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ABSTRACT

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Emotional Intelligence Profiles and Job Search Correlates in the Context of the School-to-Work Transition

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Abstract

The current study adopted a person-centered approach to explore emotional intelligence profiles among 1582 university students and investigated whether different combinations of self-focused (i.e., intrapersonal) and other-focused (i.e., interpersonal) emotion appraisal and regulation emerged between women and men. We also examined the relations of these profiles with job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. Four distinct profiles emerged for the women and men that differed in terms of level and shape. Furthermore, these profiles predicted job search self-efficacy significantly for the women and men, but they predicted only job search clarity among the men. These results provide evidence about the importance of differentiating profiles of emotional intelligence between women and men and to be particularly attentive to gender stereotypes. Second, these results open new avenues for tailor-made career counseling interventions for university students facing the school-to-work transition.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, job search self-efficacy, job search clarity, school-to-work transition, person-centered approach.

Emotional Intelligence Profiles and Job Search Correlates in the Context of the School-to-Work Transition

The transition from schooling to employment is a pivotal and uncertain period for students' career development. The preparation of leaving university life for a full-time job involves many challenges, such as developing clear career goals, making important career decisions, and anticipating and preparing for entry into the world of work (Akkermans, et al., 2021). This period may lead to the experience of various emotions that could influence career choices and career behaviours (Parmentier et al., 2022). In this sense, emotional intelligence has received increasing attention as an important self-regulatory resource to respond adaptively to career events such as the school-to-work transition (Coetzee & Beukes, 2010).

Previous theoretical frameworks in the context of career, that is, the career construction model of adaptation, considered emotional intelligence as a stable psychological characteristic that covers readiness and willingness to adapt to career challenges, labeled *Adaptivity* (Hirschi et al., 2015; Savickas, 2013). In this model, adaptivity is recognized as an antecedent of *Adaptability*, which is defined as the psychosocial strength that helps individuals to adapt to career difficulties. Adaptability is generally associated with the concept of career adaptability. In turn, adaptability influences how individuals develop adaptive behaviors and beliefs in relation to career conditions, such as job search self-efficacy or job search clarity. Finally, adaptability and adapting responses affect the adaptation results, such as employment outcomes. Indeed, emotional intelligence has been demonstrated to be a predictor of career adaptability (Parmentier et al., 2019), career decision-making processes (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2014), and career satisfaction (Pirsoul et al., 2021). In addition, recent studies also showed that emotional intelligence plays an important role with regard to job search processes such as job search self-efficacy (Nieto-Flores et al., 2019), job search success (Mittal, 2020), entrepreneurial intentions

(for a meta-analysis, see Miao et al., 2018), entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Mortan et al., 2014), and employability (Nelis et al., 2011). These studies have used mainly variable-centered approaches and explored how individuals differed in their mean levels of emotional intelligence (i.e., low or high emotional intelligence) and how these mean levels predicted different outcomes. However, they did not investigate the various combinations of emotional intelligence dimensions (i.e., profiles of emotional intelligence) and how these combinations might predict career and educational outcomes. In this respect, person-centered approaches are more suitable for addressing these issues.

Additionally, a long and tenacious debate exists about gender differences. On the one hand, some research has shown a higher level of general emotional intelligence in situational tests for women. On the other hand, no significant differences were found regarding self-report measures (for a meta-analysis, see Joseph & Newman, 2010). When exploring differences at the dimension level, women tended to report a higher level of interpersonal skills, whereas men tended to report a higher level of intrapersonal skills (Brasseur et al., 2013; Parker et al., 2011; Petrides & Furnham, 2000a). To the best of our knowledge, only one study has investigated gender differences in emotional intelligence using person-centered approaches. In this study, the authors demonstrated qualitative and quantitative differences across men and women profiles (Gerits et al., 2005). However, person-centered approaches are cumulative, and profile replication is a core aspect to ascertain their validity.

The aims of the present research were therefore threefold. Using latent profile analysis (LPA), we first explored how different profiles of emotional intelligence emerged from the data among a sample of Belgian university students. Our second objective was to investigate gender differences and similarities among these profiles. This objective was motivated by the importance of examining the construct validity of profiles and determining their plausibility and relevance for

developing tailor-made interventions among students (Morin et al., 2016). Finally, as job search success is one of the most critical components for a successful transition to the world of work, and because our study investigates the processes before the transition, our last objective was to examine how emotional intelligence profiles predicted two job search correlates: job search self-efficacy and job search clarity.

The current research makes essential contributions in various ways to the career literature. We develop and propose a more nuanced picture of emotional intelligence but also investigate unexplored job search correlates with regard to emotional intelligence in the context of the school-to-work transition. At the theoretical level, we go beyond the classic variable-centered approach that considers emotional intelligence as high or low and considers the complexity of the emotional intelligence construct. We also extend our comprehension of emotional intelligence with regard to vocational- and career-related processes and contribute to the career construction model of adaptation. It also responds to prior calls that pointed out the necessity to better understand and integrate the role of emotions and emotional processes in career theory (Hartung, 2011). By examining gender differences, we also propose a better understanding of how women and men differ in terms of emotion appraisal and emotion regulation and how these differences may affect job search correlates. At the practical level, as emotional intelligence represents a core resource in individuals' career development, the person-centered approach used in the present study conveys concrete information and categorization for career counselors and university services in order to adapt their practices and help students in their preparation into the workforce. It also opens new avenues to develop tailor-made interventions in emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence

Two main approaches coexist in the emotional intelligence literature: ability models (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and trait models (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). The development of

these two models has given birth to a significant number of debates over whether emotional intelligence is a set of abilities or a personality trait. Other researchers also developed mixed models of emotional intelligence that include characteristics such as empathy or social skills (Bar-On, 2006). Finally, integrative models have been proposed to reconcile previous theoretical debates, such as Mikolajczak, Quoidbach, Kotsou, and Nélis' (2009) tripartite model of emotional intelligence.

Building upon these theoretical considerations, we can broadly define emotional intelligence as the ability to identify, understand, and manage one's and others' emotions. In this paper, as we were not able to evaluate all components of emotional intelligence, we decided to focus on the trait level. In other words, we focused on what people naturally do in emotional situations rather than what they know (i.e., knowledge) or what they are able to do in emotional situations (i.e., abilities). Recent evidence showed that these components are distinct and few correlated (Cardos-Seixas, 2016; Lumley et al., 2005). To this end, we used the Rotterdam Emotional Intelligence Scale (Pekaar, Bakker, van der Linden, & Born, 2018). This modern instrument allows us to disentangle the extent to which individuals perceive and understand their own emotions (i.e., self-focused emotion appraisal) and the emotions of others (other-focused emotions appraisal). It also investigates the extent to which individuals regulate their own emotions (i.e., self-focused emotion regulation) and the emotions of others (i.e., other-focused emotion regulation). These dimensions are also present in every conceptual model of emotional intelligence.

A series of studies showed the positive effect of emotional intelligence in the educational and vocational literature. Based on the career construction model, previous research has demonstrated that emotional intelligence is a predictor of career adaptability (Parmentier et al., 2019, 2021) and is related to more adaptive career decision-making processes (Di Fabio &

Kenny, 2011), greater career satisfaction (Pirsoul et al., 2021), and higher levels of employability (Nelis et al., 2011). These results have led researchers to recognize emotional intelligence as an important self-regulatory resource for individuals' careers, as emotionally intelligent people are better at planning their career goals, dealing with different organizational cultures, and developing positive relationships at work and are able to anticipate the emotional consequences of career difficulties and respond adaptatively to them.

Profiles of Emotional Intelligence

Although previous research has highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in the educational and career domains, the study of emotional intelligence has been mainly conducted through variable-centered approaches. These approaches have investigated how individuals differed with regard to the mean of the sample (i.e., low or high emotional intelligence) but not *how* the specific dimensions of emotional intelligence interacted together, while several researchers have suggested substantial variability across dimensions (Fiori, 2009; Keefer et al., 2012). However, Nelis et al. (2011) argued that the capacity to manage one's stress and consider recruiters' emotions simultaneously predicted university students' employability. Another study showed that a high level of emotional appraisal combined with an inability to understand or regulate emotions could lead to psychological discomfort and disorders (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2006). Thus, it is possible that two university students with two equivalent levels of emotional intelligence present two profiles characterized by quantitative (i.e., low versus high levels of emotional intelligence dimensions) and qualitative differences (i.e., a high level of self-focused emotion appraisal and a low level of self-focused emotion regulation). These observations motivated us to use a person-centered approach to investigate emotional intelligence at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels.

Research question 1. *How many emotional intelligence profiles that vary quantitatively (in level) and qualitatively (in shape) among university students emerge in the data?*

Among the few studies adopting a person-centered approach to investigate emotional intelligence, Gohm (2003) revealed four profiles among university students based on emotional attention, clarity, and intensity dimensions. Individuals with a profile displaying high levels on the three dimensions reacted more intensively to emotional situations and had a negative mood during a longer period. However, this study neglected the intrapersonal regulation dimension and the interpersonal dimensions. Using LPA and based on intrapersonal abilities, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and stress-management capacity, another study found 5 profiles of emotional intelligence among freshmen students (Keefer et al., 2012). Two profiles presented high and average scores on the four dimensions. A third profile presented high interpersonal scores but low stress-management scores. A fourth one presented a reverse pattern. The last one presented a low level on the four dimensions. The results indicated that having a profile with low levels on emotional intelligence dimensions was associated with a probability of degree non-completion. Finally, Toyama and Mauno (2016) also investigated emotional intelligence using LPA and found 6 profiles based on intrapersonal, interpersonal, and situational emotional intelligence dimensions. Most profiles were low, on average, or high on the three dimensions. However, one profile presented an average level of intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional intelligence but low situational emotional intelligence levels. They also showed that profiles with high levels of emotional intelligence were associated with lower levels of burnout and depression and higher levels of work engagement and performance.

With respect to gender differences and based on Bar-On's model, Gerits et al. (2005) investigated emotional intelligence profiles among nurses using cluster analysis. This study is one of the first to examine gender differences in relation to emotional intelligence through person-

centered approaches. Prior variable-centered studies of the relation between emotional intelligence and gender have had inconsistent results. In these studies, women tended to present a higher level of emotional intelligence in situational tests. Nevertheless, no significant differences emerged with regard to self-report measures (for a meta-analysis, see Joseph & Newman, 2010 or MacCann et al., 2020). However, these results relied only upon the global score of emotional intelligence. When exploring differences at the dimension level, most of the studies have demonstrated that women tended to report higher levels of interpersonal emotional intelligence, whereas men tended to report higher levels of intrapersonal emotional intelligence (Brasseur et al., 2013; McIntyre, 2010; Petrides & Furnham, 2000). In their study, Gerits et al. (2005) revealed the emergence of 7 profiles for both women and men based on intrapersonal abilities, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress-management capacity, and general mood dimensions. They also found that profiles characterized by a higher level of emotional intelligence were associated with a lower level of burnout among women and men. However, this study also differed from Peekar et al.'s (2018) conceptualizations regarding the specific dimensions of appraisal and regulation.

In the current study, we used LPA to examine the combinations of the emotional intelligence dimensions of self-focused emotion appraisal, self-focused emotion regulation, other-focused emotion appraisal, and other-focused emotion regulation among a sample of university students at the end of their studies. In addition, we assessed the extent to which differences concerning profiles emerged between women and men. The investigation of gender differences offers the possibility to ascertain the construct validity of profiles that could guide tailor-made interventions (Olivera-Aguilar & Rikoon, 2018). LPA is a categorical latent variable modeling approach that aims to identify individual subgroups (i.e., profiles) that differ with regard to their mean level (e.g., low vs. high) and to their shape in relation to the dimensions (e.g., high level of

self-focused emotion appraisal and low level of self-focused emotion regulation). In contrast to classical clustering, LPA relies upon the structural equation modeling framework and provides several advantages, such as the possibility to analyze fit indices to choose the best profile solution, taking into account measurement errors, investigating covariates, and classifying membership probabilities directly from the model (Spurk et al., 2020).

As the literature indicates the emergence of different profiles of emotional intelligence and that women tend to report higher levels of interpersonal levels of emotional intelligence, we first expected that women would display profiles with higher levels on other-focused emotional intelligence dimensions than those of men. In contrast, as the literature indicates that men tend to report higher levels of intrapersonal emotional intelligence, we expected that men would display profiles with higher levels on self-focused emotional intelligence dimensions than those of women.

Hypothesis 1a. *The emotional intelligence profiles of women will display higher levels on other-focused emotional intelligence dimensions than those of men.*

Hypothesis 1b. *The emotional intelligence profiles of men will display higher levels on self-focused emotional intelligence dimensions than those of women.*

Job Search Correlates of Emotional Intelligence Profiles

In light of the career construction model of adaptation, the second objective of this study was to investigate the relations of distinct emotional intelligence profiles with two job search correlates with regard to the school-to-work transition: job search self-efficacy and job search clarity.

Job search self-efficacy is defined as the belief that one can successfully perform job search behaviours (Saks & Ashforth, 1999). Based on the career construction model of adaptation that considers emotional intelligence as a stable trait (i.e., Adaptivity) that predicts adapting

responses and based on the self-regulation theory describing that individuals regulate their cognition, emotions, and behaviours to find employment and attain personal and career goals (Kanfer et al., 2001), we consider emotional intelligence a predictor of job search self-efficacy. This is in line with previous research that showed the predictive effect of emotional intelligence on active job search behaviours through the mediation effect of job search self-efficacy (Nieto-Flores et al., 2019). A recent study also showed that emotion regulation was a predictor of employment status via job search self-efficacy (Urquijo et al., 2019). These studies are consistent with previous research demonstrating that emotional intelligence training can improve employability among university students (Nelis et al., 2011). Following Young et al. (1996), emotional identification plays an essential role in the investigation and understanding of individuals' career interests and in carrying out actions in agreement with our emotions. Individuals with a high level of emotional intelligence are also better at managing their emotions in front of recruiters. Thus, students with a higher level of emotional intelligence tend to think they have more chances to find employment or develop adaptative behaviours in job search processes, leading to a higher level of job search self-efficacy (i.e., ability to present themselves as a competent person).

Job search clarity is defined as the extent to which individuals have a clear idea of the type of job they want to find (Wanberg et al., 2002). Previous research has shown that developing goals in the job search process is an important predictor of self-regulated behaviours such as job search intensity and employment (Côté et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Additionally, career choices and goals can be regulated and influenced by a series of decisions that may be emotional (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2011). Accordingly, prior studies have already shown that emotional intelligence tends to be a salient predictor of the clarity and stability of individuals’ career goals and interests among women (Puffer, 2011). Authors support that emotionally intelligence

individuals are better at understanding their emotions, and providing important information about what is important to them in terms of values and needs (Clore et al., 2001), which, in turn, may lead to higher clarity about their career aspirations (Côté et al., 2006, Young et al., 1996). These assumptions are in line with the career construction theory that argues that emotional intelligence is considered as a predictor of individuals' beliefs. Therefore, the capacity to be conscious and regulate emotions could lead to better planning of individuals' career goals (Potgieter, 2014). It is also in line with a recent study demonstrating that emotional intelligence predicts job search success through the effect of career adaptability (Mittal, 2020). Based on these elements, we consider emotional intelligence as a predictor of job search clarity.

Hypothesis 2. *Emotional intelligence profiles will display significant differences in terms of job search self-efficacy, such that profiles characterized by higher levels of self-focused emotion appraisal, self-focused emotion regulation, other-focused emotion appraisal, and other-focused emotion regulation will display a higher level of job search self-efficacy.*

Hypothesis 3. *Emotional intelligence profiles will display significant differences in terms of job search clarity, such that profiles characterized by higher levels of self-focused emotion appraisal, self-focused emotion regulation, other-focused emotion appraisal, and other-focused emotion regulation will display a higher level of job search clarity.*

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were collected from 1582 Belgian university students enrolled in the third, fourth and final year of their studies. We decided to focus on these three last years because, in Belgium, it corresponds to an important period with regard to career decision processes and specialization before the transition to the world of work. Students were contacted by personal contacts, e-mail, and social networks to complete an online survey. This study was approved by the Institutional

Review Board of the university, and the students were ensured of both the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey. To evaluate gender differences appropriately, we tried to maintain a balance between women and men. Accordingly, the final sample consisted of 51.6% women and 48.4% men. The mean age of our sample was 21.67 (*SD* = 5.55). Additionally, 41.3% were in the third year of study, 34.9% were in the first year of their master's degree, and 23.8% were in the final year of their master's degree. Concerning the study programs, 57.4% were in social sciences, 18.6% were in health sciences, 20.5% were in technology, and 3.5% did not report their study program.

Measures

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was assessed in French with the *Rotterdam Emotional Intelligence Scale* (REIS; Pekaar, Bakker, van der Linden, & Born, 2018). To this end, we used a back-translation from the original version in English to French (Brislin, 1981). The items in French are available in Appendix 1. This measure is a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and comprises 28 items investigating four dimensions: self-emotion focused appraisal (e.g., "*I always know how I feel*", α = .84), other-focused emotion appraisal (e.g., "*I am aware of the emotions of the people around me*", α = .85), self-focused emotion regulation (e.g., "*I am in control of my own emotions*", α = .82), and other-focused emotion regulation (e.g., "*I can alter another person's emotional state*", α = .85). The validity and reliability (four factorial structure with good fit indices and good internal consistency reliabilities) of the REIS has been shown in eight different samples in the validation article (Pekaar, Bakker, van der Linden, & Born, 2018), but also in a series of other studies (Pekaar, Bakker, van der Linden, Born et al., 2018; Pekaar et al., 2019). The Cronbach's alpha in prior studies varied from .79 to .89.

Job Search Self-Efficacy

Job search self-efficacy was assessed in French with items from the *"Getting ready for your next job" inventory* (Wanberg et al., 2010). This measure uses a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all confident*) to 5 (*highly confident*) and comprises 11 items. This scale assesses how confident individuals feel about being able to realize a series of job search behaviours. We performed an exploratory factor analysis that indicated the emergence of two factors. Thus, we decided to separate the items targeting the intrapersonal (e.g., "*Writing a good resumé*", α = .74) from those targeting the interpersonal (e.g., "*Presenting yourself well in an interview*", α = .68) job search behaviours in our analysis. Prior studies showed good reliability evidence (Cronbach's α from .82 to .93) and also showed job search self-efficacy as a good predictor of job search intensity, and employment status (Guan et al., 2013; Petruzziello et al., 2021; van Hooft et al., 2021)

Job Search Clarity

Job search clarity was assessed in French with the scale developed by Côté et al. (2006) and Wanberg et al. (2002). This measure uses a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and comprises 5 items. This scale assessed the extent to which individuals have clear objectives of the type of job they want and where they want to work. A sample item is "*I have a clear idea of the type of job that I want to find*". The Cronbach's α in the present study was .83. Prior studies showed good reliability evidence (α = .84) and also showed job search clarity as a good predictor of job search intensity, job search quality, and employment quality (Côté et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks; 2009; van Hooft et al., 2021).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Statistical analyses were conducted using the M*plus* 8 robust maximum likelihood estimator with full information maximum likelihood. The means, standard deviations, and

bivariate correlations are reported in Table 1. Second, confirmatory factor analyses were performed to evaluate the reliability of our constructs. In addition, we performed measurement invariance between women and men using a multigroup analysis to evaluate the equivalence of our constructs (Parker et al., 2011). Regarding emotional intelligence, the model fit for the entire sample was good (χ^2 (272) = 1308.975; RMSEA = .049; CFI = .929; TLI = .902; SRMR = .029), and we reached residual invariance between women and men (χ^2 (691) = 1936.504; RMSEA = .048; CFI = .914; TLI = .906; SRMR = .052). Model fit for job search self-efficacy and job search clarity was also good (χ^2 (240) = 751.001; RMSEA = .055; CFI = .914; TLI = .906; SRMR = .045), and we also reached residual invariance with regard to job search self-efficacy and job search clarity (χ^2 (235) = 809.838; RMSEA = .06; CFI = .908; TLI = .906; SRMR = .05). We saved the factor scores from the measurement invariance model of emotional intelligence and used them as profile indicators for LPA (Morin et al., 2016).

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Latent Profile Analyses and Profile Similarity

We performed LPA following in a stepwise procedure from 1 to 8 profiles for women and men. We performed LPA using 5,000 random sets of starting values and 1,000 iterations. The 200 best solutions were retained for optimization. For multigroup models, the values were 10,000, 2,000, and 500. We used a number of fit statistics to evaluate each profile solution: the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), the Consistent AIC (CAIC), the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), the sample-size adjusted BIC (SABIC), the adjusted Lo-Mendell-Rubin likelihood ratio test (aLMR), the Bootstrap Likelihood Ratio test (BLRT), and entropy. The best profile solution should display smaller AIC, CAIC, BIC, and SABIC values; an entropy greater than .70; and significant aLMR and BLRT statistics. The solution to retain should display the AIC, CAIC, BIC, and SABIC values; an entropy greater than .70; and significant aLMR and

BLRT statistics. The simulation studies of Nylund et al. (2007) recommended using the CAIC, BIC, SABIC, and BLRT compared to other indices. For the multigroup profile analysis, we followed the sequential strategy of Morin et al. (2016). These kinds of analyses allow evaluation of the similarity of the number of profiles, their shape, variability, and distribution. We used the R3STEP function to determine how the year of the study predicted profile membership. For the outcomes, we used multinomial logistic regressions to examine how profile membership was associated with job search self-efficacy and job search clarity using the AUXILIARY (BCH) function. We allowed the means and variances to vary during the enumeration process because the parameterization is more realistic and provides less biased parameter estimates (Morin et al., 2011).

We report the fit indices associated with the profile enumerations, and the multigroup similarity fit statistics for women and men in Table S1 and S2, respectively. For the women, the BIC and CAIC decreased until the 4-profile solution and then increased. The AIC and SABIC decreased until the 8-profile solution. The values of the aLMR and BLRT supported a 4-profile solution. Thus, our results supported a 4-profile solution. The 3-profile to the 5-profile solutions were examined more closely. This examination demonstrated that the 4-profile solution was the most proper solution regarding its statistical and theoretical conformity. The 4-profile solution compared to the 3-profile solution proposed a fourth profile that better differentiated the proportion of the total sample. The proportion of individuals in one profile scoring below the average with respect to the four emotional intelligence dimensions decreased from 46.76% in the 3-profile solution to 4.77% in the 4-profile solution. Concerning the 5-profile solution, a new profile with only 1.35% difference from the 4-profile solution emerged and did not provide substantive additional information. Thus, our qualitative investigation highlighted the 4-profile solution presented in Figure 1.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

For the men, the BIC and the CAIC decreased until the 4-profile solution and then reached a plateau. The AIC and the SABIC decreased until the 8-profile solution. The values of the aLMR supported a 2-, 3-, 5-, and 6-profile solution. The BLRT supported the 1- to 7-profile solutions. However, some simulation studies have shown that aLMR tends to underestimate the number of profiles (Nylund et al., 2007). Additionally, it is recommended that the values associated with the BIC and CAIC be privileged. For women's profiles, we examined the 3-profile to 5-profile solutions. The added profile in the 4-profile solution compared to the 3-profile solution provided a new relevant profile comprising 30.59% of the sample. However, adding a 5th profile did not bring substantive information due to the low proportion in this profile (1.18%). Thus, we retained the 4-profile solution displayed in Figure 2.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

Then, we explored the similarity of the profiles between the women and men, which is displayed in Table S2. As indicated by Morin et al. (2016), two indicators have to decrease to consider there to be similarity between profiles. Our results did not reach structural similarity, indicating that the women's and men's profiles displayed the same number of profiles but different patterns with respect to the shapes and levels of emotional intelligence profiles.

Interpretation of the Profiles.

For the women, Profile 1 showed low levels on the intrapersonal emotional dimensions (i.e., self-focused emotion appraisal and regulation) and very low levels on the interpersonal emotional dimensions (i.e., other-focused emotional appraisal and regulation). This *Low interpersonal* profile was composed of 4.77% of the total sample. In the same vein, Profile 2 was composed of women displaying low levels on emotional intelligence dimensions, but these levels were just below average. We labeled this profile *Below average* (composing 50.18% of the total

sample). The third profile, composing 32.68% of the total sample, presented levels of emotional intelligence dimensions moderately *Above average*. The levels were higher for the interpersonal dimensions. Finally, the fourth profile displayed particularly high levels on the interpersonal dimensions, but the intrapersonal dimensions were also moderately above average. Thus, we labelled this profile *High interpersonal*, composing 12.36% of the total sample.

For the men, the first profile presented low levels of self-focused emotion appraisal, other-focused emotion appraisal, and other-focused emotion regulation but a moderate and positive level of self-focused emotion regulation. This *Intrapersonal Regulator* profile was the largest profile, composing 41.39% of the total sample. The second profile was composed of the men displaying high levels on the intrapersonal dimensions, and the levels on the interpersonal emotional intelligence dimensions were below average. Composing 18.95% of the men sample, we labelled this profile *Intrapersonal*. The third profile, composing 30.59% of the sample, presented moderately *Above average* levels on the emotional intelligence dimensions. Finally, the fourth profile displayed high levels on the four emotional intelligence dimensions with a particularly high level for other-focused emotion regulation. Thus, we labelled this profile *High*, composing 10.07% of the total sample.

Antecedents of Emotional Intelligence Profiles

No significant coefficients were found between the year of study and the profiles of the women and men.

Job Search Correlates of Emotional Intelligence Profiles

Differences between profiles with regard to job search self-efficacy and job search clarity are reported in Table 2 and Table 3. Significant differences between emotional intelligence profiles were found for the women and men concerning intrapersonal and interpersonal job search self-efficacy. Overall, the profiles with higher levels of emotional intelligence dimensions

displayed a higher intrapersonal and interpersonal job search self-efficacy level. The women with a *High interpersonal* or *Above average* profile exhibited significantly higher levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal job search self-efficacy than those with a *Low interpersonal* or *Below average* profile. For the men, individuals with a *High* or *Above average* profile exhibited a higher level of intrapersonal job search self-efficacy than those with an *Intrapersonal regulator* profile. Regarding interpersonal job search self-efficacy, the men with a *High* or *Above average* profile exhibited a higher level than those with an *Intrapersonal regulator* or *Interpersonal* profile. For job search clarity, no significant differences were found between the women. Concerning the men, individuals with a *High* or *Above average* profile exhibited a higher level of job search clarity than those with an *Intrapersonal regulator* or *Interpersonal* profile. These results supported our second hypothesis and partially supported our third hypothesis.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore emotional intelligence profiles based on the self-focused emotion appraisal, self-focused emotion regulation, other-focused emotion appraisal, and other-focused emotion regulation dimensions among university students at the point of the school-to-work transition. Another key objective was to investigate gender differences and similarities in university students' profiles. This objective was motivated by ascertaining the construct validity of our profiles. Finally, we aimed to document the importance of emotional intelligence profiles at the point of the school-to-work transition in terms of job search self-efficacy and job search clarity.

Our results demonstrated the emergence of four profiles for both women and men. However, profile similarity analyses indicated that the levels and shapes were quite different.

Thus, we echo previous findings demonstrating the relevance of investigating how the specific emotional intelligence dimensions differ quantitatively and qualitatively (Gohm & Clore, 2002; Keefer et al., 2012; Toyama & Mauno, 2016), especially (Gerits et al., 2005). For the women, we observed the emergence of a first *Low interpersonal* profile characterized by low levels of self-focused emotion appraisal and regulation and very low levels of other-focused emotion appraisal and regulation. This profile represented a small proportion of the subgroup (4.77%). We also observed a *Below average* profile characterized by below-average levels on the four dimensions. This profile had the largest proportion, accounting for 50.18% of the women's subgroup. We also observed *Above average* and *High interpersonal* profiles, with above average and high levels on the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions, respectively. Regarding the men, we observed the emergence of a first *Intrapersonal regulator* profile that represented 41.39% of the subgroup. This profile was characterized by low levels of self-focused emotion appraisal, other-focused emotion appraisal, and other-focused emotion regulation. However, individuals with this profile presented a high level of self-focused emotion regulation. The second *Intrapersonal* profile was characterized by a high level on the self-focused dimensions but low levels on the other-focused dimensions. The third was composed of *Above average* levels on the four dimensions, representing 30.59% of the subgroup. Finally, the last *High* profile was characterized by high levels on the fourth dimension and represented 10.07% of the subgroup. These results are consistent with previous findings that demonstrated that women tend to have higher interpersonal skills levels, wherein men tend to have higher levels of intrapersonal skills (Brasseur et al., 2013; McIntyre, 2010; Petrides & Furnham, 2000b). These results can be interpreted under the theory of social roles (Eagly & Wood, 2016). This theory argues that gender differences, in terms of behaviour, cognition, or emotion, are mainly explained by gender role beliefs. Thus, women are socially expected to develop listening, empathy, caring skills and to be interpersonally oriented.

Simultaneously, it is also expected for men to develop courage, assertiveness, self-control, and stress management. In addition, Brody (2000) argues that gender differences are also based on a developmental process in which parents and peers socialize individuals to internalize these social roles. However, by using a person-centered approach in the current study, we demonstrated more nuanced differences regarding gender. Even if women tend to differ with regard to the interpersonal dimensions, we also observed some differences with respect to the intrapersonal dimensions. For the men, the profiles were differentiated on the basis of not only the intrapersonal dimensions but also the interpersonal dimensions. Therefore, our results highlight being particularly attentive to gender stereotypes conveyed in our society since our person-centered findings revealed some heterogeneity among the women's and men's profiles. Thus, our results support the complementariness of person-centered approaches compared to variable-centered approaches in the study of emotional intelligence.

With respect to job search correlates (i.e., job search self-efficacy and job search clarity), the investigation between profiles demonstrated the predictive and positive effect of emotional intelligence. These results thus first bring additional evidence for the career construction model of adaptation and provide empirical support for considering emotional intelligence as an Adaptivity component that predicts Adapting Responses, that is, job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. According to our hypothesis, we observed significant differences with regard to the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of job search self-efficacy among the profiles. Profiles with higher levels on the emotional intelligence dimensions showed higher levels on these two outcomes. For the women, having an *Above average* or *High interpersonal* profile was related to higher levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal job search self-efficacy than to low levels of emotional intelligence dimensions (i.e., *Low interpersonal* and *Below average*). For the men, we globally observed the same pattern of results. The *Above average* and *High* profiles

were related to higher levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal job search self-efficacy than the *Intrapersonal regulator* and *Intrapersonal* profiles. However, we did not find significant differences between the *Intrapersonal* and *High* profiles, between the *Above average* and *High* profiles, or between the *Intrapersonal* and *Above average* profiles. These results may be explained in part by the fact that these profiles present relatively the same levels of intrapersonal emotional intelligence. Accordingly, previous research has already shown that intrapersonal emotional intelligence is more related to behaviours directed at regulating one's own emotions (Pekaar et al., 2019). Concerning interpersonal job search self-efficacy, Nozaki (2015) found that interpersonal emotional intelligence was more associated with behaviours that aim at regulating the emotions of others, which are particularly important during a job interview. For job search clarity, no significant differences were found between the women's profiles. Among the men, the *High* and *Above average* profiles were related to a higher level of job search clarity than the *Intrapersonal regulator* and *Intrapersonal* profiles. For both the women and men profiles, these results suggest that job search clarity is more strongly predicted by students' ability to identify and regulate their own emotions than to regulate the emotions of others. These results are in line with Young et al's (1996) assumption that the appraisal and regulation of one's emotions are crucial to developing one's career objectives. These results also corroborate previous findings indicating that emotional intelligence is a predictor of job search success, job search self-efficacy, and employability (Mittal, 2020; Nelis et al., 2011; Nieto-Flores et al., 2019). It is also the first study to explore emotional intelligence as a predictor of job search clarity.

Limitations and Future Directions

Various limitations in the present study may have affected the generalizability of our results. First, we relied upon a cross-sectional design, limiting our ability to measure causality between variables. Further research should aim to develop longitudinal designs to evaluate the

stability of the profiles across time (i.e., latent transition analysis) and the direction of the causality between emotional intelligence and career-related outcomes (Morin et al., 2018). Second, our research was conducted on a sample of Belgian university students. Future research should focus on other populations and educational contexts to generalize the profiles and results. Third, our study was assessed with a self-report measure of emotional intelligence. Therefore, it is difficult to affirm whether we evaluated an objective level of emotional intelligence or whether these responses were biased by social desirability and social role expectancies, especially with regard to gender differences (Lopez-Zafra & Gartzia, 2014; Martínez-Marín et al., 2020). In the same vein, this paper only focused on the trait level of emotional intelligence. However, even if the ability level of emotional intelligence is few correlated to the trait level of emotional intelligence, a recent framework argues that it is important to investigate how each of these levels predicts outcomes, but also how they interact to develop emotionally intelligent behaviors (Vesely Maillefer et al., 2018). Future research is thus needed to examine this recommendation. Fourth, our study relied solely upon a person-centered approach, involving the necessity to compare the present results to other research designs such as variable-centered approaches or qualitative approaches. Finally, our study did not investigate contextual variables such as the labor market demand perception. It is unfortunate as this kind of variable has an influence on how individuals cope with and anticipate their transition to the world of work.

Practical Implications

The present findings convey important practical implications for career counseling and universities. First, our findings highlighted the emergence of different profiles for women and men and offered a more realistic and complex picture of emotional intelligence. These profiles also showed a different pattern of levels and shapes for emotion appraisal and emotion regulation. Indeed, our results indicated that it is possible to present a high level of emotion regulation and a

low level of emotion appraisal simultaneously (i.e., *Intrapersonal regulator* profile). Furthermore, profiles that presented higher levels of emotional intelligence dimensions were more likely to present higher levels of job search self-efficacy and job search clarity.

Hence, it is first important for career counselors and university services to consider the complexity of emotional resources among university students and help them with a tailor-made approach. For emotion appraisal, career counselors may help students to develop their abilities to differentiate and be open to emotional experiences that are aligned with the third-wave cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness principles (Greenberg, 2002). Regarding emotion regulation, career counselors may help university students to develop adaptive emotion regulation strategies (Peña-Sarrionandia et al., 2015). By training emotional intelligence using a tailor-made approach, career counselors will help specifically students with regard to their job search self-efficacy and job search clarity, improving their probability of preparing and successfully realizing their transition into the workforce.

The present findings also indicated some differences between women and men. Indeed, women tend to present differences with regard to their interpersonal levels of emotional intelligence, whereas men tend to present differences both at the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. In addition, these differences have important implications regarding job search correlates as women's profiles did not differ in terms of job search clarity. For women, career counselors should thus focus on developing interpersonal dimensions of emotional intelligence. For men, career counselors should pay attention to helping students both for intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of emotional intelligence.

Finally, this research opens new avenues for emotional intelligence training. As emotional intelligence is a malleable construct that can be developed through specific training (Hodzic et al., 2018) and that our findings demonstrate positive and predictive effects of emotional

intelligence profiles on job search self-efficacy and job search clarity, future research should focus on the development of emotional intelligence training with regard to job search processes. Throughout this study, we also would like to insist on the necessity to better integrate emotional processes in guidance counseling activities.

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Tables

Table 1

Factor Correlation Matrix

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender		–									
2. Age		.01	–								
3. Study year		.03	.16**	–							
4. SFEA		.09**	.03	.01	–						
5. SFER		–.12**	.01	.01	.17**	–					
6. OFEA		.39**	.01	–.03	.29**	.04	–				
7. OFER		.02	.01	–.01	.25**	.17**	.56**	–			
8. Intra-JSSE		.01	.03	–.01	.19**	.10**	.16**	.21**	–		
9. Inter-JSSE		.20**	.03	–.01	.23**	.26**	.20**	.34**	.76**	–	
10. Job search clarity		.09**	.07**	.11**	.28**	.14**	.13**	.13**	.20**	.39**	–
Women											
	M	–	21.65	3.8	3.38	3.01	3.75	3.44	3.27	3.82	3.14
	SD	–	4.61	.78	.66	.74	.58	.58	.68	.62	.97
Men											
	M	–	21.70	3.85	3.47	3.47	3.59	3.48	3.47	3.85	3.28
	SD	–	6.41	.79	.69	.68	.66	.65	.61	.59	.90

Note. Gender was coded 0 = women and 1 = men; study year was coded 3 = third year of bachelor's degree, 4 = first year of master's degree and 5 = second year of master's degree; SFEA = self-focused emotion appraisal; SFER = self-focused emotion regulation; OFEA = other-focused emotion appraisal; OFER = other-focused emotion regulation; JSSE = job search self-efficacy.
** $p < .01$

Table 2

Differences of Outcomes between Emotional Intelligence Profiles for Women

	Low interpersonal	Below average	Above average	High interpersonal	Overall χ^2
Intra-JSSE	$-.39_{a,b}$	$-.11_{a,b}$	$.11_{b}$	$.33_{a}$	20.560***
Inter-JSSE	$-.50_{a,b}$	$-.10_{a,b}$	$.13_{b}$	$.31_{a}$	25.450***
Job search clarity	–.01	$-.10_{b}$	$.11_{b}$	.14	7.685

Note. JSSE = job search self-efficacy. Overall chi-square tests were performed with 5 degrees of freedom. Subscripts indicate significant differences between profiles at the .05 level. Subscripts from *a* to *b* refer to significant pairwise comparisons with the High interpersonal and Above average, respectively.
*** $p < .001$

Table 3

Differences of Outcomes between Emotional Intelligence Profiles for Men

	Intrapersonal regulator	Intrapersonal	Above average	High	Overall χ^2
Intra-JSSE	$-.21_{a,b,c}$	$.12_{c}$	$.16_{b}$	$.44_{a}$	28.191***
Inter-JSSE	$.08_{a,b,c}$	$.37_{a,c}$	$.47_{a,b}$	$.90_{a}$	81.780***
Job search clarity	$.08_{a,b,c}$	$.18_{a,c}$	$.37_{b}$	$.50_{a}$	32.882***

Note. JSSE = job search self-efficacy. Overall chi-square tests were performed with 5 degrees of freedom. Subscripts indicate significant differences between profiles at the .05 level. Subscripts from *a* to *c* refer to significant pairwise comparisons with the High, Above average, and High intrapersonal, respectively.

*** $p < .001$

Figures

Figure 1. *Final LPA Solution for Women*

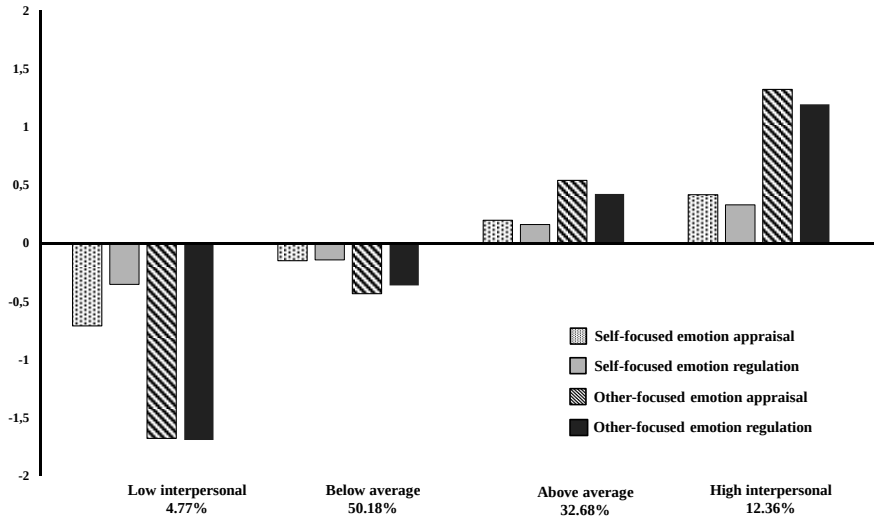
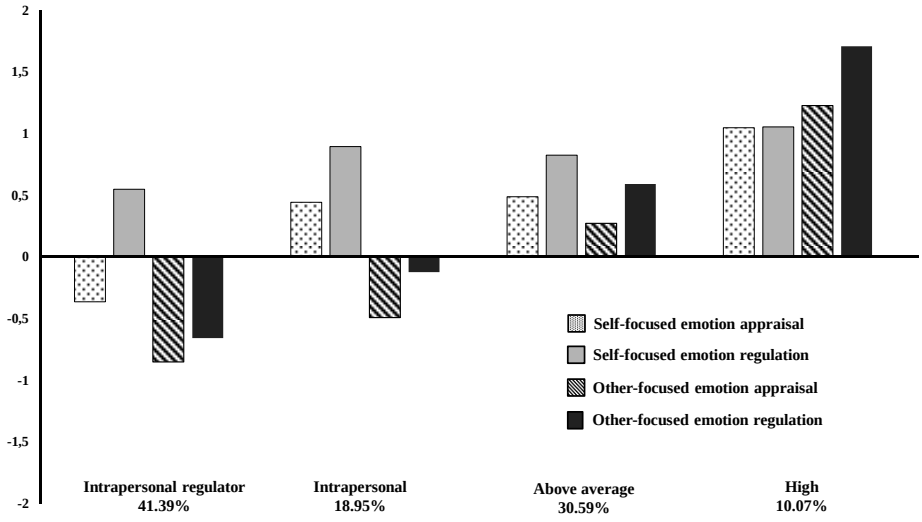


Figure 2. *Final LPA Solution for Men*



Note. The 0 represents the mean of women

Appendix 1. Full list and translation in French of the Rotterdam Emotional Intelligence Scale items (Pekaar, Bakker, van der Linden, & Born, 2018).

Items of the Rotterdam Emotional Intelligence Scale

	English (original version)	French
Self-focused emotion appraisal		
1.	I always know how I feel	Je sais toujours ce que je ressens
2.	I can distinguish my own emotions well	Je suis capable de bien distinguer mes émotions
3.	I am aware of my own emotions	Je suis conscient de mes propres émotions
4.	I understand why I feel the way I feel	Je comprends pourquoi je ressens ce que je ressens
5.	I know which emotions I experience	Je sais quelles émotions je ressens
6.	Mostly, I am able to explain exactly how I feel	La plupart du temps, j'ai la capacité d'expliquer exactement ce que je ressens
7.	I can judge well if events touch me emotionally	Je suis capable de bien juger les événements qui me touchent émotionnellement
Other-focused emotion appraisal		
8.	I am aware of the emotions of the people around me	Je suis conscient des émotions des personnes qui m'entourent
9.	I know which feelings others experience	Je sais quelles émotions les autres ressentent
10.	When I look at other people, I can see how they feel	Quand je regarde les autres personnes, je suis capable de voir ce qu'elles ressentent
11.	I can empathize with the people around me	Je suis capable d'éprouver de l'empathie avec les personnes qui m'entourent
12.	I understand why other people feel the way they feel	Je comprends pourquoi les personnes ressentent ce qu'elles ressentent
13.	I can distinguish well between other people's emotions	Je suis capable de bien distinguer les émotions des autres
14.	I can judge well if events touch others emotionally	Je suis capable de bien juger si les événements touchent émotionnellement les autres

Self-focused emotion regulation

15.	I am in control of my own emotions	Je suis au contrôle de mes propres émotions
16.	I can suppress my emotions easily	Je suis capable de facilement supprimer mes émotions
17.	I do not let my emotions take over	Je ne laisse pas mes émotions prendre le dessus
18.	I only show my emotions when it is appropriate	Je ne montre mes émotions que lorsque c'est approprié
19.	Even when I am angry, I can stay calm	Même quand je suis en colère, je suis capable de rester calme
20.	If I want to, I put on my poker face	Si je le veux, je peux avoir un visage impassible
21.	I adjust my emotions when necessary	J'ajuste mes émotions quand cela est nécessaire

Other-focused emotion regulation

22.	I can make someone else feel differently	Je suis capable de faire en sorte que quelqu'un d'autre se sente différemment
23.	I can alter another person's emotional state	Je suis capable de modifier l'état émotionnel d'une autre personne
24.	I can boost or temper the emotions of others	Je suis capable de stimuler ou tempérer l'état émotionnel des autres
25.	I have great influence on how others feel	J'ai une grande influence sur la façon dont les autres se sentent
26.	I know what to do to improve people's mood	Je sais quoi faire pour améliorer l'humeur des personnes
27.	I know how to influence people	Je sais comment influencer les personnes
28.	I am able to calm others down	J'ai la capacité de calmer les autres