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Emotional intelligence and its relation to job creativity in preschool teachers of at-risk children: A cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated how emotional intelligence relates to job creativity in preschool teachers working with children who might have specific learning disabilities (SLDs). Earlier research indicates a strong link between emotional intelligence and factors like creativity, job satisfaction, engagement, and well-being. These factors are important in positive psychology, benefiting both teachers' and students' life and work quality. However, there's limited research on emotional intelligence's impact on job creativity in preschool education, particularly for teachers of children at risk for SLDs. This study aimed to address this lack of information by surveying 140 female preschool teachers. They were assessed using the Schutte self-reported emotional intelligence scale (SSREIS) and the job creativity scale (JCS). The findings showed that emotional intelligence accounts for 30% of the differences in job creativity. This was determined after considering factors like age, education level, kindergarten type, and teaching experience. The study found a positive, significant link between emotional intelligence and job creativity in these teachers. It emphasizes the need to improve emotional skills and job creativity in early childhood educators. This includes creating training programs and supportive environments. The study also suggests new research areas to enhance teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

1. Introduction

Preschool teachers who work with children at risk for specific learning disabilities (SLDs) must possess emotional intelligence (EI) and job creativity (JC) to succeed. SLDs are neurodevelopmental disorders that affect a child's reading, writing, or math skills and are usually diagnosed during or after schooling (APA, 2013). Research confirms that EI, with its three components, is crucial for preschool teachers who face the challenges of supporting these children (Poulou, 2017; Poulou et al., 2018; Ivcevic et al., 2007; Munday and Horton, 2021; Al-Jundi and Anwar Al-Taher, 2022). Moreover, JC is an essential component of effective teaching practices for early childhood educators working in this context (Kovalchuk et al., 2022; Levitats et al., 2022; Winton and Sabol, 2022; Sundquis and Lubart, 2022). Therefore, preschool teachers must develop and demonstrate high levels of EI and JC to serve the needs of children at risk for SLDs effectively. However, despite its significance, the literature lacks information about the relationship between EI and JC, particularly among preschool teachers working with children at risk for SLDs.

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own and other people's emotions (Adamakis and Dania, 2021). EI enhances self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Mustafa et al., 2020), as well as interpersonal interactions, mental and physical well-being (Wicks et al., 2021), and personal goal attainment (Garner et al., 2013; Anand, 2019). Moreover, EI may also influence the job creativity (JC) of preschool teachers who work with children at risk for specific learning disorders (SLDs). EI is a vital skill for interpersonal relationships and well-being in both physical and mental aspects (Wicks et al., 2021). Moreover, it can help people effectively cope with their emotions and prevent negative emotions from interfering with their goals (Anand,

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2019). The literature on EI examines different models, but two of the most influential ones are those proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997) and Goleman (1998). Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model comprises four components: perceiving and expressing emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding and analyzing emotions, and regulating emotions. Goleman's (1998) model consists of five domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. EI has various implications for preschool teachers working with children at risk for specific learning disabilities (Anastasiou, 2020). For instance, Poulou (2017) investigated how teachers' perceptions of EI and students' social skills influence students' emotional and behavioral difficulties in preschool.

The outcomes demonstrated that teachers' perceptions of emotional intelligence are more important for students who have low social skills. The study implies that teachers' perceptions of EI and students' social skills are important factors in understanding these difficulties in preschool. Additionally, Poulou et al. (2018) compared U.S. and Greek preschool teachers' perceptions of EI and social and emotional learning (SEL) and how they relate to students' difficulties in each culture. Munday and Horton (2021) suggested that graduates from programs that emphasize EI can apply their skills in different professions and settings that support individuals with disabilities.

Al-Jundi and Anwar Al-Taher (2022) examined how EI and social competence are related in teachers of resource rooms for learning disabilities. The outcomes revealed a positive correlation between EI and social competence and that female teachers have higher levels of both than male teachers. Some studies have found a negative correlation between EI and burnout among preschool teachers (Turner and Stough, 2020). This suggests that higher levels of EI can protect teachers from the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that characterizes burnout. Other studies have found a positive effect of EI on preschool teachers' self-efficacy and educational leadership (Gómez et al., 2022).

This implies that higher levels of emotional intelligence can boost teachers' confidence in their abilities and their capacity to influence and inspire others. In this study, we use a three-factor model of emotional intelligence that consists of optimism, emotional awareness, and emotional use (Naeem and Muijtjens, 2015). We contend that these emotional intelligence competencies are vital for preschool teachers as they can help them cope with the challenges and demands of working with young children. Moreover, we propose that a development plan can foster the acquisition of these competencies among preschool teachers (Burke and Barron, 2014). In conclusion, emotional intelligence has important implications for various aspects of life (Xu et al., 2019; Tong et al., 2022). Preschool teachers can enhance their ability to recognize, understand, and regulate both their own emotions and those of others by implementing their emotional intelligence skills (Watkin, 2000; Savina et al., 2021).

In conclusion, emotional intelligence has important implications for various aspects of life. Preschool teachers can enhance their ability to recognize, understand, and regulate both their own emotions and those of others by implementing their EI skills. We use a three-factor model of emotional intelligence that consists of optimism, emotional awareness, and emotional use. We argue that these EI competencies are essential for preschool teachers, as they can help them cope with the challenges and demands of working with children who are at risk for specific learning disabilities (SLDs).

Job creativity is a crucial consideration in effective teaching practices. It involves generating novel and useful ideas or outcomes in the workplace (Zhou and Shalley, 2011). Kaufman (2016) divided the development of creativity research in psychology into pre-1950 and post-1950. While prominent intellectuals like Plato, Freud, Einstein, and John Dewey explored creativity, rigorous research on the topic began in the post-1950 period (Kaufman, 2016). Yates and Twigg (2017) noted that many adults express doubt about their creative ability, often associating creativity with activities such as art or crafts or following steps to achieve a specific outcome. Job creativity encompasses creative performance, creative teaching, and learning, as well as overcoming obstacles to creative education. These aspects can significantly impact the educational outcomes of children with SLDs (Rinkevich, 2011; Huang and Lee, 2015). Therefore, addressing these obstacles and providing professional development opportunities can enhance Job creativity development among early childhood teachers and improve outcomes for these children.

Cheung (2010) defined creative performance as a key aspect of JC, involving the generation of novel ideas and innovative solutions to problems. In Cheung's (2010) study, Torrance's test of creative thinking evaluated the effectiveness of creative movement activities and found that limited creativity knowledge, skills, and experiences among teachers posed challenges in nurturing creativity in children. According to Ada and Zembat (2022), creative teaching and learning encompass the context in which creativity education takes place, including the curriculum, classroom environment, and teacher-student interactions. Obstacles to creativity education can adversely influence the development of JC among early childhood teachers, consequently impacting educational outcomes for at-risk children.

Beghetto and Kaufman (2014) discovered that low JC among early childhood educators can negatively influence children's learning outcomes and overall development. Teachers lacking creativity may struggle to design engaging learning experiences, resulting in disinterest, disengagement, and diminished learning outcomes. Additionally, children are exposed to low levels of creativity in early education. Maybe they are less likely to

develop creative skills, impairing their ability for critical thinking and creative problem-solving later in life. Cheung and Mok (2013) found that early childhood teachers in Hong Kong valued novelty, product, problem-solving, cognitive processes, and personal attributes as defining features of creativity, with imagination, multiple perspectives, and curiosity being particularly important.

2. The objective of the research

The objective of the current study was to address this gap and contribute to the research on preschool teachers and work settings. By exploring the predictors of job creativity, particularly emotional intelligence, this study can enrich the existing literature and have practical and policy implications for professionals working with children at risk for learning disabilities in kindergarten, such as principals and family members. Furthermore, this research can help teachers become aware of how working with these children affects their emotional intelligence and work outcomes, benefiting their overall well-being (Munday and Horton, 2021).

No previous study has examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and job creativity as a personal indicator of work success for preschool teachers of SLDs, despite the central role of emotional intelligence in the lives of preschool teachers (Turner and Stough, 2020). Therefore, this study is necessary for several reasons. First, it addresses the lack of research on emotional intelligence and job creativity among preschool teachers who work with children at risk for SLDs, considering the significance and relevance of these constructs to their work. Second, it contributes to the literature by testing the three-factor model of emotional intelligence proposed by Naeem and Muijtjens (2015) and its applicability to preschool teachers in this specific context. Lastly, it has practical and policy implications for enhancing EI and JC among preschool teachers working with these children, potentially improving teaching effectiveness, student learning outcomes, and professional development.

3. Method

3.1. Research questions

The research questions that guide this study's design are as follows:

- Is there a relationship between the teacher scores on the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) and their scores on the Job Creativity Scale (JCS) among preschool teachers who work with children at risk for specific learning difficulties (SLDs)?
- To what extent does emotional intelligence account for differences in job creativity while controlling for contextual factors such as age, education level, kindergarten type, and teaching experience?

3.2. Procedures and participants

We conducted a study using a numerical method that looks at the relationship between two factors at a single point in time. Our focus was on understanding the connection between the ability to manage emotions (emotional intelligence) and the ability to come up with new and innovative ideas (job creativity) in preschool teachers. These teachers work with young children who are potentially at risk for Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs). For our research, we invited all 152 kindergarten teachers from the Northern Border Region to take part. These teachers were employed across 15 kindergartens, with nine being public (government-run) and six being private institutions (MOE, 2023). After getting ethical approval from the deanship of scientific research at the Northern Border University, we contacted the kindergarten principals and explained our study and how to fill out the questionnaires. We also informed the prospective teachers about our study in one of their courses. We told them that they could join or leave the study at any time and that we would protect their privacy. Some participants asked for personal emotional intelligence analysis and gave us their nicknames and emails that did not reveal their real names. We included only those participants who met the following criteria:

- The participants had to be certified preschool teachers with at least one year of teaching experience.
- The participants had to work in a public or private kindergarten.
- The participants had to work with at least one child who was at risk of SLDs, as identified by the criteria cited in Myklebust (1971) and standardized in the Arabic region.

The participants who did not meet these criteria or who did not complete the questionnaire were excluded. A total of 140 early childhood teachers participated in the survey, resulting in an impressive 92% completion rate. The participants were all female, with ages ranging from 28 to 50 years and an average age of 34.4 years (standard deviation of 6.57).

Most of the teachers held a college degree, with 85 of them having completed college. Of the participants, 79 worked in government kindergartens (Kg. G), while the remaining 61 worked in private kindergartens (Kg. P). The researchers collected data through self-administered questionnaires distributed via the Internet. The questionnaires included items assessing emotional intelligence (EI), job creativity (JC), and background contextual factors such as age, education level, teaching experience, and type of kindergarten. Please note that the emotional intelligence questionnaire was not intended for clinical purposes

but rather for research purposes to evaluate the current experience of teachers in working with children at risk for specific learning disabilities (SLDs).

3.3. Instruments

The initial questionnaires were written in Arabic. Back translation was used to translate self-reported questionnaires into Arabic. These questionnaires were distributed to participants on a 3-point Likert scale (from 1 = disagree to 3 = agree), with higher scores indicating a greater level.

3.3.1. Control variables

This study controlled for several demographic characteristics that may affect emotional intelligence and job creativity among early childhood teachers. These variables included age (in years), educational level (college, master's, or doctoral), type of kindergarten (government or private), and years of experience with SLDs (more than or equal to 5 or less than 5). This variable was included because job creativity may co-vary with emotional intelligence among preschool teachers who work with children at risk for SLD, and experience in dealing with such children may influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and job creativity. By controlling for these demographic characteristics, the study can better isolate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job creativity among early childhood teachers who work with children at risk for SLDs and provide a more accurate understanding of the factors that influence job creativity in this population, as shown. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of these variables.

3.3.2. The Schutte self-reported emotional intelligence scale

This study measured EI, the independent variable, by the bilingual version of the Schutte Self-Reported Emotional Intelligence Scale (SSREIS). The SSREIS is a 16-item scale that evaluates three EI factors: optimism (9 items), emotional awareness (2 items), and emotional use (4 items). Pisnar et al. (2022) cited the SSREIS in their research, and Naeem and Muijtjens (2015) validated the Arabic version of the SSREIS. The SSREIS had a high Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88 for EI, indicating high internal consistency. The authors of this study also reported high internal consistency for the three EI factors and the global score (the sum of all items), with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.81 for optimism, 0.83 for emotional awareness, 0.75 for emotional use, and 0.83 for the global scale. These results indicate good psychometric properties of the SSREIS.

Table 1: Descriptive data and correlations between the emotional intelligence, job creativity, age, education level, kindergarten type, and teaching experience of participants (N= 140)

Variables	M	SD	95% CI		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			LL	UL									
Age	34.4	6.7	33.3	35.5		0.1	.3**	0.11	-21-	0.14	-31	-.4**	-0.04
Ed. L (College)	85	0.52	1.5	1.7				.18*	. 31**	.41*	0.05	.4**	-0.13
Ed. L (M/ Ph.D.)	55	0.49	1.5	1.6					-1.3	.3*	.21*	.31**	-.18*
Kg. (G)	79	0.49	1.5	1.7						-.32*	-.4**	-.32**	-0.11
Kg. (P)	61	0.49	1.3	1.5							-.4**	-.32**	-0.11
Year (≥ 5)	63	0.8	1.2	1.4								-0.02	.33**
Years (≤ 5)	77	1.3	1.5	1.7									-0.07
EI	39.9	8.4	18	60									.-.21*
JC	275.5	24.3	271.5	279.6									

CI: Confidence interval; LL: Lower limit; UL: Upper limit; Ed. L: Educational level; Kg. (G): Government kindergarten; Kg. (P): Private kindergarten; Year (≥ 5): Experience more than or equals 5 years; Years (≤5): Experience less than 5 years; EI: Emotional intelligence; JC= Total job creativity; *: p < .01; **: p < .001

3.3.3. The job creativity scale

This study measured job JC, the dependent variable, using an instrument developed by Chien and Hui (2010). This instrument assesses teachers' attitudes toward creative education in early childhood settings. It consists of five factors: perception of creative performance (22 items), perception of creative teaching (24 items), perception of creative learning (24 items), perception of barriers to creativity education (17 items), and perception of creativity education (24 items). The authors of this study found high internal consistency for the five JC factors and the global score (the sum of all items), with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.82 for the perception of creative performance, 0.81 for the perception of creative teaching, 0.71 for the perception of creative learning, 0.85 for the perception of barriers to creativity education, 0.81 for the perception of creativity education, and 0.84 for the global scale. These results indicate that the instrument has good psychometric properties.

3.4. Data analysis

We used various methods to analyze the data thoroughly, such as multiple regression, descriptive, and correlation analysis. We checked the Pearson correlations for the variables and found them to be reliable. We chose a parametric approach for accuracy. We performed a multiple regression analysis to explore how emotional intelligence relates to job creativity. We controlled for age, education level, kindergarten type, and teaching experience in the first block using the enter method and added emotional intelligence in the second block using the entry method. We set the significance level

at 0.05 for all tests and did not adjust for multiple tests. The multiple regression did not show any signs of multicollinearity, and the residuals were independent according to the Durbin-Watson test. We used these criteria to interpret R^2: very weak < 0.02, weak 0.02 - 0.13, moderate 0.13 - 0.26, and substantial > 0.26. We used IBM SPSS Statistics 27 for all calculations.

4. Results

All 140 teachers completed the SSREIS and the JCS. Table 2 presents a summary of means, standard deviations, 95% confidence intervals, and correlations between the measures. There was a widespread in emotional intelligence.

4.1. Interplay of emotional intelligence, job creativity, demographic, and experience

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted between emotional intelligence, job creativity, age, education level, kindergarten type, and teaching experience. Correlations indicated that emotional intelligence was positively correlated with job creativity (r=0.45 p < .001). Conversely, job creativity did not indicate significant associations with age, education level, kindergarten type, and teaching experience.

4.2. Emotional intelligence's effect on job creativity, considering demographic and experience

To investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job creativity, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted, and the findings are presented in Table 2. In Step 1, age, education level, kindergarten type, and teaching experience were included to assess their impact on job creativity.

The results indicated that these variables had a negligible effect on job creativity, with F (2.54) = 2.7, p =.061, R^2 adj = 0.04. None of these variables were found to be significant predictors of job creativity. In Step 2, emotional intelligence was added to the model, and the results showed that together, they accounted for 30% of the variance in job creativity, F (4.2) =12.7, p < .001, R^2 adj = 0.27. Further analysis revealed that emotional intelligence was positively associated with job creativity, indicating that higher scores on emotional intelligence were linked to a higher percentage of job creativity.

This study aimed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and job creativity in preschool teachers who work with children at risk of developing a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). We also controlled for potential confounding variables such as age, education level, kindergarten type, and teaching experience. We found that emotional intelligence accounted for 30% of the variance in job creativity after adjusting for these variables. We compared our results with other published papers on the same or related topics and discussed the implications and limitations of our findings.

5. Discussion and conclusion

In this section, we discuss the main results of our study and compare them with the existing literature. We also highlight the contributions and implications of our study for theory and practice, as well as the limitations and directions for future research.

5.1. Emotional intelligence and job creativity correlations

Our first research question was whether there was a correlation between emotional intelligence and job creativity. We found a positive correlation between these variables, indicating that higher levels of emotional intelligence were associated with higher levels of job creativity in preschool teachers who work with children at risk of developing an SLD. This suggests that emotional intelligence may play an important role in enhancing the creative potential and performance of these teachers.

Our result is consistent with some previous studies that have reported a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity in various contexts and populations (Carmeli and Josman, 2006; Reiter-Palmon et al., 2012). However, our result is also in contrast with some other studies that have found a weak, negative, or non-significant relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity (Jafri, 2018; Khajehpour and Ghazvini, 2011; Mayer et al., 1999; Petrides et al., 2018). These discrepancies may be due to the different measures, methods, and moderators used in these studies, as well as the different definitions and dimensions of emotional intelligence and creativity.

One possible moderator that may influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity is the work environment. Some studies have suggested that the work environment can either facilitate or inhibit the expression and development of creativity, depending on factors such as job autonomy, supervisor support, organizational climate, and resources (Amabile et al., 1996; Shalley et al., 2004; Zhou and Shalley, 2003). For example, Jafri (2018) found that job autonomy and supervisor support moderated the relationship between trait-based emotional intelligence and employee creativity, such that the relationship was stronger when job autonomy and supervisor support were high. Similarly, Carmeli and Josman (2006) found that organizational climate moderated the relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity, such that the relationship was stronger when the climate was supportive, participative, and innovative.

In our study, we did not measure or control for the work environment variables, so we cannot rule out the possibility that they may have affected the relationship between emotional intelligence and job

creativity. However, we can speculate that the work environment of preschool teachers who work with children at risk of developing an SLD may be challenging, demanding, and stressful, which may require high levels of emotional intelligence to cope and adapt. Moreover, the work environment of these teachers may also provide opportunities and incentives for creativity, as they need to design and implement individualized and differentiated interventions and curricula for their students, as well as collaborate and communicate with other professionals and parents (Chien and Hui, 2010; Huang and Lee, 2015). Therefore, we can hypothesize that the work environment of these teachers may have a positive impact on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job creativity, but this needs to be tested empirically in future studies.

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression model with job creativity as dependent variable

Variables	B	95% CI For B		SE	β	R^2 adj	AR^2 adj	T-test	P-value
		LL	UL						
Block1									
Cojhjnstant	22.1	-15.7	57.6	18.2		0.04	0.04	1.2	0.25
Age	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.16			1.88	0.05
Ed. L (College)	0.43	-0.03	0.8	0.22	0.13			1.2	0.07
Ed. L (M/ Ph.D.)	0.35	-15.7	57.6	18.2	0.16			1.88	0.25
Kg. (G)	0.33	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.12			1.2	0.05
Kg. (P)	0.54	-0.03	0.8	0.22	0.12			1.88	0.07
Year (≥ 5)	0.44	-15.7	57.6	18.2	0.03			1.2	0.25
Years (≤ 5)	0.53	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.31			1.88	0.05
Total JC	0.55	-0.03	0.8	0.22	0.2			1.2	0.07
Block 2									
Constant	32.32	-2.7	46.6	18.2		30	0.27	1.2	0.25
Age	0.23	0.01	0.12	0.04	0.13			1.88	0.05
Ed. L (College)	0.51	-0.03	0.6	0.21	0.15			1.2	0.07
Ed. L (M/ Ph.D.)	0.22	-0.17	47.6	17.2	0.11			1.88	0.25
kg. (G)	0.21	0.04	0.02	0.54	0.13			1.2	0.05
kg. (P)	0.03	-0.03	0.8	0.23	0.22			1.88	0.07
Year (≥ 5)	0.23	-15.7	56.6	15.2	0.31			1.2	0.25
Years (≤ 5)	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.21			1.87	0.05
Total EI	1.66	-0.03	54.8	0.22	0.32			3.5	<.001
Total JC	2.51	-15.7	57.6	18.2	0.2			2.33	45

CI: Confidence interval; LL: Lower limit; UL: Upper limit; Ed. L = Educational level; Kg. (G): Government kindergarten; Kg. (P): Private kindergarten; Year (≤ 5): Experience less than or equals 5 years; Years (>5): Experience more than 5 years; EI: Emotional intelligence; JC: Total job creativity; *: p < .01; **: p < .001; B: Unstandardized regression coefficient; SE: Standard error; β: Standardized regression coefficient

5.2. The prediction of emotional intelligence on job creativity

We conducted a multiple regression analysis to examine the predictive power of emotional intelligence on job creativity and its subscales after controlling for age, education level, kindergarten type, and teaching experience. Table 2 shows the results of the analysis for each subscale and the total score of job creativity. The results indicate that emotional intelligence was a significant and positive predictor of all the subscales and the total score of job creativity beyond the control variables. The coefficients suggest that higher levels of emotional intelligence were associated with higher levels of job creativity and its components.

We compared our results with those of other published papers that investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and job creativity or performance in different settings and populations. We found that our results were consistent with some studies that have reported a positive and strong relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity or performance (Gupta and Bajaj, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2019; Pekaar et al., 2017; Su et al., 2022; Tong et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2019). However, our results were also in contrast with some studies that have found a weak, negative, or non-significant relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity or performance or that have found other variables to be more important predictors (Hansenne and Legrand, 2012; Khassawneh et al., 2022; McCabe, 1991; Penrose et al., 2007; Shipley et al., 2010; Silva and Coelho, 2019; Wijayati et al., 2020). These discrepancies may be due to the different measures, methods, and moderators used in these studies, as well as the different definitions and dimensions of emotional intelligence and job creativity.

6. Limitations of the study

Our study has some limitations that should be acknowledged and addressed in future research. First, our study only included female teachers from the Saudi Arabian educational system, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Future studies should include a more diverse sample, with individuals of different genders, cultures, and backgrounds. Second, our study did not measure or control for the work environment variables, such as job autonomy, supervisor support, organizational climate, and resources, which may influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and job creativity. Future studies should examine how these variables moderate or mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job creativity.

Third, our study did not evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to enhance emotional intelligence and job creativity. Future studies should conduct experimental or quasi-experimental designs

to test the impact of such interventions on the outcomes of interest. Despite these limitations, our study provides valuable insights into the role of emotional intelligence and job creativity among preschool teachers who work with children at risk of developing an SLD. However, we advise caution when extrapolating the results to other populations.

7. Implications

Our study adds to the existing knowledge on emotional intelligence and creativity by examining a specific and neglected group of preschool teachers who work with children at risk of developing an SLD. We think that this group is significant and relevant for both theory and practice, as they have a vital role in the early detection and intervention of children with learning difficulties, as well as in the enhancement of their academic and social-emotional development (Squires et al., 2012; Zaslow et al., 2010). Our study also addresses the need for more research on how work-related factors influence each other and affect creativity (Parke et al., 2015). Moreover, our study confirms the idea that creativity is a valuable and essential skill for working with children, as it improves the ability to cope with changes and challenges and to be flexible and innovative in the ongoing processes (Beghetto et al., 2016).

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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