Emotional intelligence and teachers' work engagement: The mediating and moderating role of perceived stress

Abstract

A growing number of studies have tested the relationship between personal resources (e.g., emotional intelligence) and indicators of occupational well-being, including work engagement. However, few have examined health-related factors moderating or mediating the pathway from emotional intelligence to work engagement. A better knowledge of this area would contribute substantially to the design of effective intervention strategies. The present study's main goal was to test the mediating and moderating role of perceived stress in the association between emotional intelligence and work engagement. The participants comprised 1166 Spanish teaching professionals (744 of whom were female and 537 worked as secondary teachers; M_{age} = 44.28 years). The results showed that perceived stress partially mediated the link between emotional intelligence and work engagement. Moreover, the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and work engagement was strengthened among individuals who scored high in perceived stress. The results suggest that multifaceted interventions targeting stress management and emotional intelligence development may facilitate engagement in emotionally demanding occupations such as teaching.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; perceived stress; work engagement; teaching professionals

Introduction

Given the growing number of factors impacting teachers' mental health and psychological well-being, there is a consensus that teaching is an occupation at psychosocial risk (Iriarte Redín & Erro-Garcés, 2020; Taris et al., 2017). Accordingly, the World Health Organization (WHO) has prioritized action directed at preventing stress and its negative consequences in organizational, social, and educational areas (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021; WHO, 2019). Horizon 2030 has also underlined the need to target teachers' well-being (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). Among these initiatives, strategies attempting to improve teachers' health, well-being, motivation, and effectiveness have been developed (Granziera et al., 2021). Previous studies, particularly in occupational health psychology, have paid particular attention to work engagement (Bakker et al., 2014; Sonnentag, 2011).

Work engagement is conceptualized as a positive psychological state that includes great vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bakker, 2022; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Scholars have demonstrated that work engagement has an impact on a variety of individual and organizational outcomes (Bakker et al., 2014; Mazzetti et al., 2021). Among teachers, work engagement is a key predictor of adaptive functioning at school through enhanced positive work motivation as well as teacher commitment and retention (Granziera et al., 2021). The job demands-resources (JD-R) theory offers a robust foundation for an understanding of the drivers and consequences of work engagement in a variety of contexts – including teaching (Mazzetti et al., 2021; Taris et al., 2017). Accordingly, job demands and job resources may either impede or enable individuals to grow and develop at work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The emotional nature of teaching profession leads a great number of professionals to deal with interpersonal job demands including pupil misbehavior and emotional demands (Taris

et al., 2017). Moreover, there are additional teachers' job demands such as workload or role conflict (Taris et al., 2017). In this review, Taris and colleagues (2017) have also highlighted several teachers' job resources, including autonomy, control, and social support from colleagues and supervisors.

Regarding the Spanish teaching context, previous studies have reported increasing levels of contextual sources of stress impairing their health and work-related well-being (Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2019; Pulido-Martos et al., 2016). Beyond the widely recognized effects of organizational variables on occupational health and well-being, considerable attention has been given in recent years to individual resources that account for between-person differences in work engagement (Bakker, 2022; Granziera et al., 2021). Personal resources are defined as "the beliefs individuals hold regarding how much control they have over their environment" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017, p. 275). The JD-R theory supports the idea that personal resources are key antecedents of well-being indicators including work engagement (Bakker, 2022; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). It has been demonstrated that personal resources are positively associated with work engagement (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). It is, therefore, not surprising that training based on the JD-R theory includes personal resources as a beneficial way of increasing work engagement (Bakker & van Wingerden, 2020). Personal resources including adaptability, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence are reported to play a vital role in helping to understand and fostering work engagement among teachers (Granziera et al., 2021). The present study focuses on the latter.

The emotional intelligence (EI) construct has received wide attention in occupational health psychology given its consistent relationship with the effective management of demanding events at work (Côté, 2014). It has been found to act as a key psychological resource for protection against negative health outcomes (e.g.,

burnout) and impaired ill-being in teaching (Bardach et al., 2021; Yin et al., 2019). Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to understand emotions and regulate them to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer et al., 2016). Previous research using the so-called generalization model of EI has demonstrated EI to be positively associated with work-related criteria (Côté, 2014). Following the JD-R theory, emotionally intelligent teachers may count on resources to manage the impairing effect of demands on their levels of job strain, thereby maintaining increased levels of work-related well-being (Iriarte-Redín & Erro-Garcés, 2020; Mérida-López et al., 2019). Studies involving human service professionals such as teachers have reported that EI positively relates to work engagement (Guerrero-Barona et al., 2020; Mérida-López et al., 2017; Yan et al., 2018). However, most of these studies have examined the direct link between EI and work engagement; there is limited evidence regarding the potential health-related factors involved in this relationship. Given the prevalence of stress and negative work attitudes in teacher populations (Iriarte-Redín & Erro-Garcés, 2020; Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2019), it would be of importance to test the variables linking teachers' EI with their work engagement. In the current study, perceived stress is proposed as an intervening variable that is explored as a mediator and as a moderator in the link between EI and teachers' work engagement.

Perceived Stress as a Mediator in the EI-Work Engagement Relationship

Increasing studies following the JD-R have considered perceived stress as an indicator of job strain negatively associated with work engagement (Mérida-López et al., 2019; Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). The effects of personal resources on increased work engagement are shown to occur through underlying health-related factors. For instance, perceived stress has been identified as a mediator in the association between self-efficacy and nurses' work engagement (Pérez-Fuentes et al.,

2019). Similarly, the link between EI and teachers' work-related functioning is likely to be more indirect than direct (Bardach et al., 2021). EI has been underlined as a psychological resource consistently associated with lower self-appraised stress among teachers (Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2019; Pulido-Martos et al., 2017). Teachers with highly developed EI skills find it easier to engage in adaptive emotional regulation strategies that offset potential stress responses and reduce the likelihood of negative work-related states such as burnout (Rey et al., 2016). Similarly, teachers with high EI might be more able to integrate stressful experiences appraising in ways that are less threatening and with less negative arousal (Mérida-Lopez et al., 2019). These positive effects of EI on perceived stress may result in increased levels of work-related well-being such as work engagement. However, the role of perceived stress as a potential mechanism linking teachers' EI with their work engagement has not been addressed. Based on prior research, the propose the following:

H1. Perceived stress mediates the positive relationship between EI and work engagement.

Perceived Stress as a Moderator in the EI-Work Engagement Relationship

According to the JD-R theory, job demands are expected to boost the link between job resources and work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). For instance, pupil misbehavior was found to exacerbate the association between supervisor support and teachers' work engagement (Bakker et al., 2007). There is limited evidence applying this assumption to personal resources. As an exception, self-efficacy is positively related to work engagement specially when professionals face high emotional demands (Xanthopoulou et al., 2013). Following the situation-specific model proposed by Côté (2014), the positive effects of EI on work-related criteria may be modulated by certain dispositional and contextual factors. Accordingly, role ambiguity was found to

boost the relationship between EI and teachers' work engagement (Mérida-López et al., 2017). Moreover, the link between EI and teachers' work engagement is found to be more intense among teachers perceiving themselves as low self-efficacious (Mérida-López et al., 2020). Similarly, there is some evidence supporting the contention that how people manage emotions might interact with some levels of strain (Extremera et al., 2009). Therefore, the impact of EI is likely to be more profound on work engagement outcomes when teachers perceive high levels of stress to cope with typical school threats. As such, EI may increase work engagement less drastically among teachers with low levels of stress. However, when stress is intense, its deleterious effects aggregate. As a result, a heightened perception of self-appraised stress may have a more significant boosting effect than a lesser self-appraised stress on the levels of EI in predicting work engagement. These findings could be explained by the JD-R theory and conservation of resources (COR) theory postulations that resources become more salient when situations are perceived as a threat (e.g., Bakker et al., 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2013). On this basis, it could be hypothesized that:

H2. Perceived stress moderates (i.e., boost) the positive relationship between EI and work engagement.

The Present Study

Studies on the potential factors involved in the relationship between EI and work-related functioning are needed (Bardach et al., 2021). However, no research has been encountered to test the mediating or moderating role of perceived stress in the EI-work engagement relationship. Thus, the main goal of the present study is to explore the associations among EI, perceived stress, and work engagement in a sample of teaching professionals. Moreover, perceived stress is explored as a potential mediator and moderator in the relationship between EI and work engagement. By doing so, this work

makes at least two relevant contributions to the existing literature on teachers' work engagement. On the one hand, examining the association between EI and work engagement by including perceived stress as a mediator may add to the existing literature indicating the mechanisms that may explain why teachers' EI contribute to their work engagement. Given the scarce amount of evidence in this line, it seems worthwhile to explore the health-related mechanisms linking personal resources with work-related well-being (Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2019; Rey et al., 2016). These findings may suggest future directions in training programs designed to help teachers maintain their levels of engagement through stress management practices.

On the other hand, testing whether perceived stress could moderate the association between EI and work engagement should help us understand whether teachers' EI could be most impactful as a personal resource among teachers experiencing greater levels of stress. Findings in this line could be useful as a preliminary step for integrating theoretical assumptions on the JD-R theory and the situation-specific model of EI with a health-related indicator such as stress. A better knowledge on the potential boosting effect of stress may support the design of multifaceted interventions (both in EI development and stress management) to promote work engagement.

Methods

Participants and procedure

The participants comprised a total of 1166 teaching professionals (744 of whom were female) working in southern Spain. The mean age and tenure of the sample were 44 years (M = 44.28; SD = 9.14) and 17 years (M = 16.56; SD = 9.93), respectively. One-hundred-and-fifty-three participants were early years teachers (with pupils from 3–5

years of age), 476 were primary teachers (with pupils from 6–11 years of age), and 537 were secondary teachers (with pupils from 12–17 years of age). Of these, 63.1% were married, 27.4% were single, 5.7% were separated/divorced, 0.9% were widows/widowers, and 0.9% were in a relationship. Twenty-two participants did not report their marital status.

The data were collected using a non-probability student recruitment sampling-based method (Wheeler et al., 2014). A team of psychology students contacted principals and teachers from educational centers in southern Spain. Potential participants were informed of the research aims and told that their involvement in the survey would be voluntary, individual, and anonymous. There was a period of five weeks between contacting the centers and collecting the last filled in questionnaires. Completing the questionnaires lasted around 20 minutes. Surveys were completed at home or in small groups with the supervision of a research assistant. The research staff collected the completed questionnaires in sealed envelopes for statistical processing. The procedure received ethical approval of the hosting university (Ref: 66-2018-H).

Instruments

Emotional intelligence was measured with the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002). The Spanish version was used (Extremera et al., 2019). This 16-item instrument covers four EI dimensions (self-emotion appraisal, other-emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion). A 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*) is used to score the items. One example item is "I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others". Given our interest in the global EI construct, we calculated an overall EI score. This instrument has shown adequate reliability with samples of Spanish teaching professionals (e.g., Rey et

al., 2016). The scale showed excellent reliability and validity (Cronbach's α = .90; McDonald's Ω = .90; CR = .87; AVE = .63; MSV = .27).

Perceived stress was measured with the Spanish version of the Perceived Stress Scale (Vallejo et al., 2018; Cohen et al., 1983). This short-format instrument comprises four items. Respondents are asked to indicate the frequency with which they have experienced stressful situations during the last month. The items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). One example item is "In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?". The reliability of this scale with Spanish teachers is satisfactory (e.g., Mérida-López et al., 2019). In this study, the instrument showed good reliability and validity (Cronbach's α = .72; McDonald's Ω = .71; CR = .72; AVE = .39; MSV = .27).

Work engagement was assessed using the Spanish version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Salanova et al., 2000; Schaufeli et al., 2002). It comprises nine items rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*) and includes three work engagement dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. One example item is "When I am working, I forget everything around me". For present purposes, the total score reflecting overall work engagement was calculated (Mérida-López et al., 2020). This instrument has demonstrated excellent reliability with Spanish teacher samples (e.g., Mérida-López et al., 2017). The scale showed excellent reliability and validity (Cronbach's α = .92; McDonald's Ω = .92; CR = .93; AVE = .81; MSV = .21).

Besides the study variables, the surveys assessed sociodemographic factors (i.e., age, job tenure, gender, and teaching level) that were used as control variables as they have been consistently related to teachers' work-related indicators (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Plan of analysis

First, statistical analyses were performed. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using SPSS AMOS to test the adequacy of the measurement model. A maximum likelihood approach was used with the following indicators of goodness of fit: chi-square (χ^2)/df; comparative fit index (CFI); the Tucker and Lewis Index (TLI); and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Indicators of the reliability and validity of the measures comprised Cronbach's α, McDonald's Ω, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and maximum shared squared variance (MSV). Second, the confounding effects of sociodemographic factors (i.e., age, job tenure, gender, and teaching level) on work engagement were tested with descriptive analyses. Bivariate correlations among the main study variables were calculated in a zero-order correlation matrix.

Third, to test the main study hypotheses, the SPSS macro PROCESS was used (Hayes, 2022). This computational technique generates highly accurate confidence intervals through bootstrapping accounting for the possibility of non-normality in the distributions. This technique provides similar results to structural equation models with models as the tested in the current study (i.e., simple mediation and simple moderation, e.g., Galindo-Domínguez et al., 2020). Analyses included 5,000 bootstrapping samples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) to test the significance of estimated effects (Hayes, 2022). Model 4 was used to test the mediator role of perceived stress in the association between EI and work engagement, whereas the moderator role of perceived stress in the association between EI and work engagement was tested with model 1. We followed criteria proposed by Kenny (2016) to determine whether the interaction products accounted for small (f^2 = .005), medium (f^2 = .01) and large effects (f^2 = .025). In all analyses, sociodemographic factors (i.e., age, gender, job tenure, and teaching level) were controlled for.

Results

First, normality assumptions were fulfilled by the data – skewness and kurtosis values were found to be acceptable (George & Mallery, 2009). Moreover, the measurement model was satisfactory (X^2 = 1469.87, *df* = 367, X^2/df = 4.00, *p*-close = .31; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = 0.05; CFI = 0.94; TLI = 0.93). The AVE value of perceived stress was less than .50 (.39), so did not fulfil the standard requirements (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). However, AVE was less than CR (.72) and greater than MSV (.27). Moreover, all factor loadings were significant at .001 and values were above .50 (ranging between .57 and .69). According to Malhotra and Dash (2011), AVE could be considered as a more conservative measure than CR. In light of the above results, it may be concluded that the scale showed adequate convergent validity.

Second, descriptive results showed age to be negatively associated with work engagement (r = -.09; p < .01); job tenure did not show a significant association with this variable (r = -.05; p = .06). Regarding gender, female (M = 5.04; SD = .92) scored significantly higher than male (M = 4.84; SD = .97) in work engagement (t(836.14) = -3.43; p < .01). Work engagement was higher among childhood teachers (M = 5.36; SD = .70) than primary teachers (M = 5.05; SD = .89; p < .01). Early years teachers scored higher in work engagement than secondary teachers (M = 4.79; SD = 1.01; p < .001), and work engagement was significantly higher among primary teachers than secondary teachers (p < .001). On the basis of these results, the potential cofounding effects of the sociodemographic variables was controlled for. The correlation results are displayed in Table 1. EI was negatively associated with perceived stress (r = -.38; p < .01) and positively associated with work engagement (r = .40; p < .01). Finally, perceived stress was negatively related to work engagement (r = -.30; p < .01).

Table 1. Descriptive results and bivariate correlations.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age					
2. Job tenure	.84**				
3. Emotional intelligence	-.07*	-.06*			
4. Perceived stress	.03	.02	-.38**		
5. Work engagement	-.09**	-.05	.40**	-.30**	
Mean	44.28	16.56	5.51	1.16	4.97
Standard Deviation	9.14	9.93	.70	0.65	0.94

Note. *$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$.

Mediation analysis

Table 2 shows the results of the mediation analysis. As can be seen, H1 was supported, as perceived stress emerged as a partial mediator in the association between EI and work engagement. EI was negatively related to perceived stress and perceived stress was negatively linked with work engagement. The residual direct effect between EI and work engagement remained significant. The level of teaching was negatively related to work engagement. The model explained a 22% of the variance in work engagement (R^2 = .22, F = 54.65, $p < .001$).

Table 2. Summary of mediation results.

	Total effect			Indirect effect			
	B	SE	*t*	B	SE	*t*	95% CI
Age	-.01	.01	-1.36	-.01	.01	-1.28	
Job tenure	.00	.00	.63	.00	.00	.54	
Gender	.07	.05	1.26	.10	.05	1.94	
Teaching level	-.21***	.04	-5.42	-.21***	.04	-5.52	
EI – perceived stress (a)	-.36***	.03	-14.17				
Perceived stress – work engagement (b)	-.27***	.04	-6.54				
EI – work engagement (c)	.51***	.04	14.30				
EI – work engagement (c´)	.42***	.04	10.93				
EI – perceived stress – work engagement (ab)				.10	.02		[.06 / .13]
R^2	.19			.22			
F (*gl*)	55.06*** (5, 1160)			54.65*** (6, 1159)			

Note. n= 1166. EI = emotional intelligence. 95% CI = 95% confidence interval with 5000 resamples. Letters *a, b, c* y *c´* are unstandardized coefficients: *a* = direct association between EI and perceived stress; *b* = direct association between perceived stress and work engagement; *c´* = direct effect between EI and work engagement accounting for perceived stress; *c* = total effect between EI and work engagement not accounting for perceived stress; *ab* = indirect effect between EI and work engagement via perceived stress. ***$p < .001$.

Moderation analysis

The main results for moderation analyses are displayed in Table 3. As is shown, there were significant differences in work engagement according to gender and teaching level. Furthermore, EI and perceived stress showed significant direct effects as predictors of work engagement. Finally, the interaction between EI and perceived stress was significant and accounted for a medium (f^2 = 0.013) amount of variance in work engagement after controlling for the effects of the demographic variables and the main effects of the study variables (ΔR^2 = .011, F = 16.22, p < .001). A total of 23% of the variance in work engagement was explained. The lowest scores in work engagement were reported by individuals scoring low in perceived stress and EI. Moreover, perceived stress moderated the relationship between EI and work engagement, so the relationship was stronger among those participants reporting high levels of perceived stress.

Table 3. Summary of moderation results.

	B	*SE*	*t*	R^2	*95% CI*
				.23***	
Age	-.01	.01	-1.26		-.02 to .00
Job tenure	.00	.00	.50		-0.00 to 0.00
Gender	.11*	.05	2.06		.01 to .21
Teaching level	-.20***	.04	-5.43		-.27 to -.13
Emotional intelligence	.39***	.04	10.25		.32 to .47
Perceived stress	-.27***	.04	-6.70		-.36 to -.19
Emotional intelligence x perceived stress	.20***	.05	4.03		.10 to .30

Note. *B* = Unstandardized beta. *SE b* = Standard error. 95% CI = Confidence interval with lower and upper limits; * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

Following standard procedures (Hayes, 2022), simple slopes are illustrated. Figure 1 shows the link between EI and work engagement at low and high levels of perceived stress. The results show that the positive relationship between EI and work engagement strengthened as perceived stress increased. The positive association between EI and work engagement at low levels of perceived stress ($b = .26$, $p < .001$) was found to be stronger at high levels of perceived stress ($b = .52$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H2 was confirmed.

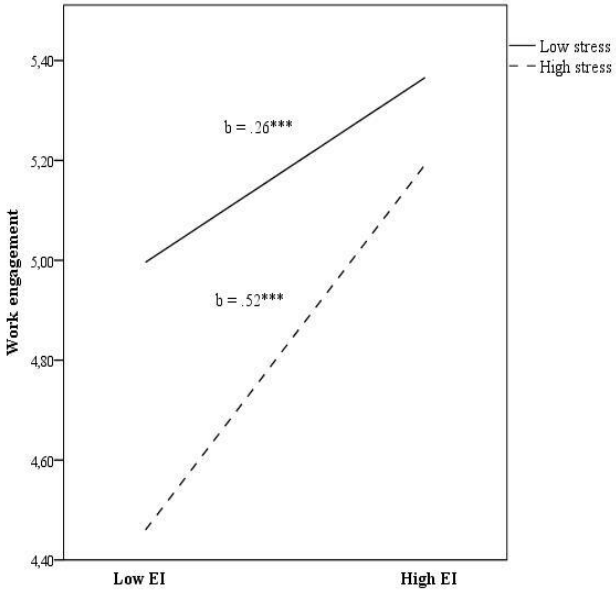

Figure 1. Relationship between EI and perceived stress for predicting work engagement. ***$p < .001$.

Discussion

The present study complements previous studies that related EI to work engagement by testing the mediating and moderating role of perceived stress. Regarding H1, the findings indicate that perceived stress partially mediated the relationship between EI and work engagement. This is consistent with prior research (e.g., Pérez-Fuentes et al.,

2019). Moreover, this result is in line with previous studies of teaching professionals where perceived stress emerged as a mechanism through which EI protected them against occupational ill-health (Iriarte-Redín & Erro-Garcés, 2020; Rey et al., 2016). According to the JD-R theory, our results may suggest that professionals with high EI may perceive themselves as better equipped to deal with situations that may arise stress, as has been demonstrated by a recent review showing that teachers use EI to allow adaptive coping with daily stressors (Iriarte Redín & Erro-Garcés, 2020). These adaptive processes may reduce stress responses, thus maintaining teachers' well-being (Bardach et al., 2021; Yin et al., 2019).

With regard to H2, the results show that the interactive effect of EI and perceived stress account for additional variance in work engagement beyond the variance accounted for the main effects. Despite the medium effect size, it should be mentioned that the percentage of explained variance attributable to the interaction between EI and perceived stress in predicting work engagement was very modest compared to the main effects. Nevertheless, authors have argued that even a 1% contribution of the total variance should be considered as particularly noticeable as the efficiency of the estimation of moderations is primarily low (McClelland and Judd, 1993; Meyer et al., 2001). Moreover, the potential practical relevance of these preliminary findings should be highlighted. Despite recognition that individuals who believe that they have control over their lives and work may find it easier to stay engaged, findings show that the magnitude of the EI-work engagement relationship was stronger for individuals reporting higher (vs. low) stress. Following the JD-R and COR frameworks, it may therefore be that professionals make the most reservoir of emotional resources for maintaining their work engagement when these resources are needed the most, that is, when they face high stressful situations in their lives (e.g., Bakker et al.,

2007; Seers et al., 1983). These results expand previous studies considering other personal and contextual factors and provides evidence regarding the situation-specific model of EI (Côté, 2014; Mérida-López et al., 2017; Xanthopoulou et al., 2013).

Several limitations should be acknowledged. For example, the findings should be replicated using prospective designs and testing EI dimensions rather than overall EI. Prior research has highlighted emotion regulation as a key EI facet that is associated with lower teacher stress (Iriarte-Redín & Erro-Garcés, 2020). It would be worth exploring how EI facets might facilitate work engagement by reducing stress, for instance, by exploring the specific emotion regulation strategies emotionally intelligent teachers use to stay engaged. Such an approach would generate useful information regarding the correlates of self-focused EI dimensions (Baudry et al., 2018). Future studies are needed to test performance-based EI tests as well as profession-specific and objective measures of stress. In this sense, it should be acknowledged that a general measure of perceived stress was used. Further research would allow to confirm whether profession-specific stress (e.g., stress associated with interpersonal tasks such as classroom management) may boost the relationship between certain EI facets (e.g., other-focused emotion regulation) and work engagement.

Results on the amount of variance explained in work engagement suggest the need for exploring factors unaccounted for in the EI-work engagement link (e.g., Zhu et al., 2015). For instance, it is possible that teachers scoring high in EI use more adaptive cognitive and behavioral strategies and so they experience decreased stress and exhaustion which, in turn, relates to their levels of engagement and commitment. This would advance current knowledge regarding how EI becomes salient under stressful conditions and associate with occupational health and well-being. Finally, there is a need for studies involving more representative samples based on random techniques.

In theoretical terms, the present study could serve as the basis for a preliminary examination of the mechanisms that may explain how and when emotionally intelligent teachers stay engaged. These results suggest perceived stress as a mechanism through which EI may allow teachers to deal with the deleterious effects of demanding events on their work motivation. Additionally, they also confirmed that stress may exacerbate the positive link between EI and work engagement. Taken together, these results integrate and advance knowledge from two widely accepted frameworks such as the JD-R theory and the situation-specific model of EI (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Côté, 2014). The simultaneous support of the mediating and moderator role of perceived stress seems to provide support for highlighting this health-related indicator in teaching contexts (Iriarte-Redín & Erro-Garcés, 2020). Thus, the present study bridges the two models, and as such helps to integrate them within the wider frameworks of educational and occupational health psychology (Taris et al., 2017).

In practical terms, these preliminary results could serve as a starting point for designing effective programs with teachers. The findings supporting the mediating role of perceived stress could be used to help teachers understand that their emotional management of daily situations at work may influence their levels of stress and engagement. For instance, teachers could be taught how to develop their EI skills by acquiring and cultivating regulation strategies to manage potentially stressful situations that might otherwise demotivate them. Given the close relation between teachers' well-being and students' adjustment (Braun et al., 2020; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), this line merits increased attention. In addition, the results regarding the moderating role of perceived stress suggest that EI becomes a more relevant personal resource for maintaining teachers' work engagement under demanding circumstances. Thus, EI training initiatives might be more beneficial for teachers appraising high levels of stress

or even working in particularly demanding periods (e.g., beginning of their teaching career) or contexts such as secondary education. These results may suggest perceived stress as a potential moderating factor in EI effects, thereby increasing limited evidence in this field (Kotsou et al., 2019). In keeping with suggestions concerning individual- and organizational-level strategies (Randall & Travers, 2017), the present results underline the importance of multifaceted interventions and the need to focus on the emotional resources that teachers can access to stay engaged at work.

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