PART II.
LIFE AND HEALTH

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Does emotional intelligence really ensure a happy life?
The mediation role of emotional competencies

Czy istotnie inteligencja emocjonalna zapewnia szczęśliwe życie?
Mediacyjna rola kompetencji emocjonalnych[1]

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Abstract: The study was focused on relations between the abilities to recognize facial emotions, emotion understanding abilities, emotional competencies and well-being. It was expected that the relation between emotional intelligence and well-being is mediated by emotional competencies. Statistical software IBM SPSS AMOS 21 was used to test mediation models involving emotional abilities as the independent variable, emotional competencies as the mediator variable, and well-being as the dependent variable. The participants were 144 students aged between 18 and 32 (*M* = 20.59; *SD* = 1.82). Two tests were used to measure emotional intelligence: *Emotional Intelligence Scale – Faces* (EIS-F, in Polish: *Skala inteligencji emocjonalnej – twarze,* SIE-T) by Anna Matczak, Joanna Piekarska and Elżbieta Studniarek, and *Emotion Understanding Test* (EUT, in Polish: *Test rozumienia emocji*, TRE) by Anna Matczak and Joanna Piekarska. Emotional competencies were estimated with a self-descriptive questionnaire PQEI (in Polish: PKIE) by Anna Matczak et al. Well-being was measured with the use of a *Depression Symptom Questionnaire* (DSQ, in Polish: *Kwestionariusz symptomów depresyjnych, KSD*) by Anna Matczak and Katarzyna Martowska. It was found that emotional competencies are the mediator of the relation between emotional intelligence and well-being. The study also shows that having high emotional potential (emotional abilities) itself does not guarantee well-being. It is acquired emotional competencies, meaning the skills of coping in different emotional situations, that may significantly contribute to improving the person's physical and mental state. At the same time, emotional intelligence is a prerequisite for the development of such competencies, although more than that is necessary. The results of the study confirm the difference between emotional abilities and emotional competencies constructs and point out the importance of emotional competencies for the person's well-being.
Keywords: abilities to recognize facial emotions, emotion understanding abilities, emotional intelligence, emotional competencies, physical and mental state

[1] Polska wersja: https://stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/Presentations0/2021-3-Mart.pdf

Abstrakt: Badania dotyczyły związków między zdolnościami do rozpoznawania emocji na twarzy, zdolnościami do rozumienia emocji, kompetencjami emocjonalnymi i samopoczuciem. Oczekiwano, że relacja między inteligencją emocjonalną a samopoczuciem jest mediowana przez kompetencje emocjonalne. Korzystając z programu statystycznego IBM SPSS AMOS 21 przetestowano modele mediacyjne, w których zmienną niezależną były zdolności emocjonalne, zienną pośredniczącą kompetencje emocjonalne, a zmienną zależną samopoczucie. Badani to 144 studentów w wieku od 18 do 32 lat (M = 20,59; SD = 1,82). Do pomiaru inteligencji emocjonalnej zastosowano dwa testy: *Skalę Inteligencji Emocjonalnej –Twarze* (SIE-T) autorstwa Anny Matczak, Joanny Piekarskiej i Elżbiety Studniarek oraz *Test Rozumienia Emocji* (TRE) autorstwa Anny Matczak i Joanny Piekarskiej. Kompetencje emocjonalne szacowano za pomocą samoopisowego kwestionariusza PKIE autorstwa Anny Matczak i współpracowników. Natomiast samopoczucie mierzono z wykorzystaniem *Kwestionariusza Symptomów Depresyjnych* (KSD) autorstwa Anny Matczak i Katarzyny Martowskiej. Okazało się, że kompetencje emocjonalne są mediatorem związku między inteligencją emocjonalną a samopoczuciem. Z badań wynika również, że samo posiadanie wysokiego potencjału emocjonalnego (zdolności emocjonalnych) nie gwarantuje dobrego samopoczucia. To nabyte kompetencje emocjonalne, czyli umiejętności radzenia sobie w różnych sytuacjach o charakterze emocjonalnym mogą w istotny sposób przyczyniać się do lepszego samopoczucia jednostki. Zarazem warunkiem koniecznym, choć niewystarczającym, kształtowania się tychże kompetencji jest inteligencja emocjonalna. Rezultaty badań potwierdzają odmienność konstruktów, jakim są zdolności i kompetencje emocjonalne oraz wskazują na znaczenie kompetencji emocjonalnych dla dobrostanu jednostki.
Słowa kluczowe: inteligencja emocjonalna, kompetencje emocjonalne, samopoczucie, zdolności do rozpoznawania emocji na twarzy, zdolności do rozumienia emocji

Introduction

In 2007, Anna Matczak asked an intriguing question in *Studia Psychologiczne* journal: *Can emotional intelligence be harmful?* Since the origin of the concept of emotional intelligence, which is often claimed to have occurred in 1990 (Mayer, DiPaolo, Salovey, 1990; Salovey, Mayer, 1990), many research results have been published which show a positive role of emotional intelligence in almost all areas of human life and its importance for people nearly from the moment of birth.

In the deluge of this positive information we may have the impression that psychology has finally found a panacea for all the problems of the contemporary human and if we only have a sufficient level of emotional intelligence, we will be healthier, better fit, creative, coping with stress and happy humans. Although though a lot of time have passed since the appearance of the concept of emotional intelligence in scientific and popular science literature, there is still some disagreement among researchers and practising psychologists about its nature and structure. Without discussing in detail the issues connected with the already commonly known distinctions between emotional intelligence understood as a set of abilities, competencies, personality traits or character features (see e.g. Jasielska, Leopold, 2000; Ledzińska, Zajenkowski, Stolarski, 2013; Matczak, 2006; Matczak, Knopp, 2013; Matczak, Knopp, 2019; Martowska, 2012; Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, 2000; Nęcka, 2003; Petrides, Furnham, 2001; Piekarska, 2020a, 2020b; Szczygieł, 2006; Śmieja, 2018; Wytykowska, Petrides, 2007) and the multiplicity of ways of measurement resulting from such distinctions

(test-based or questionnaire-based), it is worth considering what are the repercussions of this variety for the results of scientific research.

If we analyse the data concerning correlates of emotional intelligence with well-being, on which we focus in this article (or associated concepts such as physical and mental health, satisfaction with life), we can see that most of the spectacular results proving its high importance are obtained with the use of questionnaire-based measurements (see e.g. Extremera, Salguero, Fernández-Berrocal, 2011; Malinauskas, Malinauskiene, 2020; Martinez-Pons, 1997; Rey, Extremera, Pena, 2011; Szczygieł, Mikolajczak, 2017); its role is not so consistently proved when estimated with the use of tests: then correlation coefficients are usually low or insignificant (cf. Brackett, Mayer, 2003; Extremera, Ruiz-Aranda, Pineda-Galan, Salguero, 2011; Extremera, Sánchez-Álvarez, Rey, 2020; Lopes, Salovey, Straus, 2003; Matczak, Piekarska, Studniarek, 2005; Ruiz-Aranda, Extremera, Pineda-Galan, 2014); although there are also some correlation coefficients which prove its moderate correlation (cf. Rey, Extremera, Trillo, 2013).

Furthermore, correlations between the results of test and questionnaire measurements of emotional intelligence are usually either low, especially when the impact of personality factors is controlled (Austin, 2004; Brackett, Mayer, 2003; Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner, Salovey, 2006; Ciarrochi, Chan, Bajgar, 2001; Gohm, Clore, 2002; Warwick, Nettlebeck, 2004; Zeidner, Shani-Zinovich, Matthews, Roberts, 2005), or insignificant (Austin, 2005; Davies, Stankov, Roberts, 1998; Gutiérrez-Cobo, Cabello, Fernández-Berrocal, 2017a; Gutiérrez-Cobo, Cabello, Fernández-Berrocal, 2017b; Livingstone, Day, 2005; Matczak et al., 2005).

These ambiguous study results may confirm that tests and questionnaires do not really measure the same variable; tests measure emotional abilities – the "mechanics"[2] of emotional intelligence, which determine maximal performance, and questionnaires allow for the evaluation of emotional skills – the "pragmatics" of emotional intelligence, meaning emotional competencies concerning typical performance. Maximal performance is revealed in difficult situations and reflects the top level of an individual's capacities, whereas typical performance is manifested in everyday situations and is determined by motivational dispositions such as personality and temperamental traits (Ackerman, 1994; cf. Matczak, 2008).

It is worth mentioning that the division into emotional intelligence and emotional competencies is well-known in literature and many authors support the usefulness of such a

[2] The division into mechanics and pragmatics comes from Baltes and Smith (1990), but the Authors refer it to the concept of intelligence. They think that the mechanics of intelligence is composed of the basic elements of information processing, independent of the content, whereas the pragmatics involves declarative and procedural knowledge, strongly saturated with contextual data and culturally conditioned. Some authors identify intelligence pragmatics with wisdom (cf. Maruszewski, 2008).

distinction (Cherniss, 2002; Jasielska, Leopold, 2000; Matczak, 2004; Nęcka, 2003). Certainly, the distinctness of these two concepts does not mean independence of the dispositions they refer to. Both emotional intelligence and emotional competencies are instrumental dispositions, determining the capacity to act effectively. They are interrelated: emotional intelligence (which is cognitive in nature) is the potential, constituting a good starting point for the development of emotional competencies (which are behavioural in nature) (cf. Matczak, Martowska, 2011).

Within emotional intelligence itself, different groups and kinds of abilities can be identified. Mayer and Salovey (1999) identified four groups of abilities: perceiving and expressing emotions, assimilating emotion in thought, understanding emotions and reflectively regulating emotions. Some factor analyses do support this idea (cf. e.g. Brackett, Mayer, Warner, 2004; Day, Caroll, 2004). However, we may have some doubts as to whether all the identified components really have the same nature. It seems that the concept involves both purely cognitive abilities such as perceiving and understanding emotions and those which are rather competencies: assimilating emotions in thought or emotional regulation. This way of thinking may also be supported by factor analyses, giving two separate factors: *cognitive* (formed by elements concerning the recognition of emotions in oneself and in others and understanding them) and *operational* (represented by elements concerning the assimilation of emotion in thought and emotional regulation) (cf. Matczak, 2008). Yet, we cannot ignore the fact that some researchers have achieved different two-factor solutions indicating the potential existence of experiential emotional intelligence, including abilities to recognise emotions and use them in thought and action, and the strategic one, involving emotion understanding and regulation. A lot suggests that different factor solutions may be equally good (Day, Caroll, 2004; cf. Matczak, 2006). Many studies devoted to relations between emotional intelligence measured with tests (mainly MSCEIT) and well-being present the relation of the total score of the test either with the results of questionnaires or with factor results (experiential and strategic). There are few studies presenting the relation between the perception of emotions measured with tests and various indicators of well-being. Some data may even prove that high abilities to recognize one's own emotions may increase the sensitivity to everyday stresses (Ciarrochi, Deane, Anderson, 2002), and accurate perception of emotions (especially negative ones) may be detrimental to social relationships (Elfenbein, Ambady, 2002). Other study results mostly show the lack of relation between test-measured abilities to recognise emotions and different well-being measures (cf. Gohm, Corser, Dalsky, 2005; Matczak at al., 2005; Piekarska, 2020b; Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2014), although in clinical groups (of people suffering from depression, schizophrenia or addicted to psychoactive substances) lower abilities to recognize facial emotions are usually observed (cf. Davies, Gibson, 2000; Edwards, Jackson, Pattison, 2002; Green, Waldron, Coltheart, 2007; Łosiak, Siedlecka, 2013; Kucharska-Pietura, David, 2003; Mandal, Pandey, Prasad, 1998;

Mendoza et al., 2011; Silver, Bilker, Goodman, 2009; Tremeau, 2006; Vernet, Baudouin, Franck, 2008). Still, the results of studies in clinical groups are not unambiguous, especially when emotional valence is taken into account (Brüne, 2005; Łosiak, Siedlecka, 2013; Murphy, Cutting, 1990). Furthermore, in clinical groups, deficits or brain structure damage can probably be responsible for a lower level of abilities discussed here (cf. Bryan, 2007; Krawczyk, Lelek, Mróz, Kamenczak, Chrostek Maj, 2009; Kucharska-Pietura, David, 2003; Namiki, Hirao, Yamada, Hanakawa, Hayashi, Murai, 2007; Mier et al., 2010; Spaletta et al., 2001).

There are also relatively few data concerning the relations between emotion understanding abilities (measured with tests) and the indices of well-being. Research results are not unambiguous. For example in research by Joanna Piekarska (cf. Matczak, Piekarska, 2011) a positive though weak correlation between the *Emotion Understanding Test* (EUT) scores and satisfaction with life was observed. The emotion understanding abilities (apart from the abilities to regulate emotions) also proved to be the predictor of life quality when combined with the control of personality traits, emotionality and cognitive intelligence (Karim, Shah, 2014). In other studies with the use of MSCEIT, no relation was found between understanding emotions and mood, satisfaction with life and subjective sense of happiness (cf. Gohm at al., 2005; Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2014).

Now it is worth returning to the question posed at the beginning of the *Introduction*: *Can emotional intelligence be harmful?*

On the one hand, if emotional intelligence really belongs to the family of intelligence types, in accordance with the general definition it serves adaptational functions, so the answer should be negative. On the other hand, some data have been gathered which prove that high abilities to recognise emotions may be unfavourable (Ciarrochi et al., 2002; Elfenbein, Ambady, 2002), and excessive concentration on one's own emotions may lead to a harmful phenomenon of mental rumination (Gohm et al., 2005). It can be concluded, then, that a very high level of certain emotional abilities may be disadaptational, especially when it is not accompanied by equally high skills of emotional regulation (cf. Matczak, 2007; Nęcka, 2000).

It should be emphasized here that a high level of emotional abilities does not implicate having high emotional competencies, especially if the high level of emotional abilities is accompanied by shyness and/or social anxiety, which may make it difficult for the individual to engage in experiences of emotional nature and to acquire emotional competencies.

Thus the adaptational importance of emotional abilities is more "potential", since they may not be implemented in action if they are not translated into concrete skills (cf. Matczak at al., 2005).

Generally, it may be concluded that having excellent emotional abilities does not have to be connected with well-being. What may have a positive impact on well-being is high emotional competencies, which enable the individual to function effectively in emotional situations. At the same time, we must not forget that emotional intelligence is a prerequisite for the development of such competencies, although more than that is necessary. Hence, we can think that emotional intelligence can also have a favourable influence on well-being, although this influence may not be direct but occur indirectly, through emotional competencies.

1. The study problem and hypotheses

In the study presented below, it was checked what are the correlations between emotional intelligence, emotional competencies and well-being. The following assumptions were made: (a) Emotional intelligence is a set of cognitive abilities, and the best way to measure it is tests, (b) Emotional competencies are complex skills which allow to cope effectively in emotional situations, (c) Emotional competencies develop thanks to emotional experiences; emotional intelligence is a necessary condition to develop emotional competencies.

The aim of the presented study was to check the hypothesis arising from the above-mentioned facts: *emotional competencies are a mediator of the relation between emotional intelligence and well-being*.

Besides, it was expected that: *abilities to recognise facial emotions are positively and moderately correlated with abilities to understand emotions.*

Although some data, especially in the area of neuropsychology, already support the distinction between the abilities to recognise facial emotions and the emotion understanding abilities, it does not mean these abilities are independent. The abilities to perceive emotions are regarded as fundamental and are the condition of the development of other emotional abilities, including e.g. understanding emotions. On the other hand, accurate recognition of sincere and insincere emotional messages is possible thanks to emotional knowledge, which can be acquired thanks to the ability to understand and analyse emotions.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

144 participants aged between 18 and 32 (M = 20.59; SD = 1.82), including 77 women and 67 men, took part in the study. The results of 140 participants aged between 18 and 32 (M = 20.61; SD = 1.84) were included in the final analysis, excluding four atypical observations (Mahalanobis distance) from the base. The respondents were students of

different university faculties, living in and near Warsaw. The study was conducted in a group using the paper-and-pencil method, and it was anonymous.

2.2. Measures

Physical and mental state (well-being) was measured with the use of a *Depression Symptom Questionnaire* (DSQ, in Polish: *Kwestionariusz symptomów depresyjnych*, KSD) by Anna Matczak and Katarzyna Martowska (2011). The questionnaire comprises 15 items – expressions referring to different symptoms which may prove that the person is not functioning properly: anxiety, irritation, tiredness, the sense of hopelessness, lack of motivation, sleeping difficulties, excessive sleepiness, no appetite, overeating, aversion to interpersonal contacts, aversion to going out, changeable mood, tearfulness, pain, thoughts about death. The task of the respondent is to determine whether and how often he or she has had these symptoms during the last month in a three-point scale: from *never* (0 points), through *rarely* (1 point), up to *often* (2 points). The result of the study is the general score being the sum of points obtained in all the questions. The higher the score, the worse the condition. The questionnaire's reliability estimated in the group N = 689 is Cronbach's a = .80.

Emotional competencies were measured with a self-descriptive *Popular Questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence* (PQEI, in Polish: *Popularny kwestionariusz inteligencji emocjonalnej*, PKIE) by Anna Matczak et al. (Jaworowska, Matczak, 2005). Although this tool, as the name suggests, was designed to study emotional intelligence, thanks to its questionnaire nature it can be treated it as a method allowing to evaluate emotional competencies (see *Introduction*). PQEI includes 94 items in the form of statements formulated in first person singular; the respondent decides in a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) how well the statements refer to himself or herself. The reliability of the tool is satisfactory. Cronbach's a for the total score is equal or higher than .90 (depending on the studied group).

Two tests were used to measure emotional intelligence. The first is *Emotion Understanding Test* (EUT, in Polish: TRE) by Anna Matczak and Joanna Piekarska (Matczak, Piekarska, 2011). It consists of 30 tasks grouped into 5 sub-tests with 6 tasks each. In the first sub-test, the participant is asked to organize words describing emotional states of the same kind from the word denoting the weakest emotion to the word denoting the strongest one. In the second sub-test, the task is to find a word which means an emotion or state opposite to the presented one. The third sub-test involves looking for simple emotions which make up a complex emotion. In the fourth one, a list of different situations is presented, and the participant must provide the names feelings or states which are most probably to occur in these situations. In the fifth sub-test, the task is to indicate conditions which make it probable that certain emotional reactions will occur in certain situations. The score of EUT is computed by adding up the points received in 5 sub-tests. The test's reliability estimated with Cronbach's a was equal or higher than .78.

The other test was *Emotional Intelligence Scale – Faces* (EIS-F, in Polish: *Skala inteligencji emocjonalnej – twarze*, SIE-T) by Anna Matczak, Joanna Piekarska and Elżbieta Studniarek

(Matczak at al., 2005). The test material is 18 photos of faces expressing eight positive emotional states (four of them are presented by a woman and four, by a man) and 10 negative emotional states (five presented by a woman and five, by a man). Different sets of emotion names (six in each set), both positive and negative, are assigned to each photo. The respondent's task is to decide whether the face in the photo expresses the listed emotions and each time mark one of three possible answers: *yes, no, hard to say*. The instruction stresses that the answer *hard to say* should only be chosen in exceptional cases. The result of EIS-F is computed by adding up the scores achieved in all the tasks. Since each emotion name is a separate test item, the total number of points the respondent can obtain is 108 (18 photos x 6 names assigned to each photo). The test's reliability estimated with Cronbach's *a* was equal or higher than .77.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients for emotional intelligence (emotional abilities), emotional competencies and well-being (physical and mental state)

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for the studied variables

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3
1. Abilities to recognise facial emotions	78.96	8.01			
2. Abilities to understand emotions	21.44	3.62	0.42*		
3. Emotional competencies	340.01	39.60	0.24*	0.22*	
4. Physical and mental state/Well-being	12.80	4.56	-0.15	-0.10	-0.42*

* $p < .05$.

As Table 1 shows, a positive, moderate correlation was found between the results in EIS-F, which measures the abilities to recognise facial emotions, and the results in EUT, used to measure the abilities to understand emotions. Both kinds of abilities proved to be positively though weakly correlated with emotional competencies. No correlation was however found between emotional abilities and well-being. Emotional competencies proved to be negatively moderately correlated with the score in the Depression Symptom Questionnaire, which means that the higher emotional competencies, the better physical and mental state.

Previous research shows that both emotional abilities (emotional intelligence) and emotional competencies may have a positive influence on the person's well-being. A regression model was created in the IBM SPSS AMOS 21 program, and the results of tests which measure emotional abilities (EUT and EIS-F) and emotional competencies (PQEI) were entered as the predictors of well-being. The model did not prove to be well fitting the data: χ^2

= 37.774; $p < .001$; $df = 3$; GFI = .876; CFI = .410; NFI = .419; RMSEA = .289 (.211-.374). The values of path coefficients between the abilities to recognize facial emotions and emotion understanding abilities and well-being proved to be insignificant. Emotional competencies, in turn, proved to be significantly, moderately correlated to well-being (the value of the path coefficient was -.41, β =-.047). Thus it may be concluded that emotional competencies are significantly correlated with well-being: the higher emotional competencies, the better the person feels.

Taking into account the fact that both the abilities to recognise facial emotions and the emotion understanding abilities may be regarded as indices of the same theoretical construct – emotional intelligence – they were combined into one latent variable in order to check whether the model with consideration of the latent variable of emotional intelligence and emotional competencies variable will be improved.

But the model still did not fit the data well: $\chi^2 = 10.875$; $p < .001$; $df = 2$; GFI = .964; CFI = .849; NFI = .833; RMSEA = .179 (.085-.289).

Although it turned out that emotional abilities are not directly related to well-being, it can still be assumed – as its has already been mentioned – that they provide the basis for the acquisition of emotional competencies. That is why the author decided to check whether emotional competencies are really a variable mediating between emotional abilities and well-being.

The hypothesis was verified (the test of mediation effect) in accordance with the proposal by Cohen and Cohen (1983) in a model of structural equations (in the program IBM SPSS AMOS 21). These authors claim that to detect mediation it is enough to find that the relations: independent variable – mediator and mediator – independent variable are statistically significant. The mediation test is supplemented with evaluation of the significance of differences between beta coefficients of paths between the independent variable and the mediator and between the mediator and the dependent variable (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, Sheets, 2002). Tests by Sobel, Aroian and Goodman are used to assess the significance of differences. The first of them is used to analyse mediation of large samples (over 50 observations). The Aroian test is also designed for large samples but it is better than the Sobel test, as it includes the correction of denominator of the test statistics. The Goodman test is recommended for small samples. In the presented study, the Aroian test was used.

An analysis was carried out in which the mediator variable between emotional intelligence (which were respondents' scores in the EIS-F and EUT tests) and well-being were emotional competencies (overall score in PQEI). The model proved to be well fitting the data: $\chi^2 = .227$; $p = .893$; $df = 2$; GFI = .999; CFI = 1.000; NFI = .997; RMSEA = .000 (.000-.076); it explains 18% of variability of the scores obtained by participants in *Depression Symptom Questionnaire (DSQ)*. The measurement model of the slack variable (emotional intelligence) is

of good quality (loads .68 and .62, reconstructed variances .46 and .38 – for the abilities to recognise facial emotions and the abilities to understand emotions, respectively). Emotional intelligence significantly, moderately affects the level of emotional competencies (the value of path coefficient was .36; β = 6.300). Increasing the index of emotional intelligence by one point translates into the increase of emotional competencies by 6.300 points. Emotional competencies significantly affect well-being (the value of path was -.42; β = -.051); the increase of emotional competencies by 1 point results in lowering the well-being score by .051 points (the lower score in *Depression Symptom Questionnaire*, the better condition). The result indicating that emotional competencies are a mediator between emotional intelligence and well-being was confirmed by the result of Aroian test $Z = 2.427$; $p < 0.05$.

To sum up, it may be concluded that emotional intelligence indirectly influences well-being, although this influence is moderate.

Discussion

The starting point for the presented research was looking for the answer to the question: *Can emotional intelligence be harmful?*

The obtained results did not prove it. Also, it was proved that emotional intelligence is not directly related to well-being.

It is worth asking why such a relation did not occur. We may suppose that emotional intelligence (the abilities to recognise facial emotions and the emotion understanding abilities) may be equally favourable and unfavourable for the individual's well-being.

There is no doubt that emotions serve important adaptational functions, and quick and efficient processing of emotional stimuli enables the individual to function effectively in the society. Facial expressions are one of the most important ways of communication; thanks to emotions expressed (both consciously and unconsciously) on the face, people share messages concerning the emotions experienced at the moment. Accurate recognition of emotions expressed on the face is a valuable source of information of the emotional states of other people and of the importance and value of their different experiences, and thus allows to react appropriately to non-verbal messages they send.

Besides, accurate recognition of other peoples' emotions and associating those emotions with particular events and conditions builds emotional knowledge and allows to develop emotion understanding abilities. The awareness of the causes of the occurrence of emotions and their possible consequences, the knowledge about how emotions may affect one's functioning and the knowledge of social expectations concerning the way and degree of explicitness of expressing emotions are the basis of conscious emotional regulation. Hence, both the abilities to recognize emotions and the emotion understanding abilities may be

beneficial for the person's well-being, and thus, emotional intelligence understood this way may promote good physical and mental state.

However, certain literature data (mentioned before) may suggest that an extremely high level of emotional abilities may not be adaptational.

Perceiving emotions indicating disapproval, dislike, hostility or boredom in interaction partners may lead to exceeding the optimum level of emotional arousal. In accordance with the Yerkes-Dodson law, both the quantity of arousal (intensity of emotions) and the quality of arousal (quality of emotions) affect the efficiency of actions. Extreme emotional experiences may be adaptational if emotional equilibrium is restored in a reasonable timescale. If it does not happen, however, then high abilities to recognise facial emotions may not ensure well-being.

Paradoxically, high emotion understanding abilities are not necessarily adaptational. The awareness of occurring emotions or their possible consequences, predicting changes in emotion dynamics (sequence) and associating them to possible social interaction scenarios may not be positively related to well-being.

If it is really so that particularly high emotional competencies may be both favourable and unfavourable for our physical and mental state, maybe emotional competencies, especially the kind responsible for emotional regulation, are decisive for one's well-being?

The skills of controlling one's emotions make you able to consciously influence their occurrence and course, both in yourself and in others. This allows to engage in some emotions or separate from others depending on the evaluation of their information value and usefulness. High emotion regulation skills also enable you to control your emotions, purposefully reinforce or calm them, thus preventing excessive arousal, adjusting the way of expressing emotions to social standards, and the level of of expressing them so as not to allow them harm interpersonal relations. There is no doubt, then, that effective regulation of one's own and others' emotions, in other words, wise emotion management, translates into the person's well-being. This is proved by the results of previous studies in which a relation between abilities to regulate emotions and the individual's well-being was found (e.g. Extremera, Fernandez-Berrocal, 2005; Extremera, Fernandez-Berrocal, 2006; Lopes et al., 2003; Rey et al., 2011; Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2014).

This is also confirmed by the results of the study presented here, which showed that emotional competencies are really related to well-being: the higher the competencies, the better the person feels. At the same time, it proved that emotional intelligence is positively correlated with emotional competencies and indirectly influences one's well-being through emotional competencies.

It is worth noting that the relation between emotional abilities (emotional intelligence) and emotional competencies was not very strong (which also corresponds to the results of previous studies). This may be connected, first of all, with the different nature of

the variables – EUT and EIS-F measure emotional intelligence, while PQEI, emotional competencies. As already stressed, having a high level of emotional intelligence does not implicate having high emotional competencies. What is more, we need to remember that emotional intelligence was measured with tests, and emotional competencies were estimated with a self-descriptive questionnaire. The results obtained in the latter considerably depend of self-knowledge but also self-evaluation of the participants. It can be assumed that people with a high level of emotional intelligence will be more aware of the complexity of emotional functioning conditions, and hence they will evaluate their own abilities more carefully.

General intelligence may also have some importance for the divergence between the results of tests and questionnaires: particularly gifted children have higher results in tests measuring emotional intelligence than in self-descriptive questionnaires (Zeidner et al., 2005).

The obtained study results also prove that abilities to recognise facial emotions are positively and moderately correlated with emotion understanding abilities. This relation seems to be obvious. The basis for the development of emotion understanding abilities is the abilities to recognize emotions, both one's own and others'. It is thanks to perceiving emotions that mental representations of emotional events appear, which are later subject to cognitive processing. Emotion recognition abilities are also developed thanks to emotion understanding abilities: for example differentiating between sincere and insincere emotional messages, weaker and stronger emotions, or not mistaking two similar emotions require emotional knowledge, which develops thanks to the abilities to understand emotions.

The relation between emotion recognition abilities and emotion understanding abilities is obviously a reciprocal one, and also they become the basis for acquiring emotional competencies. Emotional competencies, in turn, especially regulatory competencies, allow the person to effectively function emotionally among other people.

In the presented study, the measurement of temperamental traits was not taken into consideration, but it seems these traits would be good to consider in future research. It is so because, as we can assume, a certain combination of emotional abilities and temperamental traits may be particularly unfavourable for the person's well-being. Disorganisation of functioning, with equally high emotion recognition and understanding abilities, is more probable in high reactive people, characterized by lower stimulation processing capacity and lower emotional resistance than low reactive people, who are resistant and mentally strong.

As we know, emotional experiences and situations are a strong source of stimulation; the same emotional experience may cause an excess of the optimum level of arousal in a high reactive person, while in a low reactive one, it will remain within the optimal range.

Besides, high reactive people may be more exposed to the deficiency of emotional and social training than low reactive ones. The reason is that high reactive people may due to their temperamental determinants avoid highly emotional situations or limit their social

contacts so as not to incur excessive psychophysiological costs. Thus the people may have fewer opportunities to intensive emotional training and the development of emotional competencies.

The presented research definitely has some limitations. Firstly, the sample group was not very numerous. Secondly, temperamental dispositions were not taken into consideration in the study. As mentioned in the discussion, it would be useful to analyse different result configurations, involving temperamental traits apart from instrumental dispositions (emotional abilities and competencies). It seems, however, that despite its limitations, the presented study has some information value and can provide some input to knowledge on the importance of emotional competencies for an individual's well-being.

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