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- 2 Predicting Job Satisfaction in Military Organizations:
- 3 Unpacking the Relationship Between Emotional
- 4 Intelligence, Teamwork Communication, and Job
- 5 Attitudes in Spanish Military Cadets
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Abstract: Although prior research has extensively examined the association of emotional intelligence (EI) with various job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction), the empirical and systematic investigation of this link within military institutions has captured considerably less research attention. The present research analyzed the relationship between EI, teamwork communication, and job satisfaction among Spanish military cadets. We tested the potential unique contribution of EI to job satisfaction over and above demographics (i.e., gender and age), proactive personality, and resilience. Moreover, we also examined whether EI indirectly affects job satisfaction via its relationship with teamwork communication. A sample of 363 cadet officers of the Spanish General Military Academy completed questionnaires assessing EI, teamwork communication, proactive personality, resilience, and job satisfaction. Our results revealed that EI exhibited incremental variance in predicting job satisfaction even after accounting for demographics, proactive personality, and resilience. Additionally, we found that the effect of EI on job satisfaction was partially driven by enhanced teamwork communication. This research provides empirical evidence suggesting a pathway (i.e., effective teamwork communication) through which EI helps military cadets to experience higher job satisfaction. Implications for future academic programs including EI and teamwork communication to promote positive job attitudes among military personnel are discussed.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence; job satisfaction; military context; proactive personality; resilience.

### 1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been conceptualized as an individual difference dimension that encompasses a set of abilities concerned with the processing of emotion-relevant information.

According to Mayer and Salovey's theoretical approach [1], EI could be defined as "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions

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and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" [1] (p.5). In the last two decades, a significant body of research has documented the predictive validity of EI across a wide array of psychological domains. For instance, EI has been found to predict a set of health-related dimensions and behaviors [2,3], subjective well-being [4], cognitive and affective academic engagement [5], career decision making [6], or social sharing motives [7], among others.

A promising avenue for future research is related to the examination of psychological processes involved between individuals' EI and critical work-related outcomes [8,9]. Accordingly, given that people high in EI are more prone to successfully evaluating and regulating their emotional states [10], thereby deploying more appropriate strategies for coping with adverse circumstances, employees' EI is argued to play a fundamental role in the maintenance and development of positive individual and organizational outcomes. Indeed, higher EI has been consistently and positively associated with positive work outcomes, such as job satisfaction [11-13], trust and project success [13], psychological ownership of the job [14], or organizational commitment [15]. Although the aforementioned studies substantially strengthen the idea that EI may promote desirable work outcomes, it is important to ascertain whether the effects of EI remained significant once established, well-known personality or work-related constructs are controlled in the analytical models. However, there is growing valuable research trying to demonstrate incremental validity of EI in predicting work attitudes and behavior. For example, Carmeli [16] found that EI predicted a set of work outcomes (i.e., job performance, withdrawal intention, altruistic behavior, career commitment, affective commitment, work-family conflict, and job satisfaction) even after accounting for age, income, organizational size, and tenure in an organization. Further studies have also shown that EI uniquely predicted burnout levels (beyond demographic and work-related factors [17]) and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (above and beyond demographics and personality traits [18]). Likewise, it is worth noting that recent meta-analytic findings have indicated that EI exhibited incremental validity in the prediction of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions above and beyond the Big Five personality factors [8], thus suggesting the unique contribution of EI to these work attitudes. Moreover, Miao et al. [8] also explored potential theoretically related psychological mechanisms that might act as mediator variables in the association between EI and job satisfaction. In particular, their study demonstrated that both state affect and job performance mediated the EI-job satisfaction relationship. Similarly, in another meta-analysis aimed at exploring the effects of EI on job satisfaction it was also found that employees with higher EI reported greater job satisfaction [19]; notably, this relationship existed independently of numerous relevant employees' characteristics (i.e., gender, age, and tenure). In additional support of the unique contribution of EI to work outcomes, another recent meta-analysis of EI provided empirical evidence showing that EI has incremental validity in predicting both organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior after controlling for classical variables, such as personality dimensions or general self-efficacy [20].

Overall, the data above suggest that there is increasing convergence on the idea that EI represents a central individual characteristic for uniquely enhancing positive individual and work-related outcomes in organizational life. However, even though the desirable effects of employees' EI on job satisfaction across organizational settings have received accumulated evidence, the empirical and systematic investigation of such a relationship within military organizations has captured considerably less scholarly attention [21]. Currently, military organizations are mainly hierarchical and large institutions where orders have a great impact on subordinate members [22]. Operating in complex socio-cultural (military forces are integrated in local populations), globalized (mass media and social platforms could trigger far-reaching incidents), and rapidly changing (a wide range of operations are performed, from maintaining security to fighting) environments poses a major challenge for the military culture and organization. Therefore, these institutions should ineluctably give due consideration to cadet officers' abilities to perceive and regulate their emotions within this particularly complex work environment. For example, in a large cohort of North

American military academy cadets, research confirmed the importance of cognitive and personality variables that could contribute to military competences and performance [23]. Nevertheless, EI was not specifically measured in that research. Thus, authors suggest the need to explore additional factors that may influence military performance beyond reasoning, personality, and social skills.

Through this research, we intend to extend prior research findings on EI by elucidating the specific role of EI in job satisfaction—one of the central variables in the organizational field [24]—among military forces, while also controlling for the potential influence of further conceptually related personality constructs, such as individuals' levels of proactive personality and resilience. Although recent research has found that both proactive personality and resilience are positively correlated with EI and job satisfaction [25-28], no studies have analyzed whether EI predicts job satisfaction even after accounting for proactive personality and resilience.

Considering that the underlying psychological mechanisms of the EI–job satisfaction association are barely known [11], we also explored whether teamwork communication—a basic teamwork competence [29]—would act as a plausible mediating psychological variable. Previous research has suggested that high EI could represent a prerequisite to developing adequate and effective interpersonal communication skills [30]. Nonetheless, the role of teamwork communication in the relationship between EI and job satisfaction has not been elucidated so far. In this regard, prior indirect evidence allows us to infer that communication competence could exert an explanatory role. For instance, EI has been proven to be positively correlated with perceptions of constructive communication patterns [31]. Furthermore, effective communication at work has been found to correlate with higher job satisfaction [32], thereby supporting the beneficial impact of communication on positive job attitudes. To sum up, because EI is deemed a key factor in various types of communication, potentially leading to optimal work-related outcomes [33], one might expect that EI positively affects job satisfaction by enhancing teamwork communication.

## 120 1.1. The Current Study

This research is principally aimed at testing the predictive ability of EI on job satisfaction among a large sample of cadet officers. Additionally, we also examined the incremental validity of EI above and beyond partially conceptual overlapping factors (i.e., proactive personality and resilience), as well as the putative mediating role of work-team communication competence in the EI-job satisfaction relationship, thus complementing prior research that analyzed other mediating factors [8,11]. Overall, proceeding on the basis of the abovementioned considerations, the following hypotheses have been made:

- *Hypothesis* 1: Cadet officers' EI will predict increased job satisfaction.
- 129 Hypothesis 2: Cadet officers' EI will exhibit incremental validity in job satisfaction above and beyond
- the effects of proactive personality and resilience.
- *Hypothesis* 3: Teamwork communication competence will act as a mediator in the relationship
- between cadet officers' EI and job satisfaction.

### 133 2. Materials and Methods

134 2.1. Sample

Cadet officers of the Spanish General Military Academy, located in Zaragoza, Spain, were invited to participate in this research. A total of 363 individuals completed a comprehensive survey including five separate questionnaires. The sample comprised 343 male and 20 female military cadets between 20 and 40 years of age (M = 23.48, SD = 3.99).

140 2.2. *Measures* 

# 2.2.1. Emotional Intelligence

We used the Spanish version of the Wong Law Emotional Intelligence Scale [34]. This instrument consists of 16 items measuring four aspects of EI: Self-Emotion Appraisal, SEA, Others' Emotion Appraisal, OEA, Use of Emotion, UOE, and Regulation of Emotion, ROE. However, as in prior studies, we used the overall score in our analyses as we were interested in the global EI score [35,36]. Items (e.g., "I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions" or "I always encourage myself to try my best") were rated using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores in this measure reflect higher levels of EI ( $\alpha$  = 0.86). We used the well-validated Spanish version [37].

#### 2.2.2. Teamwork communication

We used the communication measure composed of eight items of the Teamwork Knowledge, Skill, Ability Test proposed by Stevens and Campion [38,39] and adapted it to the Spanish population [29] (e.g., "I make an effort to talk about less important things with my peers for the sake of team spirit and better internal communication"). The answer format is a Likert-type scale with five options ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*always*); high scores indicate effective communication for teamwork. Cronbach's alpha reliability on the present sample was 0.76.

## 157 2.2.3. Proactive Personality

We administered the shortened version of the Proactive Personality Scale proposed by Seibert, Kraimer, and Crant [40] and validated according to Bateman and Crant's work [41]. The short version consists of 10 items (e.g., "I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life") measuring individual differences in the inclination to take action and change the environment. Items were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never at all*) to 5 (*always*). Higher scores indicate higher levels of proactive personality. Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.86.

## 2.2.4. Resilience

We used the 5-item measure developed by Hardy et al. [42] to evaluate resilience. It was operationalized as the ability to maintain confidence in the face of misadventures and dissatisfaction experiences (e.g., "Bounce back from performing poorly and succeed"). The response format was a 5-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (*low*) to 5 (*high*). Higher scores reflect greater resilience. Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.81.

## 170 2.2.5. Job Satisfaction

To assess job satisfaction, we administered the job satisfaction scale proposed by Judge, Locke, Durham, and Kluger [43]; this measure was based on Brayfield and Rothe's overall job satisfaction scale [44] (e.g., "Most days I am enthusiastic about my work"). The responses to its 5 items were measured using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores in this measure indicate increased job satisfaction. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.84.

### 178 2.3. Procedure

A number of previously trained evaluators requested military cadets' volunteers to participate in the Spanish General Military Academy. The evaluators explained to participants how the collected information will be used, ensuring that they could abandon their participation in the study at any time and without any consequences. After participants were informed about the estimated duration of their collaboration (about 25 minutes), confidentiality, and anonymity regarding their answers, they proceeded to complete the questionnaire booklet individually in Spanish General Military Academy classrooms while supervised by the aforementioned evaluators. Volunteers did not receive any type of academic or financial compensation in exchange for their participation.

## 2.4. Data Analysis

First, basic descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) and bivariate correlations for all measures were computed. Then, we performed a hierarchical regression analysis to determine the possible unique predictive contribution of EI to job satisfaction. As a preliminary check, we calculated variance inflation factors (VIFs) for each independent questionnaire variable. Collinearity statistics obtained for our sample showed acceptable values (VIFs < 1.57 [45]). Lastly, we further computed a simple mediation analysis to explore whether the EI–job satisfaction relationship among cadet officers could be explained—at least, partially—by teamwork communication competence levels.

### 3. Results

### 3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) and product–moment correlation coefficients for all key variables in the study are given in Table 1. Aligning with our main expectations, military cadets' EI showed positive correlations with the rest of the variables (Table 1). Thus, greater EI was significantly associated with elevated teamwork communication competence, proactive personality, resilience, and job satisfaction.

**Table 1.** Means, standard deviations, and correlations for EI, communication competence, proactive personality, resilience and job satisfaction.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	
1.Emotional Intelligence	5.49	0.63	-					_
2. Communication	2.75	0.55	.45***	-				
3. Proactive Personality	5.46	0.66	.51***	.36***	-			
4. Resilience	3.96	0.53	.51***	.37***	.46***	-		
5. Job Satisfaction	4.85	1.20	.36***	.26***	.29***	.26***	-	

*Note*: \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001

### 3.2. The Unique Contribution of EI to Job Satisfaction

To verify Hypotheses 1 and 2, we performed a multiple hierarchical regression analysis. In the first step of the regression equation, demographics (i.e., sex and age) were entered (method: enter). Proactive personality and resilience were included in the second step (method: enter). Finally, we incorporated EI in the third step (method: enter) to calculate its added value in explaining variance in job satisfaction and ascertain its unique predictive contribution to this criterion above and beyond demographics (i.e., gender and age), proactive personality, and resilience. The results of the regression analysis predicting cadet officers' job satisfaction are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Summary of the hierarchical regression analysis with job satisfaction as the criterion variable

		Job Satisfaction		
Predictor	β	C.I. (95%)	р	$R^2$
Step 1				.002
Sex	013	[604, .471]	.808	
Age	038	[052, .025]	.487	
Step 2				.101
Sex	009	[557, .469]	.866	
Age	035	[050, .025]	.510	
Proactive Personality	.205	[.160, .578]	.001	
Resilience	.163	[.106, .630]	.006	
Step 3				.153
Sex	.001	[496, .503]	.990	
Age	064	[060, .014]	.222	
Proactive Personality	.100	[039, .399]	.107	
Resilience	.071	[111, .430]	-246	
Emotional Intelligence	.286	[.306, .771]	<.001	

Neither gender nor age significantly contributed to the prediction of job satisfaction, with an amount of criterion variance explained of 0.02%, F(2,343) = 0.309, p = 0.735. Conversely, the model including proactive personality and resilience, which were added at the second step of the regression analysis, was significant, F(4,343) = 9.523, p < 0.001. As illustrated in Table 2, both proactive personality and resilience emerged as significant predictors of higher levels of job satisfaction. These personality-related factors explained an additional 10% of the variance in job satisfaction. The inclusion of EI in the third step of the regression equation accounted for incremental criterion variance (5.2%), and the regression model remained significant, F(5,343) = 12.231, p < 0.001. As Table 2 shows, the regression coefficient for EI was significantly positive, t(343) = 4.564, p < 0.001, indicating that military cadets' EI levels uniquely predicted greater job satisfaction even after controlling for demographics (i.e., gender and age) and personality variables (i.e., proactive personality and resilience). Hence, Hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported.

7 of 12

We used Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4 [46]) to test Hypothesis 3, namely to determine the potential indirect effect of EI on job satisfaction via the mediator variable (i.e., communication). None of the covariate (age and gender) effects was significant (all ps > 0.10). The results indicated that military cadets with greater scores on EI showed higher communication competence (b = 0.192, SE = 0.012, p < 0.001), which in turn was related to increased job satisfaction (b = 0.404, SE = 0.144, p = 0.005). We calculated 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) for the point estimate on the basis of 5,000 bootstrap samples. Taking into account Hayes' indications [46], the indirect effect is considered statistically significant (p < .05) when the 0 value is not included in its CI. Given that 0 is outside the CI (0.039 to 0.292) of the indirect effect of cadet officers' EI on job satisfaction via communication competence (b = 0.156) (Table 3), the results confirmed that communication competence mediated the EI–job satisfaction relationship; hence, military cadets' EI was indirectly linked to job satisfaction through its association with teamwork communication. After controlling for the effect of communication (i.e., mediator variable), the direct effect of EI on job satisfaction among cadet officers remained significant (b = 0.500, SE = 0.123, p = 0.001), thus indicating the existence of a partial mediation. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

	Outcome: Co		244		Outoma I	oh Catiofastion		
D 1 (				111.01		b Satisfaction		111.01
Predictors	Coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	0.712*	0.341	0.400	1.385	1.846**	0.760	0.348	3.345
Co: Sex	0.088	0.150	-2.061	0.383	0.219	0.331	-0.433	0.870
Co:Age	-0.004	0.009	0.650	-0.023	-0.327	0.021	-0.743	0.009
Me:					0.404**	0.144	0.121	0.687
Communi-cati								
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X: EI	0.387***	0.049	0.289	0.485	0.500***	0.123	0.258	0.742
$R^2$	0.21***				0.16***			
Indirect effect		Boot SE	Boot SE		Boot LLCI		Boot ULCI	
0.156		0.064	0.064		0.039		0.292	

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap simple size: 5,000. LLCI= lower level of the 95% bootstrap percentile confidence interval; ULCI= upper level of the 95% bootstrap percentile confidence interval. The indirect effect is significant where the confidence intervals does not contain zero. \*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .001

## **Table 3.** Summary of mediation analysis.

### 4. Discussion

In the present study, we examined the predictive and incremental validity of EI on job satisfaction above and beyond the effects attributable to common demographic characteristics (i.e., gender and age), proactive personality, and resilience in Spanish military cadets; furthermore, this is

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8 of 12

also the first study to explore the mediating role of teamwork communication competence in the relationship between EI and job satisfaction in the military context.

Our regression findings supported Hypotheses 1 and 2. In line with prior meta-analytic research, EI has demonstrated its ability to predict some significant variance over levels of job satisfaction [8]. Besides, strong predictors of job satisfaction such as proactive personality and resilience have not been controlled for in previous research. Given the functional similarities among EI, proactivity, and resilience in predicting positive attitudes at workplace, we were also interested in verifying the contribution of EI to job satisfaction beyond the influence of cadet officers' other traits characteristics. Our results showed that EI explained a significant proportion of variance in job satisfaction above and beyond the effects of demographic variables, proactive personality, and resilience. These findings provide a stringent test of the practical importance of EI as an explanatory factor of job satisfaction in military organizations over theoretically and empirically robust predictors. Moreover, in our study EI explained an additional 5% of the variance of levels of job satisfaction. While the incremental effects of military cadets' EI on job satisfaction were not excessively large, incremental values like these should be considered a reasonable contribution when other variables are controlled [47,48]. In sum, independent of the influence of other well-known dispositional traits and demographics variables, our set of results has indicated that EI also plays a significant role in how cadet officers develop and maintain positive job attitudes, suggesting that intervention programs focused on cultivating EI might have beneficial effects in the development and maintenance of job satisfaction among military members [8, 49].

On the other hand, the mediation analysis also demonstrated a partial mediation effect of teamwork communication competence in the relationship between EI and job satisfaction. Extending past research on mediating mechanisms in the link between EI and job satisfaction [11], our study found that emotionally intelligent cadet officers reported higher effective communication for teamwork, which results in higher job satisfaction. Emotionally intelligent workers are thought to show not only higher interpersonal skills but also greater levels of effective communication for teamwork [50]. According to prior research [51,52], military cadets with higher EI might communicate more effectively because they are able to perceive, understand, and implement strategies to infer other people's intentions from their affective signs, use others' emotions as guides for their behavior, or influence people's motivation and use of effective skills to maintain successful relations that might result in greater job satisfaction. Military activity has been found to be associated with an array of workplace stressors that could affect the development of job attitudes [53]. EI is proposed as a psychological resource that might contribute to developing positive job attitudes and behaviors and, specifically, job satisfaction [8]. According to our findings, one potential mechanism by which military cadets' EI may help to explain higher job satisfaction is through using and developing effective teamwork communication.

### 4.1. Limitations and Future Directions

Some limitations of our study are to be mentioned. First, our results are based on self-reported data and we used a cross-sectional design. Therefore, this methodology makes it impossible to determine the direction of association between variables. Further studies should include other complementary data (e.g., interviews and situational judgment tests) and use longitudinal designs that provide further insights to the causal relationships between EI, teamwork communication, and positive attitudes among cadets officers. Although one strength of this study is the analysis of the relationship of EI and job satisfaction in a non-commercial organization (i.e., Spanish General Military Academy), one limitation is that the military academy is an officer training and education context, and positive attitudes in this context might not be strongly related with their positions in army units after graduation.

Despite these limitations, our study provides insights into how EI, teamwork communication, and positive attitudes in military organizations are connected, and how the relationship between EI and job satisfaction is independent of other well-known dispositional factors. These findings might help to design future intervention programs aimed at increasing EI and teamwork communication skills among future career officers. EI is a psychological construct that might be predictive of several positive functioning outcomes and might foster adaptive (and mitigate maladaptive) personal and organizational outcomes for active duty members and their families [54,55]. In military operations, the success of missions frequently depends on the capacity of military leaders to understand and manage the emotions of the team and on the effective team communication among members in challenging and dangerous environments [56]. Current conflicts involving non-state actors require military leaders to be adaptive to shifting roles where EI favors interpersonal relationships, regulating stress, and focusing attention to optimize decision making [57]. Further academic programs of cadet leadership instruction should focus on developing EI and enable participants to acquire skills and tools to promote effective team interaction strategies for smooth communication and positive interpersonal relationships. The development of these abilities might help officers to effectively work with others in groups and teams. Military institutions could benefit from implementing programs to facilitate and foster emotional abilities and effective teamwork communication to promote both personal and job attitudes [58].

### 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the setting for cadet officers typically involves collaborative and interdisciplinary teamwork tasks. However, working collaboratively requires several personal skills to allow different military academy cadets to effectively synchronize, work together cooperatively to solve conflict problems, and contribute as members of inter-professional teams to provide successful performance outcomes and experience higher positive attitudes in their daily military tasks. Increasing their abilities to understand and to manage their emotions may positively impact teamwork communication and, therefore, positively affect job attitudes. Extending previous findings on incremental validity of EI and underlying mechanisms between EI and job attitudes [8], our current findings provide empirical support of (a) the incremental role of EI in job satisfaction beyond further dispositional factors and (b) the mediating role of teamwork communication in the EI-job satisfaction association in the military context. In short, teamwork communication skills appear to be a partial mediator in the association between emotional skills and job satisfaction in Spanish cadet officers. Therefore, team communication skills and emotional abilities may represent promising targets for academic training programs aimed at increasing job satisfaction among military cadets. If our findings are replicated, then these emotional and teamwork skills might become an integral part of a training module for the development of strategies for improving positive attitudes at work for future career officers.

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12 of 12

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