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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TRAINING AS AN INTERVENTION TO DIMINISH CONSUMER MATERIALISM*

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Abstract. Research confirms the existence of links between a personality's propensity for materialism, and various social and psychological ills: compulsive buying, poorer mental health, etc. The development of emotional intelligence (EI) helps to solve such issues. However, the creation of EI development programme is complex. In addition, such programmes developed tend to lack a clear EI model, are not differentiated according to specific participant problems (e.g., materialism), underestimate certain aspects of the change in the EI level, etc. Thus the purpose of the present paper is to present essential EI programme curriculum methodological guidelines and recommendations for the creation of a specialised materialism reduction programme. *Results and conclusions.* The curriculum must implement the following principles: adaptation according to the participant age and nature of the demonstrated behaviour (in this case – materialism); linking certain tasks to a practical application to develop real-life skills; establishment of objective criteria to assess the EI level and materialism changes at the end of training. The recommended format of the three-stage EI curriculum is: I. Development of self-awareness; II. Self-management training; III. Application of learnt emotional competencies in a group by modelling various situations relevant to participants. A qualified coach must provide ongoing feedback consisting of reinforcement and constructive criticism. Recommended EI training methods: discussion, modelling, role play, etc. Essential factors for the effectiveness of the EI curriculum: selection of motivated participants, coach competence, reliability, validity and objectivity of EI and materialism change measurement tools, transfer of tasks to real-life situations, and measurement of the impact stability after at least 3 months.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; consumer materialism; training

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1. Introduction

As overconsumption has been continuing to rise, researchers have been increasingly seeking to understand the motivation behind the endorsement of materialism and the resulting maladaptive consumption. With the increasing awareness about the negative environmental consequences originating from the widespread consumer culture, consumers are still incapable of resisting indulgence in materialistic possessions and acquisitions, and they have been proven to be unable to abandon materialistic values. Even the rapidly rising environmental consciousness and the acknowledgement of the detrimental effect of overconsumption on the societal well-being are slow in inhibiting the materialistic value orientation. Consumers struggle in reconciling the coexistence of pro-environmental and materialistic values, whose conflict negatively affects their subjective well-being (Furchheim, Martin & Morhart 2020). Literature suggests that the susceptibility to materialistic inclinations and the resulting compulsive buying is, in most cases, determined by the emotional vulnerability and negative emotional states which persist despite the efforts to compensate for personal deficiencies with material objects (Donnelly et al. 2016).

Moreover, the continuous belief in the power of materialistic objects to help arrive at the aspirational-self results in the materialism perpetuation cycle (Richins, 2017). Individual differences in generating, perceiving, and regulating emotions can explain why people react differently to stress. This ability is referred to as *Emotional Intelligence* (EI). Emotionally intelligent consumers are skilled at managing their emotions and, as a result, they should be less vulnerable to maladaptive coping strategies. For example, research findings suggest that, by improving emotional ability, consumers can gain control over their food choices (Kidwell, Hasford & Hardesty 2015). Extrapolating from the previous findings, we assume that emotional intelligence ability development through appropriate training programmes should contribute to the prevention of materialism through increased emotional self-awareness and self-regulation. The ability to understand and manage one's own emotions should motivate the consumer to re-consider their excessive-consumption based habitual behaviour. Since the emotional responses of materialists compromise their subjective well-being, the coping modes and educational programmes that could help cope with the triggers of materialistic orientation have become highly necessitated.

Furthermore, effective interventions, such as training aimed at coping with unpleasant emotional events in a more adaptive way than materialistic orientations and excessive buying, would improve the sustainability of the everyday consumption and personal well-being. Effective training-based interventions can be used in the experimental research within the materialism and compulsive buying literature so that to examine the effect of an educational training programme on the EI level and, in turn, the impact of emotional intelligence on materialistic orientations and behavioural outcomes. This study reviews what is already known and understood about emotional intelligence training programmes. It makes a case for further developments in this area's context-specific emotional intelligence training curriculum. The conclusions summarise the findings of the review and propose an emotional intelligence programme curricular methodological guidelines and recommendations for the creation of a specialised materialism reduction programme.

2. Theoretical background

The concept of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EI) can be defined in various ways, but, in the broad sense, it is the ability to recognize, assess and control your own and other people's emotions as a whole. EI reflects how well an individual manages to process their emotions and the emotional information received from others (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2008), both of which are crucial aspects of everyday functioning and successful interpersonal relationships (Mikolajczak, Brasseur & Fantini-Hauwel, 2014). Even more so, EI is one of the main sources of human well-being, health and efficiency. For example, high emotional intelligence correlates with better mental health (Martins, Ramalho & Morin, 2010; Manju, 2016). An improved emotional and psychological condition leads to a higher quality of life, and overall health (Abascal-Bolado & Dulohery,

2016; Zysberg, 2018; Matthews et al., 2018; Benzo). Individuals exhibiting high EI levels are more able to moderate their emotions and are less impulsive, they tend to empathise with others better, which leads to their better functioning in the society and the forming of closer relationships with other people (Manhas & Sharma, 2015). A high EI is also associated with the improved social support, a decreased likelihood of interpersonal relationship issues, better stress management, and greater health (Ermer et al., 2012). Those who possess a superior EI tend to be more successful in many areas of life: at work, academically, and in interpersonal relationships (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019). Conversely, those with a low EI are not as empathic, they fail to empathise with other people's state or situation, and they are prone to acting impulsively (Henley & Long, 1999). A low emotional intelligence is also statistically significantly related to aggression and criminal behaviour (Ermer et al., 2012; Megreya, 2013; García-Sancho, Salguero, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2014).

Emotional intelligence depends on a variety of factors: it is believed to be influenced by the childhood environment and upbringing, by the examples that a child is exposed to in their immediate environment, as well as by favourable and adverse or stressful situations, traumatising events, and so on (McNulty, 2016). Despite an abundance of EI research, the scientific community is still engaged in discussion over how to identify and define emotional intelligence as a theoretical concept (Papadogiannis, Logan, & Sitarenios, 2009).

Emotional intelligence models. Various emotional intelligence models have been suggested, but two EI conceptual trends stand out. The proponents of the first approach define EI as an intersection of the emotional and intellectual spheres, i.e., as cognitive processing of emotional information (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2016). This model focuses on social relationships and is called the *abilities model*. Its alternative – the *trait model* – is centred on self-understanding and the constellation of one's own emotional world (Petrides et al., 2016). This model underlines non-cognitive abilities, knowledge and competencies allowing individuals to successfully solve various complicated situations of life. The advocates of the EI ability model evaluate the ability to operate emotional information by using performance tests, which are, in principle, largely related to IQ tests, while the proponents of the trait theory apply questionnaires, constructed on the basis of introspection that may remind of personality assessment tests (Petrides, Pita & Kokkinaki, 2007). In addition, researchers identify a third – hybrid – model that intertwines the two previously mentioned approaches. A brief overview of the aforementioned models is presented below.

Ability model of Emotional Intelligence. Salovey and Mayer (1990) were the first to define emotional intelligence as the “ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions” (Salovey, Mayer, 1990, p. 189). Mayer, Salovey & Caruso (2004, 2008) interpret emotional intelligence as a construct within the broader category of intelligence and claim that abilities reflecting EI can be evaluated through standardised cognitive criteria. In other words, EI is defined as the ability to employ emotions and feelings in the thought process. This entails the ability to understand and use emotions in a precise manner, which assists the conveying and comprehension of thoughts, and allows the reflective management of feelings, which, in turn, spurs emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004).

Mayer, Salovey and Caruso's (2004) EI model emphasises that EI is a set of abilities for responses to events that constitute emotions. The authors distinguish four complementary structural parts of EI: perceiving and identifying emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions.

Perceiving and identifying emotions refers to the ability to perceive one's own and other people's emotional states and feelings. This part of EI is immensely important, as unperceived or suppressed feelings remain unidentified and unrecognised. Perception of emotions encompasses the recognition and decoding of emotional signals (i.e., facial expressions, voice tone) (Papadogiannis, Logan & Sitarenios, 2009).

The second structural part of EI – using emotion to facilitate thought – indicates that the ability to recognise emotions entails placing one’s attention on a person and decoding their emotions and feelings (Papadogiannis, Logan & Sitarenios 2009). This ability is used to endorse cognitive processes and to make decisions, hence, in other words, this part of EI aids thinking. Those individuals who are able to create the appropriate emotions and to integrate them into the thinking process are more adaptive, able to regard the world from different perspectives, reflect on problems in-depth and more creatively, and they are also able to change their mood accordingly to a specific situation.

Understanding emotions comprises the ability to make sense of emotions, their succession, causes and effects. (Rivers et al., 2007). Those individuals who are able to understand emotions know their real meaning, subtle combinations and sense the differences between similar emotions, know how emotions merge and change with time (Fiori & Vesely-Maillefer, 2017).

Managing emotions refers to the ability to regulate one’s own and others’ emotions effectively. Management of emotions is observed when one perceives and understands them well and is able to use them to change moods. This ability allows an individual to maintain positive emotions, change negative emotions into positive ones, and to appropriately employ emotions in particular situations (Papadogiannis, Logan & Sitarenios, 2009).

To summarise, this model examines four different but closely related EI abilities. Despite the criticism of the model by certain scientists, this four-part structural EI model remains the main contemporary theoretical EI ability model.

Trait Model of Emotional Intelligence. EI can be understood as certain personality traits that are revealed through the individual’s self-reflection which determine the person’s ability to cope with demands and pressure coming from the immediate surroundings (Ekman, Friesen, & Ellsworth, 2013). This model breaks away from the previously mentioned emotional intelligence as an ability-based construct and establishes that people have, as part of their personality, emotional traits or emotional self-perceptions.

This conception of emotional intelligence emphasises that EI is a personality trait that permits the understanding and management of emotions (Petrides, Pita & Kokkinaki, 2007). One of the most famous proponents of this approach, Bar-On, defines EI as a non-cognitive ability or skill that significantly facilitates dealing with pressure and demands that come from one’s environment (Bar-On, 1997, 2006). The model proposed by Bar-On is multifactorial and eclectic. It not only encompasses the abilities that are traditionally ascribed to EI, but also includes traits that supplement EI and are important to the level of EI one has attained.

Bar-On compiled a list of 15 emotional skills, which was reshaped in 2011 by Multi-Health Systems (MHS) and expanded to 16 emotional skills, grouped into five categories: intrapersonal category (emotional self-awareness, self-regard, independence, self-actualisation, assertiveness); interpersonal category (social responsibility, empathy, interpersonal relationship), adaptability (flexibility, testing of reality, problem solving), stress management (impulse control, stress tolerance, flexibility, correct application of thought and behaviour) general mood (sense of happiness, optimism) (Bar-On, 1997).

Afterwards, the EI trait model by Petrides (2011) was proposed. Petrides suggested the idea that EI encompasses social intelligence, cognitive intelligence, self-awareness, and certain personality traits. Also, the trait model involves individual convictions related to the perception, processing and regulation of emotions. Petrides attempted to describe EI as a trait and distinguished 15 elements of the construct which are divided into four groups: well-being (self-esteem, happiness, optimism, self-motivation), self-control (regulation of emotions, low impulsiveness, stress management, adaptivity), emotionality (understanding one’s own and other people’s

emotions, emotional literacy, empathy, management of other people's emotions), sociability (relationships, social perception, perseverance).

According to the EI trait model, emotional intelligence is a set of traits located at the lower levels of personality. Precisely due to this, EI can be evaluated in two directions: when EI traits are explained by an already existing personality taxonomy, or when EI traits are understood as separate and independent (Petrides, Pita & Kokkinaki 2007).

The concept of materialism. Consumer materialism is related with the degree of the importance that consumers attach to possessions (Belk 1995). The most commonly accepted definition of materialism is “set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one's life” (Richins & Dawson, 1992, p. 308). Basing on Kasser (2002), materialism is uniquely identified with consumption that leads to happiness that can be enhanced through possessions.

Materialistic people are attached to possessions, and possessions take the infinitely important place in their lives. Fitzmaurice and Comegys (2006) state that the continual acquisition of goods becomes a primary goal for materialists. They observe that materialists often become overly focused on purchases, and direct their energy and resources towards acquiring possessions.

Literature analysis reveals that scholars have two perspectives on the development of materialistic values of individuals, i.e., the socialisation and psychological perspectives. Moschis (2007) notes that both states are related with events at the early age of individuals. He determined that the weaker self-esteem and relationship between parents and their children are expected to grow the individual vulnerability to stressful situations in further life and increase inclination toward material wealth. Weaver et al. (2011) established that family communication and television at an early age is related with the materialistic values of individuals. Some scholars (e.g., Roberts et al., 2003) have also come to a conclusion that those individuals who experienced such events as divorce and separation in their families during their teen years as well as those who were brought up by materialistically oriented parents (Chaplin & John, 2010) are more prone to materialism and compulsive buying as they feel more stress and insecurity.

The research on materialism is definitely extensive, yet it is far from being conclusive. Literature review shows that various authors have conceptualised the construct of materialism as a single entity, but have measured it as a multidimensional construct. As a matter of fact, researchers have developed two perspectives on conceptualising materialism. Belk (1985) proposed three measures of materialistic traits – possessiveness, non-generosity, and envy. Belk (1984) also defined possessiveness as “an inclination and tendency to retain control or ownership of one's possessions.” Non-generosity involves reluctance to give away possessions, or to share those with others (Belk 1985). In addition, Belk (1984) emphasised that envy can be treated in both ways, i.e., as a benign characteristic that motivates striving to acquire the desired object, and as a destructive characteristic leading to crime, such as vandalism, murder, etc. Gilovich et al. (2015) indicated that this process is never-ending as the pleasure from the purchase quickly fades away, and the individuals have a new desire, and they ultimately become victims of their own desires and excessive needs.

Richins and Dawson (1992) proposed three components to measure value-oriented materialism among individuals. In the opinion of these authors, the more a consumer values material remuneration as the essential goal of life, the more s/he sees material possession or its acquisition as the main path to success and happiness, and the more they use material possession to determine their identity, the more materialistic they are considered to be. Basing on this approach, consumer materialism is measured by using three related facets: centrality, happiness and success (Richins & Dawson 1992; Richins, 2004). The centrality facet discloses the scope of the consumers' belief on the essentiality of things in their lives. The success domain of materialism is related with the trust that

one's and others consumers' success depends on their evident material wealth and acquisitions. The happiness facet is related with the belief that possessions and their purchase is the central way to happiness and satisfaction with life. This approach is well known and generally accepted by researchers of consumer materialism.

Emotional intelligence and materialism. The conceptualisation of materialism based on consumer values is widespread in the consumer behavioural research (Richins & Dawson, 1992; Richins, 2004). The enormous value which consumers tend to place on acquisitions and possessions drives their corresponding behaviour, which manifests as maladaptive consumption, overconsumption, and compulsive buying. Material objects are viewed as a source of happiness and success by those consumers due to earning them a special place in their lives.

There is no single definition of 'emotional intelligence' in the scientific literature. Two approaches can be highlighted. The concept of emotional intelligence based on personality traits includes emotion-related self-awareness, hierarchical systems of personality traits (Petrides, 2011; Bar-On et al., 2006; Petrides & Furnham, 2003). The ability-based concept of emotional intelligence emphasises an individual's cognitive capability to use emotional information – that is, to perceive, use, understand and manage one's emotions and the emotions of others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer et al., 2004).

It is well documented that the materialistic value orientation is negatively associated with the personal, social, and environmental well-being, thus implying a bidirectional relationship manifested in the vicious cycle of being trapped in over-relying on material objects that do not bring happiness and the expected relief (Dittmar & Isham, 2022). Materialists, more than others, set unrealistically high standards for themselves. As materialistic expectations are unattainable in most cases, materialists experience more negative emotions than those consumers who are less concerned with materialistic pursuits (Donnelly et al., 2016). The excess of negative emotions is also more characteristic of the consumers of a lower emotional intelligence. Materialists are also more emotionally responsive to daily events and are more vulnerable to them (Richins, 2017). Meanwhile, psychologically resilient people are described as having higher emotional intelligence (Salovey et al., 1999). In addition, those consumers whose intrinsic ability to manage negative emotions (especially mourning) is better developed, less frequently use hedonistic consumption to control negative emotions (Kemp & Kopp, 2011). Studies also show that the experience of positive emotions contributes to the more effective management of emotions, faster recovery after negative emotional excitement, and positive meaning in negative life situations (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

Those consumers who are high on materialism are more susceptible to the painful self-discrepancy which results in suffering and negative feelings for the same reason. The usual response to adversity is compensatory consumption, which can also manifest as a strong attachment to material objects (Mandel et al., 2017). Materialists are prone to using shopping with the objective to regulate their negative emotions. According to research, emotional dysregulation is linked to various forms of addictive behaviour that are used to regulate and avoid negative affective states. For example, Estévez et al. (2020) discovered a positive relationship between the buying-shopping disorder severity, materialism, and emotion dysregulation levels. The same study found that emotional dysregulation was associated with excessive buying behaviour in clinical samples, thus implying that people with emotional dysregulation prioritise the immediate reward over the long term negative consequences. Furthermore, the study of Ozimek, Bierhoff and Hamm (2020) determined that difficulties with emotion regulation were positively correlated with the intensity of the social use of Facebook. In addition, research (Ozimek & Förster, 2017) indicates that people use Facebook more intensely when they are high in both materialism and social comparison motivation.

The reviewed findings are indicative of the negative relationship between emotional intelligence and materialistic orientations. The development of emotional intelligence abilities may alter the materialistic view of life and its negative consequences. Literature suggests that the development of the emotional intelligence ability should contribute to reducing harmful materialistic value orientations. Hence, the potential of emotional intelligence

development programmes to counteract materialistic stances demonstrates their relevance and the need for such programmes to be developed and validated.

Challenges of Designing Emotional Intelligence Development Programmes. Recent years have brought a significant increase in EI interventions (Hodzic et al., 2017; Kotsou et al., 2018). The following key issues may be highlighted as a result of the analysis of EI development programmes and scientific literature dealing with the topic.

Programmes often lack foundations of scientific theory, and, as a rule, their content does not reflect the concept of EI; for example, the rationale of intervention is based on a construct different to that of EI (e.g., mindfulness, meditation) (Kotsou et al., 2018); programmes often include contentious elements or are simply focused on personality development, such as creativity, leadership, problem-solving skills, active citizenship, etc. (Zeidner, Roberts, & Matthews, 2002). Campo, Laborde and Weckemann (2015) pointed out that many programmes are developed by practitioners who rely solely on their own experience or popular psychology. Developers of high-quality EI curricula tend to base them on a theoretical EI model, provide a clear structure of the programme, and emphasise proper programme execution (Pool & Qualte, 2012; Hodzic et al., 2017).

There is no consensus on what the most appropriate and effective training method is. Various authors recommend the following methods of developing emotional intelligence: discussion, reflection and feedback, modelling, role-playing, examples, paired exercises, emotions diaries, readings, art therapy, and video (Hinsch & Pfungsten, 1998; Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2010; Clarke, 2010; Kotsou et al., 2011; Nelis et al., 2011; Zijlmans et al., 2011; Campo, Laborde, & Weckemann, 2015). The benefits of role-playing in a group are particularly emphasised: the group participant learns that other people share similar problems; the situations offered by the participants create a wide range of learning situations (the participant can compare different patterns of behaviour, determine which options are successful or misguided); participants receive feedback and reinforcement not only from the coach but also from other participants, which motivates them to try new behaviours. However, we conclude it to be difficult to analyse the effects of the programmes in a complex way if they employ a variety of methods.

There is also no leading opinion regarding the duration of the programme, i.e., how long the programme should be for a positive change in a person's emotional intelligence. Researchers choose very different intervals: from long-term to relatively short-term options, such as a 2-year programme (Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2012), a 4-month programme including three 90-min video feedback sessions (Zijlmans et al., 2011), or a 2.5 day programme (15hr) (Kotsou et al., 2011). Data on whether the programme duration affects its effectiveness are conflicting (Grant, 2007; Kruml & Yockey, 2011). Overall, even a short one-day EI development session may prove to be beneficial since it provides specific knowledge; however, it is questionable whether the effects can be long-lasting (Zeidner et al., 2008). More effective long-term EI education strategies are expected to take longer so that to provide not only knowledge and skills, but also sufficient time for self-analysis and independent EI development. In this context, it is also relevant to assess how much time the participants are ready to commit in order to achieve the result, i.e., the motivation of the participants is also pertinent in choosing the duration of the programme.

Emotional intelligence development programmes often do not cover the evaluation of the change in EI: programmes do not provide tools for measuring changes in EI at various levels (emotion recognition, emotion management, etc.). The more reliable and valid is the methodology used to measure the change in EI, the more convincing are the outcome of the curriculum. Subjective methodologies (questionnaires, personality inventories, etc.) primarily measure changes at the cognitive level, which may be closely related to self-esteem, attributional habits, self-confidence, as well as emotional states (e.g., fear, depressed mood, etc.) (Hinsch & Pfungsten 1998). Meanwhile, objective measurement methods can first include role-playing, which should be filmed before the start of the curriculum and after the completion of the programme, and then these recordings should be evaluated by independent experts. However, this relies on the assumption that the simulated situations reflect the real

environment of the programme participants. In our opinion, the real effects of the programme can only be measured by the participant's ability to transfer the acquired knowledge to real life situations, especially such that were not play-acted during the programme. Measurements of the stability of the effect after a certain time when comparing the results of the Pre-/Post-test can be considered as an even more important criterion for the effectiveness of the programme. However, even in this regard there is no consensus on when a post-test could most realistically reflect the effect of the training (e.g., Hinsch and Pfingsten (1998) cites measurements at 3, 6, and 12 months; Beigi and Shirmohammadi (2010) performed measurements at 2 weeks; Kotsou et al. (2011) measured the change after 1 month and 1 year; Nelis et al. (2011) did that immediately after programme implementation and after 6 months; Slaski and Cartwright (2003) conducted measurements after 6 months, etc.). It is obvious that the evaluation showing the sustainability of the positive effect after 1 year prove the quality of the programme much more than the one taken immediately after the implementation of the programme: long-term assessment is essential to assess the sustained learning transfer and the acquisition of EI competencies; any results that occur shortly after an intervention may be due to the participant's increased knowledge of EI from the intervention, which may not translate into abilities or behaviours that would last long-term (Kotsou et al., 2018). However, taking measurements after a longer period of time is quite complicated, as it involves the consent of the programme's participants to continued cooperation.

The design of emotional intelligence programme for decreasing consumer materialism. The analysis of the problematics of the EI programme design provided guidelines for the foundation of the programme that could be used for consumer materialism issues. First, this programme is built on scientific theory, as it enables the selection of the appropriate intervention techniques and increases the likelihood of programme effectiveness. Secondly, due to the restrictions brought about by the global pandemic, face-to-face training should be given up and an online contact method should be chosen instead – 3 long-distance trainings of 2 hours each. Third, the format should be engaging, and this influences the choice of the training methods: discussion, examples, paired exercises, emotions diaries, readings, reflection and feedback. Some of the tasks in the programme are linked to the practical application of the acquired knowledge in real life so that to turn the knowledge into skills (in the form of self-assigned tasks). Fourth, the assessment of the change in EI should be performed immediately after the programme and three months later according to the overall EI indicator and the individual components. Thus, the curriculum established objective criteria to assess the change in the level of emotional intelligence of the personality after the end of the programme.

Below we list some essential activities and tasks of our three-part (three-session) programme. The aim of the *first session* was to develop the participants' ability to accurately identify their own and others' emotions at a particular moment and to understand their goals, motives, incentives to act; and to teach to analyse and adequately decode nonverbal and verbal signs. The session started with the coach's presentation and introductions by all the group participants, a brief description of the concept of EI, a presentation of the goals of the EI curriculum and the first session identifying the participants' expectations, and a discussion of the rules in the working group. The first task of the session was aimed at expanding one's vocabulary of emotions, i.e., the ability to identify emotions. The participants were asked to write down columns of as many words as possible that reflect positive and negative emotions. Studies show that a rich emotional vocabulary can mitigate the effects of negative emotions, which is especially important in regulating emotions. Knowing the words that describe emotions helps to express one's emotions and to recognise the emotions of others better. In turn, it improves the well-being and relationships with other people. After the exercise, the participants reflected on the expanded vocabulary and compare the number of words in the columns. An effort was made to involve all the participants in the discussion.

The following task was aimed at testing the participants' ability to identify emotions. The group was shown portraits reflecting various emotions (see examples in Picture 1).



Picture 1. Portraits reflecting various emotions
Source: authors

The participants were asked to observe and individually decide what emotions were reflected in the photographs. After the task, the group discussed which emotions were easy or difficult to recognise; what were the differences between recognising negative and positive emotions; and what made it easier to recognise emotions.

After completing these and other similar tasks, the participants were given homework – a compulsory task of *Self-Reflection of Emotional Intelligence* for a self-assessment of the participants' emotional abilities, and an optional task of *Coloured Emotions*. The latter exercise was designed to promote a clearer understanding of one's emotions by colouring a mandala. Mandala drawing and colouring is a form of art therapy which combines elements of meditation. Through colouring, a person diverts his/her thoughts and feelings from the dominating negative aspects, which helps to more clearly understand emotions experienced in certain situations.

The goal of the *second session* was to help develop the ability to use the acquired information about one's emotions (especially the negative ones) and to adjust one's emotional reactions to oneself, different situations and other people accordingly. The session commenced with a reflection on the first session, discussing the homework, and identifying the purpose of the second session. The first exercise, *Vocabulary of Emotions*, was aimed at creating a personal map of feelings to help reveal the thoughts which cause emotions. This exercise helped to identify the roots of poor well-being. Thoughts that cause anger, frustration, resentment, guilt, shame, and so on were identified. The influence of thoughts on behaviour was then discussed based on the ABC model (A – Activating event, B – Belief, C – Consequences). Other tasks in the second session, for example, *Dialogue with Emotion*, *Zoom Out*, *Eraser*, and so on, also focused on negative emotion mitigation. The final task *Rain of Positive Emotional Thoughts* was designed to generate positive emotions that a person experiences infrequently or insufficiently in everyday life. At the end of the training, the task *Determining Needs According to Emotions* was assigned as homework. This exercise aimed to help understand that emotions are useful because they contain valuable information about oneself. This exercise explained why it is important to listen to emotions instead of suppressing them. In addition, the task can help change a person's attitude towards negative emotions.

The third and final session aimed to strengthen the newly formed emotional competencies in the group by modelling various situations. It started with a reflection on the second session, discussing the homework and identifying the purpose of the final meeting. Before completing the practical tasks, the participants were introduced to the technique of cognitive change, according to which the participants would continue to work after completing each task. Changes in an individual's cognitive level affect the recognition of emotions and the choice of the behaviour pattern. Therefore, in addition to the tasks of developing emotional skills, the session also included self-regulation training. Self-regulation involved three stages: 1. Self-awareness: each participant commented on their behaviour after the role play. 2. Self-esteem: the participants compared their behaviour to a given standard (e.g., the ideal behaviour). If the standard was too high for a participant, the coach adjusted the criteria of the standard. 3. Self-reinforcement: after the self-assessment, the participant self-reinforced (was satisfied, felt good) or punished themselves (suffered, was dissatisfied with themselves). The goal was to keep self-reinforcement separate from the environment, as this is important in EI education. That was done through self-awareness, self-esteem and self-reinforcement while performing the tasks. The third session tasks included *Visualisation of Behavioural Tendencies*, *Chair of the Wise Men*, *Hot Buttons* and others, focused on finding and establishing effective coping strategies when faced with strong emotional situations. At the end of the meeting, the coach gave an overview of the work of the group.

Conclusions

Analysis of the scientific literature and emotional intelligence education programmes has revealed the approach of researchers that emotional intelligence can only be developed through effective, evidence-based programmes. While developing EI, various skills are improved – understanding, recognising emotions, their regulation, etc. The idea of the possibility of developing emotional intelligence is supported by the authors who adhere to both the trait and mixed theoretical approaches, but research shows that programmes based on the theoretical approach to emotional intelligence skills are more effective than the above mentioned trait and mixed types.

The number of emotional intelligence intervention programmes in the psychological practice has increased significantly in the recent years. The curricula vary widely in their theoretical and methodological validity, objectives, duration, context in which they are applied, and so on. However, some emotional intelligence training programmes are not evidence-based, their effectiveness is not empirically proven, and it is dangerous to trust their results, and to prove their effectiveness and usefulness.

The analysis indicated that interventions aimed at developing emotional intelligence cause positive changes not only for their target points but also for other psychological constructs. It has been found that developing emotional intelligence increases life satisfaction, improves self-esteem, relieves depressive symptoms, reduces alcohol consumption, and so on.

Consequently, emotional intelligence is also developed to overcome certain risk factors or difficulties. It is one of the most important protective measures for a person ensuring his/her mental resilience as well as good mental health, and it can act as a protective factor in reducing a person's materialism. In addition, for EI educational interventions to be effective and reduce consumer materialism, they must meet a number of methodological requirements detailed in this article.

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