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Emotional intelligence and job performance: The role of enactment and focus on others' emotions

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ABSTRACT

The link between emotional intelligence (EI) and job performance was examined focusing on the interplay between self- and other-focused EI dimensions. Two diary studies were conducted among divorce lawyers and salespersons. We adopted a two-level perspective including individual differences in EI (person-level EI) and within-person fluctuations in the usage of EI (enacted EI). It was hypothesized that a focus on others' emotions predicts job performance in social jobs. Multilevel analyses showed that others-emotion appraisal contributed more to subjective (Studies 1 and 2) and objective (Study 2) job performance than other EI dimensions. This link was more apparent in person-level EI in Study 1 and in enacted EI in Study 2. Furthermore, EI dimensions interacted with regard to job performance, such that appraising the emotions of one person was more effective than appraising the emotions of two persons (other and self), and appraising others' emotions was more effective when one's own emotions were also used or regulated.

The introduction of emotional intelligence (EI)—the capacity or knowledge to effectively deal with emotions—gave rise to high expectations about its ability to predict job performance. This initial enthusiasm was tempered by the relatively modest meta-analytic correlations that were found, ranging between .15 and .25 (Joseph & Newman, 2010; O'Boyle, Humphrey, Pollack, Hawver, & Story, 2011). In the present research, we take a closer look at the EI–job performance link and address two limitations of conventional procedures in EI research. One is that most previous studies have combined the different dimensions of EI into an overall EI score to predict job performance. Yet this common practice may mask the unique effects of specific EI dimensions. The second limitation is that EI is usually measured at a single point in time. Although this method allows the assessment of an individual's potential to use EI, it does not reveal the situations in which one tends to apply EI (Elfenbein, 2016). In fact, this traditional approach cannot reveal *direct* associations between the way people deal with emotions during particular work episodes and their job performance during those episodes. Therefore, the present research highlights the potential value of distinguishing EI dimensions in the prediction of job performance and studies this link in vivo.

The definition of EI is a subject of debate. Some scholars have even argued for abandoning its label and rather refer to emotional competencies (Brasseur, Grégoire, Bourdu, & Mikolajczak, 2013; Cherniss, 2010; Jordan, Dasborough, Daus, & Ashkanasy, 2010). In the current research, however, we follow the main literature in this field and conceptualize EI as knowledge about emotional processes, and the tendency or ability to use this knowledge to regulate social and emotional behavior (Petrides, 2011; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Zeidner, Roberts, & Matthews, 2008). We base our theorizing on the Four-Branch Model of Mayer and Salovey (1997), in which EI is defined as "the ability to (1) perceive and express emotion, (2) assimilate emotion in thought, (3) understand

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and reason with emotion, and (4) regulate emotion in the self and others" (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000, p. 396). These dimensions can be hierarchically structured and the highest order dimension emotion regulation seems to play a vital role in the work setting (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Instead of focusing on which type of EI dimension is predictive of job performance, the current research examines whether the target person of EI dimensions matters. Specifically, during social interactions, EI dimensions can be directed at the self or at others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It is likely that other-focused EI dimensions contribute more to job performance than self-focused EI dimensions in jobs in which other people form "the core" of the work. For example, an important task for salespersons is convincing other people. As another example, for counselors, an important task is to react to other people. A strong focus on one's own emotions in such jobs may even backfire if it would distract attention and demand resources that cannot be used to focus on the emotions of others. Therefore, exploring the possible differential effects of self- versus other-focused EI dimensions is important, whereas only using overall EI scores may mask such effects.

The present research makes a number of theoretical contributions. First, it examines whether the distinction between self- and other-focused EI dimensions clarifies the relatively modest link between EI and job performance. Although the self–other distinction in EI has been mentioned in the literature (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), it has been studied only sparsely in a systematic way. Second, combinations of self- and other-focused EI dimensions are examined to see whether using them simultaneously is more effective than using them in isolation. Third, the choice of a diary approach enabled us to distinguish between people's general potential for displaying EI (person-level EI) and whether they actually display EI in a given situation (enacted EI). Person-level EI is usually measured with a one-time survey measuring one's general level of EI. Enacted EI can very well be measured with diary surveys across several occasions. The distinction between person- and enacted level EI suggests that the actual usage of EI is dependent not only on people's potential for EI but also on other factors such as motivation, group processes, or task demands at that specific moment in time (Elfenbein, 2016). Thus, studying the enacted level (i.e., "state level") of EI allowed to test whether fluctuations in the actual manifestation of EI dimensions are reflected in fluctuations in job performance. Overall, this approach examines the EI–performance link closer to the work situation than prior research and therefore contributes to the understanding of EI in a way that could not be extrapolated from existing work.

Emotional intelligence and job performance

Previous efforts to define and measure EI have led to three streams of research. These streams consider EI as a trait or as a set of abilities (Zeidner et al., 2008). The streams are (a) ability EI based on the four branches of Mayer and Salovey (1997), (b) self-reported ability EI based on the Four-Branch Model, and (c) self-reported trait EI that goes beyond the Four-Branch Model (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). These streams reflect an ongoing debate on the nature of EI and its overlap with cognitive abilities and/or personality traits. Specifically, trait EI mainly tends to share variance with personality, whereas ability EI mainly covaries with cognitive abilities. Related to the EI streams is the question whether EI is best measured with ability tests or with (self-reported) questionnaires (O'Boyle et al., 2011). As the three types of measures belonging to each stream only correlate weakly, they may reflect different aspects of the same general construct (Petrides, 2011).

In relation to job performance, meta-analytic data showed that ability EI tests display the smallest (corrected) correlation (r = .24), followed by self-reported trait EI measures (r = .28) and self-reported ability EI measures (r = .30). Moreover, self-reported EI measures (vs. ability tests) showed more incremental validity in predicting job performance over cognitive intelligence and personality measures (O'Boyle et al., 2011). In the present study, EI is conceptualized based on the Four-Branch Model (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) and measured with a self-reported measure. Besides its stronger correlation with job performance and its substantial incremental validity over cognitive intelligence

and personality measures (O'Boyle et al., 2011), a self-reported ability measure is also better suited for diary studies than an ability test.

All of the aforementioned meta-analyses have used an overall EI measure and found moderate associations with job performance. These meta-analyses also revealed that one of the moderators in the EI–job performance relation was the level of interpersonal contact in a job. The EI–performance association was stronger in jobs with a high level of interpersonal contact such as in sales or counseling jobs (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

Self- and other-focused EI dimensions

We suggest that the distinction in EI dimensions in terms of being self- or other-focused is important. For example, when a salesperson is confronted with an angry customer, he or she may focus on the emotions of the customer (e.g., calming down the customer) but may also focus on his or her own emotional reaction (e.g., remaining calm). This distinction is incorporated in Davies, Stankov, and Roberts's (1998) conceptualization of EI in which they considered emotion appraisal a composite of emotion perception and emotion understanding as divided into a self-emotion appraisal component and an others-emotion appraisal component. The accompanying self-reported measure, the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), empirically distinguished these components, indicating that people can differ in EI dimensions focused on the self or on others (Wong & Law, 2002).

Both self- and other-focused EI dimensions can contribute to job performance, particularly when it involves other people. However, those dimensions may not necessarily contribute to job performance *to the same extent*. For example, if one wants to achieve a specific social goal, such as mediating a conflict or selling a product, then focusing on others' emotions may be particularly useful because this allows one to influence their behavior or mood states. In contrast, while dealing with others, being focused on one's own emotions may be less effective in influencing others, and may even become counterproductive when too much attention is directed to the self.

As most well-known EI instruments do not explicitly distinguish between self- and other-focused EI, the question of whether the target person of EI dimensions matters in the prediction of job performance has not been answered yet. In the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test, the scores on subtasks that focus on others' emotions (the faces task and the emotion-relationship task) are combined with scores on subtasks that focus on the emotions of the self into one overall score (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003). Similarly, in the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, facets that focus on others' emotions (e.g., the social awareness facet and the empathy facet) are combined with facets that focus on emotions of the self into one overall score (Petrides, 2009). Nevertheless, studies examining the EI–job performance link with the WLEIS support the idea that mainly other-focused EI dimensions are relevant. Although these studies also used overall EI scores to predict performance, their correlation tables showed that, of all four EI dimensions, others-emotion appraisal indeed contributed most to job performance among salespersons (Wisker & Poulis, 2014), laboratory assistants (Law, Wong, Huang, & Li, 2008), and civil servants (Wong & Law, 2002). Furthermore, a recent study showed that leaders' others-emotion appraisal was positively associated with employees' satisfaction with the leader (X. Liu, Zhang, & Liu, 2017). Building on these findings, we further examined the role of other-focused EI dimensions in comparison to self-focused EI dimensions in social jobs.

H1: Compared to EI dimensions that focus on the emotions of the self, EI dimensions that focus on the emotions of others have stronger positive associations with job performance in social jobs.

Combinations of EI dimensions

EI dimensions are generally used not in isolation but simultaneously (Elfenbein, 2016; Joseph & Newman, 2010). A relevant question therefore is whether they are effectively used in combination.

For example, emotion appraisal can simultaneously be directed toward the self and others. In such a situation, the same EI dimension is allocated over multiple target persons. From a conventional EI perspective, a person who is able to do both is seen as more emotionally skilled than a person who can appraise the emotions of just one person (other or self). Consequently, the more emotionally skilled person should perform better. An alternative view is that appraising emotions may require cognitive resources such as attention. This would imply that any resources allocated to one process (e.g., appraising one's own emotions) might occur at the expense of resources invested in another process (e.g., appraising others' emotions; Beal, Weiss, Barros, & MacDermid, 2005). A simultaneous focus on the emotions of others and the self might be costly in terms of attentional or energetic resources, which may diminish performance (Beal, Trougakos, Weiss, & Green, 2006; Grandey, 2000). In line with these two lines of reasoning, we introduced two competing hypotheses. The first one is in accordance with the first notion of overall efficiency. The second hypothesis follows the latter, limited resource, notion:

H2a: Appraising the emotions of two persons (other and self) has a stronger positive association with job performance in social jobs than appraising the emotions of just one person (other or self).

H2b: Appraising the emotions of two persons (other and self) has a weaker positive association with job performance in social jobs than appraising the emotions of just one person (other or self).

A second possibility is that different *types* of EI dimensions are combined in interacting with people. This implies that, instead of directing the same EI dimension to two or more persons simultaneously, one simultaneously uses two types of EI dimensions (e.g., emotion appraisal and emotion regulation). A recent review by Elfenbein (2016) showed that most jobs require the combination of different types of EI dimensions. For example, a negotiator in police crisis management needs a high level of other-focused emotion recognition together with high levels of self-focused emotion regulation and emotion understanding (Elfenbein, 2016). This illustrates that in interpersonal jobs, the effects of other-focused EI dimensions on job performance can be amplified by different types of (self-focused) EI dimensions. Consequently, we aimed to disentangle this phenomenon systematically by examining combinations of others-emotion appraisal with different types of (self-focused) EI dimensions.

It seems plausible that for employees working with people, others-emotion appraisal contributes more to job performance when one's own emotions are used or in control. Self-focused emotion use and emotion regulation may facilitate one's focus and motivation (Y. Liu, Prati, Perrewe, & Ferris, 2008) while appraising others' emotions. To illustrate, service employees need to invest self-regulatory effort to deal effectively with the emotions of their customers (Webb, Gallo, Miles, Gollwitzer, & Sheeran, 2012). Accordingly, we hypothesized that using and regulating one's own emotions boosts the positive effect of appraising others' emotions on job performance in social jobs.

H3a: Appraising the emotions of others has a stronger positive association with job performance in social jobs when one's own emotions are also used (vs. when one's own emotions are not used).

H3b: Appraising the emotions of others has a stronger positive association with job performance in social jobs when one's own emotions are also regulated (vs. when one's own emotions are not regulated).

The present research: Two studies

The current research examined the contributions of self- and other-focused EI dimensions in predicting job performance in a sample of divorce lawyers (Study 1) and a sample of salespersons

(Study 2). We extended the traditional approach of using a one-time measure of EI that captures people's general level (person-level) of EI by using multiple diary measures of the actual enactment of EI. This approach is valid for our research question because traits or abilities can fluctuate over time depending on contextual factors that trigger their expression (Elfenbein, 2016; Fleeson, 2001; Tett & Guterman, 2000). People scoring high on a certain trait or ability are expected to display an increased propensity of daily behaviors that are associated with that trait or ability. These enacted traits or abilities are likely to directly affect variables such as mood states and job performance (Wilt, Noftle, Fleeson, & Spain, 2012). However, traits or abilities need relevant situations to be expressed (Fleeson, 2001). For example, extraverted individuals do not always behave socially, enthusiastically, and assertively; they do so only in situations that allow for extraversion such as a party or a meeting. In nonsocial situations, extraversion will (or can) not be expressed (Fleeson, 2001; Oerlemans & Bakker, 2014; Tett & Guterman, 2000).

With regard to EI, it is expected that EI dimensions are enacted when the context allows for it. In turn, these enacted EI dimensions are likely to directly affect job performance. Emphasizing the role of context is not new in the EI literature. Jordan and colleagues (2010) explicitly called for a consideration of context because it may determine whether EI has positive effects. To illustrate, emotional demands may evoke effective emotion regulation strategies among high-EI employees because they are sensitive to the needs of such demands (Brotheridge, 2006). Moreover, meta-analytic findings showed that under such conditions, EI contributes most to job performance (Joseph & Newman, 2010). We build on these studies by incorporating the context in the measurement of EI using enacted EI dimensions (i.e., EI dimensions "in-use"). For example, others-emotion appraisal may be enacted when employees sell products but may not be enacted when working on administrative tasks. In the first activity, enacted EI may contribute to job performance, whereas in the latter activity it will not.

The enactment of EI dimensions may also fluctuate, depending on contextual factors such as fatigue and motivation of the employee. Therefore, even high-EI employees may encounter situations in which they do not fully enact their EI. In turn, these fluctuations are likely to affect job performance. To capture the fluctuating usage of EI in the work setting, we used survey data and diary measures to test our hypotheses. The survey data reflect the way people generally deal with emotions (person-level EI), whereas the diary measures reflect the way people perform and deal with emotions in actual work situations (enacted EI). This approach may reveal the relationship between EI and job performance more clearly than cross-sectional studies do.

Study 1

Method

Participants and procedure

Participants were recruited by an invitation in newsletters sent by the Dutch Professional Association of Divorce Lawyers and Mediators to their members. Participants were first asked to complete an online person-level questionnaire assessing EI and demographics. Subsequently, they received a link to a diary survey to be filled out online after a consult with clients. The diary had to be filled out immediately after a consult to avoid distorted memories. To gain sufficient variance in the diary measurements, participants were asked to complete three diary surveys. In total, 68 divorce lawyers completed the person-level questionnaire and at least one diary survey, resulting in 187 study occasions. Specifically, 57 divorce lawyers completed three diary surveys or more, three divorce lawyers completed two diary surveys, and eight divorce lawyers completed one diary survey. As multilevel analyses were used to test the hypotheses, we could account for the difference in the number of observations because single-case observations are excluded in the estimation of within-person fluctuations (Hox, 2002).

Participants were asked to fill out a diary survey on three random consults. Although all these consults aimed to solve a (marital) conflict, the content and composition of the consults varied. Some consults involved conversations with individuals, whereas other consults involved conversations with couples or families. Most diary surveys were filled out within a period of two weeks. The mean age of participants was 45.5 (SD = 9.4) years, and 94.1% were female. On average, the divorce lawyers had 17.1 years of work experience and worked 37.4 hr per week. The majority of our participants possessed an advanced degree (98.5%).

Measures

Person-level questionnaire

Person-level EI was measured with the WLEIS (Wong & Law, 2002), consisting of four subscales with four items each: Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others-Emotion Appraisal, Emotion Use, and Emotion Regulation. Important to note, except for the Others-Emotion Appraisal subscale, all subscales are oriented toward emotions of the self. Example items are "I really understand what I feel" (Self-Emotion Appraisal), "I am a good observer of others' emotions" (Others-Emotion Appraisal), "I always tell myself I am a competent person" (Emotion Use), and "I have good control of my own emotions" (Emotion Regulation). Questions were answered on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). Alpha coefficients were .68, .75, .65, and .86, for Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others-Emotion Appraisal, Emotion Use, and Emotion Regulation, respectively.

Diary survey

As is customary in diary studies, the scales measuring enacted EI and subjective job performance were adapted versions of existing scales (Heller, Komar, & Lee, 2007). Specifically, we adjusted the number of items and adapted the time frame to which the items referred so that the diary assessment took limited time to fill out and referred to the respective consults (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010).

Enacted EI was measured with eight items from the WLEIS. Each EI dimension was measured with two items that referred to the respective consult, for example, "During this consult, I had a good understanding of my own emotions," on a scale from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). The selection of two of the four original items was based on their content validity. Average Spearman-Brown coefficient values over three consults were .86, .87, .88, and .95, for Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others-Emotion Appraisal, Emotion Use, and Emotion Regulation, respectively.

Subjective job performance was assessed with a 7-item in-role performance measure (Williams & Anderson, 1991) including "During this consult, I adequately completed assigned duties" from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). The average alpha coefficient over three consults was .76.

Statistical analysis

Analyses were conducted using Mplus to account for the multilevel structure of the data. Maximum likelihood estimation was used to deal with missings (Peugh & Enders, 2004). The first level consisted of consults (N = 187), which were nested in persons at the second level (N = 68). Prior to the analyses, the intraclass correlation coefficent (ICC) values were calculated, which showed that 53% to 74% of the variance in enacted EI and subjective job performance could be explained by within-person fluctuations (Table 1). Consequently, all hypotheses were tested with either enacted or person-level predictors. Predictor variables at the enacted level were centered to the respective individual means, and predictor variables at the person-level were centered to the sample mean (Ohly et al., 2010). Enacted level predictors thus explain the effect of *fluctuations* in the enactment of EI dimensions controlled for the stable component of these dimensions, whereas person-level predictors explain the effect of individual differences in EI dimensions.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, ICCs, and intercorrelations of the study variables in Study 1.

	M	*SD*	ICC	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. SEA	3.98	0.49	—	—								
2. OEA	4.04	0.52	—	.20	—							
3. UOE	3.80	0.60	—	.20	.03	—						
4. ROE	3.61	0.73	—	.37**	.10	.49***	—					
5. Enacted SEA	5.81	0.93	.53	.17	.16	.15	.02	—	.06*	−.07	.01	.20**
6. Enacted OEA	5.85	0.77	.70	.20	.38**	−.07	−.06	.38**	—	.02	.10	.16*
7. Enacted UOE	4.43	1.29	.74	.10	.13	.26*	.15	.19	.01	—	−.17*	−.16*
8. Enacted ROE	6.03	0.88	.67	.13	.28*	−.05	.24*	.27*	.21	.19	—	.26***
9. Subjective job performance	5.95	0.64	.55	−.03	.39**	.08	−.13	.39**	.30*	.21	.48***	—

Note. Correlations below the diagonal are person-level correlations aggregated over three consults (N = 68). Correlations above the diagonal are within-person correlations (N = 187). Means and standard deviations are person-level means. ICC = intraclass correlation coefficient; SEA = Self-Emotion Appraisal; OEA = Others-Emotion Appraisal; UOE = Emotion Use; ROE = Emotion Regulation.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

The substantive focus of H2a to H3b is on combined EI dimensions. Therefore, we tested the improvement of each interaction model (Model 2) over the main effects model (Model 1) by computing the difference of the respective log-likelihood statistic −2*log and submitting this to a chi-square test. Interactions were further explored using simple slope analyses for multilevel models (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006).

Results

Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, ICCs, and correlations between all study variables. Person-level and enacted EI dimensions correlated between r = .17 and .38.

Results of the multilevel analyses are reported in Table 2. H1 stated that of all EI dimensions, others-emotion appraisal (other-focused EI) has the strongest positive association with subjective job performance. At the person-level, others-emotion appraisal was indeed positively and significantly associated with subjective job performance (γ = .504, p < .001), whereas the other EI dimensions were not. At the enacted level, none of the EI dimensions were significantly related to subjective job performance, meaning that fluctuations in the enactment of EI dimensions did not explain subjective job performance beyond the stable use of these dimensions. Therefore, H1 was partially supported.

To test H2a to H3b, three two-way interaction terms (between others-emotion appraisal and the remaining self-focused EI dimensions) were added to our models. H2a and H2b were competing hypotheses

Table 2. Multilevel estimates of emotional intelligence dimensions on subjective job performance in Study 1.

	Person-level				Enacted level			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE
Constant	5.94***	0.07	5.99***	0.07	5.94***	0.08	5.94***	0.08
SEA	−0.12	0.14	0.03	0.13	0.13	0.09	0.11	0.07
OEA	0.50***	0.13	0.63***	0.14	0.09	0.07	0.09	0.07
UOE	0.17	0.13	0.18	0.15	−0.04	0.03	−0.04	0.03
ROE	−0.21	0.11	−0.28*	0.11	0.15	0.08	0.15*	0.08
OEA × SEA			−1.28***	0.34			0.18	0.13
OEA × UOE			0.06	0.34			0.08	0.07
OEA × ROE			0.39**	0.15			0.01	0.06
−2 * log	390.772		382.090		389.024		386.014	
Δ −2 * log			8.682*				3.010	
df	4		3		4		3	

Note. SEA = Self-Emotion Appraisal; OEA = Others-Emotion Appraisal; UOE = Emotion Use; ROE = Emotion Regulation.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

on the combination of self- and others-emotion appraisal, and H3a and H3b were concerned with the combination of others-emotion appraisal with self-focused emotion use and emotion regulation, respectively. At the person level, the interaction between others-emotion appraisal and self-emotion appraisal was significant ($\gamma = -1.278$, $p < .001$). Simple slope analyses revealed that a tendency to appraise the emotions of one person (other or self) was effective (estimate = 2.29, $p < .001$), whereas a tendency to appraise the emotions of two persons (other and self) was less effective (estimate = −1.03, $p = .017$; Figure 1). This finding supported H2b and suggests that individuals who generally appraise emotions of themselves and others experience a trade-off in the effectiveness of these EI dimensions in terms of subjective job performance.

The interaction between person-level others-emotion appraisal and emotion use was not significant ($\gamma = .055$), yielding no support for H3a, which stated that appraising the emotions of others has a stronger positive association with subjective job performance when one's own emotions are also used (vs. when one's own emotions are not used). H3b stated that appraising the emotions of others has a stronger positive association with subjective job performance when one's own emotions are also regulated (vs. when one's own emotions are not regulated). We found an interaction between person-level others-emotion appraisal and emotion regulation ($\gamma = .386$, $p = .008$). Simple slope analyses revealed a pattern showing that only divorce lawyers who tend to regulate themselves without a tendency to appraise the emotions of others perform worse (estimate = 1.05, $p < .001$). In contrast to the hypothesis, the tendency to regulate one's own emotions had no effect on divorce lawyers who generally appraise the emotions of others (estimate = 0.19, $p = .186$; Figure 2). At the enacted level, the inclusion of the three two-way interaction terms did not explain additional variance in subjective job performance, Δ −2*log (3) = 3.01, $p = .390$, and none of the interactions were significant.

Discussion

The main result of Study 1 was that divorce lawyers who generally appraise the emotions of others seem to perform better than divorce lawyers who lack this tendency. This finding is in accordance with correlations between others-emotion appraisal and job performance reported in former studies (Law et al., 2008; X. Liu et al., 2017; Wisker & Poulis, 2014). Noteworthy, this effect occurred only at the person-level and not at the enacted level. A possible explanation may be that the subjective job performance measures required the global evaluation of some clear job performance goal, whereas the enacted EI measures referred to the emotions of one specific client. As most consults involved multiple clients (i.e., multiple sources of emotions), it could have been unclear on which client the divorce lawyer had to report in the diaries. Hence, the subjective job performance and enacted EI measures might have captured different performance- and emotion episodes, which, in turn, could have blurred the associations.

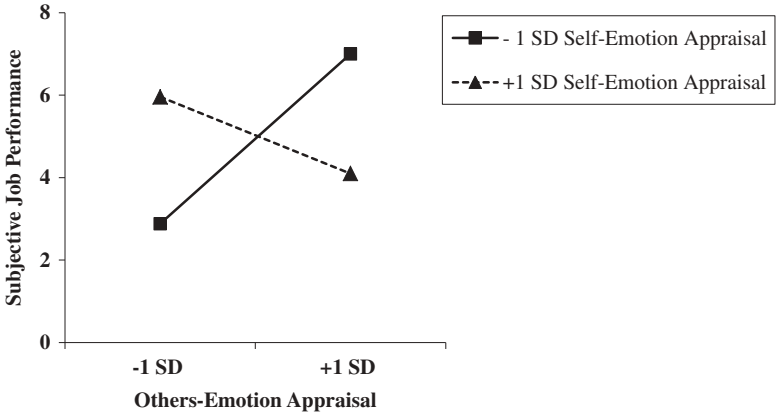

Figure 1. Two-way interaction effect between Others-Emotion Appraisal and Self-Emotion Appraisal on subjective job performance in Study 1. *Note.* −1 *SD* = one standard deviation below the mean; +1 *SD* = one standard deviation above the mean.

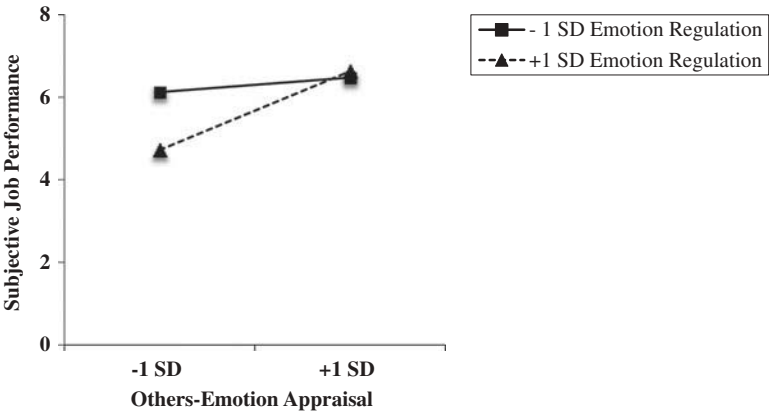

Figure 2. Two-way interaction effect between Others-Emotion Appraisal and Emotion Regulation on subjective job performance in Study 1. *Note.* −1 *SD* = one standard deviation below the mean; +1 *SD* = one standard deviation above the mean.

Study 1 also tested the influence of combined EI dimensions. We found that a tendency to appraise the emotions of one person (other or self) is effective, whereas a tendency to appraise the emotions of two persons simultaneously (other and self) is less effective in terms of subjective job performance. These results are in line with the idea that an allocation of one competency over multiple tasks diminishes performance (Beal et al., 2005). Furthermore, regulating one's own emotions contributed to subjective job performance only when combined with others-emotion appraisal. This finding relates to Elfenbein's (2016) notion that certain combinations of EI dimensions are more effective than others.

Although these results are informative, one limitation is the common source (self-reports) of the predictor and outcome measures, which might have led to an overestimation of relationships (Podsakoff & Todor, 1985). However, there are several reasons to assume that this limitation did not compromise our conclusions. First, scholars have argued that self-reports in socially desirable variables, such as EI and subjective job performance, may artificially enhance main effects. However, there is no such reason to expect this process to bias interaction effects (Van Yperen & Janssen, 2002). Second, we found that most of the relationships were nonsignificant, which is at odds with the notion of a common-method bias. Another limitation of the self-reported criterion that we used in this study is that it may have resulted in restriction of range, diminishing overall effect sizes.

Therefore, we decided that our conclusions would be more strongly supported if these findings could be generalized to other job settings with additional objective performance criteria. In Study 2, we therefore tested our hypotheses in a sample of salespersons. In sales, job performance mostly is established in a one-time customer contact in which a salesperson has to peak. Such performance can be classified as maximum performance (i.e., performing to one's best effort), which differs from the more typical performance (i.e., performance over an extended period) measured in Study 1 (Sackett, Zedeck, & Fogli, 1988). As different factors seem to contribute to these two types of job performance (Sackett et al., 1988), we consider it likely that enacted EI, which is measured "in the moment," has more influence on this momentary peak-performance than on a typical consult that is part of a longer trajectory with clients.

Study 2

Method

Participants and procedure

Participants were salespersons employed at a face-to-face sales company selling subscriptions for charity organizations. To recruit participants, invitation e-mails were sent to all employees. These

e-mails included a link to an online person-level questionnaire assessing EI and demographics. Employees received diary surveys from their managers and were asked to fill them out directly after their last customer contact. Participation was on voluntary basis. Similar to Study 1, our aim was to retrieve at least three diary surveys of the participants. In total, 61 salespersons completed the person-level questionnaire and at least one diary survey, resulting in 141 study occasions. Specifically, 19 salespersons completed three diary surveys or more, 17 salespersons completed two diary surveys, and 25 salespersons completed one diary survey. The mean age of participants was 19.1 (SD = 2.1) years, and 62.3% were male. On average, they had 5.7 months of work experience in their current job. Besides their job, the majority attended higher education (70.5%), whereas the remaining participants attended secondary education.

Measures

Person-level questionnaire

Similar to Study 1, the WLEIS was used to assess person-level EI. Alpha coefficients were .79, .78, .65, and .79, for Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others-Emotion Appraisal, Emotion Use, and Emotion Regulation, respectively.

Diary survey

In the diary survey, the enacted EI measure was presented first, followed by the measure of customer contact satisfaction, objective sales success, and objective performance. When filling out the diary surveys, participants were instructed to focus on their most recent customer contact to minimize retrospective biases.

Enacted EI was measured with the same items used in Study 1, which were adapted to the sales context (e.g., "During my last customer contact, I really understood what I felt"). Average Spearman-Brown coefficient values over three customer contacts were .79, .73, .87, and .87, for Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others-Emotion Appraisal, Emotion Use, and Emotion Regulation, respectively.

Customer contact satisfaction. As a subjective indicator of job performance, participants were asked the following question: "Irrespective of the objective result, how well did your contact with your last customer go?" The scale ranged 1 (*very bad*) to 7 (*very good*).

Objective sales success. To measure objective sales success, participants indicated whether they had sold a subscription (*Yes*/*No*) during the contact for which they had filled out their diary survey.

Objective performance was measured by the total amount of subscriptions that participants sold on the days they participated in the study. Later, we checked whether the reported amounts were the same as the amounts in the administrative system of the company. Consequently, in four occasions we aligned the reported amounts with the data from the administrative system prior to the analyses.

Statistical analysis

The strategy of analysis employed in Study 2 was identical to the strategy used in Study 1. The ICC values indicated that 49% to 89% of variance in the enacted level variables could be explained by within-person fluctuations (Table 3). Furthermore, the hypotheses on objective sales success were tested with multilevel logistic regression analyses to account for the binary response format of this variable.

Results

Table 3 reports the means, standard deviations, ICCs, and correlations of all study variables. Person-level and enacted EI dimensions correlated between r = .20 and .42.

Results of the multilevel regression analyses are reported in Tables 4 and 5. As expected, at the person-level, only others-emotion appraisal was positively and significantly related to objective performance (γ = 1.593, p = .023) and to objective sales success (odds ratio [OR] = 4.08).

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, Intraclass Correlation Coefficients, and intercorrelations of the study variables in Study 2.

	M	*SD*	ICC	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. SEA	3.98	0.58	—	—										
2. OEA	3.97	0.45	—	.26*	—									
3. UOE	3.99	0.52	—	.38**	.25*	—								
4. ROE	3.75	0.66	—	.10	.05	.25	—							
5. Enacted SEA	5.54	0.93	.60	.20	.17	.37**	.08	—	.26**	.30***	.33***	.38***	.01	.42***
6. Enacted OEA	5.52	0.88	.66	.17	.25*	.21	.03	.28*	—	.37***	.34***	.48***	.22**	.47***
7. Enacted UOE	6.02	0.86	.79	.13	.19	.42***	.14	.55***	.16	—	.24**	.36***	.03	.36***
8. Enacted ROE	6.05	0.88	.49	−.06	.19	.31*	.27*	.51***	.16	.46***	—	.26**	.14	.24**
9. Objective sales success	0.47	0.41	.48	−.02	.26*	.04	.18	.14	.18	.14	.09	—	.32***	.54***
10. Objective performance	3.04	2.30	.57	.19	.28*	.05	.05	.04	.19	.01	.02	.34**	—	.17*
11. Customer contact satisfaction	5.34	1.08	.89	.02	.23	.10	.04	.42***	.11	.54***	.38**	.47***	.15	—

Note. Correlations above the diagonal are within-person correlations (N = 141). Correlations below the diagonal are person-level correlations aggregated over three customer contacts (N = 61). Means and standard deviations are person-level means. SEA = Self-Emotion Appraisal; OEA = Others-Emotion Appraisal; UOE = Emotion Use; ROE = Emotion Regulation.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Apparently, salespersons who generally appraise the emotions of others have a better chance to sell a subscription, and sell more subscriptions on a day. At the enacted level, others-emotion appraisal showed the strongest positive association with objective performance (γ = 0.730, p = .045), objective sales success (OR = 4.75), and customer contact satisfaction (γ = 0.514, p = .002). This indicates that interactions in which salespersons appraised the emotions of their customers more were directly accompanied with an increase on all performance indicators. Together, these results confirm H1. Multilevel regression analyses further revealed that an increased appraisal of emotions of the self while interacting with customers led to more objective sales success (OR = 2.72), and more customer contact satisfaction (γ = 0.471, p = .020).

To test hypotheses 2a to 3b, three two-way interaction terms were added to our models. At the person-level, this inclusion did not explain additional variance in objective performance, Δ −2*log (3) = 1.70, p = .636; objective sales success, Δ −2*log(3) = 1.83, p = .609; or customer contact satisfaction, Δ −2*log(3) = 2.02, p = .568. At the enacted level, the interaction between self-emotion appraisal and others-emotion appraisal on customer contact satisfaction was significant (γ = −0.429, p = .001). Simple slope analyses showed that when salespersons appraised their own emotions less, they profited most from appraising the emotions of their customers (estimate = 0.77, p < .001; Figure 3). In contrast, when salespersons appraised their own emotions more, the extent to which they simultaneously appraised the emotions of their customers did not further enhance their customer contact satisfaction (estimate = -0.03, p = .914). This finding confirms H2b and suggests that appraising the emotions of either others or the self during contact with customers increases customer contact satisfaction.

The hypothesized interaction between enacted others-emotion appraisal and emotion use (H3a) was found for all outcome variables (γ = 2.430, p = .026; OR = 9.79; γ = 0.472, p = .001, for objective performance, objective sales success, and customer contact satisfaction, respectively). Simple slope analyses showed that when salespersons used their own emotions more, they profited most from simultaneously appraising the emotions of their customers in terms of customer contact satisfaction (estimate = 0.80, p < .001). However, when salespersons used their own emotions less, they did not profit from simultaneously appraising the emotions of their customers in terms of customer contact satisfaction (estimate = −0.03, p = .875; Figure 4). Likewise, when salespersons used their own emotions more, they profited most from simultaneously appraising the emotions of their customers in terms of objective performance (estimate = 2.60, p < .001) and objective sales success (estimate = 3.45, p < .001). However, when salespersons used their own emotions less, the extent to which they appraised the emotions of their customers was even negatively associated with objective performance (estimate = −1.58, p < .001) and objective sales success (estimate = −0.48, p = .049). Taken together, these results

Table 4. Multilevel estimates of emotional intelligence dimensions on objective performance and customer contact satisfaction in Study 2.

	Objective performance								Customer contact satisfaction							
	Person-level				Enacted Level				Person-level				Enacted Level			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE
Constant	3.17***	0.32	3.01***	0.38	3.18***	0.33	3.00***	0.33	5.39***	0.12	5.42***	0.12	5.37***	0.12	5.37***	0.12
SEA	0.75	0.50	0.72	0.52	−0.30	0.48	−0.30	0.45	−0.03	0.21	−0.08	0.23	0.47*	0.20	0.55*	0.23
OEA	1.59*	0.70	1.47*	0.69	0.73*	0.36	0.51	0.29	0.47	0.36	0.51	0.38	0.51**	0.16	0.37**	0.14
UOE	−0.50	0.67	−0.53	0.66	−0.15	0.68	0.20	0.45	0.13	0.25	0.15	0.25	0.21	0.17	0.30*	0.13
ROE	−0.04	0.39	0.15	0.43	0.29	0.51	0.25	0.54	0.01	0.14	−0.15	0.20	−0.04	0.17	−0.05	0.16
OEA × SEA			0.01	0.94			−0.89	0.55			0.44	0.62			−0.43**	0.13
OEA × UOE			2.40	1.44			2.43*	1.09			−0.54	0.73			0.47**	0.14
OEA × ROE			−1.05	0.83			0.53	0.87			0.59	0.42			−0.31	0.18
−2 * log	663.994		662.290		664.994		644.338		450.494		448.472		426.712		420.382	
Δ −2 * log			1.704				20.656**				2.022				6.330+	
df	4		3		4		3		4		3		4		3	

Note. SEA = Self-Emotion Appraisal; OEA = Others-Emotion Appraisal; UOE = Emotion Use; ROE = Emotion Regulation.
+ $p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 5. Odds Ratios (*OR*s) and 95% Confidence Intervals (CIs) of objective sales success by EI dimensions in Study 2.

	Person-level				Enacted level			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	OR	95% CI	*OR*	95% CI	*OR*	95% CI	*OR*	95% CI
Constant	1.04	[0.63, 1.69]	0.97	[0.57, 1.65]	1.10	[0.57, 2.11]	1.25	[0.62, 2.53]
SEA	0.76	[0.27, 2.15]	0.86	[0.31, 2.34]	2.72	[1.03, 7.20]	3.44	[1.06, 11.15]
OEA	4.08	[1.34, 12.39]	4.57	[1.51, 13.86]	4.75	[1.86, 12.10]	4.42	[1.73, 11.32]
UOE	0.88	[0.23, 3.38]	0.84	[0.22, 3.19]	1.49	[0.50, 4.42]	2.05	[0.71, 5.91]
ROE	1.46	[0.88, 2.44]	1.62	[0.70, 3.71]	1.09	[0.51, 2.32]	1.12	[0.52, 2.43]
OEA × SEA			1.69	[0.19, 17.92]			0.64	[0.29, 1.42]
OEA × UOE			0.16	[0.01, 4.51]			9.79	[1.45, 65.95]
OEA × ROE			0.67	[0.13, 3.51]			0.55	[0.11, 2.73]
−2 * log	190.740		188.914		170.912		162.576	
Δ −2 * log			1.826				8.336*	
df	4		3		4		3	

Note. SEA = Self-Emotion Appraisal; OEA = Others-Emotion Appraisal; UOE = Emotion Use; ROE = Emotion Regulation.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

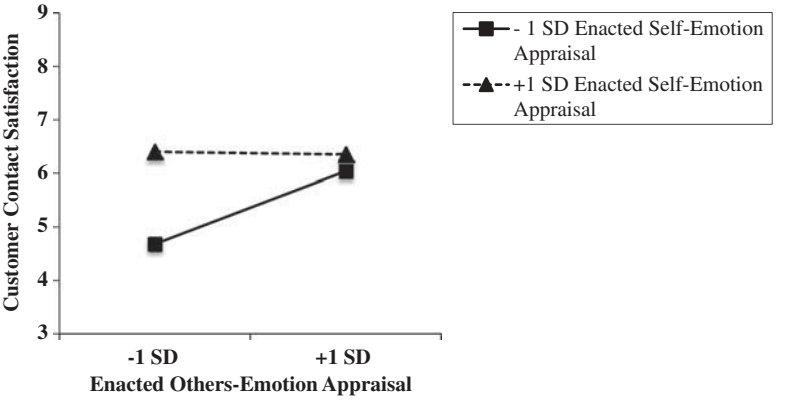

Figure 3. Two-way interaction effect between enacted Others-Emotion Appraisal and enacted Self-Emotion Appraisal on customer contact satisfaction in Study 2. *Note*. –1 *SD* = one standard deviation below the mean; +1 *SD* = one standard deviation above the mean.

suggest that appraising the emotions of customers contributes to job performance only when salespersons simultaneously use their own emotions. As the interaction between enacted others-emotion appraisal and emotion regulation was not significant for any of the outcome variables, H3b received no support.

In this study, the percentage of male participants was noticeably higher than in Study 1 (62.3% vs. 5.9%, respectively). To better compare the results of the studies, we conducted parallel analyses in which we controlled for gender in Study 2. This resulted in a pattern that did not differ substantially from the observed pattern without control variables (results of these analyses can be received upon request). Thus, it seems unlikely that a different gender ratio was responsible for any differences in results between the two studies.

Discussion

The aim of Study 2 was to examine whether the results of Study 1 could be generalized to a different job context using additional (objective) performance criteria. At the person-level, Study 2 replicated that individuals who generally appraise others' emotions were more effective in terms of subjective and objective job performance criteria. Furthermore, fluctuations in the enactment of this specific EI

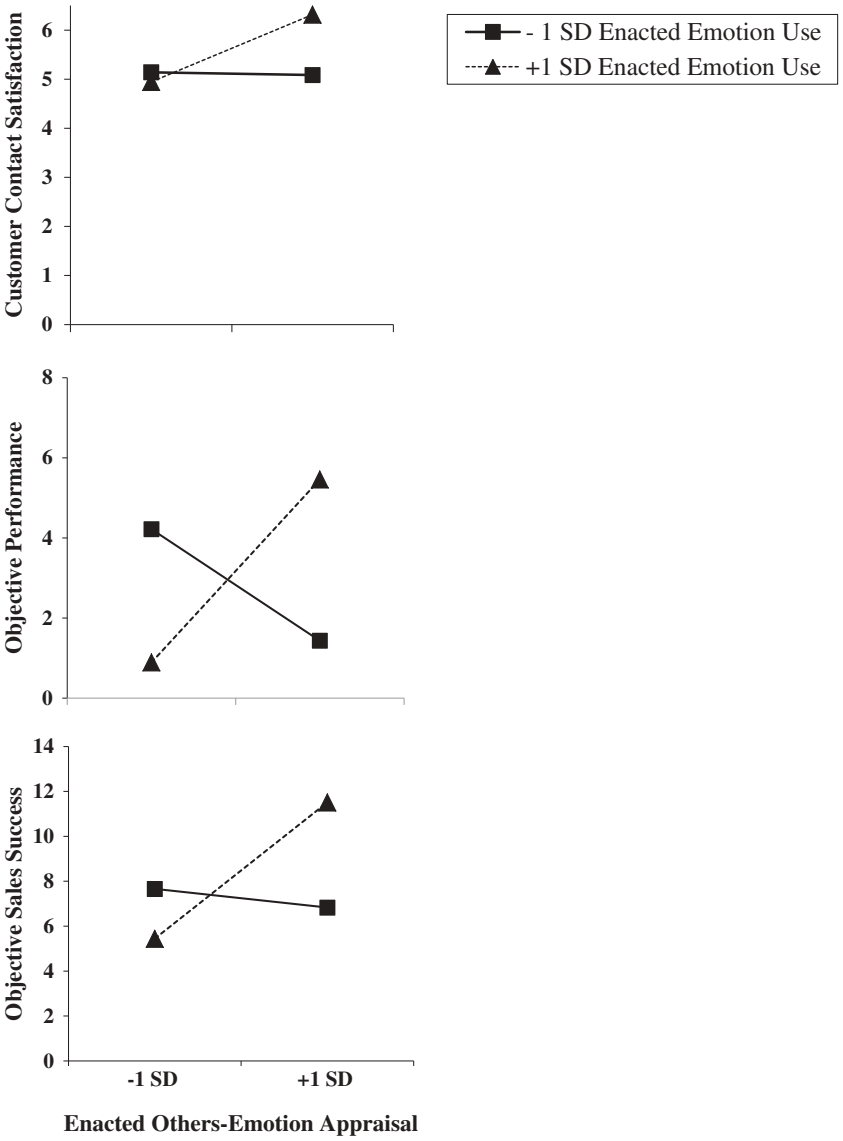

Figure 4. Two-way interaction effects between enacted Others-Emotion Appraisal and enacted Emotion Use on customer contact satisfaction, objective performance, and objective sales success (displayed in logits) in Study 2. *Note*. −1 *SD* = one standard deviation below the mean; +1 *SD* = one standard deviation above the mean.

dimension were predictive of fluctuations in all job performance outcomes. Together, these results confirmed the hypothesized role of (fluctuations in) others-emotion appraisal in job performance.

In contrast with Study 1, combined effects of EI dimensions were found at the enacted level but not at the person level. Specifically, self-focused emotion use amplified the positive effect of others-emotion appraisal on job performance. This pattern was consistent across all outcome measures and supports the combined effect of different EI dimensions on job performance (Elfenbein, 2016). This finding adds to the literature because very few studies have tested combinations of EI dimensions and their effects on job performance explicitly.

The results also suggest that when salespersons appraised the emotions of their customers more, they did not profit from simultaneously appraising their own emotions. They profited only from appraising their own emotions when they did not put much attention to the appraisal of others' emotions. This finding

suggests that salespersons perceive their own job performance as being more positive when their contact with customers included an appraisal of either self-related or customer-related emotions.

General discussion

The present article highlights the potential role of other-focused EI in jobs where employees work with other people, as was the case for the divorce lawyers and salespersons who participated in our studies. Within these interpersonal contexts, individual differences in other-focused EI dimensions contributed most to job performance. Furthermore, fluctuations in the enactment of other-focused EI dimensions also directly affected job performance outcomes.

Theoretical implications

The theoretical contributions of the present studies are threefold. First, approaching the predictive value of EI in terms of the person (the other or the self) on which these dimensions are focused is relatively new in EI research (see also Brasseur et al., 2013; X. Liu et al., 2017). Although previous research has shown the beneficial effects of EI for performance in jobs with a high level of interpersonal contact (Joseph & Newman, 2010; Wong & Law, 2002), we are unaware of any studies that have explicitly taken into account whether EI is directed to the self or to others. Thus, our research contributes to the literature by showing that a distinction between self- and other-focused EI is relevant for the prediction of job performance.

A second contribution is the explicit examination of the effects of combined EI dimensions. Although most studies acknowledge that EI is composed of various dimensions, there are very few studies that have actually tested whether and how these dimensions may interact (see Elfenbein, 2016). As the cascading model of EI implies that few people possess a high level of all EI dimensions (Joseph & Newman, 2010), a mixed pattern of EI dimensions best resembles reality for most people. It is therefore surprising that testing combined effects of EI dimensions is not common practice yet. For example, Study 1 showed that divorce lawyers with a high level of others-emotion appraisal and a high level of self-emotion appraisal experienced a trade-off of these dimensions: Their colleagues who score high on either one of these dimensions performed significantly better. Furthermore, Study 2 showed that only salespersons who used their emotions profited from simultaneously appraising the emotions of their customers. Thus, the simultaneous enactment of different EI dimensions altered their unique effects. The patterns just described provide useful information about the actual manifestation of EI. Therefore, one central message of this article is that combined effects of EI dimensions should be further explored.

Third, the present research contributes to the research field by using a diary design to study enacted EI. This approach has several advantages over cross-sectional studies. Most important, the diary measures made it possible to capture within-person fluctuations in the enactment of EI dimensions. As the findings of both studies indicated, approximately 50% to 80% of the variance in enacted EI dimensions could be attributed to these fluctuations. Furthermore, the moderate correlations between the enacted and person-level predictors showed that a high general level of a certain EI dimension is not necessarily reflected in a continuous manifestation of this EI dimension. This suggest that the enactment of EI dimensions indeed varies over situations and validates the diary design of our studies. Specifically, Study 2 showed that the use of EI dimensions differed from customer contact to customer contact, and, consequently, had a differential effect on job performance across these contacts.

A methodological strength of the current article is that we studied the role of enacted EI in two job contexts. Enacted EI related positively to the objective job performance of the sales persons (Study 2) but not to the subjective performance of the divorce lawyers (Study 1), suggesting that the value of enacted EI may be dependent on context. The contexts differed in terms of task-completion (Study 1 ongoing vs. Study 2 immediate), type of relationship with the other person (Study 1 long-

term vs. Study 2 short-term), and type of performance (Study 1 typical vs. Study 2 maximum; Sackett et al., 1988). Hence, the present results may suggest that enacted EI is better suited to predict immediate, short-term, peak performances (i.e., sales) instead of general performance evaluations (i.e., the effect of a consult). Also, participants' educational level, job tenure, and number of repeated diary measurements may have affected the predictive validity of enacted EI. Hence, we encourage future research to examine the conditions under which enacted EI most probably is a useful predictor.

The presence and (partial) predictive value of fluctuations in the enactment of EI dimensions in our studies call for a more elaborate discussion on the *meaning* of these fluctuations. As person-level EI dimensions refer to individual differences in the way people generally deal with emotions, enacted EI dimensions refer to the extent to which people deal with emotions in a given occasion. These fluctuations do not discard the role of person-level EI dimensions but rather complement them by providing information on the actual manifestation of these dimensions. An intriguing question is whether the same antecedents affect both levels of EI dimensions. It is conceivable that daily levels of energy or motivation and emotional job demands affect (fluctuations in) the enactment of EI dimensions during performance episodes. However, such contextual variables will not influence person-level EI dimensions. Future research might consider delving deeper in the difference between the person-level and enacted role of EI dimensions as it might enrich our current understanding of EI.

Limitations and implications

The present study is not without limitations. First, we did not include cognitive intelligence or personality measures in our models. Therefore, we could not show that other-focused EI dimensions provided incremental validity beyond these well-known predictors of job performance. On the other hand, meta-analytic data convincingly showed that self-reported ability measures of EI, such as the WLEIS, indeed predict job performance over and above cognitive intelligence and personality measures (O'Boyle et al., 2011). Second, the reliability for the emotion use dimension fell just below the recommended cutoff value of .70 in both studies. However, the psychometric quality of the WLEIS (Wong & Law, 2002) and the significant relations that were found with this respective dimension suggest that the relatively low reliability found did not have a major impact on the present findings.

Third, we measured (enacted) EI using the WLEIS because it allowed us to differentiate self- from other-focused EI dimensions. Although this instrument is a validated and widely used measure, its self-report format might have resulted in inflated EI scores due to a social desirability bias (Ciarrochi, Chan, Caputi, & Roberts, 2001). Specifically, as EI is a socially desirable characteristic, our participants might have responded more positively to the items than they should have if answering truthfully. If this is the case, this bias could have affected only the person-level models because these models investigate between-person processes. Enacted level models investigate within-person processes. As socially desirable answering can be considered a stable tendency (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960), we consider it unlikely that fluctuations in an EI dimension from participants' own baselines (i.e., enacted EI) are caused by fluctuations in social desirability. Nonetheless, the conclusions would have been more robust if an ability EI test was included, which differentiates self- from other-focused EI.

A related point is the fact that the WLEIS includes only one other-focused EI scale, namely, the Others-Emotion Appraisal scale. The lack of different other-focused EI scales in the WLEIS prevented us from examining whether a simultaneous appraisal and regulation of the emotions of others would increase job performance. Instead, we could examine only combined effects of appraising the emotions of others while regulating or using emotions of the self. Thus, future research should consider developing instruments that include multiple other-focused EI scales to examine combined effects of EI dimensions more thoroughly. Furthermore, it might also be interesting to examine combined effects of more than two EI dimensions. Although the current

studies explicitly focused on the interplay between others-emotion appraisal and different self-focused EI dimensions, it is feasible that all EI dimensions are connected. The examination of different combinations of EI dimensions may lead to a new line of research in the EI literature.

Another interesting path to follow is to investigate the effects of other-focused EI dimensions on employee well-being. Although the appraisal of others' emotions may help in reaching job performance goals, there may be a negative effect of knowing what others feel for one's own well-being. Research on emotion contagion has shown that too much attention to negative emotions of other people may have negative consequences for employees themselves (Bakker, Schaufeli, Sixma, & Bosveld, 2001). Related to this point, there is an ongoing debate on the "curse of emotion" (Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough, 2009; Jordan et al., 2010), a phenomenon in which leaders' sensitivity to their followers' emotions hinders them to provide corrective feedback or to take disciplinary action when necessary. This suggests that other-focused EI dimensions have costs and benefits in terms of job performance and employee well-being. Disentangling these effects would advance our understanding of other-focused EI dimensions.

Practically, these findings imply that it could be worthwhile for a company to take the distinction between self- and other-focused EI into account when selecting employees. Furthermore, current employees could be encouraged to enact their other-focused EI dimensions more during their work because this enactment may directly influence job performance outcomes. To raise awareness of the direct effects of the appraisal of others' emotions, companies could implement specialized training programs in which both self- and other-focused EI are trained (e.g., Clarke, 2010).

Concluding remarks

The present research introduces three promising approaches in EI research. The person (other or self) to whom EI dimensions are directed seems relevant for the prediction of job performance and might impact the prediction of other criteria. Furthermore, studying fluctuations in the enactment of EI is a promising avenue that could lead to greater clarity on the role of context. Finally, the examination of the effects of combined EI dimensions on job performance may correspond better to the dynamics of emotional processes. It is our hope that these new approaches may move the field toward a better understanding of EI.

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