

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Investigating Emotion Regulation Strategies to Facilitate the Well-Being of Managers

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Maintaining good mental well-being is important for leaders, but little attention has been given to how leaders facilitate their own well-being or how leaders evaluate emotions associated with certain events (cognitive reappraisal). This study investigates how mental well-being might influence the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and cognitive reappraisal in leaders and whether this relationship differs by gender. Data from 246 hotel managers in Sweden were collected, with a response rate of 69%. Our findings show that the four EI dimensions play a significant role in cognitive reappraisal, including *Self-Emotion Appraisal*, a core dimension of EI. The analyses showed that the effect of mental well-being on the relationship between two of the EI dimensions and cognitive reappraisal differed significantly by gender. We recommend the use of tailored training programs such as simulation-based training with real life cases. This type of training can support leaders in using broader strategies to regulate emotions, as well as helping them become more mindful about the consequences of their own and others' choice of emotion regulation.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; emotion regulation; cognitive reappraisal; mental well-being; leadership; gender

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO), over several years, has expressed concerns over the mental health of the population at large, suggesting that governments and educational institutions map and promote measures for preventive work (WHO, 2015). This view aligns with organizational research arguing that mental health issues, particularly within a competitive environment in the workplace, are a major factor leading to multiple negative mental health outcomes such as burnout, anxiety, depression, and suicide (Flovik, Knardahl, & Christensen, 2019; Sonnentag, 2015; Yao, Li, & Wildy, 2021). This is of major concern, especially when serious incidences caused by neglect of employees' mental and physical health are being frequently reported (Schulz-Dadaczynski & Janetzke, 2020; Yao et al., 2021). Up until now, research has primarily focused on employees' mental well-being and mechanisms linking leaders' traits and behaviours (e.g., leadership style) to improve their own, as well as their employees' efficacy and performance (Montano et al., 2017; Skakon et al., 2010). However, leaders' mental

well-being and factors that can contribute to promoting this have not been sufficiently researched (*cf.*, Haver, Olsen, & Akerjordet, 2019).

Leaders' ability to manoeuvre efficiently between numerous roles and deal with complex relationships is important and requires regulating emotions wisely (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011; Humphrey, 2012). Specifically, this is the case in work environments (such as the hospitality industry) where there are increased expectations from different stakeholders to meet ever-growing and changing demands (Crick & Spencer, 2011; Tourish, 2020). Research shows that job challenges such as diversity, centralization, operational complexity, and more recently, increased job insecurity due to the Covid 19 pandemic, have emerged globally in the hospitality and service industry (Davahli et al., 2020; Elbanna, 2016; Hodari, Waldthausen, & Sturman, 2014). These challenges may evoke negative emotions amongst leaders, when they are exposed to financial demands and high degrees of uncertainty (Thory, 2013; Thun & Bakker, 2018). Furthermore, such comprehensive change and challenges may lead to increased occupational stress, associated changes in operational structures, work characteristics and leadership behaviour, which in turn, affects leaders' job performance and mental well-being (Haver et al., 2019, Tourish, 2020). Leaders, therefore, may adjust their behaviour to meet the organization's role requirements, which can cause job strain and reduce longer-term well-being (Sonnentag, 2015). To reduce negative health outcomes of job stressors,

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leaders need not only high levels of job resources, such as supportive environments, autonomy, and job security (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), but also social and personal resources, such as emotional intelligence (EI) and emotion regulation skills (Peña-Sarrionandia, Mikolajczak, & Gross, 2015; Troth et al., 2018).

Middle managers play a pivotal role in executing leadership duties (Burgess, 2013). The present study, therefore, seeks to expand previous research by using a sample of middle managers to examine how mental well-being might influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and cognitive reappraisal. Additionally, it investigates whether these relationships differ by gender.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can be conceptualised as a multifaceted construct, developed as a mental ability (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). Mayer and Salovey's ability model is an accepted conceptualization of EI (Troth et al., 2018) and posits four dimensions: *ability to perceive emotions in self and others; ability to assimilate the information in cognitive functioning; ability to understand the role of emotions and ability to use and manage emotions to promote emotional; and intellectual growth* (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008, p. 506). According to Côté (2014, p. 461), these EI abilities represent variations in how well individuals can solve a problem that involves emotions; they also point to the importance of how well individuals regulate their own emotions. It is possible that EI may not only influence how leaders appraise their jobs, but also how efficiently they reason about events that produce positive or negative emotions. Emotionally intelligent leaders are careful to consider context before deciding whether and how their emotions should be regulated to achieve adaptation, welfare, and job effectiveness (Peña-Sarrionandia et al., 2015). Research on the relationship between EI and how emotions are reframed in organizational settings is therefore relevant for understanding leaders' regulation and expression of emotions (Chuang, Judge, & Liaw, 2012; Karim & Weisz, 2011).

Emotional intelligence is well-researched in the prediction of health and mental well-being, life satisfaction, emotional labour, organizational citizenship behaviour, team effectiveness, job performance, work-family conflicts and effective leadership (See meta-analyses: Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2016; O'Boyle et al., 2010; Peña-Sarrionandia et al., 2015; Joseph et al., 2015; Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017). EI is also associated with preventing and dealing with stress (Schutte et al., 2007), which reflects an important leadership skill (Miao et al., 2016). A meta-analysis found that EI is more predictive in health care and service industries where jobs involve frequent management of emotions (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Other meta-analyses have revealed that EI is a strong predictor of mental well-being in organizations (Extremera, Sánchez-Álvarez, & Rey, 2020; Martins, Ramalho, & Morin, 2010; Schutte et al., 2007). In particular, trait EI showed a strong relationship with mental well-being. Based on these findings, mental well-being is included in this paper and refers to the "state in which every individual realises his or

her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2004).

Cognitive Reappraisal

A construct that is closely linked to EI is cognitive reappraisal (an emotion regulation strategy: Gross, 1998). Cognitive reappraisal involves changing how an individual thinks about an emotional stimulus (Gross, 2015) and is linked to positive affect, mental health/well-being, and positive cognitive and social outcomes (Hu et al., 2014; John & Gross, 2004). However, little attention has been given to how leaders themselves utilize cognitive reappraisal (Thory, 2013; Torrence & Connelly, 2019). This is of concern because cognitive reappraisal can help leaders in building sustainable interpersonal relationships (Little, Gooty, & Williams, 2016; Thiel et al., 2018), handling time pressure, decision-making, and overcoming frustration when confronting demanding job stressors (Haver et al., 2019; Walter, Cole, & Humphrey, 2011).

Conceptually, important differences exist between the interpretation of EI's "emotion regulation" (Mayer et al., 2008) and Gross's (1998) concept of emotion regulation (Peña-Sarrionandia et al., 2015). EI tradition builds on skilful emotion regulation as an ability and seeks to capture the outcome of emotion regulation, but it does not specify or explain what is meant by emotion regulation (Megias-Robles et al., 2019). Gross's (1998) emotion regulation model is process-oriented and involves different strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, which requires a change in an individual's emotional state (Ford, Karnilowicz, & Mauss, 2017). More specifically, a leader will first decide to attempt to use cognitive reappraisal (by using EI), and subsequently decide to employ cognitive reappraisal successfully to reframe the mindset. This process implies that the benefits of EI and cognitive reappraisal as a strategy to leaders depends on their ability/capacity, motivation, and work context (Ford et al., 2017, p. 905). Although cognitive reappraisal is beneficial for psychological health (See meta-analyses: Hu et al., 2014; Webb, Miles, & Sheeran, 2012), the successful use of cognitive reappraisal may also consume a large number of psychological resources (i.e., taxing cognitive processes) (Troy et al., 2018, p. 59). Notably, cognitive reappraisal is not necessarily easy, particularly when negative emotions are associated with it (Gross, 2015).

Thus, an important factor to consider when assessing cognitive reappraisal is the nature of the available mental resources used to perform it (Côté, Gyurak, & Levenson, 2010). Negative emotions, for example, cause individuals to narrow their focus of attention (Wu et al., 2017). Consequently, successful cognitive reappraisal entails not only breaking free from the constraints of dominant negative emotions, but also developing a creative interpretation that is both novel and appropriate. This requires a considerable amount of initiative, consuming more psychological resources (Wu et al., 2017, p. 1598). Stress or poor mental well-being might therefore lead to the use of mediocre cognitive reappraisal or maladaptive emotion regulation strategies (e.g., suppression, rumination) (*c.f.*, Wu et al.,

2017). This view is also supported by the “effort-recovery and the rumination theory” focusing on the importance of recovery when dealing with negative emotions related to job-demands (having mental energy to do so) (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). This highlights the necessity of using mental and physical resources when dealing with negative emotions (Kinnunen, Feldt, & de Bloom, 2019; Sonnentag, Venz, & Casper, 2017). Thus far, research linking cognitive reappraisal and psychological health has typically been experimental in methodology and comprises student samples and laboratory studies (Troy et al., 2018). As such, little attention has been given to leaders’ mental well-being and how they utilize cognitive reappraisal, highlighting a need to explore this further. In particular, consideration is warranted regarding the extent to which mental well-being being may moderate the relationship between EI and cognitive reappraisal, given the associations between these two constructs and mental well-being.

The role of gender

The role of gender is also an important consideration with EI, although studies report mixed findings (Miao et al., 2016). While some studies indicate that women score more highly for EI than men (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2012), others report the opposite result (Kong & Zhao, 2013; Mikolajczak, Menil, & Luminet, 2007). Studies that target gender differences in cognitive reappraisal are rare but some reveal that females tend to use reappraisal more (e.g., Megias-Robles et al., 2019). Other studies report no gender differences (Śmieja, Kobylińska, & Mrozowicz, 2012). Given that there is an association between EI and emotion regulation, an exploration of the interplay between EI, gender and emotion regulation is warranted and is therefore a focus of this study.

A systematic review of people’s emotion regulation in organizations (Haver, Akerjordet, & Furunes, 2013), along with research about EI and gender, revealed that most studies are primarily based on small sample sizes or samples of students and employees (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2012). Previous research shows that the men and women differ on measures of EI (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Thus, studies that examine the interactions between these variables are somewhat overlooked in the leadership literature. In particular, there has been limited focus on leaders’ mental well-being and use of cognitive reappraisal. Moreover, few organizational studies have applied Gross’ (1998) concept of emotion regulation in leadership (Thory, 2013; Torrence & Connelly, 2019). Research addressing this gap is warranted because leadership is an emotion-laden process – the ability to manoeuvre effectively between different emotion regulation strategies, as well as control and manage one’s own emotions and those of others, is an essential quality of emotionally intelligent leadership (Troth et al., 2018). This study contributes to the leadership literature by extending the research involving leaders with extensive work experience. Moreover, the study contributes to theory and practice, showing that EI is a prerequisite for cognitive reappraisal among leaders. Cognitive reappraisal is an important emotion regulation strategy in order to

meet future challenges. Consequently, it is reasonable to argue that the relationship between EI and cognitive reappraisal will vary depending on the level of the leaders’ mental well-being. Finally, this study highlights the role that gender may have in those relationships.

Theoretical framework, hypotheses and conceptual model

Linking Emotional Intelligence to Reappraisal

Previous research shows that emotionally intelligent individuals seem to achieve high levels of effective task performance in ways that enhance their motivation, stress management, and the quality of their decisions (Côté, 2014; Karimi et al., 2013). These factors are closely linked to all forms of reappraisal (Peña-Sarrionandia et al., 2015).

Reappraisal is an umbrella term for different reappraisal strategies, that is, situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, and cognitive reappraisal (Gross, 2015). Reappraisal is an antecedent-focused strategy and operates along a continuum from conscious, effortful controlled regulation of emotions to unconscious, effortless, and automatic regulation (John & Gross, 2004). Cognitive reappraisal is a form of cognitive change that involves a reinterpretation of an emotion-eliciting situation in order to modify its emotional impact (John & Gross, 2004). Moreover, cognitive reappraisal involves four forms of (re)appraisal: *challenge/threat appraisals*, *self-efficacy appraisal*, *positive appraisal*, and *acceptance*. Challenge/threat appraisals emphasize the “potential or actual gains inherent to the situation”, and/or “the gains and losses perceived in an undesirable situation” (Peña-Sarrionandia et al., 2015, p. 4). Self-efficacy appraisal concerns leaders’ self-confidence. In turn, positive appraisal refers to leaders’ capability (and motivation) to reframe their emotional states, while acceptance refers to leaders’ capability (and motivation) to come to terms with a challenging situation.

Emotion regulation operates on people’s emotions (Gross, 2015). Take for instance the negative emotions triggered by having to make staff cutbacks. Such a predicament can cause leaders to do very unhelpful things, such as when anger towards someone worsens the situation, or when a leader’s frustration is contagious and spills over to employees (Peña-Sarrionandia et al., 2015; Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). Nevertheless, an emotionally intelligent leader under stress will know how to deal with their own emotions and those of others by using components of EI, such as Self-Emotions Appraisal and Others’ Emotions Appraisal, to perform their job effectively (Nizielski et al., 2013; Trivellas, Gerogiannis, & Svarna, 2013). Moreover, emotionally intelligent leaders are also capable of expressing authentic sympathy and support towards frustrated employees (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2018; Parrish, 2015). This implies that leaders with a high degree of EI will have a resource-pack of several reappraisal strategies to help them to regulate emotions as required by the situation (Peña-Sarrionandia et al., 2015). Emotionally intelligent leaders will “read” the social context carefully and will understand how to support employees in coping with uncertainty (Newman, Joseph,

& MacCann, 2010; Smollan, 2017). In so doing, they will use different EI abilities (e.g., Self-Emotion Appraisal, Use of Emotions, Regulation of Emotions, Others' Emotions Appraisal) to identify and perceive their own emotions and those of others related to their leadership effectiveness and job performance (i.e., personal goals, job satisfaction) (Pekaar et al., 2018; Trivellas et al., 2013). Overall, previous research shows that individuals with high ability and trait EI are more likely to use the reappraisal strategies identified by Gross (Joseph & Newman, 2010; Karim & Weisz, 2011). Conversely, individuals with lower ability and trait EI tend to use less effective strategies (e.g., maladaptive strategies) because they may not have the emotional abilities that reappraisal requires (Megias-Robles et al., 2019). Based on this, we derive the following hypotheses:

H1a: The Self-Emotion Appraisal dimension of EI is positively related to cognitive reappraisal in a group of leaders.

H1b: The Regulation of Emotions dimension of EI is positively related to cognitive reappraisal in a group of leaders.

H1c: The Use of Emotions dimension of EI is positively related to cognitive reappraisal in a group of leaders.

H1d: The Others' Emotions Appraisal dimension of EI is positively related to cognitive reappraisal in a group of leaders.

Mental well-being as a moderator

Managing emotions are important for mental well-being; they are pivotal in determining how optimally we function (Frijda, 1988). Mental well-being can be interpreted holistically by including hedonic and eudaimonic experiences (Sonnentag, 2015). The hedonic tradition focuses on happiness, defining well-being as enjoyment and pleasure attainment (e.g., positive affect) and pain avoidance (e.g., absence of negative affect). Eudaimonic well-being goes beyond this and emphasizes human potential, meaning, and self-realization, defining well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 141). This aligns with the self-determination theory (SDT), claiming that well-being is not an outcome, or an end state only, but also comprises the process of fulfilling or realizing one's psychological needs, as well as life goals (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2008). Thus, a leader's mental well-being can be regarded as a total index – as a kind of energized state that says something about the leader's vitality (physical and mental energy) considered as a robust indicator of health, self-regulatory capacities, and behaviour (Penninx et al., 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2008). However, research indicates that vitality is enhanced by activities that mainly satisfy the leader's psychological needs: such as, *competence* (feeling effective), *relatedness* (feeling significant and connected), and *autonomy* (feeling volitional rather than controlled). Based on this, a leader's mental well-being appears to be influenced by the fulfilment of these factors (Ryan & Deci, 2017), which in turn has an effect on the workplace in terms of task

performance and other on-the-job behaviours, such as EI and emotion regulation (Sonntag, 2015; Tamir, 2009).

As previously noted, meta-analyses show that EI is significantly associated with increased mental well-being. Findings also show that those who are able to identify and manage their emotions efficiently are more capable of recovering from distress (Liu, Zhang, & Zhang, 2020; Nizielski et al., 2013). The interplay between EI and mental well-being may thus impact on any relationship between EI and cognitive reappraisal. As with EI, cognitive reappraisal is also positively associated with mental health/well-being (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Schweizer, 2010). Notably, EI and cognitive reappraisal play a significant role in terms of personal achievements (Gooty et al., 2014; Mohzan, Hassan, & Halil, 2013; Thory, 2013), and are thus closely linked to hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of mental well-being (Koole, 2009; Tamir, 2016). As mentioned earlier, cognitive reappraisal refers to a concrete approach that an individual takes in changing an emotional state. Overall, an emotional change can be effortful because negative emotions can be difficult to override (Troy et al., 2018). Reframing the mindset when an emotion is of high intensity will be difficult because it requires a high degree of consciousness and consequently psychological resources. Profound self-awareness and having psychical and mental energy are therefore very important in successful EI and emotion regulation (Hu et al., 2014; Troy et al., 2018). Consequently, as previously stated, it is therefore reasonable to argue that the relationship between EI and cognitive reappraisal will vary depending on the level of the leaders' mental well-being. More precisely, the relationship between the four dimensions of EI and cognitive reappraisal will be stronger when mental well-being is high, and conversely, the relationship between EI and cognitive reappraisal will be lower when mental well-being is low. Therefore, we expect mental well-being to moderate the relationship between EI and leaders' use of cognitive reappraisal.

H2a: Mental well-being will moderate the relationship between leaders' Self-Emotion Appraisal and their use of cognitive reappraisal, such that the relationship will be stronger when mental well-being is high, and conversely, when mental well-being is low.

H2b: Mental well-being will moderate the relationship between leaders' Regulation of Emotions and their use of cognitive reappraisal such that the relationship will be stronger when mental well-being is high, and conversely, when mental well-being is low.

H2c: Mental well-being will moderate the relationship between leaders' Use of Emotions and their use of cognitive reappraisal such that the relationship will be stronger when mental well-being is high, and conversely, when mental well-being is low.

H2d: Mental well-being will moderate the relationship between leaders' Others' Emotions Appraisal and their use of cognitive reappraisal such that the relationship will be stronger when mental well-being is high, and conversely, when mental well-being is low.

Does gender moderate the moderation relationship?

A meta-analysis has revealed that women obtain higher scores than men on both trait and ability EI (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Similar results using EI ability measures report that women score significantly higher than men on all EI dimensions (Cabello et al., 2016; Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2012). Whitman et al. (2009) have found that women score significantly higher than men on one of the four EI ability dimensions, namely, “Use of Emotions”. Research also shows that women report more depression and anxiety than men. Moreover, there is evidence that men and women differ in the way patterns of depression, anxiety and stress are reported (Cavanagh et al., & Caputi, 2014), and there are gender differences in the expression and experience of depression. For example, men tend to report symptoms such as social withdrawal and maladaptive coping strategies (Cavanagh et al., 2016). Research also shows gender differences in emotion regulation behaviour, but little attention has been paid to gender and cognitive appraisal. That said, some studies reveal that females report using more cognitive reappraisal than males (Megias-Robles et al., 2019). However, the causes of possible gender differences are relatively complex and can be linked to many factors, such as social cultural norms, work values, personality, stereotypes, and biological and psychological explanations (Costa et al., 2017; Lopez-Zafra & Gartzia, 2014; Matsumoto, Yoo, & Nakagawa, 2008). Thus, it follows that gender may moderate any relationship between the dimensions of EI

and cognitive reappraisal. Given the current theoretical base, we are unable to specify directional hypotheses about how gender will affect the moderated moderation relationship. Consequently, the following hypotheses are non-directional.

H3a: The moderating effect of mental well-being on the relationship between Self-Emotion Appraisal and use of cognitive reappraisal will differ by gender.

H3b: The moderating effect of mental well-being on the relationship between Regulation of Emotions and use of cognitive reappraisal will differ by gender.

H3c: The moderating effect of mental well-being on the relationship between Use of Emotions and use of cognitive reappraisal will differ by gender.

H3d: The moderating effect of mental well-being on the relationship between Others’ Emotions Appraisal and use of cognitive reappraisal will differ by gender.

The final theoretical model is presented in **Figure 1**.

Methodology

Sample and procedures

A structured self-report questionnaire was administered to general leaders (GM) and department leaders in a large hotel chain in Sweden. The hotel chain operates in six countries and comprises 200 hotels. Hotel concepts varied

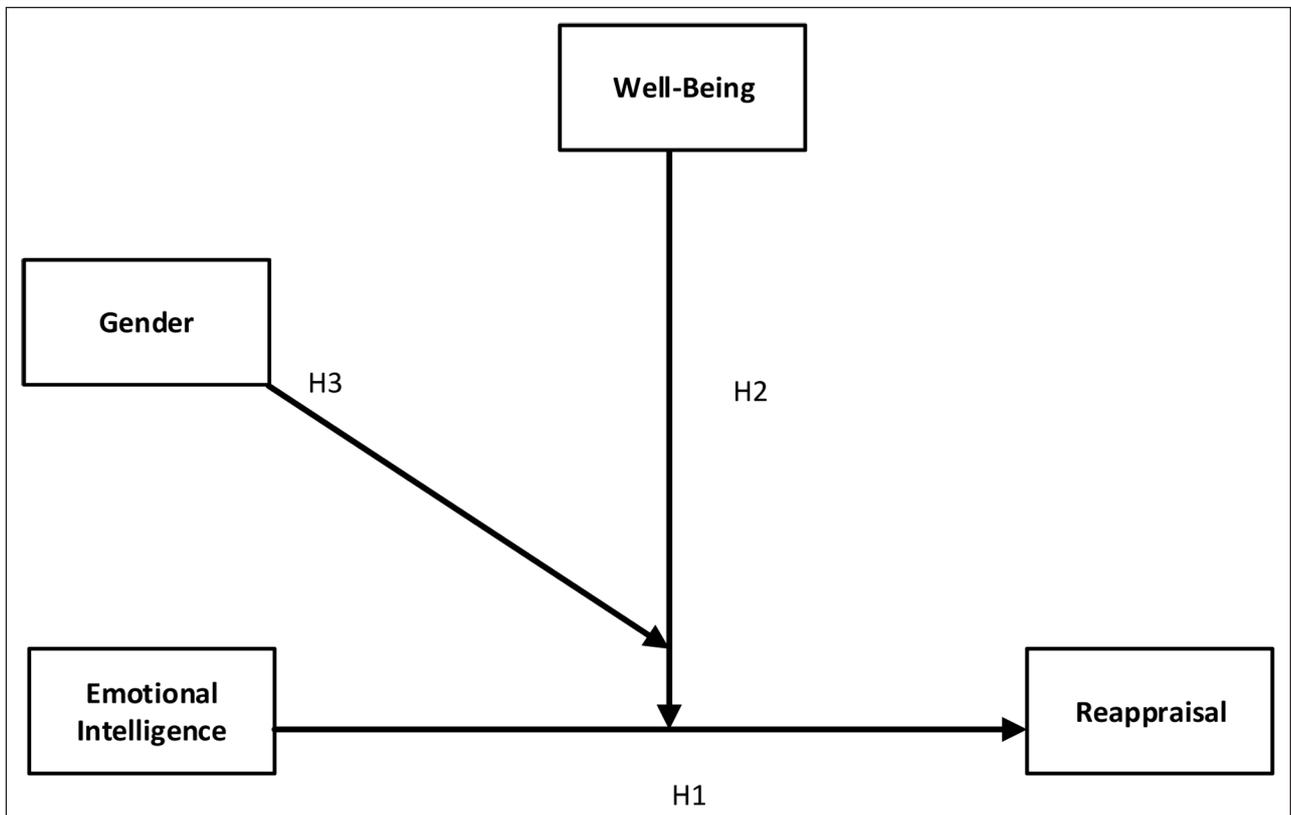


Figure 1: Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), Short Warwick-Edinburg Mental Well-Being Scale (SWEMWBS).

Note: Swedish hotel managers (N = 246).

from budget to luxurious, but most of them represented luxury and conference status. For the purpose of the data collection, an information letter about the research project and a link to an online self-report questionnaire were sent to 357 participants in Sweden. Email addresses were provided by the headquarters. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. In total, 246 participants responded – a response rate of 68.9%. Respondents were aged 23 to 64 years. Males had a mean age of 40.50 years ($SD = 8.51$ years), while females had a mean age of 39.70 years ($SD = 8.99$ years). Thirty-seven percent of the respondents were male and 63% were female.¹ About 30% of the total sample had higher university education (3 years). In the sample, 81% were department leaders and 19% were general managers (GM). Participants worked on average 47 hours per week. Males worked on average 49.16 hours per week ($SD = 8.91$ years), while females worked on average 45.50 hours per week ($SD = 7.81$ years).

Measures

Emotional Intelligence (EI) was measured using the 16-item Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002). The EI scale covers 4 facets of EI: (1) Self-Emotion Appraisal (“I have good understanding of my own emotions”). This facet measures the individual’s ability to understand and express his/her deep emotions; (2) The facet Regulation of Emotion (“I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions”) evaluates the individual’s ability to regulate his/her emotions (not the same measures as cognitive reappraisal); (3) Use of Emotion (“I always tell myself that I am a competent person”) is concerned with the individual’s ability to utilize and direct his/her emotions towards constructive activities and personal performance; and (4) the facet Others’ Emotions Appraisal (“I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others”) reflects the individual’s ability to perceive and understand the emotions of individuals around them (e.g., Law, Wong, & Song 2004, p. 484). Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Researchers have used either a 5- or 7-point Likert scale when using the WLEIS. In this study, Cronbach’s alphas were: Self-Emotion Appraisal = 0.87, Regulation of Emotions = 0.83, Use of Emotions = 0.85 and Others’ Emotions Appraisal = 0.81, respectively.

Cognitive Reappraisal was measured using the 6-item Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) (Gross & John, 2003). Instructions were adjusted to the work setting, that is, *how respondents generally regulated their emotions when encountering stressful situations at work*. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they regulated their emotions at work via cognitive reappraisal. For example, “When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement) I change what I am thinking about”. The response scale ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). In this study Cronbach’s alpha was: $\alpha = 0.85$.

Mental well-being was measured by the 7-item Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental well-being Scale (SWEMWBS: Stewart-Brown et al., 2009), which is validated in Swedish (Haver et al., & Magee, 2015). Moreover, the measure

was translated from English into Swedish, and then professionally and independently back-translated to ensure language equivalence. After some adjustment, the back-translations were approved by the original scale developers. The SWEMWBS combines hedonic and eudaimonic mental well-being, and aspects of psychological and subjective mental well-being (Stewart-Brown et al., 2009). Sample items are “I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future” and “I’ve been dealing with problems well”. The response scale ranged from 1 = none of the time to 5 = all of the time. Participants were instructed to consider their situation over the previous two weeks. In this study, Cronbach’s alpha was $\alpha = 0.87$.

Analytical Strategy

Several approaches were taken to address the hypotheses. Correlational and regression analyses were used to address the first set of hypotheses. The hypotheses involving moderation were tested using PROCESS (Hayes, 2013), a widely used regression-based path analytic approach to modelling mediation and moderation relationships. In line with Hayes et al. (2017), we opted to use the PROCESS macro because our hypotheses are based on observed rather than latent variables. To test hypothesis 2, mental well-being was entered as a moderator of the relationship between each EI dimension and cognitive reappraisal. To test Hypothesis 3, gender was entered as a moderator of the moderating effect of mental well-being on the relationship between EI and use of cognitive reappraisal (moderated mediation). In addition to gender, we included age as covariate, given that research shows that reappraisal and mental well-being are related to age (Carstensen et al., 2011).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and correlational analyses

Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations (SPSS 25) among the study variables are reported in **Table 1**. All four EI dimensions correlated positively with mental well-being and with cognitive reappraisal. As expected, mental well-being correlated positively with cognitive reappraisal.

Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Cognitive Reappraisal

Regression analyses were used to test Hypothesis 1. After controlling for gender and age, a significant positive relationship between cognitive reappraisal and Self-Emotion Appraisal, cognitive reappraisal and Regulation of Emotions, cognitive reappraisal and Use of Emotions, and cognitive reappraisal and Others’ Emotions Appraisal was seen (**Table 2**).

Moderation

The findings showed that mental well-being was not a moderator of the relationship between Regulation of Emotions and cognitive reappraisal, Use of Emotions and cognitive reappraisal or Others’ Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal. However, the positive relationship between Self-Emotion Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal ($B = 0.43$, $SE = 0.19$, $p = 0.03$) was moderated by mental well-being (**Table 3**).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, reliabilities and inter-correlations among variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
EI/SEA	4.40	0.57	0.87						
EI/ROE	4.05	0.73	0.38**	0.83					
EI/UOE	4.22	0.70	0.44**	0.35**	0.85				
EI/OEA	3.86	0.70	0.37**	0.21**	0.29**	0.81			
Well-being	3.94	0.64	0.26**	0.33**	0.37**	0.13*	0.87		
Reappraisal	4.97	1.19	0.31**	0.33**	0.35**	0.20**	0.31**	0.85	
Age	40.47	8.86	0.04	0.01	0.03	-0.11	0.02	-0.12	
Gender	-	-	0.02	-0.07	0.05	0.24**	0.23**	-0.11	0.02

Note: N = 246. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed. Reliability estimates are shown in bold along the diagonal. EI/SEA: Self-Emotion Appraisal, EI/ROE: Regulation of Emotions, EI/UOE: Use of Emotions, EI/OEA: Others' Emotions Appraisal (Law et al., 2004).

Table 2: Regression analysis with cognitive reappraisal as the dependent variable and each of the four dimensions of EI.

	<i>B</i> (SE)	<i>p</i>
EI/SEA	0.62 (0.12)	<0.001
Gender	0.49 (0.15)	<0.001
Age	-0.02 (0.01)	0.07
	<i>B</i> (SE)	<i>p</i>
EI/ROE	0.58 (0.10)	<0.001
Gender	0.61 (0.14)	<0.001
Age	-0.01 (0.01)	0.11
	<i>B</i> (SE)	<i>p</i>
EI/UOE	0.58 (.10)	<0.001
Gender	0.50 (.15)	<0.001
Age	-0.01 (.10)	0.07
	<i>B</i> (SE)	<i>p</i>
EI/OEA	0.24 (0.11)	0.03
Gender	0.47 (0.16)	<0.001
Age	-0.01 (0.01)	0.18

Note: EI/SEA: Self-Emotion Appraisal, EI/ROE: Regulation of Emotions, EI/UOE: Use of Emotions, EI/OEA: Others' Emotions Appraisal.

Testing possible gender differences

The results of the moderated moderation analysis, conducted using PROCESS (Hayes, 2013), showed that the moderation effect of mental well-being on the relationship between Use of Emotions and cognitive reappraisal and on the relationship between Self-Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal did not differ significantly by gender. However, the results showed that the moderation effect of mental well-being on the relationship between Regulation of Emotions and cognitive reappraisal differed significantly by gender ($B = -3.28$, $SE = 1.16$, $p = 0.005$). As Regulation of Emotions increased, cognitive reappraisal

Table 3: Regression analysis. The moderator and the dependent variable – and each of the four dimensions of EI.

	Cognitive Reappraisal	
	<i>B</i> (SE)	<i>P</i>
EI/SEA	-1.15 (0.74)	0.12
Well-being	-1.45 (0.86)	0.09
Gender	-0.47 (0.14)	0.001
Age	-0.02 (0.01)	0.05
EI/SEA × WB	0.43 (0.19)	0.03
EI/ROE	-0.17 (0.58)	0.77
Well-being	-0.26 (0.61)	0.67
Gender	-0.60 (0.14)	<0.001
Age	-0.01 (0.58)	0.11
EI/ROE × WB	0.16 (0.15)	0.27
EI/UOE	0.39 (0.65)	0.56
Well-being	0.32 (0.73)	0.67
Gender	-0.50 (0.14)	<0.001
Age	-0.02 (0.01)	0.06
EI/UOE × WB	0.02 (0.17)	0.92
EI/OEA	0.46 (0.62)	0.45
Well-being	0.82 (0.58)	0.16
Gender	-0.47 (0.15)	0.002
Age	-0.01 (0.01)	0.12
EI/OEA × WB	-0.07 (0.15)	0.64

Note: EI/SEA: Self-Emotion Appraisal, EI/ROE: Regulation of Emotions, EI/UOE: Use of Emotions, EI/OEA: Others' Emotions Appraisal.

for women at high levels of mental well-being increased at a greater rate than for women with low levels of mental well-being (Figure 2). Conversely, at low levels of mental well-being, there was an inverse relationship between Regulation of Emotions and cognitive reappraisal in

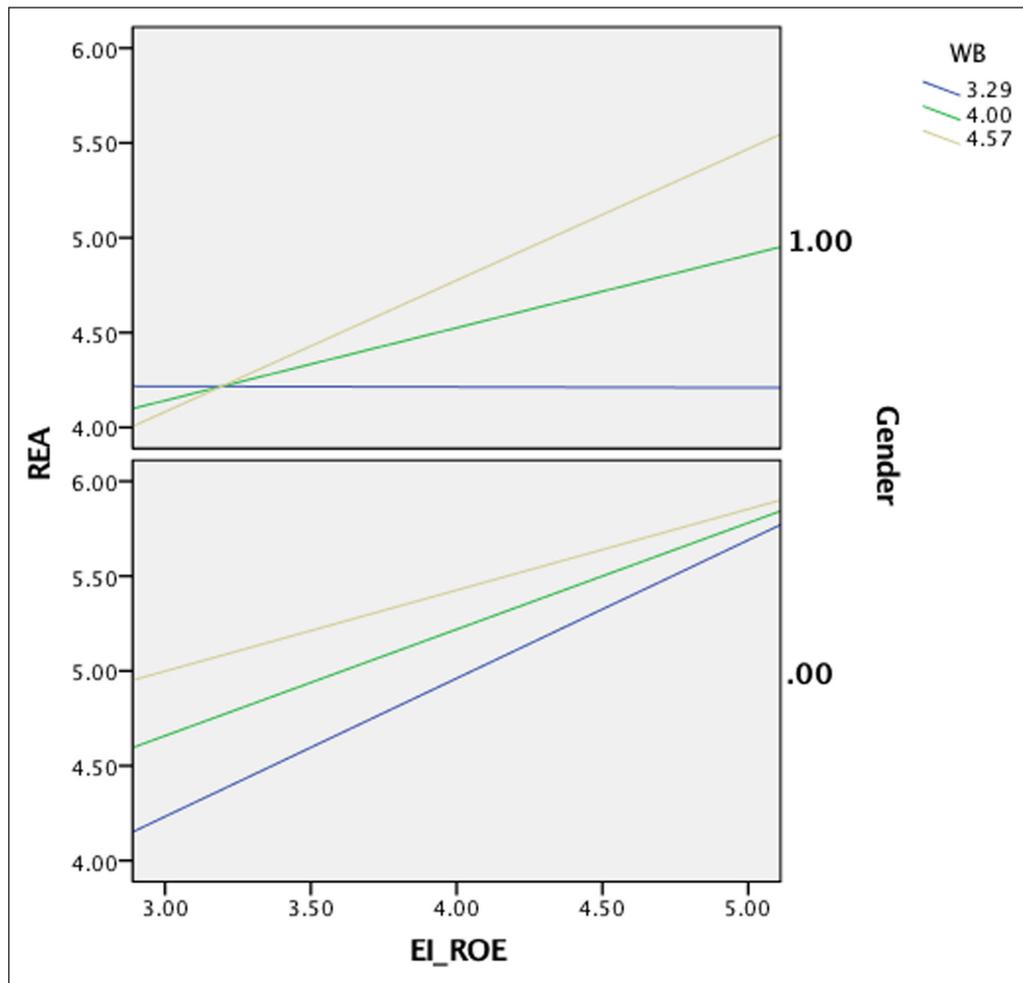


Figure 2: Well-being as a moderator of the relationship between Regulation of Emotion (EI/ROE) and cognitive reappraisal (REA) by gender.

Note: For gender: 0 = males, 1 = females; for well-being (WB) 1SD above the mean ($m = 4.57$), the mean ($m = 4.00$) and 1SD below the mean ($m = 3.29$).

men, and a positive relationship between Regulation of Emotions and cognitive reappraisal at all levels of mental well-being, although it was slightly greater for low mental well-being than for high mental well-being.

Similarly, the moderation effect of mental well-being on the relationship between Others’ Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal differed significantly by gender ($B = -3.98$, $SE = 1.26$, $p = 0.002$). For women at lower levels of mental well-being, as Others’ Emotions Appraisal increased, cognitive reappraisal declined slightly, whereas for higher mental well-being levels there was a positive relationship between Others’ Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal (**Figure 3**). However, for men, the relationship between Others’ Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal was stronger at lower levels of mental well-being than for higher levels of mental well-being.

Discussion

This study investigated the effects of the four EI dimensions and cognitive reappraisal (H1) and explored mental well-being as a moderator of the relationship between EI and cognitive reappraisal in leaders (H2). In addition, it investigated whether the moderating effect of

mental well-being on the relationship between EI and use of cognitive reappraisal differs by gender (H3). Overall, our findings show that EI plays a significant role in cognitive reappraisal. We found that all four EI dimensions predicted cognitive reappraisal. Among the four EI dimensions, only Self-Emotion Appraisal was consistent with the hypothesized association. This finding is interesting because Self-Emotion Appraisal is an important core construct of EI and plays a major role in terms of staying mentally and physically healthy (Nizielski et al., 2013; Pekaar et al., 2018). The moderated moderation analyses showed that the moderation effect of mental well-being on the relationship between Regulation of Emotion and cognitive reappraisal, and Others’ Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal differed significantly by gender.

Theoretical implications

Emotional Intelligence as a predictor of Cognitive Reappraisal

The study revealed that EI is important for cognitive reappraisal among hotel leaders. EI and effective emotion regulation (cognitive reappraisal) seems particularly important in a people-intensive work environment, such as the hospitality and services industry or healthcare

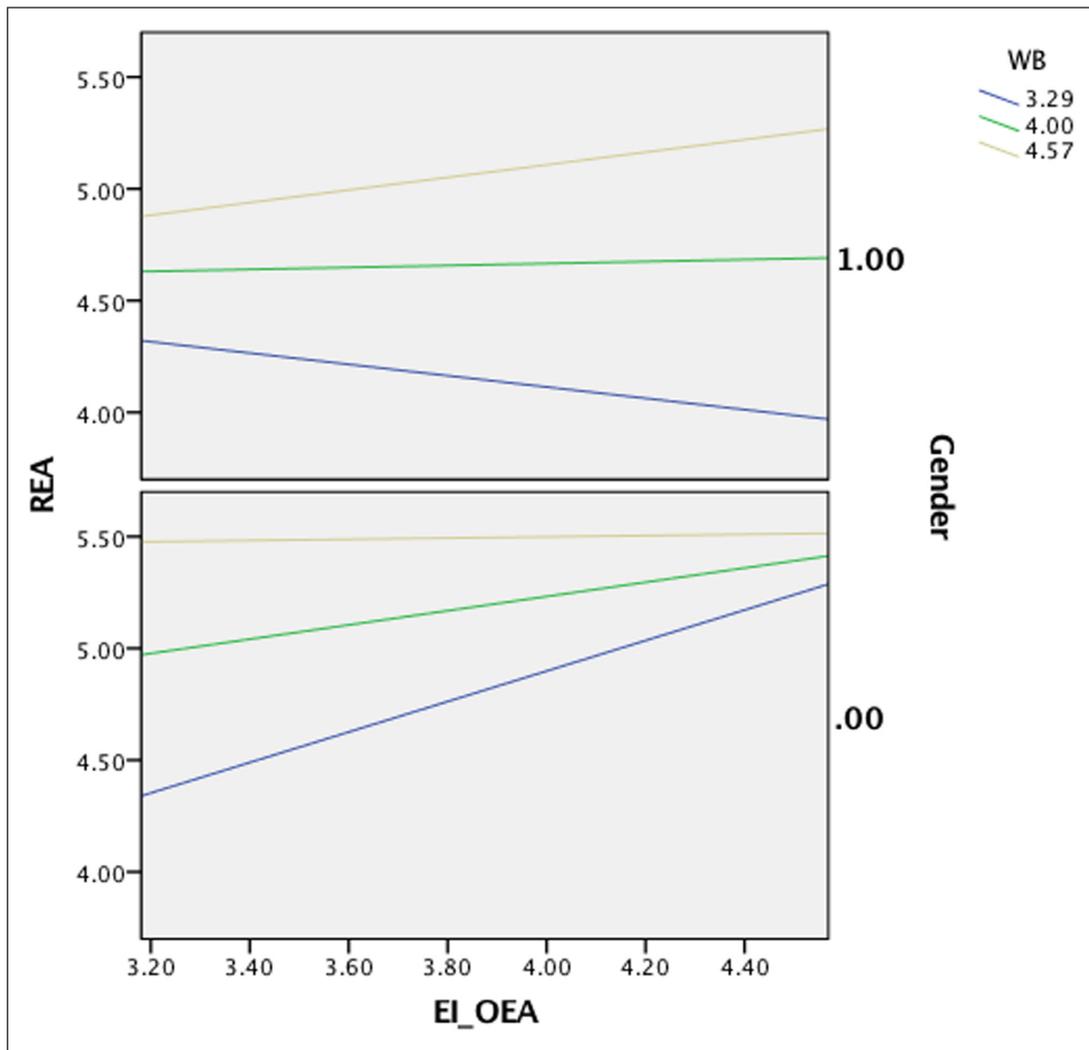


Figure 3: Well-being as a moderator of the relationship between Others Emotions Appraisal (EI/OEA) and cognitive reappraisal (REA) by gender.

Note: For gender: 0 = males, 1 = females; for well-being (WB) 1SD above the mean ($m = 4.57$), the mean ($m = 4.00$) and 1SD below the mean ($m = 3.29$).

environments (Joseph & Newman, 2010). In this context, it is likely that the leaders tend to draw on positive emotions by labelling job stressors as opportunities rather than threats via a cognitive reappraisal strategy to adapt to the corporate culture and role expectations (McRae, 2016; Sheppes & Levin, 2013; Torrence & Connelly, 2019). Further, a unique feature of leaders’ work context is that instrumental considerations often take primacy over hedonic considerations in emotion regulation (Tamir, 2016). Thus, leaders may use EI and cognitive reappraisal to regulate their emotions in ways that are shaped by their desire to achieve their instrumental goals, such as career advancement and individual rewards, regardless of their hedonic experience (e.g., feeling good or bad) (Williams et al., 2018). Moreover, the leaders in this study had extensive leadership experience and were about 40 years old (average). Emotion regulation skills, in particular reappraisal, seem to increase with age/lifespan and may thus have influenced our findings (Carstensen et al., 2011).

Currently, many leaders are experiencing increased job insecurity due to the Covid 19 pandemic (Tourish, 2020).

In critical situations like the present one, it is typical that leaders (and organizational members) experience negative emotions, and managing these in themselves and others can be costly for their mental well-being (Smollan, 2017). It is therefore important for leaders to develop their EI to handle the emotional landscape mindfully using contextual emotion regulation (Troth et al., 2018).

Mental well-being as a moderator between Self Emotion Appraisal and Cognitive Reappraisal

The findings revealed that mental well-being moderated the relationship between Self-Emotion Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal. Self-Emotion Appraisal concerns the ability to understand one’s deep emotions and is a prerequisite for effective emotion regulation. Self-Emotion Appraisal involves self-awareness, regarded as a corner stone of EI and is therefore an important dimension in effective leadership supported by our study (Butler, Kwantes, & Boglarsky, 2014; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2004). As previously emphasized, emotions accompany our daily work lives and can enhance mental well-being,

but they can also cause leaders to do unhelpful things (Gross, 2015). Previous research shows that Self-Emotion Appraisal in particular plays a pivotal role in terms of work achievement, effective decision making, overcoming obstacles, job satisfaction and creativity (Kafetsios, Nezlek, & Vassilakou, 2012; Mohzan et al., 2013; Pekaar et al., 2018). These findings are also supported in a meta-analysis showing that Self-Emotion Appraisal is a predictor of task performance and as an antecedent for successful cognitive reappraisal in people-intensive environments (Joseph & Newman, 2010). This corresponds well with our study because it involves high-performance leaders in environments where interpersonal relationships, effective problem-solving and moving ahead quickly are important leadership skills. However, our findings suggest that mental well-being seems to represent an important buffer for leaders when dealing with their own emotions, but also in terms of implementing successful cognitive reappraisal. We have argued that cognitive reappraisal can be difficult to execute; the current study shows the importance of mental well-being as a moderator between Self-Emotion Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal.

Overall, Self-Emotion Appraisal is considered an important meta-ability, necessary for leaders' development, staying mentally and physically healthy, and handling interpersonal relationships and the ongoing changes in the leadership behaviour (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Furtner, Rauthmann, & Sachse, 2013; Trivellas et al., 2013). This implies that Self-Emotion Appraisal enables leaders to identify and organize their emotions efficiently and to express these emotions clearly and naturally, which is a prerequisite when working in a people-intensive environment (Butler et al., 2014; Shum, Gatling, & Shoemaker, 2018).

Moderated moderation by gender

The third hypothesis tested whether the moderation effect of mental well-being on the relationship between EI and cognitive reappraisal was moderated by gender. Gender moderated the moderation effect of mental well-being on Regulation of Emotions and cognitive reappraisal, and Others' Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal. Regulation of Emotions had a positive relationship with cognitive reappraisal for women, although this relationship was the strongest when mental well-being was low. Thus, for women with lower mental well-being, Regulation of Emotions may be a particularly important dimension of EI to develop in order to improve cognitive reappraisal. For men, however, Regulation of Emotions was not positively related to cognitive reappraisal when mental well-being was low. Thus, increasing Regulation of Emotions as a means of developing cognitive reappraisal may not be effective for men when their mental well-being is low.

In a similar manner to Regulation of Emotions, Others' Emotions Appraisal was not positively related to cognitive reappraisal for men when mental well-being was low, although as mental well-being increased, so did the relationship between Others' Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal. It therefore appears that developing the two dimensions of EI, Regulation of Emotions and

Others' Emotions Appraisal as an approach to increasing cognitive reappraisal is likely to only be effective at medium to higher mental well-being levels in men. For women at low levels of mental well-being there is a strong relationship between Others' Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal but as mental well-being increases, the strength of the relationship decreases. This suggests that at low levels of mental well-being, increasing Others' Emotions Appraisal may lead to greater cognitive reappraisal in women. Given the relationship between Regulation of Emotions and cognitive reappraisal, mental well-being appears to be more important for men, whereas the opposite pattern happens with women, indicating differences in how male and female leaders regulate their emotions. Surprisingly, the same patterns for women and men occur in the relationship between Others' Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal. While the relationship between Others' Emotions Appraisal and cognitive reappraisal is strongest in men when mental well-being is low, the same relationship is strongest in women when their mental well-being is high. This suggests that mental well-being is particularly important for men when it comes to strengthening the relationship between EI (Regulation of Emotions, Others' Emotions Appraisal) and cognitive reappraisal, and less important for women. That said, women may use more mental energy in interpersonal sensitivity (Others' Emotions Appraisal), which can be seen in their accuracy in processing cues and behaviours in another person (Hall & Mast, 2008).

Practical implications

Our findings show that EI and cognitive reappraisal is an important ability in leaders when managing stress and emotion-laden events in the workplace. Self-awareness (e.g., Self-Emotion Appraisal) (Goleman, 2004) plays an important role in leadership, and it is therefore important for leaders to be capable of acknowledging their own emotions and to be aware of which regulation strategy they normally use and rely on (Torrence & Connelly, 2019). From a leadership perspective, there are situations (e.g., high level of stress) in which other reappraisal strategies may be more adaptive and beneficial than cognitive reappraisal (Gross, 2015; Troy, Shallcross, & Mauss, 2013). Designing systematic management training (i.e., intervention programs) and mentoring programs (i.e., by senior leaders), debate or situation simulation has the potential to improve leaders' EI and emotion regulation skills (Edelman & van Knippenberg, 2017; Thory, 2013). For example, systematic leadership training can be practiced by simulation-based training with real life cases (i.e., using 3d graphics, 360-degree feedback, e-learning). This kind of training can support leaders in using a broader set of strategies, as well as becoming more mindful about the consequences of their own and others' choice of emotion regulation strategies by using hypothetical scenarios to positively resolve job conflicts (Torrence & Connelly, 2019). Moreover, having the opportunity to debrief, or discuss different emotionally laden situations with other leaders, can also be beneficial for job performance and health (e.g., Nexø et al., 2018). Further, senior leaders

should encourage leaders at all levels to use EI and different reappraisal strategies. Senior leaders can do so efficiently by using the same strategies they use to regulate their own emotions (*c.f.*, Kluemper, DeGroot, & Choi, 2011). For example, different reappraisal strategies can be used to get middle managers or employees excited about a new project; to overcome their frustration and anger; to provide critical performance feedback without hurting their feelings; to meet job expectations involving emotional labour (display rules) (Hochschild, 1983); to effectively diffuse conflicts at work (Kluemper et al., 2011) and to support an awareness of transformational learning to strengthen their creativity and innovation in order to meet current challenges and goals effectively (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Wu et al., 2017). Thus, leaders will be better able to engage in proactive processes with their middle managers and employees (Shum et al., 2018). Such leadership moves beyond good leadership behaviour and bridges the domains of positive health and leadership. This reflects a more systemic, holistic view of leadership, contributing to a more comprehensive view of leadership (Akerjordet, Furunes, & Haver, 2018; Flovik et al., 2019; Yao et al., 2021).

Interestingly, the findings highlighted the moderating role of gender and mental well-being among leaders. For male leaders with high mental well-being, targeting Others' Emotions Appraisal as a means of improving reappraisal is not as important as it is for lower levels of mental well-being. However, as an overall strategy, improving Others' Emotions Appraisal is beneficial for men. For female leaders, reappraisal would only be positively affected by increased Others' Emotions Appraisal at high levels of mental well-being. Thus, in order to improve reappraisal in women, a multi-strategy approach is necessary, targeting both Others' Emotions Appraisal and well-being simultaneously. Nevertheless, it is vital to acknowledge that differences may exist between genders as to what influences mental well-being. This may suggest tailored programmes for male and female leaders. Along these lines, senior top leaders have to be aware of possible gender differences requiring targeted strategies to increase their mental well-being.

Limitations and Future directions

Certain limitations of the current study have to be acknowledged. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of the data does not allow any clear inference of a cause-effect relationship. In addition, this study may be susceptible to common method bias. Of note, this work is reliant on self-reported measures and may thus be affected by variance bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012), which is particularly common when measuring self-reported EI. Self-reported ability may be susceptible to desirable response and has therefore been criticised for the inherent paradox in asking individuals to report their own level of intelligence, which can thus be faked (Côté, 2014). Secondly, even though we used a well-validated self-report instrument for constructs considered in this study (English & John, 2013), measures such as the WLEIS may be disposed to feminine dimensions, which may have

reinforced our findings (Lopez-Zafra & Gartzia, 2014). Thirdly, possible confounding variables not accounted for but that might have impacted on the results beyond extensive leadership experience could be the degree of centralization and organization size (Haver, 2019; Yao et al., 2021). The distribution of power and authority in this hotel chain lies with those at the top of the hierarchy. This can have unintended negative effects restricting the leader's autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2001), which again elicits negative emotions (Haver et al., 2019; Hodari & Sturman, 2014). However, it is essential to study other mechanisms, such as resilience, that have the potential to explain variance related to leaders' well-being (*cf.*, Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). In addition, there is evidence pointing to a strong relationship between personality and EI (van der Linden et al., 2018). We did not measure personality on this study. Future research could consider personality and whether it covaries with the variables of interest in this study. Fourthly, as the studied hotel chain is well-known for recruiting leaders with high positive affect, the study population may not be representative for all leaders globally. Consequently, using random, representative samples of leaders should be considered in future studies. The present study was also conducted in a Swedish organizational context with relatively flat hierarchies and high well-being. It is therefore recommended that the study be replicated in other organizational settings and countries to test generalizability of the findings. The interplay between different socio-cultural beliefs and contextual differences should therefore be further explored to strengthen the scientific rigor of future research.

Conclusion

This study shows that examining the four dimensions of emotional intelligence provides a more nuanced understanding of its role in cognitive reappraisal. Given that mental well-being influences some of these relationships, organisations should implement strategies to improve well-being alongside approaches to increase EI in leaders and employees as a means to address cognitive reappraisal. The inherently high job stresses in the hotel and service industry (e.g., people-intensive environments) means this is critical for organisational outcomes. Coaching and training of leaders should be supported by the top management to shoulder the responsibility for promoting leaders' mental well-being and sustainable development. Organisations are therefore urged to pay more attention to the resource of meaningfulness – moving beyond good leadership behaviour bridging the domains of positive health and leadership.

Note

¹ Males had on average 10.78 years (SD = 7.40 years) of work experience compared to females, who had on average 8.15 years (SD = 8.15 years) of work experience. In terms of leadership experience in the hotel chain, males had on average 4.64 years of experience (SD = 3.89 years), while females had 3.93 years (SD = 3.69 years).

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Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

Author Contributions

Authors meet the following criteria

- Making substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data or analysis and interpretation of data.
- Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual Content.
- Given final approval of the version to be published.
- Agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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