

Emotional intelligence and satisfaction at work on teachers: Testing affectivity as potential mediator

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Introduction

Individual differences in emotional intelligence (EI) have been the subject of a great deal of research in the last two decades (Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008). Much of this research has been interested in studying emotional abilities as a predictor of indicators or performance and well-being in youth and adolescence (Cassady & Mourad, 2008).

Although previous research have highlighted the role of EI on satisfaction at work, the underlying processes accounting for this association remain relatively unexplored.

To address this gap, this study examined the role of positive and negative affect as potential mediators in this link controlling for classic and well-known personality traits.

Beyond this direct link between EI and job satisfaction, many potential mechanisms have been theorized through which EI might work to enhance job satisfaction and positive attitudes at workplace (Zeidner, 2006). One characteristic considered as a relevant mediator might be affectivity. Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) proposes that cumulative affective experiences in the work environment together with other factors (including trait personality and emotional skills) shape workers' job related attitudes.

Numerous evidences exist that positive and negative affectivity are significant correlates of job satisfaction.

Hypothesis

The purpose of the present study was:

Based on Affective Events Theory, we expected that affect would partially mediate EI effects on job satisfaction even when controlling for known confounding effects of gender, age, years of experience and personality traits.

Method

SAMPLE

- 124 secondary teachers of the province of Málaga (Spain) (75 females and 46 males; 3 unreported) recruited from different secondary high schools. Ages ranged from 25 to 59 years ($M=43.82$, $S.D.=7.81$). Teaching experience ($M=6.6$ years; $SD=7.1$ years).

INSTRUMENTS

*Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS, Wong & Law, 2002).

*Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson et al., 1987)

*Overall job satisfaction (Judge, Locke, Durnham, & Kluger, 1998).

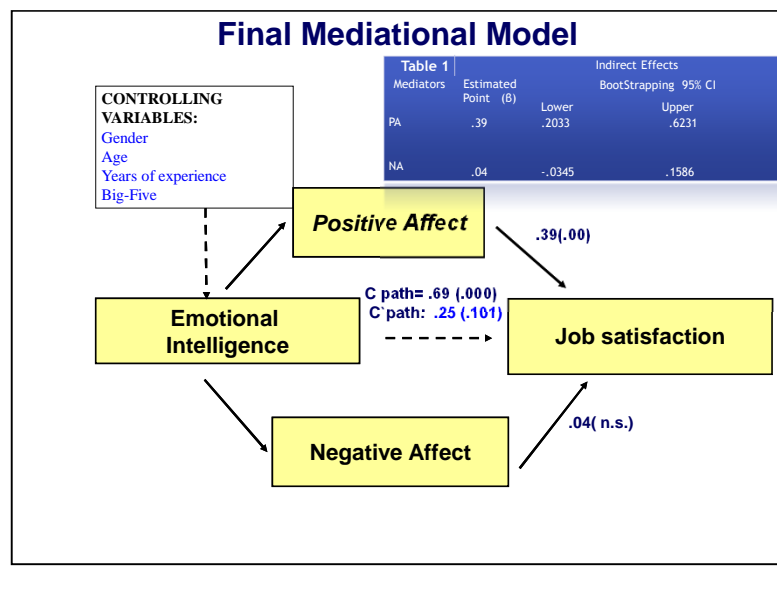
*Big-Five bipolar markers (Goldberg, 1992)

Results

In order to examine the potential mediator role of affect in the relationship between EI and job satisfaction, we used the procedure described by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Table 1 summarizes the results for the multiple mediator analysis, indicating the path coefficients and confidence intervals for each effect being tested in the model.

The results show that positive affect (but not negative affect) was a significant mediator of the relation between EI and job satisfaction. The results indicated a significant and total mediating effect for positive affect. Taken together, results showed that greater EI was associated significantly with higher levels of positive affect, which, in turn, predicted higher levels of job satisfaction.

Figure 1. Mediating role of positive and negative affect on EI and job satisfaction

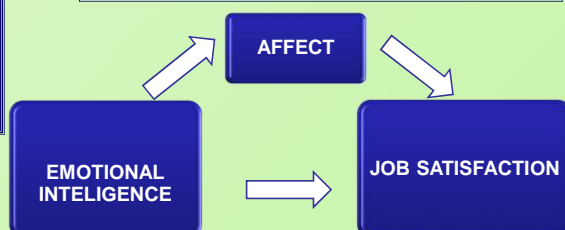


Discussion

This study replicated and extended the findings of other researchers, indicating that EI was associated with job satisfaction in teachers. Besides, the increased feelings of positive affect presumed to be associated with higher EI was, in turn, hypothesized to explain the relationship between perceived emotional abilities and job satisfaction.

These results suggest that positive affect mediate the effects of EI on job satisfaction via a complex process. Teachers skilled at perceiving, understanding and managing moods should also be better to experience a more positive feelings (Schutte et al., 2002). Finally, teachers with high EI would be more likely to feel positive affect in classroom, which, in turn, promote higher satisfaction at workplace.

Besides, according to the mediational model, the empirically supported mediating processes extend the EI literature by elucidating the pathways through which EI is linked with job satisfaction. These findings suggest the implementation of intervention program designed to bolster EI abilities as a way of enhancing positive affect might increase job satisfaction in secondary teachers.



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Figure 1. A hypothesized model of how affect may mediate the association between EI and job satisfaction.