

# Associations Between Self-Reported and Experience-Based Measurements of Emotional Differentiation and Their Relation to Well-Being

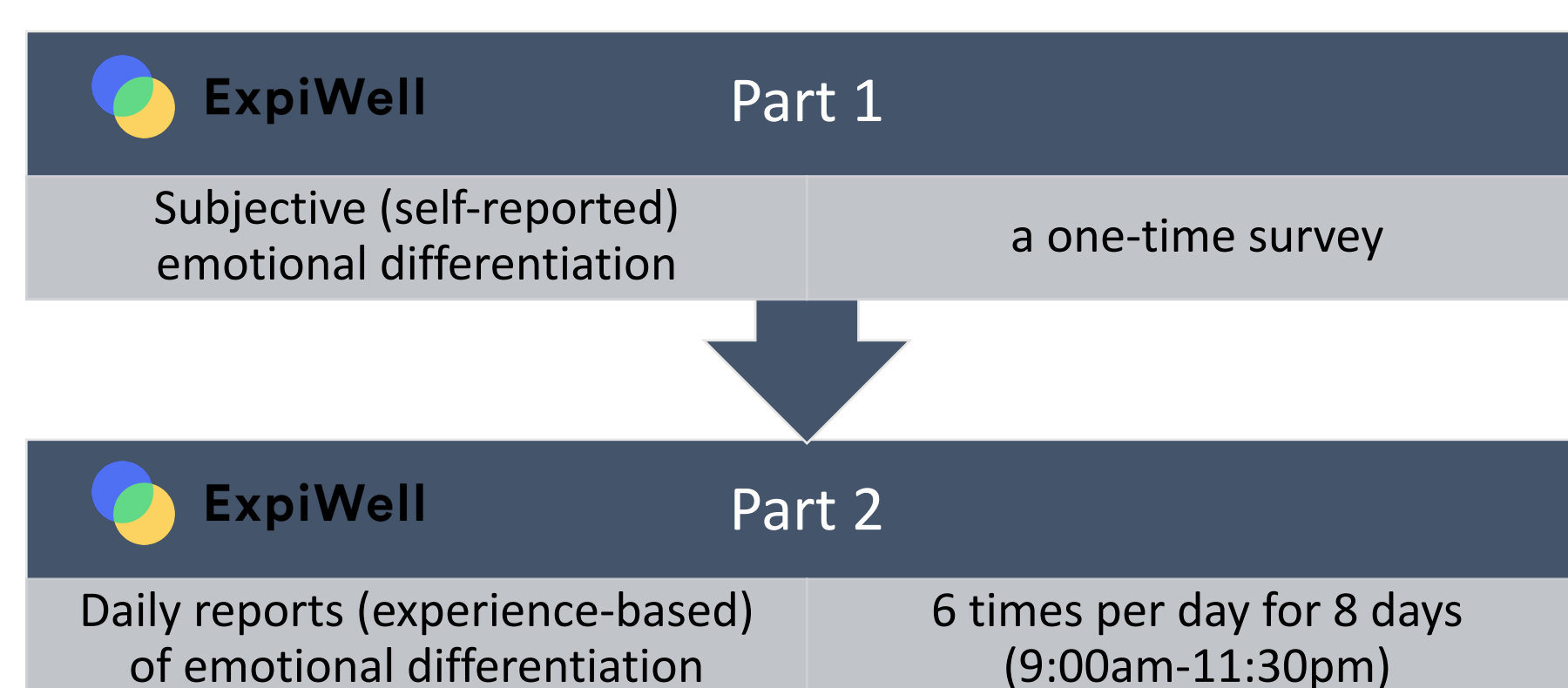
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## BACKGROUND

- Emotional differentiation, the ability to identify and distinguish one's emotions, is a critical skill for well-being (Nook, 2021).
- Yet basic questions remain unanswered about which emotional differentiation measurement is the most strongly related to well-being.
- We examined whether different approaches for measuring emotional differentiation (self-reported and experience-based) are uniquely associated with well-being.

## METHOD

- 209 undergraduate students recruited via the SONA system.



- Cohort 1 (Fall 2022,  $n = 61$ )
- Cohort 2 (Winter 2023,  $n = 148$ )

## RESULTS (Table 1)

- Multiple linear regression analysis showed that greater self-reported emotional differentiation was associated with greater well-being ( $\beta = 0.70, p = .02$ ).
- The experience-based emotional differentiation was not related to well-being ( $\beta = 2.40, p = .42$ ).
- The interaction between self-reported and experience-based emotional differentiation on well-being was not significant ( $\beta = -0.78, p = .32$ ).



Greater emotional differentiation is associated with well-being in university students, but only for self-reported and not experience-based measures.

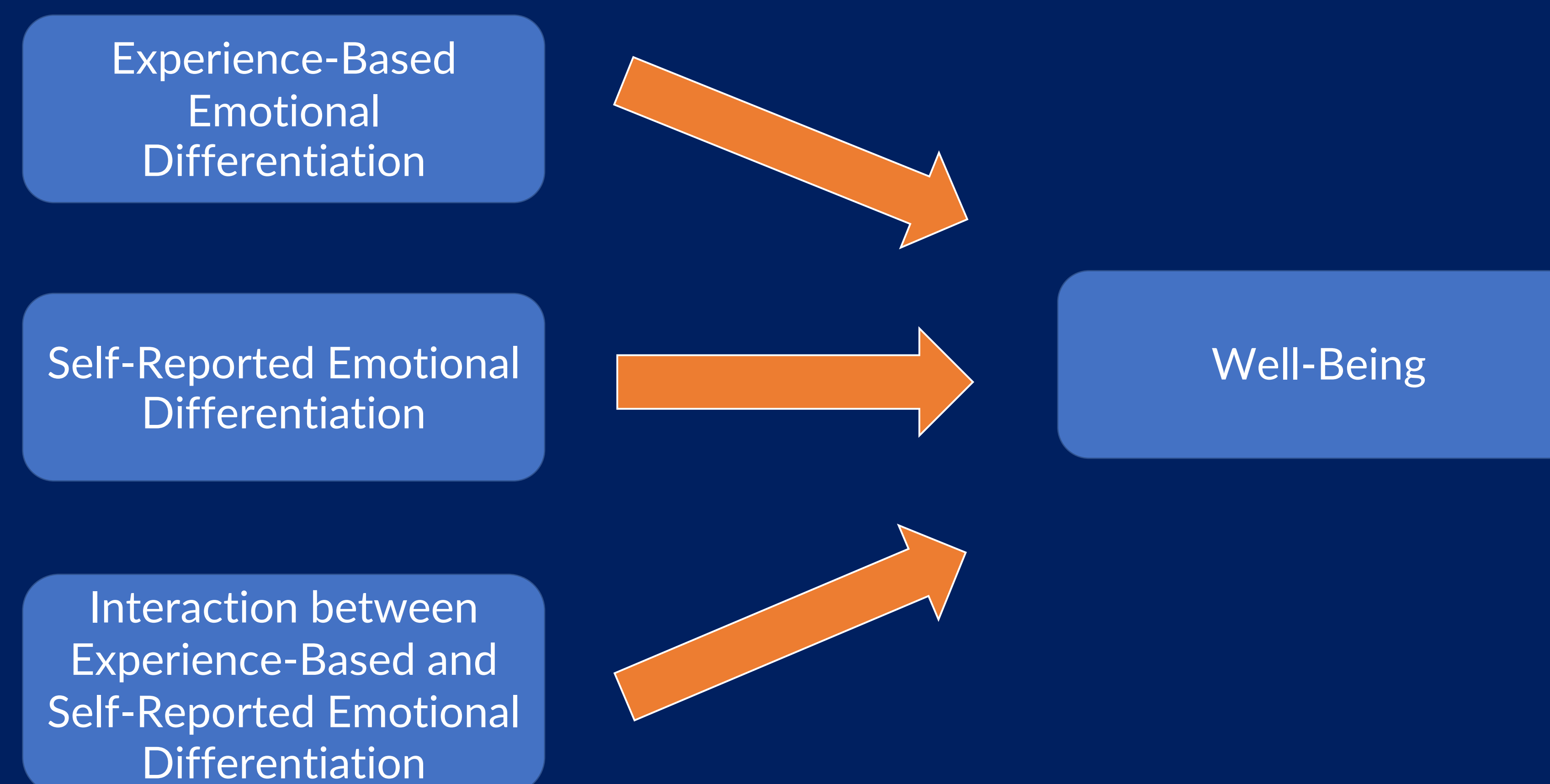


Table 1  
Unstandardized Estimates for Linear Multiple Regression of Well-being

Parameter	Estimate	SE	p	CI <sub>95</sub>	
				Lower	Upper
<b>Main Effects</b>					
Intercept	3.63	1.05	< .001	1.56	5.71
Self-reported emotional differentiation	0.70	0.29	.02	0.12	1.27
Experience-based emotional differentiation	2.40	2.94	.42	-3.40	8.19
Interaction	-0.78	0.79	.32	-2.33	0.76

Note. Intercept = Intercept of well-being.

## DISCUSSION

- Measuring emotional differentiation is complicated and assumes emotional self-awareness.
- Both self-reported and experience-based measures have benefits and limitations.
- Self-reported measures might require more insight into general emotional tendencies and patterns for accurate assessments, but they are easy to administer.
- Experience-based measures reduce recall bias but may vary by individual emotional awareness. They are also time-intensive to collect.
- These two methods for measuring emotional differentiation may capture broad aspects of emotional processes and may be differentially related to other domains of mental health and well-being.

## STRENGTHS

- Daily diary design minimizes recall bias and increases the ecological validity of emotion-related measurements.

## LIMITATIONS

- Only looked at one dimension of mental health/well-being.
- Sample of undergraduate students—results might not generalize.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Use various measures of emotional differentiation.
- Look at other dimensions of mental health/well-being.
- Study broader populations.

Nook, E. C. (2021). Emotion differentiation and youth mental health: Current understanding and open questions. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 700298. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.700298>

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