

## Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement: the case of Call Centers in Morocco

Intelligence émotionnelle et engagement des employés : Cas des centers d'appels au Maroc.

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## Résumé

Ostensiblement, l'intelligence émotionnelle et l'engagement ont commencé à occuper une place grandissante dans la littérature anglo-saxonne. Nonobstant, l'impact de l'intelligence émotionnelle sur l'engagement des employés dans le contexte des centres d'appels au Maroc, n'était pas largement examiné et nécessite plus de contribution scientifique afin de combler à ce vide. De ce fait, Grâce à cette recherche, nous tentons d'étudier l'impact de l'IE sur l'engagement au travail sur un échantillon d'employés. 58 réponses ont été obtenues via une enquête réalisée en ligne, utilisant l'échelle d'intelligence émotionnelle (WLEIS) et l'échelle d'engagement au travail (UWES). Les résultats ont montré que les employés capables de reconnaître leurs propres émotions et celles des autres et de les réguler avec précision sont très engagés envers l'organisation.

**Mots-clés :** Intelligence émotionnelle, Engagement, Centres d'appels, Maroc, Employés, UWES, WLEIS.

## Abstract

Recently, both Emotional intelligence and engagement have become a hot topic for research. Yet, the discussion on the EI impact on employee engagement in the Moroccan context remains scarce and needs to be further explored. Thus, an engaged employee is a person who is emotionally connected to the organization. Through this research, we attempt to fulfil the goal of studying the impact of EI on work engagement in a sample of employees. 58 answers were obtained via a survey carried out online, using the Wong and law emotional intelligence scale (WLEIS) and the [Utrecht Work Engagement Scale \(UWES\)](#). The results showed that employees who are able to recognize their own and other's emotions and to accurately regulate them are highly engaged and committed to the organization.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Engagement, Call Centers, Morocco, employees, UWES, WLEIS.

## Introduction

The human resource has become the cornerstone of any organization, which operates in a labor market categorized by extreme competition and change, resulting in turnover, stress, and absenteeism. Nowadays, call centers' employees are in constant communication with customers, while being subjected to constant stress and pressure (Hauptfleisch and Uys, 2006; Norman, Tornqvist and Toomingas, 2008), and at the same time, emotionally charged (Huws, 2009). Thus, call centers need to build a workforce that is capable of attracting, retaining, and maintaining healthy relationships with their customers. Moreover, they have to deal with different stressful situations (El Ghazi and Cherkaoui, 2021).

As companies in general and call centers in particular rely on employees to be more productive and performing, and to provide a high-quality customer service, the challenge is to retain the workforce and keep them highly committed and fully dedicated to the company by integrating also EI as a specific aspect related to workplace outcomes.

Over the past two decades, EI and work engagement have gained much popularity. The concept of EI has become a broader term, which include a myriad of dimensions, like empathy, Emotional self-control, adaptability, conflict management, coaching and mentoring... as conceptualized by (Goleman, 1998), he defines emotional intelligence as a component made up of four areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. EI is considered as an important factor to organizational performance and workplace productivity (Lyons and Schneider, 2005; Carmeli and Josman, 2006; O'Boyle *et al.*, 2011; Al Ali, Garner and Magadley, 2012; Masa'deh, 2016; Asrar-ul-Haq, Anwar and Hassan, 2017; Dhani and Sharma, 2017), and to business (Dejoux, Ansiau and Wechtler, 2006, p 178; Davar and Singh, 2014, p 729; Gailliege, 2016, p 16).

Additionally, work engagement has attracted over the past decade a lot of interest in academic research (Bentein, Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe, 2000; Albrecht, 2010; Babcock-Roberson and Strickland, 2010; Bakker, Albrecht and Leiter, 2011; Andrew and Sofian, 2012; Guest, 2014). Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) defines engagement as the "*Cognitive-affective state of mind relating to work, characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption*".

Notwithstanding, despite several studies associating EI with engagement, the association between the two concepts had not gain in momentum in the Moroccan context until now. Organizations in Morocco are still working with the traditional method. They neglect the utmost importance of emotions in the workplace and ignore the fact that EI contributes to enhancing job performance and is considered a sine qua non of success and organizational performance (Kotsou, 2008, p 59; Obradovic *et al.*, 2013).

Consequently, this research aimed to fill this gap by investigating EI and work engagement regarding call centers in Morocco, the principal objective is to empirically explore the impact of emotional intelligence components on engagement in a sample of 58 employees, including vigor, dedication and absorption. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on EI and engagement and provide valuable insights for managers and leaders involved in promoting a positive workplace atmosphere and healthy working conditions.

The structure of the remainder of this research is arranged as follows. In the next section, we summarize the findings of the relevant literature regarding EI and engagement. Then we explain our research methodology, introduce the studied variables in section 2. In section 3, we present the main results of our study. A discussion of the results along with the managerial contributions are presented in section 4, followed by the conclusions and limitations in [Section 5](#).

### 1. Emotional Intelligence

Over time, an extensive body of literature has addressed the topic of Emotional intelligence in the Anglo-Saxon world, giving an incremental interest to emotions at work and in organizations seen as an essential form of social relationship and dynamic group (Coulon, and Lafitte, 2016). The literature review shows that the roots of emotional intelligence goes back a little earlier to when psychologists like Thorndike and Stein (1937) propounded the concept of social intelligence, seen as “*the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls, and to act wisely in human relations.*” Later, Wechsler (1958) pointed out the importance of human intelligence. 10 years later, EI was seemingly introduced, for the first time, in 1964, by Davitz and Beldoch in a piece entitled "The communication of emotional meaning" and then in 1966, by Leuner, in an article entitled "Emotional intelligence and emancipation" (Leuner, 1966).

However, the work of these psychologists was almost forgotten until 1980, when psychologist Howard Gardner differentiated in his book "*Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*" between nine forms of intelligence, including the interpersonal and the intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

Although the field of EI has gradually broadened thanks to psychologists John Mayer and Peter Salovey who published their first article on emotional intelligence (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Interest in exploring the concept of EI has grown dramatically with Daniel Goleman, a psychologist, science reporter at The New York Times and a student of David McClelland who published the best seller book entitled "*Emotional Intelligence, why it can matter more than Intellectual Quotient*" (Goleman, 1995). He brought EI to full prominence and truly projected

it into the world of management science and explored the links that can be made between emotional intelligence and organizational performance (Chanlat, 2003).

To date, several theories, definitions, and conceptualizations have been proposed to approach the concept of EI. It can be defined as "*the ability to monitor one's own and others feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use information to guide one's thinking and action*" (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). EI underlies the ability to accurately perceive our emotions, to manage other's emotions and feelings, to understand the various spectrums of emotions, and to express emotions accordingly. Among other claims, Goleman defines emotional intelligence more broadly. He includes skills like optimism, self-awareness, motivation, empathy and social relationships (Goleman 1998, p 368). He posits that emotional intelligence develops throughout life, which is acquired and is not determined by genetics, contrary to (Salovey and Mayer, 1990), who argue that the first part of EI is innate, while the second is of the outcome of life experiences.

More specifically, a large number of existing studies in the broader body of literature has linked emotional intelligence with a large amount of variables like contextual performance (Mikolajczak and Van Belleghem, 2017), alexithymia (Berastegui, van Leeuwen and Chabrol, 2012), job satisfaction (Hollis *et al.*, 2017), communication (Hendon, Powell and Wimmer, 2017), counterproductive work behaviours (Devonish and Greenidge, 2010), personality (Shaffer and Shaffer, 2005), OCB (Shamim and Siddiqui, 2019; Aziz, Rami and Mahadi, 2020), organizational commitment (Radha and Shree, 2017; Lailatur Rizki, Titisari and Prihatini, 2019), team performance (Nel and De Villiers, 2004; Rahim and Malik, 2010; Behbahani, 2011; Yuan *et al.*, 2012; Acha, Hargiss and Howard, 2013, 2013; Neil *et al.*, 2016; Khan *et al.*, 2019), conflict management (Aqqad *et al.*, 2019), and engagement (Pérez-Fuentes *et al.*, 2018).

For this study, it was of interest to largely investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement to illuminate this uncharted territory in Morocco.

## 2. Engagement

Whereas employees are considered the bedrock of every organization worldwide (Oliver, 2019) studies suggest that only 15 percent of employees are engaged in their work, which proves problematic (Barreiro and Treglown, 2020). In order to explore this uncharted territory, this paper mainly aims to approach EI with engagement to examine if EI predicts and improves work engagement.

This has been discussed by a great number of authors. For instance, previous studies have almost exclusively focused on the impact of EI on employee engagement. A recent study on Emotional Intelligence components as predictors of engagement among nursing professionals

by sex concluded that EI helps 2,218 nurses to gain more confidence and improves engagement accordingly.

The concept of engagement dates back to 1990 when Kahn published his article, "*Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work*" (Kahn, 1990), greatly influenced by the work of (Goffman, 1961) who views engagement as spontaneous involvement in task performance. That assertion was supported by (Bakker and Bal, 2010) who found that, unlike non-engaged employees, engaged staff invest their personal and professional resources for the benefit of the organization to perform continuously.

According to (Kahn, 1990), engagement is considered a multidimensional concept. He addressed the issue of engagement and disengagement to explain the degree of physical, cognitive and emotional involvement of employees in the performance of their role. Furthermore, (Frank, Finnegan and Taylor, 2004) define engagement as a myriad of discretionary efforts manifested by employees in their work, which overlaps, in our view, with the definition of organizational citizenship behaviors. Likewise, while (Kahn, 1990) gives a multidimensional definition to the concept of engagement, (Truss *et al.*, 2006) define it simply as a "passion for work".

In this regard, (Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova, 2006) define engagement as a "*Cognitive-affective state of mind relating to work, characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption*". Vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience, investment at work, and persistence, whereas dedication to deep involvement in showing enthusiasm and challenge, and absorption is characterized by total focus on the task, and dedication to the business.

A large number of existing studies in the broader literature have examined the relationship between burnout and engagement (Durán, Extremera and Rey, 2004a; González-Romá *et al.*, 2006; Maslach and Leiter, 2008). (Macey and Schneider, 2008) linked the dimensions of engagement with organizational citizenship behaviors, which support organizational effectiveness, as well as (Fiabane *et al.*, 2013) who identified the role of personal and organizational factors in predicting employee engagement. In sum, the research results show that most of the authors who have dealt with the subject of employee engagement mainly focused on the study of links between performance (Markos and Sridevi, 2010), absenteeism (Soane *et al.*, 2013), well-being (Brunetto *et al.*, 2012), voluntary departure from the company and intention to leave the organization (Berry and Morris, 2008). However, far from focusing on the aspects previously mentioned, the overall objective of our study is to examine how emotional intelligence could be used to impact and predict employee engagement in call

centers. Although studies have been conducted by many authors, this issue remains limited and still insufficiently explored.

Although research on work engagement is flourishing, a closer look at literature, however, reveals a number of gaps and shortcomings. Some researchers do not agree on the definition of engagement. On the one hand, work engagement has been operationalized and measured in disparate ways (Sandeep *et al.*, 2008), the definition given to engagement seems akin to other concepts; organizational citizenship behaviors for instance. In addition, empirical research associated with engagement is divided into several themes and disciplines, covering research on the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement (Rich, Lepine and Crawford, 2010a; Mahon, Taylor and Boyatzis, 2014), organizational performance (Bakker, Demerouti and ten Brummelhuis, 2012; Bedarkar and Pandita, 2014; Kazimoto, 2016), and procedural justice (He, Zhu and Zheng, 2014)... That amounts to a dilemma that has to be addressed, for this profusion of research leads to confusion. On the other hand, there has been a great deal of confusion in literature regarding the conceptualizations of engagement, which sometimes underlie the same thing, engagement at work (Job engagement or work engagement) (Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova, 2006; Rich, Lepine and Crawford, 2010a; Bakker, Albrecht and Leiter, 2011), Organizational engagement (Mahon, Taylor and Boyatzis, 2014) and Employee engagement (Albrecht, 2010; He, Zhu and Zheng, 2014; Kazimoto, 2016).

Moreover, (Saks, 2006) was one of the first authors to differentiate between engagement at work, employee engagement, and organizational engagement, by grouping engagement at work and organizational engagement under what we call "Employee engagement." The difference is that organizational engagement refers to the attachment of a person to their organization, while engagement at work refers to the degree of involvement and absorption of the employee in fulfilling their role and task. *Ipsa facto*, these questions have prompted other authors to cultivate reflection on the similarities and differences between these different concepts (Truss *et al.*, 2013).

However, in the absence of an unanimous, clear and universal definition (Sandeep *et al.*, 2008; Ludwig and Frazier, 2012; Guest, 2014), this confusion will continue to reign and will consequently prompt many overlaps with other concepts, such as job satisfaction, OCB... (Little and Little, 2006; Sandeep *et al.*, 2008; Rich, Lepine and Crawford, 2010b). Finally, research on engagement was largely concentrated in the United States and the United Kingdom. Therefore, another promising line of research would be to explore other countries where the concept of engagement has received little attention like Morocco.

### 3. Relationship between EI and Engagement

A large number of existing studies in the broader literature have found some preliminary evidence for a relationship between EI and engagement. According to Gallup's annual report on 155 countries, the percentage of employees who feel engaged in their work is very low, amounting to 14 percent in the MENA region, contrary to 10 percent in Western Europe and 33 percent in the United States. Responsibility is incumbent upon managers who are in control of at least 70 percent of the variance in employee engagement (*Gallup Report, 2017*). The challenge for the organization is enormous given the fluctuating and stressful context of call centers. Without the ability to understand and effectively manage their emotions and relationships, an employee is very unlikely to feel motivated, emotionally and intellectually involved and therefore committed to the company (Saks, 2006).

Accordingly, employee engagement and emotional intelligence have an obvious relationship. A recent study on almost 2,218 nurses in Spain found a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and the engagement of nurses (Pérez-Fuentes *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, (Quang, Khuong and Le, 2015) pointed out that all emotional skills, from self-esteem, autonomy, resilience to interpersonal relationships had a positive correlation with employee engagement. Taken together, these findings seem consistent with other research (Zhu *et al.*, 2015; Boyatzis, Rochford and Cavanagh, 2017; Maguire *et al.*, 2017; Merino-Tejedor, Hontangas and Petrides, 2018).

However, other studies have failed to find a positive relationship between engagement and EI. A recent study found that emotional intelligence does not have a significant relationship with employee engagement (Mahon, Taylor and Boyatzis, 2014). Based on the literature review, sufficient studies had focused on employee engagement. Notwithstanding, the relationship between employee engagement and emotional intelligence was scarcely researched, and requires more scientific contribution (Karamustafa and Kunday, 2018).

H1: Call center's employees have a positive impact on employee engagement

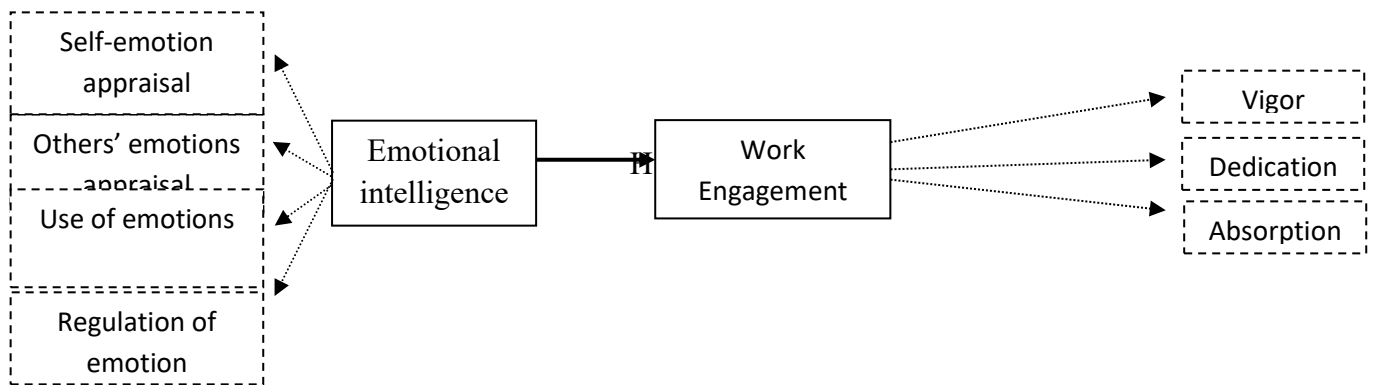
### 4. Methodology

#### 4.1. Sample

For this study, it was of interest to investigate whether Emotional intelligence has an impact on employee engagement. The aim herein is to explore the relationship between EI as an independent variable and engagement as a dependent variable.

The sample size of 58 respondents consisting of employees was selected from various call centers.

**Figure N°1: Proposed theoretical model**



**Source: Conducted by the authors**

## 4.2 Data Collection

A survey was developed, adopted from several scholars (Wong and Law, 2002; Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova, 2006), based on a 5-point Likert scale as shown below :

*Emotional intelligence*, WLEIS (Wong & Law, 2002), this scale contained 16 items comprising four subscales, Self-Emotion Appraisals, Others' Emotion Appraisals, Use of Emotion and Regulation of Emotion. The scale was translated by a bilingual translator from English to French using back-translation, followed by the committee approach and pretest procedure carried out by three managers and one professor. Following the analysis, two items were deleted from the scale, since they were repeated items and the rest of the items were slightly adapted and reworded for the Moroccan context's use, « I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior », « I have good control of my own emotions ».

Employee engagement, to date, there are several instruments used to measure and assess work engagement, but the most popular and widely used scale is the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. Subsequently, we used in our study the shortened version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) which includes 9 items grouped by three dimensions: vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova, 2006). Acceptable levels of validity and reliability were found in earlier studies (Merino-Tejedor, Hontangas and Petrides, 2018).

## 5. Data analysis

### 5.1 Structural equation modeling

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a multivariate technique used to assess the linkage between dependent and independent variables and the various constructs in the model. In our study, SEM was used to ascertain if EI has an impact on work engagement, based on Partial Least Square (PLS-SEM) approach to test our model derived from the literature review.

Likewise, we should, as a first step, assess the measurement model, which involves the checking of the composite reliability, the factor loadings of items, the internal consistency, the convergent and discriminant validity and as a second, assess the structural model to check the hypothesis and the effect of the exogenous variable on endogenous variable (Hair, 2014).

## 5.2 The measurement of the outer model

### 5.2.1 Convergent validity

The convergent validity implies checking the consistency, reliability and validity of the instruments. Thus, this is assessed by composite reliability, individual item reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE).

The internal consistency reliability was assessed, using Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability. Table 1 shows that all indicators of EI have a composite reliability above 0.70, which is acceptable (0.812-0.931) and can be broken down as follows: ESA (0.855), OEA (0.837), UOE (0.931), and ROE (0.812). The Cronbach's Alpha of the different variables range between (0.661-0.902) and can be broken as follows: ESA (0.774), OEA (0.707), UOE (0.902), and ROE (0.661), which reflects the internal consistency and reliability of items.

The factor loadings of all indicators are acceptable, ranging between 0.723 and 0.911, for they fulfil the > 0.70 requirement.

Finally, the common measure to establish the convergent validity is the average variance extracted (AVE). The table below shows that all variables have an acceptable level of AVE, ranging between (0.590-0.773) and thus fulfils the >0.50 requirement.

**Table N°1. Reliability and validity of the measurement model for Emotional intelligence (EI)**

<b>Latent Variables</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Loading factor &gt;0.70</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha 0.60-0.90</b>	<b>Composite Reliability 0.60-0.90</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE) &gt;0.50</b>
<b>Self-Emotional Appraisal</b>	ESA 1	0.723	0.774	0.855	0.596
	ESA 2	0.802			
	ESA 3	0.770			
	ESA 4	0.792			
<b>Others' emotional appraisal</b>	OEA 1	0.810	0.707	0.837	0.632
	OEA 2	0.733			
	OEA 3	0.838			
<b>Use of emotions</b>	UOE 1	0.856	0.902	0.931	0.773
	UOE 2	0.909			

	UOE 3	0.911			
	UOE 4	0.838			
<b>Regulation of emotions</b>	ROE 1	0.813	0.661	0.812	0.590
	ROE 2	0.747			
	ROE 3	0.742			

**Source: Conducted by the authors**

The internal consistency reliability was assessed, using Cronbach’s alpha and the composite reliability. Table 2 shows that all engagement indicators have a composite reliability higher to 0.70, which is acceptable (0.812-0.931), and can be broken down as follows: Vigor (0.839), Dedication (0.888), and Absorption (0.900). The Cronbach’s Alpha of the different variables lies between (0.712-0.835) and can be broken as follows: Vigor (0.712), Dedication (0.811), Absorption (0.835), which reflects the internal consistency and reliability of items.

The factor loadings of all indicators are acceptable, ranging between 0.818 and 0.921, because they fulfil the > 0.70 requirement, except for Vig 1 (0.628), but as (Hair, 2014) asserts, if the outer loading is >0.40 but <0.70, we should analyze the impact of indicator deletion of internal consistency reliability, insofar as the removal of the first item of vigor doesn't affect the composite reliability of the variable as well as the content validity, we decided to retain the indicator.

Finally, the common measure to establish the convergent validity is the average variance extracted (AVE). The table below shows that all variables have an acceptable level of AVE, ranging between (0.639-0.751) and thus fulfils the >0.50 requirement.

**Table N°2. Reliability and validity of the measurement model for and work engagement**

<b>Latent Variables</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Loading factor &gt;0.70</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha 0.60-0.90</b>	<b>Composite Reliability 0.60-0.90</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE) &gt;0.50</b>
<b>Vigor</b>	Vig 1	<b>0.628</b>	0.712	0.839	0.639
	Vig 2	0.866			
	Vig 3	0.880			
<b>Dedication</b>	Ded 1	0.903	0.811	0.888	0.727
	Ded 2	0.834			
	Ded 3	0.818			
<b>Absorption</b>	Abs 1	0.848	0.835	0.900	0.751
	Abs 2	0.828			
	Abs 3	0.921			

**Source: Conducted by the authors**

### 5.2.2 Discriminant validity

The Fornell-Larcker criterion:

This implies checking the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the cross-loadings to examine the discriminant validity, which is acceptable when the AVE is  $> 0.5$ . That attests that 50 percent of the variance was taken by the construct (Hair, 2014). Thus, to establish the discriminant validity, the variable should load higher on its corresponding variable, but much lower on the other variables. This is valid in our study as shown here in under.

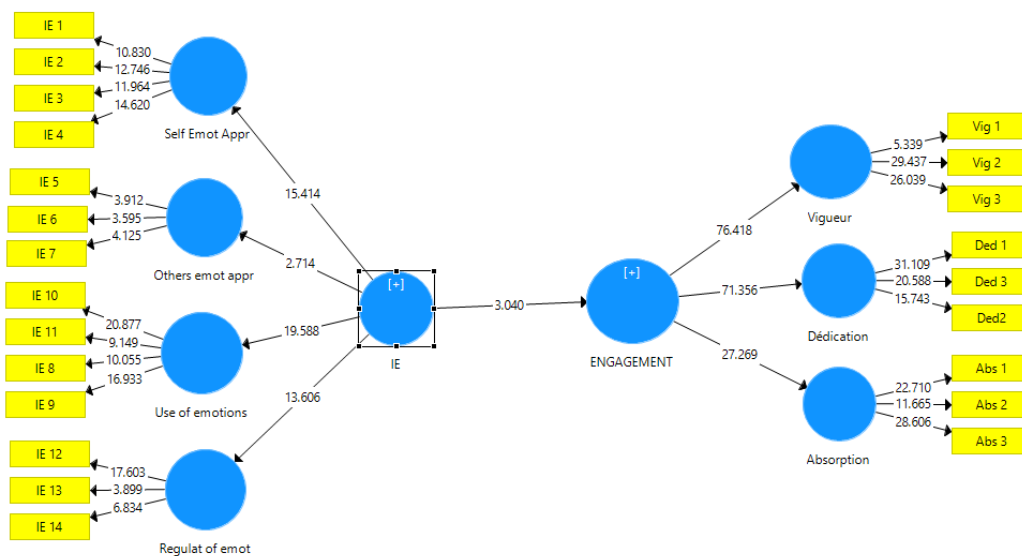
### 5.3 The measurement of the inner model

#### 5.3.1 Path coefficient of the research hypothesis

Thanks to the previous analyses, we were able to verify the psychometric properties of our measurement model, which were found to be satisfactory. At this level, we can analyze our structural model and therefore verify our research hypotheses. This can be done using the path coefficients, T value and P value, following Bootstrapping analyses with 5,000 resamplings to assess the hypothesis.

The results of path coefficient for our hypotheses are shown in the modeling window and the following table.

**Figure N°2: Results of confirmatory factor analysis of our model using SmartPls**



Source: Conducted by the authors

**Table N°3 : Hypotheses testing and results**

Hypotheses	Standard deviation	T Statistics	P-Value	Conclusion
H1 - IE → Engagement	0.125	3.121	<b>0.002*</b>	Supported
H1.1- IE → Vigor	0.120	3.055	<b>0.002*</b>	Supported
H1.2- IE → Dedication	0.118	3.129	<b>0.002*</b>	Supported
H1.3- IE → Absorption	0.111	3.086	<b>0.002*</b>	Supported

Significant at P\*\*=<0.01, p\*<0.05

Source: Conducted by the authors

The path coefficient shows a positive effect of emotional intelligence on vigor, dedication and absorption of call center's employees, as P value was less than 0.05. Employees with high emotional intelligence proved to be highly engaged and more fulfilled.

**Table N°4: The Fornell-Larcker criterion**

	Self Emotional Appraisal	Others' emotional appraisal	Use of emotions	Regulation of emotions	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
Self-Emotional Appraisal	<b>0.772</b>						
Others' emotional appraisal	0.245	<b>0.795</b>					
Use of emotions	0.583	0.238	<b>0.879</b>				
Regulation of emotions	0.540	0.275	0.498	<b>0.768</b>			
Vigor	0.221	0.157	0.432	0.485	<b>0.800</b>		
Dedication	0.173	0.141	0.390	0.445	0.874	<b>0.853</b>	
Absorption	0.073	-0.062	0.217	0.344	0.707	0.714	<b>0.867</b>

Source: Conducted by the authors

### 5.3.2 Coefficient of determination R2

**Table N°5: R square of the endogenous latent variables**

Constructs relation	R2	Result
Engagement	0.152	Accepted

Source: Conducted by the authors

According to (Chin, 1998), the R square should be above 0.19 to be considered acceptable, while (Falk and Miller, 1992) suggest 0.10 as a minimum acceptable level. In this process, the R square of our endogenous variable ranges from 0 to 1, ours being 0.15, which is acceptable in our research discipline, as confirmed by (Hair, 2014). R2 values of 0.20 are considered high in some discipline and it depends on the model complexity.

### 5.3.3 Effect size f2

According to (Cohen, 1988) the effect size above 0.35 is considered large, and from 0.15 to 0.35 being medium, 0.02 to 0.15 being small, and less than 0.02 having no effect size. Hence, our f2 ranges between 0.15 and 0.35, which is medium.

**Table N°6: R Effect size f2**

<b>Contracts relation</b>	<b>R2</b>	<b>Result</b>
<b>Engagement</b>	0.180	Medium

**Source: Conducted by the authors**

## 6. Discussion

Previous studies have almost exclusively focused on emotional intelligence and separately on work engagement. They remain one of the most-researched and most-studied subjects in the organizational field. Yet, despite decades of research, there has been less previous evidence for the relationship between these two concepts and this question is still insufficiently explored. Therefore, the overall purpose of this paper was to examine the impact of EI on work engagement among call centers' employees. The findings indicate that employees' EI has a strong positive effect on work engagement ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the hypothesis is statistically validated. The results of this correlation support previous studies conducted by (Zhu *et al.*, 2015; Pérez-Fuentes *et al.*, 2018; Molero Jurado *et al.*, 2020), who found that EI acts as a predictor of the three dimensions of engagement of healthcare workers, vigor, dedication and absorption. Similarly, previous research has found that work engagement is strongly affected by EI and then lead to better performance (Devi, 2016). In line with other studies, EI impacts engagement (Brunetto *et al.*, 2012; Mwangi, 2014).

Additionally, (Fredrickson, 2001) drew attention to the importance of emotional state to keep high level of work engagement and then improve business results, further showing that vigor, dedication and absorption has a strong, positive correlation with EI grouped by attention, clarity and mood repair.

Conversely, according to the study carried out by (Meyers-Levy, 1994), EI has just a partial impact on employee engagement.

In the context of this study, the three dimensions of engagement correlate with the four dimensions of emotional intelligence. Employees with high emotional intelligence proved extremely engaged. Particularly, all dimensions of work engagement - vigor, dedication and absorption - are positively influenced by employees' EI. When an employee feels positive emotions, that consequently induces a stronger sense of engagement and then the employee favorably connects with the company.

As expected, EI as measured by the WLEIS positively correlates with engagement. This is particularly true for vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Regarding the impact of EI on vigor, the results showed that EI has a positive impact on vigor ( $p=0.02$ ), for when employees are emotionally intelligent, this will reflect on the levels of their energy and persistence. These results support earlier research (Durán, Extremera and Rey, 2004b; 'The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Engagement in Nurses', 2018).

As regards the impact of EI on dedication, the results showed that EI has a positive impact on dedication ( $p=0.02$ ), because when an employee is allowed to flow free and is able to identify and manage their own and other's emotions, this will reflect on their involvement, enthusiasm and dedication at work. This is consistent with previous studies (Durán, Extremera and Rey, 2004b; 'The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Engagement in Nurses', 2018).

Finally, absorption also correlated with EI ( $p=0.02$ ). That means that well-mastered emotions help employees be fully concentrated at work. The results of this correlation are consistent with previous studies (Durán, Extremera and Rey, 2004b; 'The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Engagement in Nurses', 2018).

The main achievements, including implications derived from the study results, can be summarized as follows. First, we noticed that a myriad of organizations focused on the development of the manager's emotional intelligence rather than employees and collaborators (Oliver, 2020). In today's labor market marked by a fierce competition, call centers should deal with staff retention by considering them as the cornerstone of their organization's development, and thus maintain a healthy workplace. Second, It seems that emotional intelligence's training relates to better performance at work (Vidyarthi, Anand and Liden, 2014; Aqqad *et al.*, 2019; Mattingly and Kraiger, 2019). Meanwhile, previous research does not provide clear and better understanding of how EI training could affect and enhance employees' engagement.

## **Conclusion**

This research primarily aimed to provide more evidence on the impact of EI on work engagement among call centers' employees. The findings were able to demonstrate the dependence of employees' engagement on their emotional intelligence ratings. Thus, while call centers practice in such a constrained and stressful environment, they need motivated, committed and engaged people, who will be consequently associated with rapid growth. Thus, it would be safe to say that call centers should integrate EI training in their process, which will lead to effective performance and therefore foster a favorable climate of work engagement.

## **Limitations**

This section points out some limitations encountered during the study. The primary limitation is the use of self-report questionnaire on emotional intelligence. Thus, it is possible to cause biases and generate invalid answers. We also focused in our study only on call centers. However, exploring other industries could bring new insights into the subject matter. Thus, additional research is required to identify the impact of EI training on employees' engagement, given the lack of academic literature. Another limitation of our study is the cross-sectional design. So, future research should employ longitudinal studies by collecting data over an extended period of time to provide further clarity on the relationship between EI and work engagement. Ultimately, we could not generalize our findings due to our small sample size (n=58). However, we believe that our study gives rise to further research on the subject-matter.

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