improve the circumstances around us*” (benefit of sharing); “*I feel that no matter how much I do, things do not change too much*” (cost of impotence); “*Sometimes I find myself without the support I need from the organization*” (cost related to the management strategies of organizations); and “*Sometimes I think that more skills are needed than I have to achieve the goals that mark me*” (cost related to lack of competence). In this study, Cronbach’s alpha was 0.881 for benefits and 0.874 for costs.

5.1.3 Data Analysis

First, a CFA (Kline, 2011) was performed to examine the measurement model, using MPlus version 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). To enhance the reliability and parsimony of our model,

3-item parcels were created for all the administered measures, except for the intention to continue participating. Each parcel was created according to the subscales for each dimension; thus, quiet ego included four parcels, and the benefits and costs included three parcels each. Parceling allows the estimation of less free parameters and reduction of the sources of sampling error (Coffman & MacCallum, 2005; Little et al., 2002). The Robust Maximum Likelihood Approach was used to deal with non-normality in data (Wang & Wang, 2012). Next, the structural model was tested using the structural equation modeling approach (Kline, 2011). Under the model, quiet ego was directly correlated with costs and benefits, and costs and benefits were directly correlated with intention to continue participating. As in Study 1, a multifaceted approach to the assessment of the model fit was used (Tanaka, 1987), based on the following parameters: Chi-square likelihood ratio statistic, TLI, CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR. Furthermore, the same cut-off values were considered. We ran a Monte Carlo simulation to calculate power for the SEM model. Power values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater power to detect a true effect. Finally, the data were explored through the same techniques described in Study 1.

5.2 Results

5.2.1 Measurement Model

The measurement model showed a good fit to the data in this new sample: $\chi^2(41)=87.627$, $p=.000$, CFI=0.938, TLI=0.918, RMSEA=0.063 (90% CI=0.045–0.081, $p=.117$), and SRMR=0.067. Table 3 shows the correlations among quiet ego, costs, benefits, and intention to continue participating. Quiet ego showed a positive correlation with benefits ($r=.304$, $p<.01$), but unexpectedly, not with costs ($p>.05$). Intention to continue participating showed negative correlations with costs ($r=-.272$, $p<.01$) and positive correlations with benefits ($r=.315$, $p<.01$), both significant and as expected.

5.2.2 Final Model

The final model (Fig. 3) showed a good fit to the data: $\chi^2(41)=87.627$, $p=.000$, CFI=0.938, TLI=0.918, RMSEA=0.063 (90% CI=0.045–0.081, $p=.117$), and SRMR=0.067. The model showed that the quiet ego was positively associated with benefits ($b=0.511$, $p=.000$), but not with costs ($p>.05$). Consistently, when considering indirect effects, the indirect effect from Quiet Ego to Intention to continue participating *via* Benefits was significant ($b=0.147$, $p=.000$), while the indirect effect *via* Costs was not significant ($b=0.035$, $p=.122$). Furthermore, intention to continue participating was positively correlated with benefits ($b=0.289$, $p=.000$) and negatively correlated with costs ($b=-0.239$, $p=.000$). Thus, all our hypotheses were confirmed with the only exception of the relationship between quiet ego and costs perceived by prosocial participants. The quiet ego variable explained more

Table 3 Correlations among Quiet ego, Costs, Benefits, and Intention to continue

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Quiet ego	-	-0.060	0.304**	0.127*
2. Costs		-	-0.213**	-0.272**
3. Benefits			-	0.315**
4. Intention to continue				-

Note. **= $p<.01$, *= $p<.05$

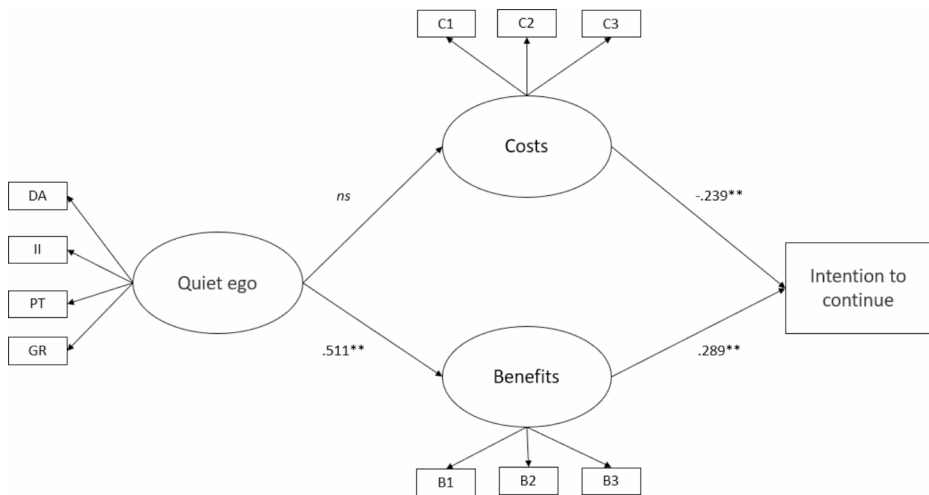


Fig. 3 Results of the structural equation model. Standardized direct effects are reported. $**p < .01$. DA=Detached Awareness; II=Inclusive Identity; PT=Perspective Taking; GR=Growth-Mindedness

than 26% of the variance of benefits while both benefits and costs explained almost 15% of the variance of intention to continue participating. We run a Monte Carlo power analysis for parallel mediation to verify the power of the following SEM model. The analyses showed that the indirect path through costs has a low power (equal to 0.14), while the one through benefits has a high power (equal to 1).

5.3 Discussion

Overall, our findings confirmed the results from Study 1 regarding the goodness of fit of the four-factor structure of the QES in a new sample. The findings also confirmed most of the hypothesized relationships, as quiet ego was significantly associated with perceived benefits, although not with perceived costs, and both the perceived benefits and costs were related to the intention to continue prosocial participation, the first ones positively and the second ones negatively.

The novelty of this study lies in the positive association found between the quiet ego and the three specific benefits perceived by the prosocial participants in our sample. This might be interpreted in light of the attitude embedded in the quiet ego construct, referring to the development of an attitude of positive involvement with others' needs and growth. Paradoxically, paying more attention to the feelings and needs of others is strongly related in our sample to the perception of personal benefits derived from prosocial participation. Parallel, the rewarding experience of feeling that one gives the best of oneself while performing meaningful activities with similar people was confirmed in this study as a significant predictor of participants' intention to continue participating in the activities they were currently performing. This supports studies conducted exclusively with volunteers in the social assistance sector (Vecina et al., 2021), and extends its applicability to other forms of prosocial participation such as environmental activism, the defense of social rights, the representation of collectives, or community development. It also supports more general studies

showing that perceived benefits may act as a “*steppingstone*” to subsequent participation (Ihm & Lee, 2021).

Additionally, we can conclude from Study 2 that a quiet ego does not seem to reduce the perception of the costs of prosocial participation as hypothesized. It seems that although there does not appear to be a significant relationship between the quiet ego and a less reactive perception of the costs, the subjective costs do coexist with subjective benefits and have a significant negative impact on social participants’ intention to continue participating in prosocial activities. This is in line with studies that have argued the relevance of the link between costs and benefits involved in volunteering and sustained prosocial activities irrespective of the instruments used to assess the costs and the benefits (Chinman & Wandersman, 1999; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Lee & Brudney, 2009; Vecina et al., 2021).

6 General Discussion

This paper explored the role played by quiet ego in relation to the assessment of the costs and benefits of prosocial participation, as well as the intention to continue participating. It should be noted that social participation does not occur in a vacuum, but is developed in non-profit organizations, associations, foundations, and so on, where many psychological and social variables interact (Ellemers et al., 1999) and produce tangible and intangible effects at all levels (Buonomo et al., 2020; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2011). Our findings can be interpreted in light of the relevance of considering personal well-being within a social frame, where the well-being of others also plays a significant role on one’s own well-being (Bauer & Wayment, 2008; Gray & Stevenson, 2019; Piliavin, 2003; Ryan, 2011; Wayment et al., 2015a, b; Wayment & O’Mara, 2008).

In this context, Study 1 showed that the QES has adequate psychometric properties for use in a Spanish population, and particularly in samples of people who perform various prosocial activities as activists, volunteers, community leaders, or members of prosocial associations. It also showed a particular indirect link between the Quiet Ego Scale and social participation, as this scale clearly differentiated between individuals who participate in prosocial activities and those who do not and never did.

Additionally, Study 2 suggested a chain of positive relationships in a new sample of 288 prosocial participants, showing that the quiet ego is related to their perception of benefits associated with social participation, and such benefits to their intention to continue performing prosocial activities in organizational contexts. It appears that when the quiet ego finds a proper, positive channel of expressing itself through prosocial activities, it becomes a rewarding experience that may motivate social participants to continue performing these activities in the future, probably fostering other desired outcomes such as work engagement and organizational commitment. The unexpected finding that quiet ego was not negatively related to the costs of social participation supports this interpretation, although it needs to be nuanced. In this respect, we may conclude that although the characteristics of the quiet ego do not seem to be related to the perception of fewer costs as we hypothesized, they do appear to be highly related to the perception of more subjective benefits.

Finding a way to support sustained social participation is a huge challenge for both, the participants’ well-being and the performance of prosocial organizations (Ma & Konrath, 2018; Maier et al., 2014; Searing et al., 2021). Our results provide an strategy to address this

challenge, as the quiet ego was found to be not only a personality trait but a reliable measure that can be confidently promoted (Wayment & Bauer, 2018b; Wayment et al., 2015a, 2019). In this respect, the quiet ego seems to reinforce three specific benefits perceived by the participants in our sample, which in essence is a manageable issue clearly related to the greater intention to continue being involved in prosocial activities. If as it seems people become happier once they increase acting on their values (Bojanowska et al., 2022) we can understand that our participants find a way to express their inclusive identity through volunteering, activism or community involvement.

The managers of social organizations need to be aware of this opportunity to reinforce personal identity characteristics and perceived benefits in social activities because that may be promoting rewarding experiences sustained over time with positive consequences for social participants, staff members, and users of the organizations' services, as well as society as a whole. Increasing prosocial participation allows the development of trust that is necessary to cooperate for mutual benefits (Montoya & Pittinsky, 2011; Putnam, 2000; Trivers, 1971) and specifically provides social organizations individuals willing to expose and eliminate social injustice (Evans et al., 2011).

6.1 Study Limitations

This work is not without limitations. First, our participants constitute a convenience sample. Although we used a total sample of 526 individuals with different levels of prosocial participation, it is in no way a representation of the population of social participants. Second, we used a cross-sectional design, based on correlations, which did not allow to test for the cause-and-effect relationships hypothesized in Study 2. Although we used the intention to continue social participation as a temporal proxy highly related to actual behavior (Sheeran, 2002), a cross-sectional design prevents the observation of the interactive evolution between the variables over time. However, it is worth noting that from a social perspective where it is assumed that many variables interact and reinforce each other, linear causality is not always the most important issue. In this respect, our idea of causality in this work is reciprocal: the quiet ego can promote prosocial participation and prosocial participation can promote the development of a quiet ego. Future research could help to elucidate whether knowing first-hand the needs of other people can help to relativize one's own, thus promoting the development of a more silent ego, and vice versa.

More specifically, we can point out a third limitation regarding the CFA models in Study 1. They showed that the models with and without the second-order factor are equally significant. This may open a reflection on the factorial structure of the Quiet Ego Scale, so that future studies may replicate the comparison of the two models in different samples. Additionally, the Monte Carlo power analysis in Study 2 showed that the indirect path between Quiet Ego and Intention to continue participating in prosocial activities *via* Costs has a low power. This implies that we do not know whether the not significant effect observed in the SEM model is due to an actual absence of such association, or to the low power itself.

Finally, it should also be considered that these limitations are common in current research and that, despite them, useful knowledge can be extracted, in this case, knowledge that may help promote prosocial participation. Future studies should verify the associations among the present variables using longitudinal designs and controlling the specific activities performed by prosocial participants. Therefore, further research is necessary to extend the

present findings that show that being aware of the needs of others reinforce the subjective benefits derived from the prosocial participation.

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Declarations

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