

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Burnout among Spanish Teachers: A Mediation Study

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ABSTRACT

The benefits of emotional intelligence and their alleviating impact on work-related stress among teachers have been gaining salience in this research field. The aim of this study was to analyze the relationship between emotional abilities and the burnout syndrome and whether the affective balance mediates this interplay. Using a structural equation modeling framework with self-report data from 200 schoolteachers aged between 22 to 64 years ($M = 44.97$, $SD = 9.31$, 73.50% women), the study design was a cross-sectional one. Results showed significant direct and indirect effects of mood clarity and emotional repair on all four burnout dimensions, while attention did not predict teacher burnout. Positive affect mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and enthusiasm toward the job, while negative affect mediated the association between emotional abilities and negative burnout symptoms. Our findings suggest that enhanced emotional abilities are directly associated with lower levels of work-related stress, however, negative affect restrains this positive influence.

La repercusión de la inteligencia emocional en el *burnout* de profesores españoles: estudio de mediación

RESUMEN

La utilidad de la inteligencia emocional y su efecto tranquilizador sobre el estrés laboral de los profesores han ido cobrando importancia en este campo de investigación. El objetivo de este estudio ha sido analizar la relación entre las habilidades emocionales y el síndrome de *burnout* y si el equilibrio afectivo media esta asociación. Se han utilizado modelos de ecuaciones estructurales con datos de autoinforme de 200 profesores cuya edad estaba comprendida entre los 22 y los 64 años ($M = 44.97$, $SD = 9.31$, 73.50% mujeres). Se utilizó un diseño transversal para el estudio. Los resultados mostraron un efecto significativo directo e indirecto de la claridad y de la reparación emocional en las cuatro dimensiones del *burnout*, mientras que la atención no predijo el *burnout* de los profesores. El afecto positivo medió la relación entre la inteligencia emocional y el entusiasmo hacia el trabajo, mientras que el afecto negativo medió la asociación entre las habilidades emocionales y los síntomas negativos del *burnout*. Dichos resultados indican que el desarrollo de las habilidades emocionales está directamente asociado a un nivel más bajo de estrés laboral. Sin embargo, el afecto negativo restringe esta influencia positiva.

Over the last 30 years, researchers have studied teacher burnout and its destructive consequences, which are still a major concern within the public education system. Given the complexity of this psychological phenomena, researchers have focused on individual differences in how teachers experience stress within the school context and in relation to their work (Friedman, 2002; Huk et al., 2019; Kyriacou, 2001; Maslach et al., 2001). One of these problems is work-related stress, which might impact emotional stability, physical endurance, and motivation (Gloria et al., 2013). In response to

chronic stressful conditions in the workplace, teachers might suffer from burnout as a consequence of maladjustment to an adverse environment (Mulholland et al., 2013). Burnout refers to progressive emotional, physical, and psychological exhaustion, which negatively impacts teachers' performance and efficiency (Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2016; Wu et al., 2019) and might lead to job insecurity (Glambek et al., 2018).

Burnout is considered a primary health concern among school teachers, since it influences psychological and physical endurance

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(Aparisi et al., 2019). The teaching staff deals with stress through coping strategies, but they might fail in the long-term; therefore, their vulnerability to emotional problems increases (Philippe et al., 2019). One of the main outcomes of burnout is a decrease in enthusiasm toward work: it refers to a lack of interest about reaching work-related goals, and it usually happens when teachers lose their intrinsic motivation and work engagement (Figueiredo-Ferraz et al., 2013). Indolence is another main burnout fallout: it refers to indifference toward one's job role, and it appears as negative attitudes, intolerance, and cynicism (Gil-Monte et al., 2017). Also, teachers may suffer from psychological exhaustion due to constant environmental stressors (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). When stress becomes part of routine in the workplace, it might severely impact emotional and physical health (Katz et al., 2018; Richards et al., 2017). Teachers may also experience guilt about their behavior - especially toward their colleagues and students - and inefficacy at work (Abós et al., 2019).

Emotional intelligence is an important personal factor that has been identified by teachers as an important resource for optimal work performance and healthy environment (Cejudo & López-Delgado, 2017). According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to perceive, express, facilitate, and understand emotions, and is associated with quality of interpersonal relationships in their everyday lives and on the job (Mayer et al., 2016). Teachers with higher EI are less likely to suffer from burnout and tend to experience more job satisfaction (Extremera et al., 2007). EI is positively associated with self-efficacy, which relates to teachers' enthusiasm, interest, and positive attitude toward their job (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012). In teaching professionals, EI predicts burnout and job satisfaction, thus, training EI might be a way of mitigating physical and psychological exhaustion (Bauer & Silver, 2018; Hopman et al., 2018).

Research consistently shows that teachers who possess the ability to accurately perceive, understand, express, and regulate emotions are considered to be more effective in achieving academic goals, maintaining social relationships, and generating a favorable classroom environment and discipline practices (Augusto-Landa et al., 2011; Castillo-Gualda et al., 2017; Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016; García-Arroyo & Segovia, 2018; Pryce & Frederickson, 2013; Valente & Lourenço, 2020). In addition, most teachers have experienced the repercussions of poor emotional abilities; for instance, teacher-student relationship may be affected by an inappropriate display of disrespect for student's feelings (Burić et al., 2019; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017; Oberle et al., 2020).

Affectivity is also a significant factor for burnout coping (Francis et al., 2011; Ramón, 2015). Positive and negative affect are dispositions to experience pleasant or aversive affective states, the tendency to experience positive or negative feelings (Donahue et al., 2014). Teachers who experience more positive and less negative affect in the classroom account for better attitudes toward work and greater school engagement (Andreychik, 2019), as well as successful adaptation to stress (Gloria et al., 2013). In addition, elevated positive affect and reduced negative affect might be the mechanism through which EI impacts emotional exhaustion (Peña-Sarrionandi et al., 2015; Petitta et al., 2017; Vergara et al., 2015).

Previous studies showed that teachers affective balance is strongly associated with EI (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2011). In addition, positive and negative affect have been identified to function as a mediator in the link between EI and burnout (Augusto-Landa et al., 2012; Brackett et al., 2010). Consequently, EI seems to be a protective factor of chronic work-related-stress, which may reduce burnout syndrome by increasing the experience of job satisfaction (Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008; Rey et al., 2016; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2015; Serrano & Andreu, 2016). However, current research needs to address the question of how teachers process emotional information effectively in order to be able to reduce the negative im-

part of work-related stress by experiencing more positive and less negative affects (Boden & Thompson, 2017; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). A better understanding of the decreasing effect of each of the emotional abilities on the specific dimensions of burnout symptoms could be the key for the development of effective burnout intervention and prevention helping teachers to return to work (Ahola et al., 2017; Capone et al., 2019; Gálvez-Iñiguez, 2018). In consequence, there has been an increase in the implementation of emotional skills training in schoolteacher population due to the evidence of their effectiveness in reducing teacher stress and enhancing well-being and satisfaction with their jobs (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2018; Hoffmann et al., 2020; Sandilos et al., 2020; Schoeps et al., 2019; von der Embse et al., 2019).

Rational for this Study

The relationship between EI and teacher burnout has been well established, but few studies have tried to explain the psychological mechanism that underlies this association (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). Positive and negative affect have been identified as potential mediators in this interplay, but burnout literature lacks empirical evidence on this subject (Augusto-Landa et al., 2012; Brackett et al., 2010). Understanding the specific influence of each of the emotional abilities (perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions) on the different dimensions of teacher burnout (lack of enthusiasm, exhaustion, indolence, feelings of guilt) and how affectivity mediates this relationship could provide new insights on the emotional processing of stressful work experience. Identifying these pathways would help to develop more efficient intervention programs that could help teachers to develop social and emotional competence that might mitigate the negative impact of burnout by enhancing their affective balance and emotional well-being.

The main objective of this study was to examine the burnout syndrome among schoolteachers and the interplay between EI, affective balance, and work-related stress. Based on the reviewed literature, we hypothesized that 1) EI dimensions and burnout symptoms may be negatively related, 2) EI dimensions are expected to positively relate to positive affect and negatively to negative affect, 3) both positive and negative affect would be related similarly to burnout, and 4) the association between EI and teachers' burnout would be mediated by affectivity.

Method

Participants

Self-report data were collected using a cross-sectional study design with incidental sampling. The sample comprised 200 schoolteachers (73.50% female) from more than twenty different private and public schools in the Valencian Region, Spain. According to the annual report published by the school council of Valencian government (Consell Escolar de la Comunitat Valenciana, 2018), in 2016-2017 the population of teachers was about 48,250 including all school types (public, private, and subsidized schools) and all education levels (preschool, primary school, secondary school, higher schools) in the Valencian Region. By choosing a 90% confidence level and a sample size of 200 participant the margin of error would be $\pm 5.80\%$, which is acceptable. Teachers were aged between 22 and 64 years and the mean age was 44.97 ($SD = 9.31$). The teachers of our sample represent all areas of the Spanish education system: 8.38% were preschool teachers teaching students between 3 and 6 years; 28.80% were elementary school teachers whose students were aged between 6 and 12 years; 28.27% were secondary school teachers who taught students between 12 and 16 years; 20.94% were high school teachers whose students' age ranged from 16 to 18 years old; 6.81%

were vocational training teachers with students aged from 16 years and older; and 6.81% were school counselors. Teaching experience among participating teachers was distributed as follows: 6.15% were new teachers with 1-2 years of experience, 24.62% were teachers with 3-10 years of experience, 29.74% were teachers with 11-20 years of experience, 25.13% were teachers with 21-30 years of experience, and 14.36% were teachers with more than 30 years of experience. All participants had the Spanish nationality.

Instruments

All instruments used in this survey are well-established and were validated in Spanish population. The reported reliability indices (Cronbach's α) are based on the current sample.

Emotional intelligence was measured by the Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS-24; Salovey et al., 1995). We used the Spanish short-version (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2004), which includes 24 items in order to assess participant's beliefs and attitudes toward basic aspects of emotional abilities from an interpersonal perspective. The instrument uses the EI ability framework proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997), who identified three dimensions: 1) attention to feelings, 2) mood clarity, and 3) emotional repair. It comprises three subscales, each with 8 items, 5-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*): Attention (e.g., "I do not pay much attention to my feelings"), Clarity (e.g., "I am often aware of my feelings on a matter"), and Repair (e.g., "When I become upset I remind myself of all the pleasures in life"). Reliability indices showed acceptable internal consistency for all three subscales ($\alpha = .88$, $.88$, and $.92$ respectively).

Positive and negative affect were assessed by the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE; Diener et al., 2010). We used the 12-item version adapted by Silva and Caetano (2013). The instrument assesses pleasant (positive affects) and unpleasant (negative affects) feelings on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*). The two subscales (6 items each) presented acceptable reliability indices ($\alpha = .93$ and $.86$).

Burnout was evaluated with the Spanish Burnout Inventory (SBI; Gil-Monte, 2011), which is based on the paradigm that chronic work-related stress and complicated interpersonal relationships have an important impact on burnout outcome (Figueiredo-Ferraz et al., 2013). The questionnaire is a 45-item self-reported measure consisting of four subscales: Enthusiasm toward the job ($\alpha = .91$; e.g., "I see my job as a source of personal accomplishment"), Psychological Exhaustion ($\alpha = .83$; e.g., "I feel emotionally exhausted"), Indolence ($\alpha = .75$; e.g., "I don't like taking care of some students"), and Guilt ($\alpha = .71$; e.g., "I regret some of my

behaviours at work"). Participants were requested to answer on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = *never*, 4 = *very frequently, every day*). The internal consistency was acceptable for all four subscales.

Procedure

Prior to the study, we received the approval of the ethics committee of our research institution (H1385330676977) and all procedures followed the ethic code established by the Helsinki Declaration (World Medical Association, 2013). After a meeting with the principal of each school, teachers were informed about the purpose of the study and asked for their consent to participate voluntarily. Response rate oscillated between 35% and 80% across schools. Data were collected in small groups during school days. Two trained psychologists monitored the assessment of the survey; anonymous coding was used to guarantee confidentiality of teachers' responses.

Data Analysis

Besides basic descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations using IBM SPSS Statistics 24, we performed structural equation modelling (SEM) with mediation analyses. We estimated three separated models, considering possible suppressor effects by cause of high intercorrelation among subscales of the TMMS-24 (Cheung & Lau, 2008). Specifically, attention to feelings, mood clarity, and emotional repair were tested independently as predictors of the four indicators of burnout using positive and negative affect as mediators.

All analyses were conducted with Mplus, version 7.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) and the maximum likelihood estimation (MLR). Following recommendation by MacKinnon (2008), confidence intervals around the estimates were constructed to assess the effects of mediators (biased-corrected bootstrap), which reduced bias caused by the non-normality in the sampling distribution of indirect effects (Cheung, 2009). The model was estimated using five main fit indices proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999): robust chi-square test of model fit (χ^2), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR). An acceptable model fit was identified when CFI and TLI $\geq .90$ (a value $\geq .95$ was considered excellent), RMSEA $\leq .08$ (a value $\leq .04$ was excellent), and SRMR $\leq .08$ (a value $\leq .05$ was excellent) (Bagozzi & Yi, 2011). To account for missing data, the models were estimated with full information maximum likelihood (FIML). All results were reported as recommended by the Reporting Standards for Studies Using Structural equation Modeling (Appelbaum et al., 2018).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations for All Measures

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Attention	-								
2. Clarity	.40**	-							
3. Repair	.27**	.56**	-						
4. Positive affect	.14	.35**	.41**	-					
5. Negative affect	-.04	-.30**	-.29**	-.53**	-				
6. Enthusiasm	.27**	.21**	.41**	.44**	-.31**	-			
7. Indolence	-.14	-.22**	-.27**	-.37**	.45**	-.45**	-		
8. Exhaustion	-.06	-.18*	-.24**	-.36**	.48**	-.39**	.52**	-	
9. Guilt	.03	-.13	-.12	-.21**	.24**	-.10	.31**	.30**	-
<i>M</i>	26.43	27.04	28.35	22.68	13.64	3.34	1.01	1.58	1.03
<i>SD</i>	5.66	5.08	5.91	3.53	3.37	0.66	0.57	0.80	0.53
α	.88	.88	.92	.93	.86	.91	.75	.83	.71

Note. Nwomen = 147; Nmen = 53; *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation; α = Cronbach's alpha.

Results

Correlations

Pearson's correlation analysis showed that EI was positively related to positive affect, and negatively to negative affect, except attention (Table 1). All three EI subscales correlated positively with enthusiasm toward the job (*r* ranged between .21 and .41, *p* < .01). Clarity and repair showed a negative correlation with indolence and psychological exhaustion (*r* oscillated between -.18 and .27, *p* < .05). Positive affect correlated positively with enthusiasm toward the job (*r* = .44, *p* < .01), and negatively with indolence, psychological exhaustion and guilt (*r* ranged between -.21 and .37, *p* < .01); burnout subscales were inversely and significantly related to negative affect (*r* oscillated between .24 and .48, *p* < .01), except for enthusiasm toward the job (*r* = -.31, *p* < .01).

The burnout subscales were significantly intercorrelated (Table 1). Enthusiasm showed a negative correlation with the two other burnout subscales (*r* oscillated between -.39 and -.45, *p* < .01), while indolence, exhaustion, and guilt showed positive intercorrelations (*r* oscillated between .30 and .52; *p* < .01).

Mediation Model Analysis

We analyzed three separated mediation models, one for each EI subscale: attention (Figure 1), clarity (Figure 2), and repair (Figure 3). All three models revealed good model fit indices (Table 2). Model 1 included direct and indirect paths from attention to feelings to burnout subscales through positive and negative affect, showing good indices of adjustment: $\chi^2(717) = 1114.73$, *p* < .001; CFI = .90; TLI = .90; RMSEA = .05 [.05, .06]; SRMR = .08. Similarly, model fit indices shown by model 2, including direct and indirect paths from mood clarity to burnout subscales through positive and negative affect, were also satisfactory: $\chi^2(642) = 879.964$, *p* < .001; CFI = .93; TLI = .93; RMSEA = .04 [.04, .05]; SRMR = .06. Finally, model 3, which included direct and indirect paths from emotional repair to burnout subscales through positive and negative affect, showed adequate model fit indices: $\chi^2(679) = 1033.900$, *p* < .001; CFI = .91; TLI = .90; RMSEA = .05 [.05, .06]; SRMR = .06.

Model 1: Attention to Feelings

There were no significant direct effects between attention and positive and negative affect, neither between attention and three of the burnout subscales: indolence, exhaustion, and guilt. However, attention predicted significantly enthusiasm toward the job (*b* = .029). These results indicate that teachers' ability to attend and value their feelings was neither associated with their affective balance nor with most burnout symptoms. Given previous results, indirect mediating effects for positive and negative were non-significant either.

Model 2: Mood Clarity

Direct effects between clarity and both positive and negative affect were significant (*b* = 0.40 and 0.37 respectively). Furthermore, positive affect significantly predicted enthusiasm (*b* = 0.40), while negative affect had a significant effect on indolence, exhaustion, and guilt (*b* between 0.36 and 0.55). In other words, teachers who feel clear about their emotions experience positive feelings more often and negative feeling less frequently, which are related to less emotional and physical stress symptoms. However, there was a non-significant relation between clarity and all burnout subscales, indicating full mediation.

The indirect effect of clarity on enthusiasm toward the job was fully mediated by positive affect (*b* = .016), while the indirect effect on indolence, psychological exhaustion, and guilt were fully mediated by negative affects (*b* between -0.13 and -0.20). Overall, the combined effects for this mediation model explain about 24% of the variance of enthusiasm (*R*² = .24, *p* = .003), 31% of the variance of indolence (*R*² = .31, *p* < .001), 34% of the variance of psychological exhaustion (*R*² = .34, *p* = .003), and 18% of the variance of guilt (*R*² = .18, *p* = .007). These results indicate that negative affect functions as a mediator, dropping the positive effect of clarity on negative burnout symptoms in teachers. In addition, positive affect fully explains the association between mood clarity and enthusiasm toward the job.

Model 3: Emotional Repair

Table 2. Path Coefficients and Model-Fit Indices for Hypothesized Mediation Models

	Model 1: Attention			Model 2: Clarity			Model 3: Repair		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Direct Effects									
EI subscale → Positive affect	0.10	0.09	.09	0.30	0.07	.40***	0.26	0.06	.45***
EI subscale → Negative effect	0.03	0.12	.02	-0.32	0.07	-.37***	-0.23	0.05	-.34***
Positive affect → Enthusiasm	0.42	0.13	.37**	0.45	0.13	.40**	0.36	0.13	.32*
Negative affect → Indolence	0.50	0.12	.47***	0.48	0.13	.45***	0.48	0.12	.45***
Negative affect → Exhaustion	0.62	0.12	.55***	0.62	0.13	.55***	0.61	0.12	.54***
Negative affect → Guilt	0.31	0.12	.34**	0.32	0.12	.36**	0.32	0.12	.36**
Indirect Effects									
Positive affect → Enthusiasm	0.04	0.04	.03	0.14	0.05	.16**	0.09	0.04	.14*
Negative effect → Indolence	0.01	0.06	.01	-0.16	0.05	-.17**	-0.11	0.04	-.15**
Negative effect → Exhaustion	0.02	0.07	.01	-0.20	0.05	-.20***	-0.14	0.04	-.19***
Negative effect → Guilt	0.01	0.04	.01	-0.10	0.04	-.13*	-0.07	0.03	-.12*
Model-fit indices									
$\chi^2(df)$	1114.73(717)			879.964(642)			1033.900(679)		
CFI	.90			.93			.91		
TLI	.90			.93			.90		
RMSEA [90% CI]	.05 [.05, -.06]			.04 [.04, -.05]			.05 [.05, -.06]		
SRMR	.08			.06			.06		

Note. *B* = unstandardized path coefficients; *SE* = standard error; β = standardized path coefficient; χ^2 = chi-square test of model fit; *df* = degrees of freedom; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residuals.
p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

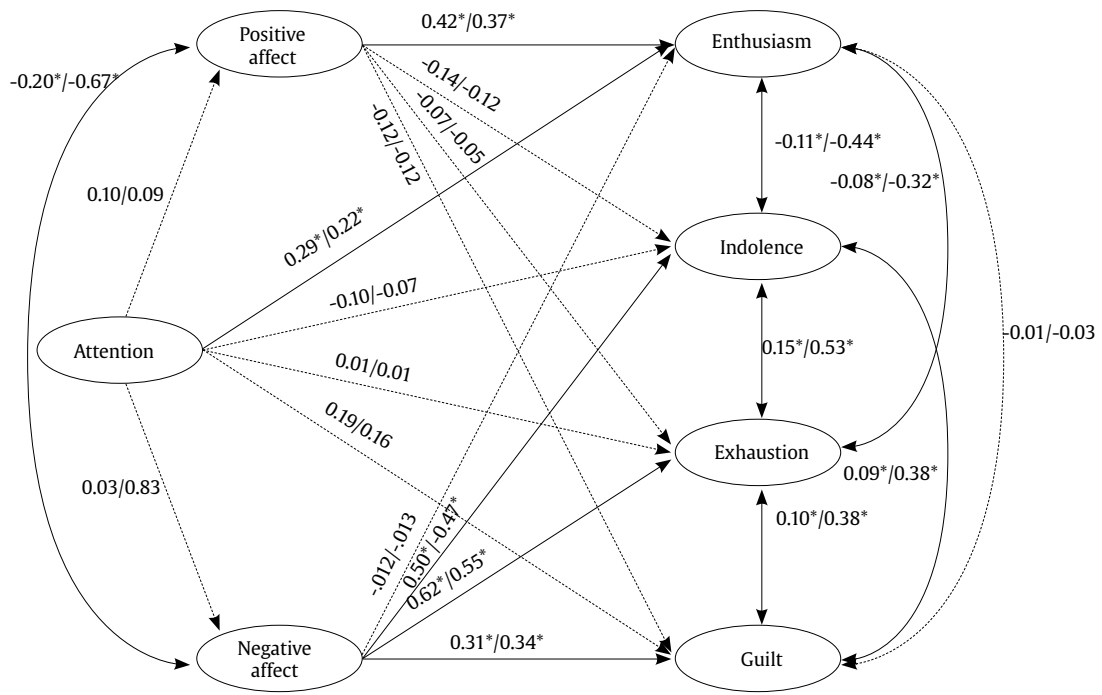


Figure 1. Model 1: The interplay between Attention to Feelings and Burnout Mediated by Positive and Negative Affect. Note. Significant effects shown as unstandardized coefficients (*B*) in the first position and standardized coefficients (β) in the second position; continuous pathways are significant at $p < .01$; dotted pathways are not significant; factor loadings are standardized.

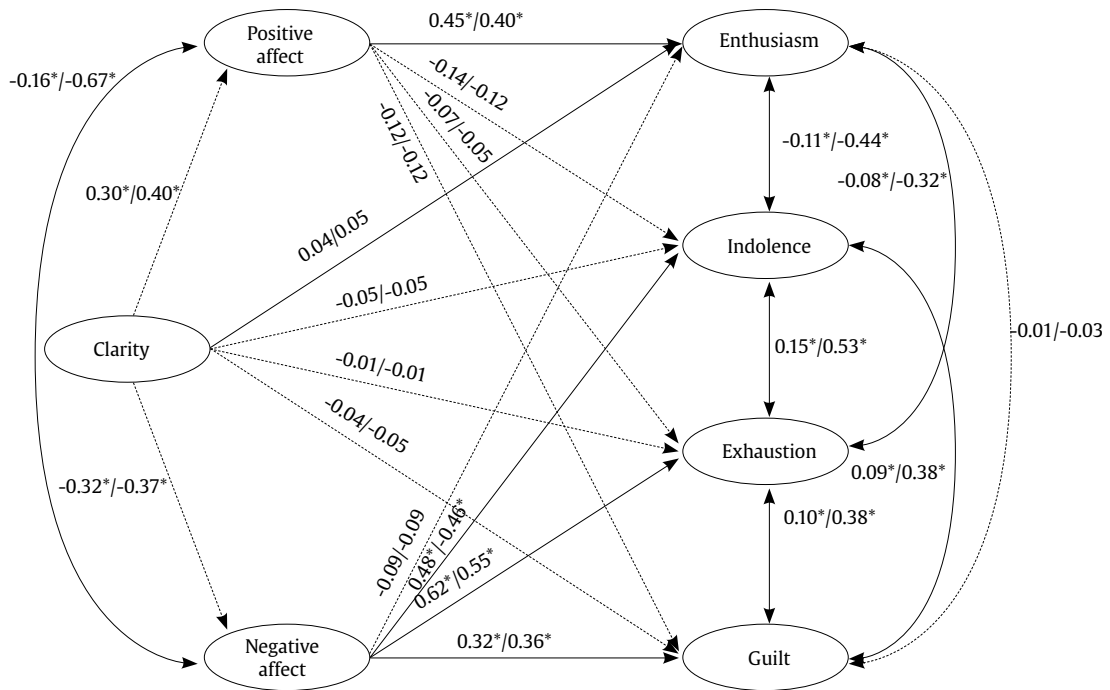


Figure 2. Model 2: The Interplay between Mood Clarity and Burnout Mediated by Positive and Negative Affect. Note. Significant effects shown as unstandardized coefficients (*B*) in the first position and standardized coefficients (β) in the second position; continuous pathways are significant at $p < .01$; dotted pathways are not significant; factor loadings are standardized.

There were significant direct effects between repair and positive and negative affect ($b = 0.45$ and -0.34 respectively). Positive affect was a significant predictor of enthusiasm ($b = 0.32$), and negative affect significantly predicted indolence, exhaustion, and guilt (b between 0.36 and 0.54). This indicates

that teachers who use their cognitive skills to repair negative moods experience pleasant feelings more often than unpleasant feelings, which are related to less burnout. Furthermore, there was a significant association between repair and enthusiasm toward the job, indicating partial mediation. However, relation

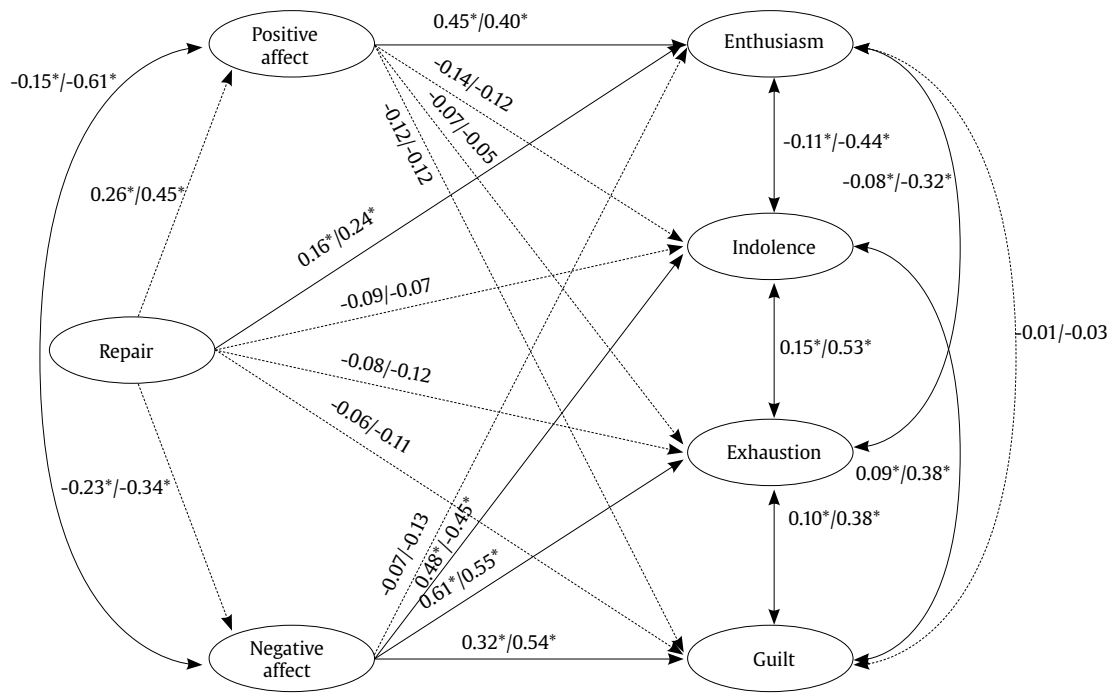


Figure 3. Model 3: The Interplay between Emotional Repair and Burnout Mediated by Positive and Negative Affect.

Note. Significant effects shown as unstandardized coefficients (B) in the first position and standardized coefficients (β) in the second position; continuous pathways are significant at $p < .01$; dotted pathways are not significant; factor loadings are standardized.

with indolence, exhaustion, and guilt was non-significant, indicating full mediation.

The indirect effect of repair on enthusiasm toward the job was partially mediated by positive affect ($b = 0.14$). The relationship between emotional repair and indolence, psychological exhaustion, as well as guilt was fully mediated by negative affect (b between -0.12 and -0.19). Overall, the combined effects for this mediation model explain about 28% of the variance of enthusiasm ($R^2 = .28, p < .001$), 31% of the variance of indolence ($R^2 = .32, p < .001$), 35% of the variance of exhaustion ($R^2 = .35, p < .001$), and 19% of the variance of guilt ($R^2 = .19, p = .006$). These results indicate that negative affect works as a mediator, dropping the positive effect of repair on teachers' burnout (indolence, psychological exhaustion, and guilt). Furthermore, the relationship between repair and enthusiasm toward the job is only partially mediated by positive affect, indicating a weaker mediation effect.

Discussion

Traditionally, research has examined the impact of work-related factors on schoolteachers' perceived stress, and burnout (Huk et al., 2019; Kyriacou, 2001; Maslach et al., 2001). More recently, research has focused on personal resources, including social and emotional abilities, examining the association between EI and work-related stress, including burnout syndrome, and how this relationship may be altered by the experience of positive and negative feelings (Augusto-Landa et al., 2012; Brackett et al., 2010). This study extends earlier findings by exploring in depth the mediating role of affectivity in the interplay between the three dimensions of EI (emotional attention, clarity, and repair) separately and four indicators of burnout (lack of enthusiasm, indolence, exhaustion, and feelings of guilt).

In partial support for our first hypothesis, we observed that two of the three dimensions of EI (mood clarity and emotional repair) were negatively related to indolence and psychological exhaustion, but not guilt. Enthusiasm toward the job relates positively to all three subscales of EI. There may be several possibilities to explain

these findings. According to Maslach et al. (2001), burnout is a complex construct with different dimensions that are determined by personal and interpersonal factors. Previous research showed that burnout might be reduced due to the primarily use of adaptive coping with work-related stress, for instance through emotional regulation strategies (Kyriacou, 2001; Ramón, 2015). Thus, the ability of emotional repair entails emotional regulation in both personal and interpersonal situations. Teachers with higher emotional repair regulate their own emotions successfully and help others to do so. Hence, they are more likely to overcome stressful situations effectively, which in turn lead to less psychological exhaustion (Rey et al., 2016). Teachers with higher mood clarity might also be less affected from burnout outcomes because clarity contributes to a better understanding of one's own emotional reactions and those of others. This ability might facilitate communication about complex emotions and mood changes with students and colleagues, to the extent that it enhances healthy relationships and prevents conflict and tension (Mayer et al., 2016). Indeed, the benefits of high competence in emotional clarity and repair for preventing burnout symptoms - by feeling more control over stressful tasks at school, and employing more constructive strategies to cope with stress - has been previously established (Hopman et al., 2018).

The weak association between attention to feelings and burnout may be attributed to the EI subscale and how it has been measured. In accordance with previous studies, an equable attention to feelings is needful for a proper understanding and regulation of emotions, whereas constant attention might be dysfunctional (Thompson et al., 2011). Nevertheless, high stages of attention combined with high competence in clarity and repair showed beneficial effects on well-being. Hence, the combination of all three EI dimensions ensure that attention to feelings might preempt negative mental health outcomes and psychopathology (Boden & Thompson, 2017; Serrano & Andreu, 2016; Vergara et al., 2015).

It is less clear why all three dimensions of EI were unrelated to guilt. Guilt is considered the appearance of unpleasant feelings and

negative attitudes toward the workplace and the people with whom teachers are working with (Figueiredo-Ferraz et al., 2013). Hence, individual difference in EI may not have a direct impact on the experience of guilt. Moreover, this experience is associated with the feeling of becoming cold and cynical in their interactions with others, as if a moral standard has been violated. However, it has not been assessed how well one is coping or dealing with these unpleasant and remorseful feelings (Gil-Monte et al., 2017).

In partial support of our second hypothesis, higher mood clarity and emotional repair, but not attention to feelings, were related with more positive and less negative affect. In line with earlier findings, the ability of understanding one's own emotions and regulating them adequately is related to the experience of less negative feelings and more positive feelings (Peña-Sarrionandi et al., 2015). It appears that teachers who have a clear idea about their mood states and easily achieve emotional repair are more skilled at generating pleasant emotions by using cognitive strategies, for instance positive reappraisal and refocusing to undo unpleasant emotional experience (Brackett et al., 2010; Gloria et al., 2013).

The non-significant association between attention to feelings and affectivity may have a few possible explanations. It has been suggested that becoming more aware of one's emotional states, both pleasant and unpleasant, might not be beneficial in terms of mental health (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2015). For instance, attention to feelings was reported to be strongly related to negative rumination, which in turn leads to emotional distress and lack of well-being (Boden & Thompson, 2017).

In support of our third hypothesis, affectivity was associated with teachers' burnout. The results stress a stronger relationship between positive affect and enthusiasm toward the job. Negative affect was more related to indolence, psychological exhaustion, and guilt. Early research showed that pleasant feelings might be an emotional regulation strategy themselves as they accomplish desired emotional states and experiences in oneself and in others (Katz et al., 2018). Indeed, positive emotions have a protective function in situations of pressure and stress, which might be helpful for teachers to prevent burnout and enhance job satisfaction (Wu et al., 2019). Furthermore, unpleasant feelings are clearly a risk factor for teacher burnout. In line with recent findings, teachers who experience unpleasant emotional states report more emotional exhaustion, a lack of motivation, pessimistic and cynical attitudes toward students and colleagues (Abós et al., 2019).

In full support of our last hypothesis, positive affect mediated the relationship between EI and enthusiasm toward the job, while negative affect mediated the link between EI and negative symptoms of the burnout syndrome. In detail, the link between mood clarity and enthusiasm was fully mediated by positive affect. Similarly, emotional repair had a positive effect on enthusiasm, even when positive affect was included. In other words, teachers who understand their feelings without a doubt and are able to repair negative emotional states are also more motivated with their work at school because they are able to elicit pleasant moods at the same time (Vergara et al., 2015). This finding suggests that clarity and repair have a beneficial indirect effect on teacher burnout through positive affect. Our findings highlight the key role of positive affect for positive job outcome and differ from prior research, which suggests that positive affect is mediating the interplay between EI and burnout in general (Augusto-Landa et al., 2012; Brackett et al., 2010).

As regard to negative affect, our results confirmed its mediating role between EI and psychological exhaustion, indolence, and guilt. Specifically, the influence of mood clarity on negative burnout dimensions was fully mediated by negative affect. In much the same way, negative affect drops the positive influence of emotional repair on burnout symptoms to zero. That means that although teacher perceive their mood accurately and perform better emotional repair, they might not be able to prevent burnout when they experience

unpleasant feelings simultaneously. Our results showed that negative affect has an important impact on teachers' health, by restraining the benefits of EI on burnout symptoms. These findings provide additional evidence that increasing emotional abilities are directly linked with lower levels of work-related stress (Extremera et al., 2007), and may as well reduce the risk of job burnout (Oberle et al., 2020; Rey et al., 2016). Nevertheless, negative affect drops this relationship, which could lead to more vulnerability for negative health outcomes in teachers who are working in a stressful environment, dealing with interpersonal conflict in the classroom on a daily basis (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Pryce & Frederickson, 2013; Valente & Lourenço, 2020).

The most important contribution of this mediation study is that positive affect partially mediated the interplay between EI dimensions mood clarity and emotional repair with enthusiasm toward the job. Negative affect fully mediated the link between such EI dimensions and psychological exhaustion, indolence, and guilt. The present study corroborates earlier findings indicating that affective balance mediated the relationship between EI and teacher burnout (Brackett et al., 2010), indicating that higher EI appears to associate with more positive feelings and fewer negative feelings, consequently reducing the experience of chronic work stress (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2017).

This research transcends previous research in the study of EI dimensions to analyze emotional skills and abilities in three separate mediation models. Thus, these analyses allowed to examine how attention to feelings, mood clarity, and emotional repair were individually related to positive and negative affect and each of the four burnout dimensions. Although previous studies reported that higher attention to feelings was related to less negative affect and teacher burnout (Augusto-Landa et al., 2012), our results did not confirm these associations. Nevertheless, our findings support the initial hypothesis about the indirect effects of mood clarity and emotional repair on teacher burnout, expanding previous findings that affectivity is an effective mediator of this relationship.

This study, however, is not without some limitations. First, we utilized solely assessment tools based on self-report. Including performance-based ability tests and physiological indicators for the constructs in the study would provide additional evidence. Second, our data were cross-sectional and were collected in a limited geographic area in Spain. To increase generalizability of results, future research should utilize more representative sample of teachers. In addition, further research should examine whether our findings may be replicated in other cultural contexts (Peña-Sarrionandi et al., 2015). We also recommend considering a longitudinal design (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). Despite these limitations, our study provided important evidence and a greater insight was gained as to the relationship between EI and teacher burnout and how this association may be mediated by positive and negative affect.

Conclusion

Teachers are faced with interpersonal conflicts, motivational problems, and personal challenges in their everyday practice, though still little is known about the emotional aspects of teachers' experience (García-Arroyo & Segovia, 2018; Pryce & Frederickson, 2013). Our study expands previous research on the key role of EI and affect balance in important work-related outcomes such as burnout in the field of the teaching profession. Hence, our findings contributed to a better understanding of EI and the possible mechanisms (positive and negative affect) by which EI may contribute to greater enthusiasm toward job satisfaction and reduced burnout symptoms. For these reasons, the present study, together with recent research on teachers' emotional skills and abilities (Gálvez-Iñiguez, 2018;

Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017), bear the witness to the need of prevention programs focusing on developing emotional skills which might enhance positive health outcomes for teachers (Capone et al., 2019), including increases in subjective well-being (Ahola et al., 2017). Consequently, teachers may experience less work stress and greater job satisfaction, retire later from their job, and be more self-efficient in the classroom (Hopman et al., 2018). Thus, the implementation of emotional skills training in schoolteachers is increasingly becoming an institutional priority, given the deep advantages they entail regarding schoolteachers' welfare (Hoffmann et al., 2020; Sandilos et al., 2020; Schoeps et al., 2019; von der Embse et al., 2019).

Conflict of Interest

The authors of this article declare no conflict of interest.

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