

Beyond general self-efficacy beliefs and big-five personality traits in teacher burnout: The role of emotional intelligence

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INTRODUCTION

Focusing on positive human resources rather than on weaknesses and distress symptoms has become an emerging approach for many social researchers (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In this sense, positive psychology has become a framework where the traditional interests on individual-differences have consistently been extended with the analysis of constructs as emotional intelligence (EI) (Salovey, Mayer, & Caruso, 2002).

Following the ability-based model proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997), EI is conceptualized as the capacity to perceive, assimilate, understand and manage emotions in oneself and others (see also Brackett & Salovey, 2006). These abilities represent useful tools to process emotional information successfully and might be considered as personal coping resources that allow individuals to manage in and cope with external and internal demands in stressful situations (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, & Mayer, 1999; Caruso & Salovey, 2004).

Recent research has provided evidence that emotionally intelligent individuals show lower symptoms of job burnout in both educational and workplace settings (Durán, Extremera, & Rey, 2004; Gerits, Derksen, Verbruggen, & Katzko, 2005). This general interest on individual resources has also influenced the research on traditional constructs as perceived self-efficacy and personality traits. One variable that may partly account for individual differences in burnout is EI.

The current study analyzes the incremental validity of Emotional Intelligence on burnout, after controlling two well-known variables, personality traits and general efficacy, in order to determine the unique contribution of EI in a sample of Spanish Secondary Teachers.

OBJECTIVES/HYPOTHESIS

The present study addressed the above concern examining the incremental validity of EI in relation to burnout controlling for significant Big Five personality traits and general self-efficacy. We hypothesized that **EI skills would independently account for additional variance in the dimensions of burnout, beyond generalized self-efficacy and big-five personality traits**.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Our sample (N= 160 ; 36,9% male 61,3% female) was composed of Spanish secondary teacher with a mean age of 44,52 years (SD=8,2). They have been teachers during 199 months and teaching in the same high school during 81 months.

INSTRUMENTS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwarzer, & Jerusalem, 1995). GSE reflects an optimistic self-belief. This is the belief that one can perform a novel or difficult tasks, or cope with adversity in various domains of human functioning. Ten items are designed to tap this construct.

Wong's Emotional Intelligence Scale (WEIS; Wong et al., 2007). WEIS is a self-report EI measure based on the four ability dimensions described in the domain of EI.

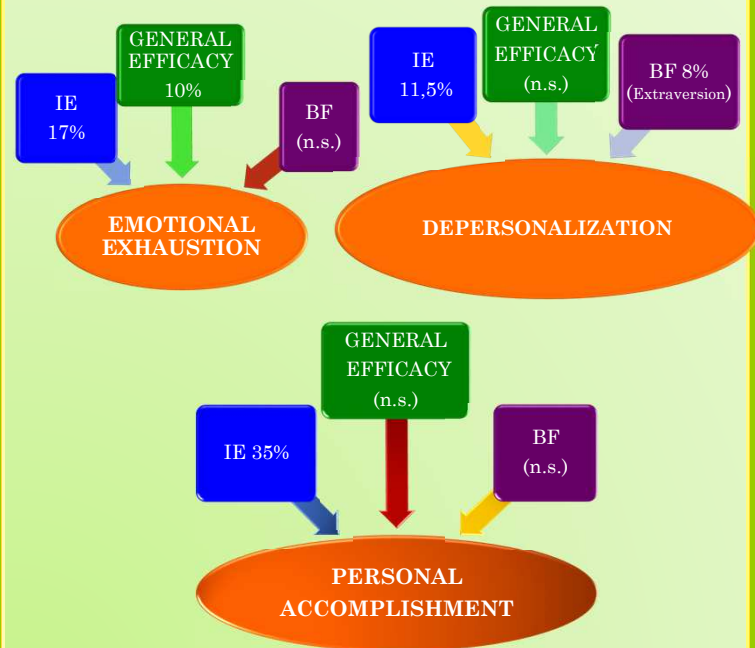
Big-Five bipolar markers (BF, Golberg, 1992). Spanish version from Goldberg's 50 personality markers for the Big Five model: extraversion, neuroticism, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Maslch Burnout inventory (MBI; Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996). MBI is a 22-item survey that assesses professional burnout in human service, education, business, and government professions which are grouped into three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment.

RESULTS

We conducted a hierarchical regression analyses to analyze in which EI abilities predicted burnout teachers with the following order of entry: In step one, general efficacy was entered. In the second step, big-five personality traits were entered. Finally, EI was entered. R² can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Results of hierarchical regression analyses.



CONCLUSIONS

The present study confirmed the relative contribution of EI skills on burnout controlling the influence of General Self-efficacy beliefs and Big-Five personality traits in a sample of Spanish Secondary Teachers.

Taken together, these findings not only indicate that EI skills are not redundant with cognitive processes reflected general self-efficacy, but also that EI may be a significant and independent predictor of burnout dimensions in a sample of Spanish Secondary Teachers.

Consistent with previous empirical studies on self-efficacy and personality traits (big five) as individual predictor of burnout (i.e., Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Evers et al., 2002; Salanova, Grau, Cifre, & Llorens, 2000), the present study found support of its relevance as predictor of the elements of teacher burnout.

Although in the workplace context many factors are out of individual control, it seems that the development of training programs which help teachers to understand their own emotions. Appraisal of one's self-worth and repair their moods are complementary and useful interventions to increase employee psychological well-being.

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