Abstract

As trait emotional intelligence [TEI] is claimed to facilitate adaptation, study 1 (N= 80) investigated whether TEI would be associated with adaptative outcomes such as enhanced self-reported mental and physical health. As these assumptions were supported, study 2 (N= 75) tested the hypothesis of a moderating effect of TEI on the relationship between stress and psychological and somatic health. Incremental validity of TEI over alexithymia and optimism was also examined. We chose academic exams as the stressor and took measures at the beginning of the year and during the examination period. Regression analyses predicting changes in mental/somatic health from baseline to follow-up revealed that TEI significantly moderated the relationship between examination stress and self-reported health. The fact that high EI people appraised the examination situation as less threatening partly explained this effect. Moreover, TEI predicted both mental and somatic symptoms amid stress over and above alexithymia and optimism.