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Trait emotional intelligence and goal self-integration: important predictors of emotional well-being?

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Abstract

Personal goals vary in the extent to which they are integrated with core aspects of the self. Goal self-integration was measured by asking 95 students to rate their reasons for adopting eight personal strivings. In addition, the trait emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional well-being of participants was measured, in order to determine the influence of goal self-integration and trait EI on each individual's sense of well-being. A correlational analysis indicated that individuals who report high levels of trait EI also construct more congruent, self-integrated personal goal systems. General linear modelling, however, indicated that global trait EI and goal self-integration were poor predictors of global emotional well-being. Despite this finding, two subscales: mood regulation (EI) and identified regulation (goal self-integration) were found to predict emotional well-being. This result indicated that emotional experience is influenced, in part, by one's ability to regulate emotions and by establishing personal strivings that are congruent with core values or personal convictions. It is tentatively concluded that trait EI and goal self-integration are both related to emotional well-being, however, further research is needed to identify which of subcomponents has the greatest influence.

Keywords: Trait emotional intelligence; Emotional well-being; Goal self-integration; Personal strivings

1. Introduction

Research has shown that when goals reflect a person's developing interests and core values, they are more likely to act effectively (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998) and experience enhanced well-being

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(Kasser & Ryan, 1993; McGregor & Little, 1998; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995). Evidently, psychological health can be accounted for, in part, by one's ability to set and work towards goals that are congruent with a sense of the self (goal self-integration), an ability that would seem to depend upon individual self-awareness.

In recent times emotional intelligence (EI) has been proposed as an important predictor of positive human functioning (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The intention of the current study is to investigate whether the self-awareness required for goal self-integration resembles the internal awareness inherent in EI. Given the reflective and evaluative nature of EI, an emotionally intelligent individual may also be capable of the self-awareness required to identify important aspects of themselves. Thus, EI and goal self-integration may be related processes. The principle aim of this study is to present and test a model of the effects of goal self-integration and trait EI on emotional well-being.

2. Well-being and goals

As the present study examines human affective states, the specific construct of interest is emotional well-being, rather than subjective well-being or psychological well-being (PWB). In the current study emotional well-being will be a composite of positive and negative affect (Bradburn, 1969) and distinct from broader conceptualisations of well-being such as subjective well-being, which typically include a measure of positive and negative affect and life satisfaction (for a review see Diener, 1984) or PWB, which has been conceptualised as including components such as personal growth and purpose in life (see McGregor & Little, 1998; Ryff, 1989).

Personal goals play an important role in the maintenance of subjective well-being (for a review see Emmons, 1996). Whilst early subjective well-being models tended to locate well-being in the *attainment* of desired end states, or telic theories (see Diener, 1984), recent models have recognised the importance of the movement *towards* desired end states, or autotelic theories (see Omodei & Wearing, 1990). As Emmons (1996) observed, "goal attainment per se will not lead to subjectively satisfying long-term states unless these goals are intrinsically meaningful and integrated within an overall structure of the individual in his or her social context" (p. 333).

Several researchers have noted the importance of setting goals that reflect core aspects of the self and permit the integration of personality and goals. For example, Kasser and Ryan (1993) found that self-reported well-being was greatest for individuals who held intrinsically oriented goals (e.g., personal growth, satisfying relationships and community contributions) compared to external orientations (e.g., achieving wealth and financial success). Similarly, Sheldon and Kasser (1995) used coherence and congruence based measures of personality integration to test the proposition that greater psychological health is experienced when an individual's goals are horizontally and vertically consistent (coherence) and pursued for intrinsically satisfying reasons (congruence). They found that when individuals strive for self-determined reasons or towards intrinsically motivated goals, these measures were possible predictors of well-being, concluding that "personality integration plays a causal role with regard to psychological health" (p. 541). Finally, McGregor and Little (1998) found that people feel better when they are doing well (efficacy) but report higher levels of meaning when their projects are more reflective of self-identity (integrity).

3. The movement towards self-determination

According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), people have an organismic psychological need to function autonomously. Individuals share an innate desire to choose activities freely and to act in accordance with our developing interests or core values. de Charms (1968) used perceived locus of causality to account for individual differences in self-determined behaviour, explaining that an internal perceived locus of causality exists when a person's interests are experienced as the initiating action, and an external perceived locus of causality when initiated by external events. In developing self-determination theory, Deci and Ryan expanded upon de Charms' original notion of perceived locus of causality and identified four distinct motivations for acting: external, introjected, identified and intrinsic (see Table 1).

In the present context, the internal–external causality distinction does not exist at a physical, bodily level but according to the individual's sense of self (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Thus, even though the striving to "achieve my sales target" occurs inside the person, if the primary motivation for this striving is some external reward (e.g., money) or internal compulsion (e.g., guilt), then it falls outside that individual's sense of self and thus has an external perceived locus of causality.

Existing goal theories typically provide an account of *how* people efficaciously pursue their personal goals, yet neglect the question of *why* they adopt particular goals over others (Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, & Deci, 1996). An aim of the current study is to explore the nature of the relationship between the reasons behind an individual's self-generated goals and the influence that those reasons exert on the determination of emotional well-being. A person's goals can be considered "personal" if they reflect important aspects of the self, and not "personal" when the motivation to act is directed by external pressures or internal compulsions. Sheldon and Elliot (1998) tested this idea using the perceived locus of causality methodology (Ryan & Connell, 1989; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995) and found that autonomous goals, which emanate from developing interests (intrinsic) or core values (identified), were more predictive of greater effort and greater goal attainment than controlled goals, which are presumed to arise from internal compulsions (introjected) or external enticements (external). Whilst a positive association with intended effort

Table 1
The four reasons for adopting personal strivings

Reason	Wording
External	Striving because somebody else wants you to or thinks you ought to, or because you will get something from somebody if you do. That is, you probably would not strive for this if you did not get some kind of reward, praise, or approval for it
Introjected	Striving because you would feel ashamed, guilty, or anxious if you did not. Rather than striving just because someone else thinks you ought to, you feel that you ought to strive for that something
Identified	Striving because you really believe that it is an important goal to have. Although this goal may once have been taught to you by others, now you endorse it freely and value it wholeheartedly
Intrinsic	Striving because of the fun and enjoyment which the goal provides you. While there may be many good reasons for the goal, the primary reason is simply your interest in the experience itself

Note: Adapted from Sheldon and Elliot (1998).

(or a preliminary sense of commitment) was observed for both types of goals, this motivation was only maintained for autonomous goals and faded over time for controlled goals. Sheldon and Elliot (1998) argued that this was likely because a controlled goal, by definition, lacks "a full sense of ownership" (p. 554), whereas autonomous goals are willingly embraced.

4. Emotional intelligence

Mayer and Salovey (1997) defined EI as "the ability to perceive emotions, to assess and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (p. 5). According to Bar-On (2001), individuals with high levels of EI have several advantages over individuals with low EI. These advantages include emotional self-awareness, stress management, problem-solving, mood regulation, empathy and the ability to prevent distress from swamping one's ability to think clearly. These qualities are highly desirable and important for successfully living in the world, including striving for personal goals.

Whilst the relationship between personal goals and subjective well-being is well documented (see Emmons, 1996), EI research has tended to concentrate on an elucidation of the construct's hypothesised components (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000) and psychometric investigations of its structure (Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998; Petrides & Furnham, 2000, 2001) rather than its ability to predict important aspects of personal functioning, such as the adoption of personal goals and emotional well-being. This research seeks to bridge this gap in the literature by presenting a model of the relationships between trait EI, goal self-integration and emotional well-being.

Despite a lack of agreement over the validity of EI (Adams, 1998; Ciarrochi, Chan, Caputi, & Roberts, 2001a, 2001b; Davies et al., 1998; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000; Mayer et al., 2000) studies have recently begun to focus on EI's ability to predict social and psychological functioning, factors hypothesised as key consequents of EI (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). [1] For instance, Martinez-Pons (1997) used path analysis techniques to test a model of hypothesised relationships between EI and areas of personal functioning such as goal orientation (task mastery/concern for competitive success), life satisfaction and depression symptomatology. As expected, EI correlated positively with task mastery and life satisfaction, but negatively with depression symptomatology.

[1] It should be noted that, as the present study utilises a self-report measure of EI, the EI to be discussed in this paper is *trait* EI, rather than *ability* EI. Several researchers have already discussed the distinction between trait and ability EI (see Davies et al., 1998; Petrides & Furnham, 2000; Saklofske, Austin, & Minski, 2003) and argue that self-reports are too closely related to established personality measures to fully represent the EI construct. For example, using two well-established personality measures, Petrides and Furnham (2001) found that the BarOn Emotional Quotient inventory could be located as a distinguishable trait EI factor within personality factor space. They concluded that trait EI "belongs to the lower-order stratum of established personality taxonomies" (p. 444) and recommended that researchers clearly distinguish between *trait EI* (i.e. behavioural tendencies and self-perceived abilities) and *ability EI* (i.e. cognitive ability). To date, however, most researchers in this area have tended to use self-report measures of EI, without reporting their findings in terms of the trait-ability separation. As such, the brief empirical review provided here refers exclusively to "general" EI, rather than the more specific, and recommended, *trait EI*.

It was concluded that individuals with high EI are more likely to work harder at perfecting tasks, report greater life satisfaction and less depression related symptoms than those with low EI. In addition, Taylor (2001) notes that several studies support a strong and inverse relationship between EI and alexithymia (the difficulty in identifying and communicating emotional experience). Alexithymics tend not to cope or relate well with others. Evidence suggests that they are prone to several common mental illnesses such as panic attacks, post traumatic stress disorder, depression and eating or substance use disorders (for a review see Taylor, 2001). There is some justification then to expect that low scorers on EI measures would show similar patterns.

5. Emotional intelligence and the self

The question of whether individuals with high levels of EI also have a greater sense of self can be addressed by studies that examine the relationship between EI and self-actualisation. Given that EI relates to effective human action and self-actualisation relates to optimal human action (Bar-On, 2001), it is surprising that few studies have examined the relationship between these two constructs. However, Bar-On (2001) has reported that EI can predict our overall ability to self-actualise. Using the subscales of the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), Bar-On concluded that self-actualisation is dependent on factors such as a well developed sense of identity (self-regard), the ability to know what one is feeling and why (emotional self-awareness) and the capacity for thinking and acting in a self-reliant manner (independence). Thus, the realisation of one's full potential seems to require an understanding of the things that are naturally interesting to us. By knowing ourselves, we are capable of setting self-motivated goals which, when supported by good emotional regulation, allow us to approach the self-actualised state.

Fig. 1 presents a predictive model of emotional well-being linking trait EI and elements of self-determination theory. The three central constructs consists of a set of subscales. First, trait EI consists of emotion appraisal, mood regulation, social skill and utilising emotion. These factors reflect most definitions of EI in the literature (e.g., Mayer & Salovey, 1997) and have been confirmed by factor analytic techniques (Petrides & Furnham, 2000). Second, the goal self-integration dimensions were derived from Sheldon and Elliot (1998) and consist of four different reasons for human action (external, introjected, identified, intrinsic) as identified by Deci and Ryan (1985).

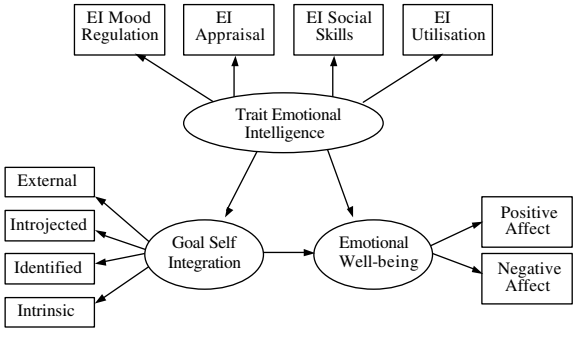

Fig. 1. A model of hypothesised relationships between trait EI, goal self-integration and emotional well-being.

Finally, global emotional well-being consists of positive and negative affect, constructs that are regularly used by researchers to measure well-being (Diener, 1984; Emmons, 1986).

6. Research questions and hypotheses

This study is exploratory in nature and is guided by three research questions. First, does a positive and significant relationship exist between trait EI and self-reported emotional well-being? Whilst this relationship has been noted by Martinez-Pons (1997), there is no further empirical evidence supporting of this claim. However, Taylor (2001) reports that alexithymia is strongly related to several mental disorders (such as posttraumatic stress disorder, panic disorder and depression) and is inversely related to EI. It follows that a relationship between trait EI and emotional well-being may exist.

Second, does a positive and significant relationship exist between trait EI and personal strivings that are set for either intrinsic or identified reasons? Are low trait EI scorers more inclined to adopt personal strivings for either introjected or external reasons? Whilst no empirical studies appear to have specifically addressed these questions, Bar-On (2001) has reported consistently high correlations between EI and self-actualisation. If EI is important for self-actualisation, and autonomy and the ability to set and achieve goals are important characteristics of self-actualised people (Bar-On, 2001) then this suggests the possibility of a relationship between trait EI and goal self-integration.

Third, to what extent are the components of trait EI and goal self-regulation influential in the determination of emotional well-being? Given the theoretical links between these two constructs and emotional well-being, this study examines whether the components of trait EI and goal self-integration predict positive affect and negative affect.

Lastly, based on the work of Kasser and Ryan (1993) and Sheldon and Kasser (1995) it is hypothesised that (i) there will be a significant positive relationship between emotional well-being and intrinsic and identified reasons (i.e. autonomous goals), (ii) there will be a significant negative relationship between emotional well-being and introjected and external reasons (i.e. controlled goals).

7. Method

7.1. Participants

Data were obtained from 95 undergraduate psychology students who received academic credit for their participation. The sample consisted of 68 females and 27 males and closely approximates the ratio of females-to-males enrolled in Australian undergraduate psychology courses. The age range of participants was 18–46, with a mean age of 22.20 years ($SD = 6.61$).

7.2. Materials and procedure

Participants were asked to complete a personal striving questionnaire and generate eight personal strivings, defined as "objectives (goals) that you are typically or characteristically trying to

attain in your daily life'' (Emmons, 1986). Examples included ''trying to be physically attractive to others'' and ''trying to seek new and exciting experiences'' (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998). Participants then rated each striving according to the four possible reasons for adopting a personal striving. These ratings, scored on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all for this reason, 5 = entirely for this reason), were given for each of the external, introjected, identified and intrinsic dimensions (see Table 1) and occurred regardless of which dimension was the dominant response. Thus, for each participant, there were 8 (strivings) × 4 (one rating per reason) rating responses.

Trait EI was measured using a 33-item scale developed by Schutte et al. (1998) and designed to assess participants' ability to perceive, express and understand emotions, and to regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Scored on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree), acceptable psychometric properties have been reported on the overall measure, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 and a two-week test-retest reliability of 0.78 (Schutte et al., 1998). An exploratory factor analysis conducted by Petrides and Furnham (2000) revealed that the 33-items load onto four sub-scales: emotion appraisal, mood regulation, social skill and utilising emotion and, in the present study, the internal consistencies of these sub-scales were 0.81, 0.72, 0.72 and 0.62 respectively.

Emotional well-being was assessed using a 10-item scale designed to measure positive and negative affect (Bradburn, 1969). Participants rated their feelings of emotional well-being on a 6-point scale (1 = not at all, 6 = extremely so), in response to five positive adjectives (happy, joyful, enjoyment/fun, pleased, enthusiastic) and five negative adjectives (angry, depressed/blue, anxious, frustrated, unhappy). These ratings were averaged to provide a measure of both negative and positive affect and, in the present study, the internal consistency of both scales was 0.86.

Testing was conducted in a laboratory with groups of no more than four students per session. At the commencement of each session, participants received a booklet containing the self-report measures described above. All necessary instructions were contained in the booklets and, whilst the examiner remained in the laboratory during the session, the examiner provided no additional information. The tasks were generally completed in 30–45 min.

8. Results

Means, standard deviations and the correlation matrix for all model variables are shown below in Table 2. Intrinsic and identified regulation (i.e. autonomous goals) was significantly correlated with each other, as was external and introjected regulation (i.e. controlled goals). These results indicate that when participants rated a striving as highly intrinsic they also tended to rate it as highly identified, and similarly when a striving was rated as more external it also tended to be rated as more introjected. In addition, both intrinsic and identified regulation correlated negatively with introjected and external regulation. Consistent with expectations, when a striving was rated as highly intrinsic there was a tendency for it to be rated as less external or introjected. That is, when people feel their strivings are inherently interesting or enjoyable they tend to report feeling less pressured to adopt these goals. Conversely, there is a reduced sense of interest or enjoyment when people feel pressured to adopt a goal.

The trait EI subscales also revealed patterns of correlations that were consistent with expectations. Specifically, higher scores on trait EI measures corresponded to higher ratings for

Table 2
Correlation matrix, means, and standard deviations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. External	1.00										
2. Introjected	0.38[a]	1.00									
3. Identified	−0.33[a]	−0.17	1.00								
4. Intrinsic	−0.24[b]	−0.21[b]	0.53[a]	1.00							
5. EI mood regulation	−0.39[a]	−0.18	0.27[a]	0.15	1.00						
6. EI appraisal	−0.25[b]	−0.29[a]	0.28[a]	0.10	0.44[a]	1.00					
7. EI social skills	−0.34[a]	−0.22[b]	0.40[a]	0.20[b]	0.36[a]	0.58[a]	1.00				
8. EI utilisation	−0.15	−0.08	0.08	0.21[b]	0.24[b]	0.22[b]	0.23[b]	1.00			
9. Trait EI	−0.40[a]	−0.29[a]	0.38[a]	0.22[b]	0.70[b]	0.85[b]	0.80[b]	0.44[b]	1.00		
10. Positive affect	−0.18	−0.08	0.36[a]	0.13	0.34[a]	0.19	0.21[b]	0.08	0.28[a]	1.00	
11. Negative affect	0.17	0.18	−0.05	0.02	−0.32[a]	−0.18	−0.02	−0.03	−0.21[b]	−0.23[b]	1.00
Mean	2.07	2.89	4.09	3.66	3.76	3.64	3.79	3.78	122.9	23.03	17.95
Standard deviation	0.69	0.94	0.58	0.71	0.50	0.66	0.49	0.57	13.7	4.71	5.85

[a] Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
[b] Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

autonomous goal setting, and lower scores corresponded to higher ratings for controlled goal setting. The strongest correlations were observed for identified and external regulation, with identified regulation yielding significant positive correlations with mood regulation, emotion appraisal and social skill, whereas external regulation yielded significant negative correlations with these same measures. Finally, consistent with Diener and Emmons (1985), a significant negative correlation was found between positive and negative affect. Overall however, these emotional well-being variables revealed few significant correlations; negative affect correlated negatively with mood regulation, and positive affect correlated positively with identified regulation and mood regulation.

8.1. General linear modelling

Using general linear modelling, four analyses were conducted in order to examine the relationships between trait EI, goal self-integration and emotional well-being. Three analyses examined whether trait EI and goal self-integration predicted emotional well-being, with the remaining analysis examining the extent to which trait EI predicted goal self-integration.

The first analysis showed that, at the multivariate level, only EI mood regulation predicted a linear combination of positive and negative affect ($\Lambda = 0.866$, $F(2, 88) = 6.81$, $p = 0.002$). At the univariate level, mood regulation was positively related to positive affect ($B = 2.88$, $t(88) = 2.69$, $p = 0.008$) and negatively related to negative affect ($B = -3.87$, $t(88) = -2.92$, $p = 0.004$). Although mood regulation was the only trait EI component to predict emotional well-being, it did so at both the multivariate and univariate levels. This finding suggests that trait EI is related to emotional well-being and is consistent with past research into alexithymia (Taylor, 2001).

In the second analysis, when well-being was regressed onto goal self-integration, we found that only identified regulation predicted well being at the multivariate level ($\Lambda = 0.900$, $F(2, 88) = 4.91$, $p = 0.010$). At the univariate level, identified regulation predicted positive affect

($B = 3.06$, $t(88) = 3.12$, $p = 0.002$) but did not predict negative affect ($B = -0.33$, $t(88) = -0.26$, $p = 0.795$). The third analysis revealed that none of the trait EI components predicted goal self-integration at the multivariate level, although it is noted that the social skills component of trait EI approached statistical significance when predicting goal self-integration ($\Lambda = 0.900$, $F(4, 86) = 2.38$, $p = 0.06$). Furthermore, when the results were examined at a univariate level we found that EI mood regulation and EI social skills subscales predicted external regulation ($B = -0.44$, $t(89) = -2.90$, $p = 0.005$ and $B = -0.33$, $t(89) = -1.99$, $p = 0.05$) respectively. EI social skills also predicted identified regulation ($B = 0.39$, $t(89)$, $p = 0.007$). Contrary to the expectations, this investigation of research question 2 found that high scores on the EI subscales did not predict the adoption of autonomous goals (i.e. intrinsic and identified). In contrast, low EI scores predicted externally regulated strivings (on the mood regulation and social skills subscales), but not strivings adopted for introjected reasons.

In the final analysis we examined the extent to which the components of trait EI and goal self-integration predicted the components of emotional well-being. It was found that, at the multivariate level, both EI mood regulation and identified regulation predicted emotional well-being ($\Lambda = 0.89$, $F(2, 84) = 5.13$, $p = 0.008$ and $\Lambda = 0.92$, $F(2, 84) = 3.45$, $p = 0.04$) respectively. At the univariate level, both EI mood regulation and identified regulation predicted positive affect ($B = 2.53$, $t(85) = 2.30$, $p = 0.024$ and $B = 2.71$, $t(85) = 2.62$, $p = 0.01$) respectively, and EI mood regulation also predicted negative affect ($B = -3.65$, $t(85) = -2.59$, $p = 0.011$). Consistent with the first and second analyses, EI mood regulation and identified regulation appear to occupy a central role in the determination of emotional well-being.

9. Discussion

9.1. The influence of trait emotional intelligence

The research findings showed that, overall, trait EI was not significantly related to self-reported emotional well-being. This result runs contrary to past findings which suggest that individual differences in EI can account for individual differences in affective experience (Martinez-Pons, 1997; Taylor, 2001). However, despite the absence of a significant relationship between global trait EI and global emotional well-being, EI mood regulation was found to significantly correlate with positive affect and negative affect. Evidently, individuals who report high levels of emotional control experience more positive affect than individuals who report lower levels of emotional control. Mayer and Salovey (1997) argue that the ability to regulate emotions is one of the higher, more psychologically integrated processes and "concerns whether the individual is trying to improve a bad mood, dampen a good mood, or leave the mood alone" (p. 14). Therefore, it is not surprising that individuals who scored highly on mood regulation should also report more positive affect, as these individuals are more likely to be able to sustain their positive moods and reduce their negative moods.

This study assumed, in line with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), that people are innately drawn towards greater levels of self-determined behaviour and that, for this to occur, one must possess sufficient self-awareness in order to identify key aspects of the self. Whilst the results in Table 2 suggest that most of the trait EI and goal self-integration components are significantly

correlated, and in the expected directions, overall global trait EI was not a good predictor of the reasons people gave for their adopted strivings.

However, individuals who scored highly on trait EI showed a tendency to set more autonomous strivings (i.e. intrinsic and identified) whereas low trait EI scorers showed a tendency to set more controlled strivings (i.e. external and introjected). It seems that high trait EI corresponds with a greater sense of that which is personally salient, thus resulting in a greater integration of important aspects of the self into personal goals (or an internal perceived locus of causality). However, this conclusion is tempered somewhat by the relatively weak correlations observed between trait EI and intrinsic regulation. If high trait EI indicates that an individual has greater access to core aspects of the self, then stronger correlations should be observed for intrinsic rather than for identified regulation. Whilst both have been defined as autonomous goals (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998), intrinsic goals are considered to be more self-integrated than goals that are pursued for identified reasons (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, intrinsic regulation correlated significantly with only utilising emotions and social skills, yet identified regulation correlated significantly with three of the trait EI subscales. One explanation for this result is that identified regulation involves greater conscious reflection than intrinsic regulation. That is, since identified regulation has an external orientation that becomes internalised over time (Deci & Ryan, 1985), it is conceivable that the adoption of these goals is a result of experience, rather than intrinsic regulation that is typically innate. In contrast, low trait EI scorers showed a tendency to set goals that emanated from either external contingencies or internal compulsions. The correlations between the trait EI subscales and both external and introjected regulation were negative, indicating that some individuals were either unaware or unmotivated by their core values or developing interests. Consequently, these individuals appear to have an external perceived locus of causality and whilst this observation may result from a lack of self-awareness, it cannot be claimed with certainty.

9.2. The influence of goal self-integration

This study found that only one goal self-integration variable (identified) was significantly correlated with positive affect, suggesting that people tend to feel their best when their goals reflect core values or personal convictions. Whilst this finding is not unexpected, contrary to previous findings (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995), intrinsically motivated goals were not significantly correlated with emotional well-being. A possible explanation may be that the emotional well-being measure used in this study only reflects an individual's short-term affective state. Given that intrinsic activity emanates from core interests of the self (Deci & Ryan, 1985), it is conceivable that these types of goals are more meaningful for people because they are the most self-determined form of activity. It has been argued that PWB consists of more than just positive and negative affect and life satisfaction (McGregor & Little, 1998; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). If so, then emotional well-being may be an insufficient measure of the well-being that results from striving for intrinsically motivated goals.

The third research question considered the extent to which components of trait EI and goal self-regulation influence emotional well-being. The results indicated that EI mood regulation and identified regulation were joint predictors of emotional well-being. This finding is intuitive,

confirming that our emotional experience is influenced, in part, by our ability to regulate emotions and by establishing personal strivings that are congruent with core values or personal convictions.

9.3. The measurement of well-being

In recent years there has been debate on the adequacy of 'standard' measurements of PWB, in particular, the preference for measures of positive and negative affect (Bradburn, 1969) and life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Although these measures are widely used (Emmons, 1986; Omodei & Wearing, 1990), Ryff (1989) argues that PWB has been narrowly conceptualised and emphasises short-term affective well-being (i.e. happiness), whilst neglecting other important aspects of positive psychological functioning (e.g., autonomy, personal growth). Likewise, McGregor and Little (1998) presented evidence in support of a two-dimensional construct consisting of happiness and meaning. They reasoned that when people act with integrity, that is, according to their principles or core values, they infuse life with meaning. Whereas, when people pursue and achieve less lofty pursuits, they may enjoy a sense of self-efficacy, but this may not feel especially meaningful.

The debate over PWB suggests that psychological health involves more than just an individual's affective state. Personal goals vary according to the meaning they have for the individuals who hold them (McGregor & Little, 1998). For example, the striving "to be more like Jesus in order to bear witness to others" can certainly be rated according to current affect (e.g., joy, frustration and enthusiasm). However this striving carries a deeper level of meaning that is beyond the reach of a purely affective measure (such as emotional well-being).

9.4. Directions for future research

Frankl (1964) argued that human meaning cannot be separated from the experience of psychological health. Therefore it is recommended that future studies utilise a measure of PWB that incorporates both affect and meaning. This suggestion entails using emotional well-being in conjunction with The Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985). Alternatively, it may involve a partial replication of Ryff and Keyes (1995) study, whereby their theory-guided dimensions of well-being are administered in tandem with the standard emotional well-being and life satisfaction measures allowing both measures to be compared.

Subjective well-being and goal researchers have long noted the need for more longitudinal designs (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2000; Emmons, 1986). As most of the research in these areas is cross-sectional, it is difficult to establish the causal direction of correlations. By assessing personal strivings and well-being at multiple points in time, for example, it may be possible to detect whether prolonged happiness produces a tendency to select more self-integrated goals, or whether the selection of self-integrated goals leads to greater positive affect. Whilst these designs will not give definite answers to causation questions, they should at least allow some conclusions to be drawn about the direction of these relationships (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2000).

In addition, future research might examine the relationships between EI and an individual's self-concept or capacity for self-awareness. This study provides support for a relationship between

goal self-integration and trait EI, and suggests that a person's self-awareness may be related to their ability to process emotional material.

9.5. Summary

A considerable amount of conceptual and empirical work is still needed to refine the model examined in this study. It is provisionally concluded that trait EI and the adoption of congruent personal goals are related processes, however it is unclear whether high levels of trait EI lead to more self-determined goals, or whether the selection of self-determined goals lead to higher on measures of trait EI. Whilst global trait EI and goal self-integration failed to predict emotional well-being, several suggestions have been made in order that these constructs might be more faithfully represented in future investigations. Future studies that confirm that: (i) EI does predicts PWB, and (ii) goal self-integration mediates the relationship between EI and PWB, will contribute to the understanding of what promotes healthy, happy human experience. As always the remaining challenge will be to utilise that understanding in various applied settings (e.g., clinical interventions, life coaching, human resource management and executive coaching).

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