IOJPE

ISSN: 1300 – 915X
www.iojpe.org

International Online Journal of Primary Education *2020, volume 9, issue 1*

A MODEL OF CAREER ADAPTABILITY FOR TEACHERS: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, GOAL SETTING, AND STRIVING FOR GOALS

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Received: 06-04-2020 **Accepted:** 08-06-2020 **Published:** 30-06-2020

Abstract

This study examined the structural relationship between teachers' career adaptability, emotional intelligence, striving for goals, and setting life goals. We hypothesized that emotional intelligence would predict career adaptability, and that this relationship would be mediated by striving for goals and setting life goals. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 263 teachers, whose ages ranged from 21 to 69, with SEM and bootstrapping procedures employed. The results indicated that teachers' striving for goals and setting life goals directly predicted their career adaptability and fully mediated the effect of emotional intelligence on career adaptability. We address the possible explanations and study limitations.

Keywords: Career adaptability, emotional intelligence, striving for goals, setting life goals, teachers

INTRODUCTION

Some people, including many teachers, continue in their chosen profession for a very long time, or even their entire working lives. During this process, loving and improving their profession affects both the teachers and their students. For this reason, teachers must be adaptable during the course of their careers. Career adaptability is defined by Savickas (1997, p. 254) as the "readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions." In general, an increase in career adaptability increases the commitment of individuals to their jobs and decreases job losses (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). Career adaptability also improves individuals' employment opportunities (Guzman & Choi, 2013) and helps them to utilize more job search strategies (Koen, Klehe, Van Vianen, Zikic, & Nauta, 2010). Studies on the career adaptability of teacher candidates and teachers (Eryılmaz & Kara, 2017; Eryılmaz & Kara, 2018; McLennan, McIlveen, & Perera, 2017) have shown that it is an important factor for education and training. Thus, teachers must become more involved in their career adaptability, both to be effective in the teaching process and to be happy in what they do.

Career Adaptability and Emotional Intelligence

Teachers' emotions and emotion regulation affect the teaching process, student success, and teachers' affections (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), meaning that teachers need to be adept at organizing their feelings and emotions. Emotional intelligence (EI) is one of the important concepts utilized in dealing with teachers' emotions, and it is defined in different ways. The most general sense of EI is defined as the capacity of individuals to perceive, understand, analyze, and manage emotions effectively and validly (Mayer & Cobb, 2000). It is also defined as the ability to perceive emotions and to make inferences with this information (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003).

Many studies have examined the relationships between EI and work life, and have associated EI with problem-solving skills, customer satisfaction (Bardzil & Slaski, 2003), self-regulation, self-awareness, and conflict resolution (Rahim & Minors, 2003). In addition, some studies have shown that EI is an important feature of individuals who lead in organizations (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003), and in an organized institution such as a school, teachers are the leaders of a class. Thus, EI is important for teachers because by increasing it, their job satisfaction increases (Wong, Wong, & Peng, 2010). It has been found that an increase in teachers' emotional regulation decreased their emotional exhaustion (Chan, 2006), positively affected their leadership characteristics (Iordanoglou, 2007), and increased their personal accomplishment (Castillo-Gualda, Herrero, Rodríguez-Carvajal, Brackett, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2019). Emotional intelligence is therefore an important tool for success both in school and in wider life (Epstein, 1998). Based on these findings and this information, the hypothesis in this study is that EI increases teachers' career adaptability.

Emotional Intelligence, Goal Setting, and Striving for Goals

There are studies that directly and indirectly examine the relationships between EI, goal setting, and striving for goals. In general, when such an assessment is made, individuals with high EI are actively structuring their careers; in other words, they set goals for their careers and strive to achieve these goals (Morehouse, 2007). The relationships between EI and setting goals and striving for them can be examined in terms of the function of EI. MacCann and colleagues (2020) indicated that emotions are managed with respect to personal goals. Study is suggesting that positive emotions are effective in achieving individual goals (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Thus, the function of individuals using EI is that they move away from negative emotions and move towards more positive ones.

According to researchers seeking to explain the characteristics of EI, it has three important features (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). The first is that individuals are aware of their own and others' feelings. The second is that individuals can regulate their own and others' feelings. The dimension of emotion regulation is associated with goal setting and striving for goals because, in this process, individuals use emotional activities to achieve certain goals and they exhibit certain emotions (Castro, Gomes, & de Sousa, 2012). While determining the goals behind the activities that reveal emotions, and in the realization of these activities, there is a process of striving for the goals. In short, in the process of activating EI, we need to consider goal setting and striving for goals. Based on these findings and information, the hypothesis established in this study is that EI increases both teachers' goal setting and striving for them.

Career Adaptability and Emotional Intelligence

When the relationships between goal setting and career adaptability are examined, it is seen that setting for goals and goal striving is the precursor of career adaptability. First, determining goals helps individuals to present a clear picture of their future. Moreover, the goals are a means of satisfying the important needs of people as, especially in terms of industrial institutions, they aid both the work performance and the effective planning of human resources (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Kaplan, 1995). Several studies point to the struggle for career adaptability and goal setting and striving. For example, in Greenhaus, Callanan, and Kaplan (1995), career management model individuals set various goals and then strive to achieve them while using various strategies. As a result of this process, they discover themselves and their careers; in other words, they increase their career adaptability.

Greenhaus, Callanan, and Kaplan (1995) stressed that in the career management system, the goal-setting process should be comprehensive:

> Effective career management requires an understanding of the relationship between an employee's work life and his or her family and personal life. Many people pursue a career goal without regard for its influence on the different facets of their lives. Work can often require an extensive time commitment that conflicts with other aspects of our existence, including time for family, leisure, community service, and self-development (p. 4).

In this study, career goals and relationship and body-sensory purposes have been added to the model. In this way, the aim is to reach a model of adaptation in which the individual will spend his life in a more balanced way. Based on these findings and information, the hypothesis established in this study is that teachers' goal setting and striving increase their career adaptability.

Emotional intelligence has been found to be an important factor in effective teaching according to both student evaluations and teacher evaluations (Singh & Jha, 2012). In this, there are explanations about the relationships between EI, determining goals and striving for them, and career adaptability (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Castro, Gomes, & de Sousa, 2012; Parmentier, Pirsoul, & Nils, 2019). Based on these studies, the hypothesis in this study is that setting goals and striving for them are mediators between EI and career adaptability.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

The participants in this research were 263 teachers in Turkey (75% female) who were recruited via a paper-and-pencil-based format. Participants who provided informed consent to participate voluntarily completed a self-report questionnaire package, which took an average of 20 minutes. Table 1 provides the participants' details.

Table 1. Participant information

Variable	*n*	Valid %
Gender		
Female	199	75.7
Male	64	24.3
Marital status		
Married	143	54.4
Single	120	45.6
Perceived socio-economic status		
Lower class	20	7.6
Middle class	232	88.2
Upper class	11	4.2

The participants ranged in age from 21 to 69 (M = 32.65; SD = 9.77); 143 (54%) were married and 120 (46%) were single. Regarding socioeconomic status, 20 identified as lower class (7.6%), 232 identified as middle class (88.2%), and 11 identified as upper class (4.2%).

Measures

Career adaptability

The Career Adaptability Scale (CAS; Eryilmaz and Kara, 2016) was used to assess teachers' career adaptability on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The CAS consists of 10 items and 2 sub-dimensions: career exploration (e.g. I can easily adapt to changes in my professional plans) and career planning (e.g. I've done career planning related to my profession). The CAS has yielded a two-dimensional solution explaining 56% of variance, and confirmed (CFA: NFI = .95; NNFI = .97; CFI = .98; IFI = .98; GFI = .94; RMSEA = .071). The CAS's sub-dimensions have been reported to have a Cronbach's alpha of .84 and .71, respectively (Eryilmaz and Kara, 2016). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .87.

Emotional intelligence.
The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides & Furnham, 2000a, 2001) was used to assess teachers' EI on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). The TEIQue-SF consists of 20 items and 4 sub-dimensions: sociability, emotionality, self-control, and well-being. The Turkish adaptation of the TEIQue-SF was carried out by Deniz, Ozer, and Isik (2013). They found that the Turkish TEIQue-SF yielded to a four-dimensional solution explaining 53% of variance, and confirmed (CFA: GFI = .95; AGFI = .92; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .056; SRMR = .060). The TEIQue-SF's sub-dimensions have been reported to have a Cronbach's alpha of .70, .66, .70, and .72, respectively (Deniz et al., 2013). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to 0.83.

Striving for goals
The Striving for Goals Scale (SGS; A Eryilmaz, 2015) was used to assess teachers' career adaptability on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (very often). The SGS consists of 17 items and 3 sub-dimensions: commitment to goals (e.g. I am a person who never accepts living without goals), persistence in goal striving (e.g. When I can't reach my goal, I'll try my best to fix it), and giving up on goals (e.g. I give up when I can't reach my goal). The SGS has yielded to a three-dimensional solution explaining 61% of variance, and confirmed (CFA: NFI = .97; NNFI = .98; CFI = .98; IFI = .98; GFI = .94; RMSEA = .051). The SGS's sub-dimensions have been reported to have a Cronbach's alpha of .88, .86, and .86, respectively (Eryilmaz, 2015). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to be .73.

Setting life goals
The Scale of Setting Life Goals concerning Positive Psychotherapy (sSLG; Eryilmaz, 2012) was used to assess teachers' setting of life goals on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (very often). The sSLG consists of 9 items and 3 sub-dimensions: achievement-career goals, relationship-based goals, and body-sense life goals. The sSLG has yielded to a three-dimensional solution explaining 69.5% of variance, and confirmed (CFA: NFI = .94; NNFI = .95; CFI = .97; IFI = .97; GFI = .94; RMSEA = .077). The sSLG's sub-dimensions have been reported to have a Cronbach's alpha of .85, .72, and .72, respectively (Eryilmaz, 2012). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to be .85.

Data Analysis
The collected data were analyzed utilizing SPSS 21.0 and AMOS Graphics. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were performed first, before structural equation modelling (SEM) and bootstrapping were carried out.

The SEM approach was used to test the proposed hypotheses of the relationships between career adaptability, EI, striving for goals, and setting life goals. Based on the recommendation of Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a measurement model was first tested for an acceptable fit to the data using confirmatory factor analysis. Once a measurement model was confirmed, a serial structural model was analyzed using the maximum likelihood method. In order to evaluate the fitness of the SEM, chi-square statistic (χ^2), χ^2/df ratio, CFI, RFI, GFI, TLI, SRMR, and RMSEA χ^2/df ratio < 5; SRMR and RMSEA < .08; and CFI, RFI, GFI, and TLI > .90 were used as cut-off criteria (Hu & Bentler,1999; Kline, 2015).

Lastly, the significance of the mediation effects was also determined using a bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 bootstrapped samples. Significant mediation (i.e. an indirect effect) was established when the 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (CI) did not contain 0, as suggested by Hayes (2013). The bootstrapping procedure has advantages over Baron and Kenny (1986) and Sobel's (1982) traditional approaches in testing mediation (Hayes, 2015; Preacher et al., 2007).

IOJPE
ISSN: 1300 – 915X
www.iojpe.org
International Online Journal of Primary Education 2020, volume 9, issue 1

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

First, the mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and inter-correlations of the variables were analyzed (see Table 2). In this study, all the variables fell under the skewness with an absolute value of .76 and the kurtosis with an absolute value of 2.31. Therefore, the variables satisfied skewness < 2 and kurtosis < 7 as a normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). In the correlation analysis, the sub-dimensions of career adaptability were significant, and positively correlated with the sub-dimensions of EI (r = .18 – .40, ps < .01). In addition, the results indicated that the sub-dimensions of career adaptability were positively correlated with the commitment to goals (r = .24 – .27, ps < .01) and persistence in goal striving (r = .33 – .37, ps < .01). On the other hand, the sub-dimensions of career adaptability were negatively correlated with giving up on goals (r = -.30 – -.37). There was a significant association between each sub-dimension of career adaptability and the sub-dimensions of setting life goals (r = .17 – .27, ps < .01).

Table 2. Correlations and descriptive statistics of the study variables

	Bivariate correlations											Descriptive Statistics			
Variable	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	***M***	***SD***	**S**	**K**
1. Career exploration [CA]	–											25.17	4.04	-1.1	2.3
2. Career planning [CA]	.58**	–										14.84	2.95	-.49	.72
3. Sociability [EI]	.33**	.18**	–									19.59	3.75	.01	.19
4. Emotionality [EI]	.28**	.20**	.40**	–								18.64	3.64	-.17	-.35
5. Self-control [EI]	.24**	.26**	.52**	.33**	–							18.38	3.97	-.11	.11
6. Well-being [EI]	.40**	.29**	.33**	.17**	.38**	–						19.71	3.85	.02	.25
7. Commitment of goals [SG]	.27**	.24**	.12*	.21**	.14**	.36**	–					19.08	3.26	-.39	.91
8. Persistence in goal striving [SG]	.33**	.37**	.23**	.17**	.36**	.45**	.53**	–				15.97	2.46	-.15	.32
9. Goals give up [SG]	-.37**	-.30**	-.42**	-.34**	-.53**	-.28**	-.17**	-.35**	–			11.15	3.79	.76	1.1
10. ACG [SLS]	.30**	.38**	.20**	.15**	.20**	.37**	.33**	.43**	-.17**	–		8.64	1.91	-.25	.41
11. RBG [SLS]	.21**	.27**	.11	.14**	.05	.23**	.33**	.37**	-.09	.54**	–	8.39	2.00	-.35	.27
12. BLG [SLS]	.17**	.15**	.14**	.11	.07	.26**	.24**	.28**	-.05	.45**	.50**	8.35	1.91	-.15	.09

Note. * p < .05; ** p < .01; *CA* Sub-dimensions of career adaptability; *EI* Sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence; *SG* Sub-dimensions of goal striving; *SLS* Sub-dimensions of settings life goals; *ACG* achievement-career goals; *RBG* relationship-based goals; *BLG* body-sense life goals; *S* skewness; *K* kurtosis

Measurement Model

As a first step in SEM, we tested the measurement models for the latent constructs of career adaptability, EI, striving for goals, and setting life goals. Each latent construct had indicators consisting of the extant sub-dimensions of the corresponding scale. The CFA indicated that the measurement model was a good fit to the data [$\chi^2_{(48,\ N = 263)}$ = 119.82, p < .001; CFI = .92; GFI = .93; IFI = .92; SRMR = .055; RMSEA = .076] and all regression weights were significant at p < .001. Thus, all four latent variables seemed to have been measured sufficiently by their respective indicators.

Structural Model

We tested three alternative models in order to find a better relationship among the study variables. First, a fully mediated model (Model I), which contained mediators (striving for goals and setting life goals) and no direct path from EI to career adaptability, was assessed. The results showed that Model I fitted the data well [$\chi^2_{(50,\ N = 263)}$ = 132.786, p < .001; CFI = .908; GFI = .917; IFI = .910; SRMR = .0585; RMSEA = .079]. Then, a partially mediated model (Model II) that drew a direct path from EI to career adaptability was tested. While the fit indices of Model II were acceptable [$\chi^2_{(49,\ N = 263)}$ = 132.613, p < .001; CFI = .907; GFI = .918; IFI = .909; SRMR = .0584; RMSEA = .081], the path between EI and career adaptability was not significant (β = -.125, p > .05). Therefore, we removed the direct pathway between EI and career adaptability and tested the theoretically hypothesized structural model (Model III). In Model III, striving for goals and setting life goals were tested as full mediators in the relationship between EI and career adaptability, and the direct associations of setting life goals with striving for goals and with career adaptability were added. Model III indicated a good model fit

[$\chi^2_{(49, N = 263)} = 119.835$, $p < .001$; CFI = .921; GFI = .928; IFI = .923; SRMR = .0552; RMSEA = .074.] In addition, all path coefficients were found to be significant. It was also seen that the AIC and ECVI values were lower in Model III (AIC = 177.835; ECVI = .679) than in Model I (AIC = 188.786; ECVI = .721) and Model II (AIC = 190.613; ECVI = .728). Consequently, Model III was preferred because of the significant pathways, better-fit indices, and lower AIC and ECVI values (see Table 3). Figure 1 illustrates the preferred structural model for determining associations between career adaptability, EI, striving for goals, and setting life goals.

Table 3. Model fit indices for structural models

Model	χ^2 df	CFI	GFI	IFI	SRMR	RMSEA	AIC	ECVI
Model I	$\chi^2_{50} = 132.786^*$	.908	.917	.910	.0585	.079	188.786	.721
Model II	$\chi^2_{49} = 132.613^*$	.907	.918	.909	.0584	.081	190.613	.728
Model III [c]	$\chi^2_{49} = 119.835^*$	.921	.928	.923	.0552	.074	177.835	.679

Note. * p <.001; [c] preferred Model

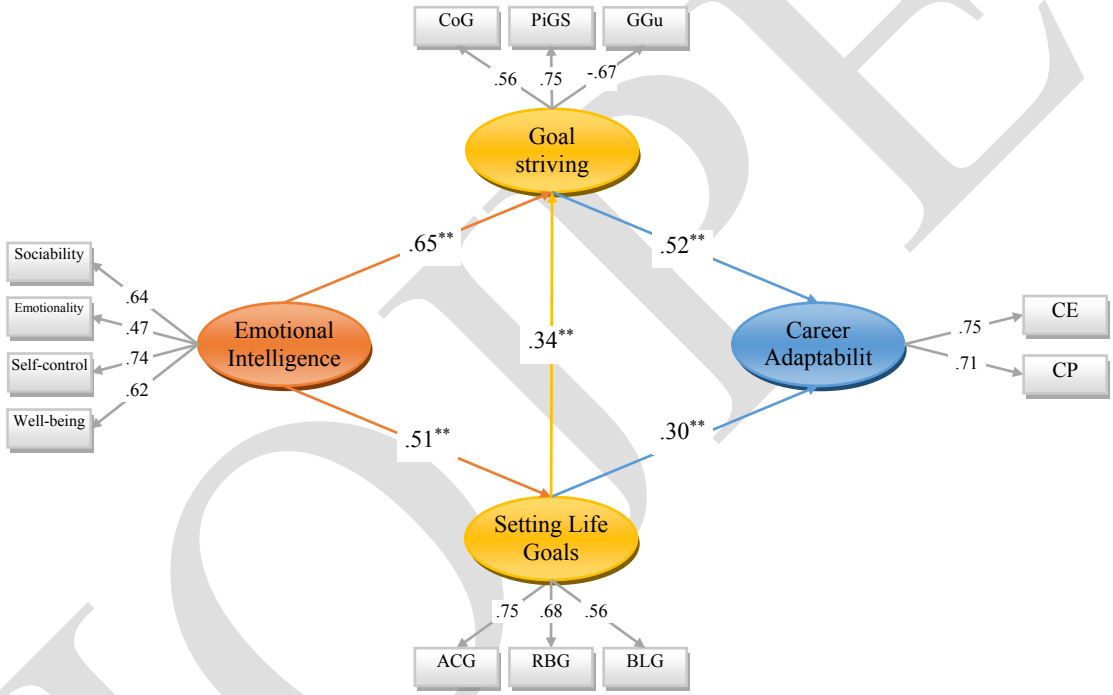

Figure 1. Standardized factor loading for the Model III

Note. ** $p < .01$; *CoG* commitment of goals; *PiGS* persistence in goal striving; *GGu* goals give up; *ACG* achievement-career goals; *RBG* relationship-based goals; *BLG* body-sense life goals; *CE* career exploration; *CP* career planning

Bootstrapping

This stage involved considering the indirect effects (and 95% confidence intervals) of EI on career adaptability via striving for goals and setting life goals, and of setting life goals on career adaptability via striving for goals. As shown in Table 4, there was a significant indirect effect of EI on career adaptability through striving for goals and setting life goals: $B = .58$, SE = .067, 95% CI [.446, 0.709].

Furthermore, the 95% CI of the indirect effect of setting life goals on career adaptability did not include zero, suggesting that striving for goals mediates the relationships between setting life goals and career adaptability: $B = .175$, SE = .064, 95% CI [.081, .353].

Table 4. Parameters and 95 % CIs for the paths of the Model III

Path	Estimate	SE	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
Direct				
EI → GS	.647	.085	.455	.794
EI → SIG	.509	.083	.335	.657
GS → CA	.522	.121	.274	.752
SIG → CA	.302	.139	.007	.555
SIG → GS	.335	.097	.138	.519
Indirect effect				
EI → GS – SIG → CA	.580	.067	.446	.709
SIG → GS → CA	.175	.064	.081	.353

Note. *EI* Emotional intelligence; goal striving; *SIG* setting life goals; *CA* career adaptability

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to present and test a career adaptability model for teachers. According to the results, when teachers' EI increases, their career adaptability also increases. In addition, it was found that goal setting and striving for goals had a mediating effect on the relationship between EI and career adaptability.

Thus, the increased EI of teachers affects their career adaptability. In the literature, there are studies showing that individuals who work in different fields are affected by their EI (Coetzee & Harry, 2014). However, there are few studies directly examining the relationship between career adaptability and EI in teachers, although some do examine it indirectly. For instance, teachers' emotions were found to relate to classroom management (Emmer & Stough, 2001), the creation of hopes (Beach & Pearson, 1998; Elbaz, 1992), and conflict and resolution in the education and training environment. This arrangement of teachers' emotions and feelings shows that they are increasing their commitment to their work and to their teaching process (Golby, 1996). The present study confirms such findings from the literature.

Teachers' setting of life goals and their striving to achieve these goals increases their career adaptability. The explanations given in career counseling research supports the findings of this study. A hope-centered model of career development causes individuals to set goals and strive for these goals to achieve a progress in their careers, a process that also supports their career adaptability (Niles, 2011). In terms of career structuring theory, setting and striving for goals involves the use of career adaptability (Savickas, 1997), while using adaptation skills also increases the career adaptability of individuals (Eryılmaz & Kara, 2018).

There are also studies that indirectly support the model discussed in this study that consider case studies and the effect of organizational leadership activities on organizational commitment (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Castro & Gomes de Sousa, 2012; Kim & Beehr, 2018). There are explanations here regarding the relationships between EI, setting goals and striving for them, and career adaptability. For example, these relationships can be evaluated in the context of organizational psychology, and studies show that managing individuals' emotions makes it easier for them to reach organizational goals. In this process, individuals struggle to achieve increased motivation and organizational purposes; as a result of this process, individuals' adaptation to the environments in which they conduct their careers increases. Individuals thus get satisfaction from their working environment, and their organizational commitment increases (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Castro, Gomes, & de Sousa, 2012). Increased satisfaction and adaptation can also improve the career adaptability of individuals.

Similarly, the relationship between EI, setting goals and striving for them, and career adaptability can also be evaluated in terms of effective leadership. According to George (2000), there is a relationship between EI and being an effective leader, as EI influences the motivation of individuals to determine goals and strive for them. Thus, individuals have a strong organizational identity. These explanations are also acceptable for teachers because they are the leaders of the classroom and their high EI can

help in setting goals for which they then strive. As a result of this situation, career adaptability is an important element of their professional self and identity.

Implications

The implementation of training programs for individuals' career adaptation facilitates their transition from teaching to work life (Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012). The elements of the structural model tested in this study may be an element of career adaptability programs prepared for university students. In addition, the potential of EI training for teachers to increase their self-efficiency, reduce stress levels, and increase job satisfaction (Vesely, Saklofsk, & Leschied, 2013) was identified. Career adaptability programs for prospective teachers can be prepared in line with the model examined in this study; these can address issues such as EI, goal setting, and goal striving.

Limitations

Several limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limited our ability to conclude causal relationships between EI, striving for goals, setting life goals, and career adaptability. Therefore, the interpretation of the mediating effects of striving for goals and setting life goals in the relationship between EI and career adaptability should be treated with caution. Thus, longitudinal or experimental studies may be carried out to examine the mediation role that can support a causal order and a better understanding of these variables. Second, the overall data was obtained from self-report scales; thus, the variable rates might have been over- or underestimated. Third, although the study involved the participation of teachers from different locations in Turkey, it was not fully and sufficiently representative of all Turkish teachers. Therefore, a more representative sample is needed to re-confirm the results of the present study.

Conclusions

This study is one of the first to examine the mediating effects of teachers' setting and striving for life goals on the association between EI and career adaptability. The study supports the view that setting and striving for life goals is a critical element in the career adaptability effect of EI. Thus, policymakers and educational administrators should pay attention to teachers' EI, goal setting, and goal striving to increase their career adaptability. This is important because teachers' career adaptability, both personal and professional, is crucial for students' well-being and the economy of the country in question.

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