

## SELF-REPORTED EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, BURNOUT AND ENGAGEMENT AMONG STAFF IN SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES<sup>1</sup>

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*Summary.*—This study examined the relationship among dimensions of self-reported Emotional Intelligence, Engagement and Burnout, using the Trait Meta-Mood Scale, Maslach Burnout Inventory and Utrecht Work Engagement Scale in a sample of Spanish professionals who work at institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. The results showed that Emotional Clarity was significantly associated with Personal Accomplishment ( $r = .25$ ) and Dedication ( $r = .25$ ). Further, Repair to moods was significantly correlated with all Engagement dimensions (.20 Vigor, .30 Dedication, .36 Absorption) and with Personal Accomplishment (.31). These findings extend previous research with college students in which Clarity and Repair to moods subscales were relevant predictors of well-being indexes and interpersonal functioning and suggest that the Trait Meta-Mood Scale subscales also show significant relationships with emotional functioning and work-related variables in a professional sample.

In the last decade, the concept of emotional intelligence has generated a great deal of interest and become a key factor in understanding personal success in life. Some authors have claimed that emotional intelligence may be a more effective predictor of various criteria of success in the work context than standard intelligence (Weisinger, 1997; Goleman, 1998). However, little empirical evidence has substantiated these claims in the workplace. Previous studies using self-report and performance measures, especially among college students, have found associations among emotional intelligence and theoretically related constructs such as self-esteem (Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, Hollander, & McKenley, 2002), individual cognitive performance (Lam & Kirby, 2002), interpersonal relations (Schutte, Malouff, Bobik, Coston, Greeson, Jedlicka, & Wendorf, 2001; Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003), depression and anxiety (Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995) or psychophysiological responses to stress (Salovey, Stroud, Woolery, & Epel, 2002), among others. Since most of these studies have been conducted with undergraduate students, further research must focus on testing the results with samples from the general population, particularly in the actual work context. Nevertheless, at present few empirical studies have been carried out

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in professional samples to examine whether self-reported emotional intelligence is associated with work-related phenomena such as engagement in work or burnout.

Previous research has shown that direct care staff who work with people with intellectual disability perform in a highly stressful occupation. This population faces unusually stringent demands provoking a huge range of negative emotional reactions (Rose, 1995). They experience a variety of physical and psychological health problems (i.e., stress, job strain, low work satisfaction), as well as engaging in behaviours with negative consequences for services, such as absenteeism and turnover (Hatton, Emerson, Rivers, Mason, Mason, Swarbrick, Kiernan, Reeves, & Alborz, 1999). Since emotional intelligence is a dispositional variable which implies a range of abilities in the way people understand and manage positive and negative emotions, we expected that emotional intelligence should be linked to emotional and behavioural responses to work context stressors, e.g., negatively associated with burnout and positively associated with engagement.

Although studies of emotional intelligence using ability-based measures are quickly growing, until now most research has been done on self-report measures of emotional intelligence, such as the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (Salovey, *et al.*, 1995), which is a measure of perceived or self-reported emotional intelligence, that is, a person's belief about his own emotional abilities (Salovey, *et al.*, 2002). This scale is composed by three dimensions: Attention to Feelings (amount of attention paid to one's own emotional states), Emotional Clarity (understanding of one's emotional states), and Repair to moods (the ability to regulate one's emotional states). Past studies using the Trait Meta-Mood Scale have shown particular correlational patterns among its subscales and different outcomes related to personal and interpersonal well-being. In particular, Emotional Clarity and Repair to moods have been associated with better psychological and interpersonal functioning, while Attention to moods is not a consistently significant predictive factor and often is correlated positively with negative mental health outcomes (Salovey, *et al.*, 1995; Goldman, Kraemer, & Salovey, 1996; Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2002; Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2002). No published studies have analysed the relationship between Trait Meta-Mood Scale and work-related attitudes in samples from a general population.

Here, we examined the relationships among different subscales of the Trait Meta-Mood Scale and components of burnout and engagement in Spanish workers as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. The hypotheses tested were that high scores on Emotional Clarity and Repair to moods would be positively associated with the subscales of Engagement (Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption) (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002), and one dimension

of Burnout (Personal Accomplishment), and negatively related to the other two dimensions (Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization).

A total of 472 survey packets were distributed by mail to professionals who work at institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. The final sample was composed of 112 Spanish workers (2 men, 69 women and 1 unreported) aged between 19 and 63 years ( $M=33$  yr.;  $SD=8.6$ ). The overall response rate was 24.2%. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Survey packets included a Spanish version of the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (24 items scored from 1=Never to 5=Very Frequently) (Cronbach  $\alpha$ s: Attention to feelings .88; Emotional Clarity .87; Repair to moods .79) (Fernández-Berocal, Extremera, & Ramos, in press). We also measured Burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) using the Spanish Maslach Burnout Inventory (Seisdedos, 1997). This 22-item instrument, scored on a 7-point frequency scale from 0=Never to 6=Daily, is composed of three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion ( $\alpha=.86$ ), Depersonalization ( $\alpha=.56$ ) and Personal Accomplishment ( $\alpha=.78$ ). Engagement to work was assessed with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale comprising three subscales: Vigor ( $\alpha=.82$ ), Dedication ( $\alpha=.85$ ) and Absorption ( $\alpha=.81$ ) (Salanova, Schaufeli, Llorens, Peiró, & Grau, 2000). The 15 items are scored on a 7-point frequency scale from 0=Never to 6=Daily.

We computed Pearson correlations among all the subscales, as shown in Table 1. The correlations were small to moderate among Trait Meta-Mood Scale subscales and Burnout and Engagement dimensions. As expected, Emotional Clarity was associated positively with Personal Accomplishment

TABLE 1  
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS OF SUBSCALES OF TRAIT META-MOOD SCALE,  
MASLACH BURNOUT INVENTORY, AND UTRECHT WORK ENGAGEMENT SCALE

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Trait Meta-Mood Scale											
1. Attention to Feelings	3.46	.66									
2. Emotional Clarity	3.75	.59	.12								
3. Repair to Moods	3.66	.58	.12	.46†							
Maslach Burnout Inventory											
4. Emotional Exhaustion	2.09	1.20	.06	-.18	-.10						
5. Depersonalization	.67	.81	.02	-.07	-.04	.44†					
6. Personal Accomplishment	4.88	.83	-.00	.25†	.31†	-.37†	-.36†				
Utrecht Work Engagement Scale											
7. Vigor	4.99	.92	-.89	.16	.20*	.55†	-.39†	.57†			
8. Dedication	5.07	1.06	-.07	.25†	.30†	-.42†	-.22*	.55†	.71†		
9. Absorption	4.58	1.13	-.15	.13	.36†	-.24*	-.17	.50†	.54†	.70†	

\* $p < .05$ . † $p < .01$ .

( $r_{108} = .25$ ) and Dedication ( $r_{110} = .25$ ). Further, all Engagement dimensions were positively associated with Repair to moods ( $r_{108} = .20$  for Vigor;  $r_{110} = .30$  for Dedication;  $r_{109} = .36$  for Absorption). Also, Repair was positively associated with Personal Accomplishment ( $r_{108} = .31$ ).

In summary, our hypotheses were partially supported. Emotional Clarity was associated with high Dedication and high Personal Accomplishment. At the same time, Repair to moods showed strong relationships in the expected direction with the Engagement dimensions and with Personal Accomplishment. However, no significant correlations were found among Trait Meta-Mood Scale subscales and Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. In this sense, it is important to note that two dimensions of self-reported Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Clarity and Repair to moods, showed moderate associations with Personal Accomplishment but not with Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. Nevertheless, the reliability coefficient obtained for the Depersonalization scale limits the findings related to this scale.

Consistent with the meta-analytic approach of Lee and Ashforth (1996), this result supports the findings that Personal Accomplishment is more related to resource correlates than to demand correlates, suggesting that emotional intelligence might be a personal resource which facilitates an enhanced perception of self-efficacy and self-appraisal at work along with higher Engagement. Finally, this study indicates that the Repair to moods subscale, associated with the regulation of positive and negative mood, is the Trait Meta-Mood Scale dimension most highly related to positive aspects of Engagement and Burnout.

This study has some limitations related to the use of self-report measures of emotional intelligence, its potentially biasing characteristics and the use of cross-sectional design which does not allow inferences concerning the causal direction of the relationships. However, our findings are consistent with previous research using the Trait Meta-Mood Scale among college students, in which Clarity and Repair to moods subscales were relevant predictors of well-being indexes and interpersonal functioning (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2002; Salovey, *et al.*, 2002), and suggest that Trait Meta-Mood Scale subscales also show significant relationships with important work-related variables in a professional sample. The practical applications of these results in the area of occupational stress and burnout indicate that those human services professionals with lower abilities in clarifying and repairing emotions may be targeted for intervention to develop emotional strategies for managing their work stressors and directed toward the increase of emotional well-being.

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