

Teachers' well-being beyond perceived stress: Exploring the relative contribution of emotional intelligence facets to Spanish teachers' happiness

Scan this QR code to get a free copy of the published paper:



Sergio Mérida-López^{1*}; Cirenía Quintana-Orts²; Lourdes Rey¹; Natalio Extremera¹

¹University of Málaga (Spain)
²University of Seville (Spain)



Applied Positive Lab

www.appliedpositivelab.com
@Lab_positive



Email: sergioml@uma.es



Background

For teaching professionals, happiness represents a major quality-of-life index as most of the time they work in direct contact with students and parents whose daily interactions require them to be dedicated, positive, and energetic (De Stercke et al., 2015).

When stress is not handled appropriately it might impact on the development of negative emotional responses, leading to unhappiness (Matthews et al., 2017).

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a personal resource typically linked to higher well-being and happiness in human service professionals including teachers (Granziera et al., 2021). However, it is unknown which **EI facets** are more predictive in explaining different indicators of well-being beyond other key predictors such as perceived stress.

The current research extends the prior research on teachers' EI and subjective happiness by representing an **exploratory investigation into facet-level EI**.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables.

Variables	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Self-emotion appraisal	.82						
2. Other-emotion appraisal	.83	.55					
3. Use of emotion	.79	.59	.50				
4. Regulation of emotion	.85	.62	.39	.53			
5. Perceived stress	.72	-.41	-.19	-.34	-.37		
6. Subjective happiness	.79	.44	.26	.47	.41	-.55	
Mean		5.63	5.50	5.58	5.26	1.17	5.40
SD		.88	.92	.89	.96	.64	.95

Note: All coefficients were significant at $p < .001$ level.

Table 2. Main results for the regression analysis.

	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
Gender	.09	.04	2.04	*	[.003 to .173]
Age	-.02	.00	-4.18	***	[-.024 to -.009]
Marital status	.01	.02	.64	.522	[-.029 to .057]
Teaching level	.04	.02	1.93	.054	[-.001 to .078]
Teaching experience	.00	.00	1.61	.109	[.000 to .001]
Perceived stress	-.59	.04	-16.91	***	[-.659 to -.522]
Self-emotion appraisal	.10	.03	2.95	**	[.033 to .166]
Other-emotion appraisal	-.04	.03	-1.36	.174	[-.092 to .017]
Use of emotion	.26	.03	8.67	***	[.201 to .318]
Regulation of emotion	.09	.03	3.17	**	[.034 to .143]

$R^2 = .42$; $F(11,1311) = 86.68^{***}$

Notes: The beta reported in the table is the unstandardized regression coefficient for the final equation. B = unstandardized beta; SE = standard error; BCa 95% CI for B = confidence interval with lower and upper limits for beta coefficients. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Objectives

1. We tested the associations among EI facets, perceived stress, and subjective happiness in a sample of teaching professionals.
2. We examined the specific role of different **EI facets** in explaining **happiness** above **perceived stress**.

Methods

Participants:

- A sample of **1323 Spanish teachers** (62,1% female and 37.9% male) took part in this study.
- Teachers worked in childhood (11.7%), primary (30.7%), **secondary** (40%), and higher (5.1%) education.
- **Mean age** was around 46 years and **teaching experience** was around 17 years.
- Most teachers were **married** (60.8%) or single (27.3%)

Measures:

1. **WLEIS** (Wong and Law, 2002).
2. **Perceived Stress** (Cohen et al., 1983).
3. **Subjective Happiness** (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

Procedure:



-Student-recruited sampling method

-Ethical approval of the University of Málaga (Ref. 66-2018-H)

Results

- ✓ **Self-focused EI dimensions** (i.e., self-emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion) **emerged as relevant predictors of teachers' happiness** even controlling for stress experienced by teachers.
- ✓ **Other-emotion appraisal** did not show predictive validity on happiness after controlling for the effects of perceived stress.

Discussion

- These results support the empirical utility of **specific EI dimensions** indicating that its predictive power for teachers' happiness would not be simply attributable to overlap with measures of stress-related constructs.
- **Future studies** adopting longitudinal designs and using objective EI measures would beneficially add to the existing evidence.
- A promising direction for **positive psychology programs** with teaching professionals may be not only focusing on **stress management interventions** but also including **EI development** as a complementary strategy for the promotion of subjective well-being.

References

- Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24(4), 385. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2136404>
- De Stercke, J., Goyette, N., & Robertson, J. E. (2015). Happiness in the classroom: Strategies for teacher retention and development. *Prospects*, 45(4), 421–427. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-015-9372-z>
- Granziera, H., Collie, R., & Martin, A. (2021). Understanding teacher wellbeing through job demands-resources theory. In C. F. Mansfield (Ed.), *Cultivating teacher resilience. International approaches, applications and impact* (pp. 229–244). Springer.
- Lyubomirsky, S., & Lepper, H. S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. *Social Indicators Research*, 46, 137–155. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006824100041>
- Matthews, G., Zeidner, M., & Roberts, R. D. (2017). Emotional intelligence, health, and stress. In C. L. Cooper & J. C. Quick (Eds.), *The handbook of stress and health: A guide to research and practice* (pp. 312–326). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wong, C.-S., & Law, K. S. (2002). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(3), 243–274. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(02\)00099-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(02)00099-1)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded in part by research projects from the University of Málaga and Junta de Andalucía/FEDER (UMA18-FEDERJA-147), funded projects by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (PID2020-117006RB-I00) and PAIDI Group CTS-1048 (Junta de Andalucía). The first author is supported by the University of Málaga. The second author is supported by a "Juan de la Cierva-Formación" Postdoctoral Research Fellowship from the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (FJC2019-038942-I/AEI/10.13039/501100011033).

ECPP 2022

"CREATING A WORLD WE WANT TO LIVE IN"

