

# Connecting Emotion Regulation to Career Outcomes: Do Proactivity and Job Search Self-Efficacy Mediate This Link?

This article was published in the following Dove Press journal:  
*Psychology Research and Behavior Management*

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**Introduction:** Over the last decade, emotion regulation has drawn much attention in the organisational literature, specifically in career outcomes. Although the relationship between emotion regulation and career outcomes has been well established, potential mechanisms that might account for this relationship are still unclear.

**Method:** This study attempts to narrow this gap by examining the mediating effect of proactivity and job search self-efficacy on the relationship between emotion regulation and career outcomes in a sample consisting of 399 graduates (277 women, 122 men) with ages ranging from 22 to 60 years ( $M=30.5$ ,  $SD=8.26$ ).

**Results:** Structural equation modelling showed partial mediation effects of job search self-efficacy between emotion regulation and career outcomes. However, no mediating effect was found for proactivity.

**Discussion:** These results suggest that the promotion of emotion regulation and self-efficacy may be fundamental in the development of programmes for career outcomes. Finally, implications and limitations of the present findings are discussed.

**Keywords:** emotion regulation, career outcomes, proactivity, job search, self-efficacy, graduates

## Introduction

In recent decades, there has been an increasing enthusiasm from practitioners and academics on the role of emotions in different domains of organisational outcomes. In particular, recent studies have underlined emotion regulation as a protective factor that reduces adverse reaction to stress in the workplace.<sup>1,2</sup> In addition, a literature review has documented that people with a high ability to recognise and understand their own and others' emotions typically report higher positive attitudes and job performance in organisational settings.<sup>3,4</sup> On the other hand, those employees with high levels of emotion regulation are able to cope more effectively with negative job stressors compared to their less emotionally skilful counterparts.<sup>5,6</sup> In turn, managing emotions appropriately is associated with positive job attitudes, including higher job satisfaction and less burnout.<sup>7-9</sup> Finally, several studies have suggested that high levels of emotional intelligence significantly decrease employees' quit intentions because of their ability to better regulate emotions.<sup>10-12</sup>

Understanding of employees' emotional perspectives in the workplace, far less is known about the implications of the job search process and the resulting job outcomes. Keeping in mind that initial job search is a dynamic process full of uncertainty where job

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seekers became discouraged further studies examining the potential underlying mechanism linked during the job search process are needed.<sup>13</sup> Understanding the contextual and personal resources that influence the job search process may help job search counsellors to identify potential risks related to adverse reaction to job process search, and ultimately negative career outcomes.<sup>14</sup> Due to the perception of a lack of job search progress, job seekers typically become discouraged and decrease their job-search persistence and intentions.<sup>15</sup> In particular, the need for increasing our understanding of the predictors, processes, and consequences of job search behaviour using integrative perspectives is needed, specifically in the Spanish population where the unemployment rate is 14.9%, exceeding that of most countries in the European Union.<sup>16</sup> This positions Spain in a critical situation because evidence shows that there is an increasing pessimism about welfare states and a frustration related to employment that is predominant among citizens.<sup>17,18</sup>

According to this view, it is important to consider individual differences involved in the job search process and consequent career outcomes to find potential mechanisms in the prediction of career success. On the one hand, emotional abilities have emerged as a personal protective factor, which allows employees to reframe job search adversity and threatening events often associated with psychological maladjustment, thereby overcoming more efficiently employment difficulties.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, some specific personal variables related to job search process, such as perseverance and self-confidence, should be taken into account. According to meta-analytic research,<sup>20</sup> these variables have been proved to be crucial for the job search process.

Thus, the analysis of personal resources as emotion-regulation strategies and their interplay with job-search self-efficacy, proactivity and career outcomes should be examined in depth as a way to help job seekers to have a more balanced job search experience and avoid negative health consequences.<sup>21,22</sup>

## Emotion Regulation and Career Outcomes

Emotion regulation is one of the key dimensions repeatedly found as predictor that may contribute to adaptive positive career progress.<sup>23,24</sup> Likewise, emotion-regulation abilities may also be associated with positive career outcomes, given the importance of management of one's own and others' emotions, through an emotionally challenging and stressful

job-seeking process. These regulatory abilities are essential for working effectively in workplaces characterised by ambiguity, fast-paced innovation, new competitive threats and opportunities and unpredictable changing roles.<sup>25</sup> For most generally accepted theoretical approaches, emotion regulation is considered a major component of emotional intelligence, as it directly affects emotional expression and behaviour in different settings.<sup>26,27</sup> Among the core emotional intelligence abilities proposed by Mayer and Salovey,<sup>28</sup> the ability to manage emotions is expected to be most strongly associated with personal and workplace outcomes in accordance with previous findings with relevant workplace criteria.<sup>22</sup> However, there is considerable debate in the definition and components of emotion regulation; sometimes this results in the lack of a consensual definition.<sup>25</sup> Within the framework of emotional intelligence, emotion regulation has been conceptualised as the capacity to regulate and manage emotional states in oneself to clarify the best options for what to do next.<sup>29</sup> It suggests being conscious of the most effective strategies for modifying that emotion if desired.<sup>30</sup>

In relation to organisational aspects, emotion regulation seems to be one of the key relevant predictors of different career outcomes.<sup>31,32</sup> A literature review suggests that career outcomes is a multidimensional construct that includes objective characteristics such as employment status, payment, and hierarchical level (i.e., from base-level worker to top managers).<sup>33</sup> Regarding employment status, preliminary research suggests that the ability to regulate emotions contributes to people's capacity to achieve the goal of finding a job.<sup>34,35</sup> Consequently, it has been shown that people with high levels of emotional regulation tend to use more career development strategies, which facilitate the job search process and subsequent employability.<sup>36</sup> Thus, emotion regulation has become one of the best resources for reemployment and employability success because is an adequate performance facilitator that might be helpful in job search situations.<sup>37-39</sup>

Salary is another indicator or outcome career, which acts as a reward to motivate employees.<sup>40</sup> Concerning salary, predictors such as a good professional network or effectiveness under the influence of leaders have been related to emotion regulation.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, those individuals who are able to maintain a positive mood in negative situations achieve higher salary levels.<sup>42</sup> In line with previous research, recent studies have demonstrated the influence of emotion regulation in earning a higher salary, which becomes a key factor in the final stage of enhancing job performance.<sup>43</sup>

Even when employment status or salary adjust properly to employees requests, the concern about job insecurity remains. Therefore, the feeling of insecurity about job tenure acquires relevance when the constant organizational changes and the lack of stable job grow constantly.<sup>44</sup> These contractual features are reflected in the stress produced by temporary contracts, which prevents life-long career.<sup>20,45,46</sup> In other words, desirable long-term contracts are relevant, but when they cannot be achieved negative behavioural and emotional reactions appear. Thus, the ability to regulate emotions becomes critical to adjust negative reactions facing job security.<sup>47,48</sup>

Because of important positive implications linked to organisational settings, modern employers consider that a worker's individual characteristics may offer a competitive advantage, contributing to the development of its human capital.<sup>49,50</sup> Thus, it should be thought that a positive relationship between emotion regulation and career outcomes will be possible (Hypothesis 1). Even though, it seems particularly important that researchers expand the existing findings by including underlying mechanisms that mediate these effects.

## Emotion Regulation, Proactivity, Job Search Self-Efficacy and Career Outcomes

One set of mechanisms potentially underlying the link between emotion regulation and career outcomes are those related to the job search process. The job search process is the determinant factor of getting an acceptable job and might be determined by search methods, self-efficacy beliefs, and job-search intentions.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, developing a clear understanding of underlying mechanisms implied in the relationship between emotion regulation and job search outcomes may offer insight into modifiable targets for guidance programme with university graduates searching for a job.<sup>52</sup>

In the search for relevant factors in the job search process, recent studies have pointed job search self-efficacy as one of the key variables in the promotion of adaptability during the job search process, and for gaining more job offers, among others.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, this dimension might be a key characteristic to gain control over their behaviour and to become more productive in their employment search among job seekers.<sup>54</sup> In this context, job search self-efficacy is defined as an individual's confidence to perform the behaviours required to obtain the desired employment outcomes, such as a new job.<sup>54-57</sup> Thus, university graduates with high job search self-efficacy

have shown more active job search behaviour and also predicted employment status four months after graduation.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, people with high self-efficacy typically direct more effort at pursuing a goal,<sup>59</sup> obtaining more positive employment outcomes.<sup>60</sup> In sum, the confidence people hold in their own capacity is a crucial factor to explain employment status.<sup>61</sup> In addition, if we take into account that those individuals skilled in emotion regulation perceive themselves as more capable to engage in job search process and to show positive coping strategies, job search self-efficacy becomes crucial in the aforementioned relationship.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, it will be expected that job search self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between emotion regulation and career outcomes (Hypothesis 2).

Once the individuals are feeling confident about their own capacity, it is important to go a step further and act. Therefore, proactivity, which is defined as a stable disposition of taking a personal initiative in diverse situations, might be also relevant for adaptive and positive career outcomes among job seeker.<sup>63</sup> It is known that the job search process depends on individuals' autonomy level, and what is more, it is a self-directed procedure that is limited by personal decisions.<sup>64</sup> Hence, empirical findings suggest that people who are highly proactive show more initiative,<sup>60,65,66</sup> identify opportunities<sup>35</sup> and experience higher intrinsic motivation<sup>67</sup> when they are engaged in the job search process. In sum, proactive people are more willing to cope with different adverse work environment aspects and persevere despite the stress of workplace challenging circumstances.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, some research have shown pieces of evidence about the capacity to use emotions to guide properly behaviour and thinking lead to individuals to take initiative.<sup>69</sup> Thus, the examination of the interplay between the mentioned variables might help to analyse an underlying structured pattern of individual differences related to positive career outcomes. In sum, it could be assumed that proactivity will partially mediate the relationship between emotion regulation and career outcomes (Hypothesis 3).

Despite the connection between proactivity and job searching, self-efficacy has been consistently related in previous studies,<sup>62</sup> but the underlying link with emotion regulation has scarcely been investigated.<sup>70,71</sup> The limited research regarding the impact of emotional intelligence on proactivity<sup>11,72</sup> shows that individuals with higher levels of emotional skills are more tolerant of stress and are characterised by positive affectivity, which, in fact, may impact proactivity.

## Overview of the Current Study

Overall, while the relationship between emotion regulation and career outcomes has been analysed, some fundamental aspects are still unclear. First, most of these studies have been focused on university students and emerging adults, leaving aside mid- or later-career adults. Besides, it has been shown that emotional responses have a stronger effect once the first two years of career have passed.<sup>5</sup> Second, even if some studies have found a positive association between emotion regulation and general self-efficacy,<sup>73</sup> it is necessary to gain a better understanding of how it affects specific job search self-efficacy. This is important to consider because it seems reasonable that emotion-regulation mechanisms of job seekers might affect task effort, persistence, and intensity within the multiple criteria of job search success.<sup>74</sup> Finally, as emotion regulation might considerably influence the development of positive job attitudes and, as a result, improve career outcomes, it is important to extend the knowledge about underlying psychological mechanisms in this relationship. However, while conceptually intriguing, to date, no empirical studies have examined potential underlying mechanisms such as proactivity or job search self-efficacy, and most of the research has instead focused on examining the direct effect of emotion regulation on organisational outcomes.

The aim of this study, then, is to analyse the mediating effect of proactivity and job search self-efficacy on the relationship between emotion regulation and career outcomes (see Figure 1). In sum, it is expected to analyse causal steps when independent variable (X) affects dependent variable (Y) through underlying relevant variables (M) in order to determine how the mediator fully or partially explained the effect.<sup>75</sup>

The consideration of multiple mediation is due to the fact that mediators do affect one another;<sup>76</sup> in these cases, it is recommended that mediation to be assessed with multiple mediators simultaneously to accommodate all factors.<sup>77</sup> This would provide an empirical framework for

researchers in the occupational environment, because, to our knowledge, no published studies have attempted to objectively examine these issues.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

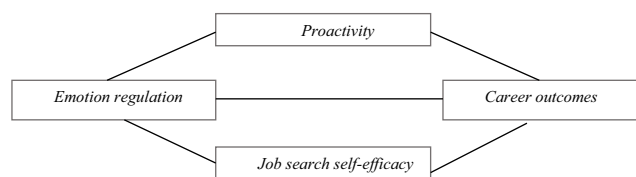
The participant group consisted of 399 graduates (277 women, 122 men). Participants' mean age was 30.55 years (SD = 8.26 years, range = 22–60 years) and 77.7% were employed and 22.3% unemployed. They came from the social and legal sciences (14.5%), health sciences (14.5%), arts and humanities (21.6%), engineering and architecture (33.1%) and science (16.3%) departments. Participants were alumni of a private university of the south of Spain. They were voluntarily recruited through an online platform which enabled inclusion of former students from this university. Participants were informed about the confidentiality of the data and informed consent was obtained. Furthermore, the study was reviewed and approved by an institutional review board before it began. In particular, it was approved by University of Deusto Research Ethics Committee with the following reference ETK-10/17-18. Participation was voluntary; further, subjects had the option of participating in different non-economic raffles, such as cinema tickets, as well as receiving feedback from study results.

As part of the recruitment process, subjects completed a multi-section online questionnaire (lasting 20 mins). In comparison to the traditional paper-and-pencil method, the online data collection method has not been extensively considered in the literature, even though this format is becoming increasingly relevant.<sup>78</sup> Some critiques of the approach are based on methodological issues, such as questionnaires that are too lengthy, the manner in which contact with the participants is made or the means used to encourage participation in online data collection.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, findings have shown that paper-and-pencil and Internet data collection methods are generally equivalent in efficacy; further, the latter enables the obtaining of a great variety of answers and allows a hidden population to become visible.<sup>80</sup>

## Measures

### Emotion Regulation

The subscale of emotion regulation from the Wong-Law Emotional Intelligence Scale,<sup>81</sup> Spanish version was administered. This self-report measure is based on the definition of emotional intelligence proposed by Salovey and Mayer.<sup>82</sup> A growing number of studies (e.g., Ref. 82) have shown this trait to be predictive of positive psychological



**Figure 1** Hypothesized model of emotion regulation, career outcomes, proactivity and job search self-efficacy.

and social functioning. The full-scale measures four self-perceived emotional intelligence abilities: self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion and regulation of emotion. The regulation of emotions subscale consists of four items such as "I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally". Respondents rated themselves from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Spanish WLEIS has shown satisfactory and acceptable psychometric properties.<sup>82</sup> In this study, Cronbach's alpha for the regulation scale was 0.86.

### Proactivity

To measure proactivity, the 10-item shortened version of Bateman and Crant's<sup>60</sup> original scale for proactive behaviour<sup>49</sup> was used. Respondents indicated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) whether the statements were "accurate descriptions of yourself" (e.g., "I love to challenge the status quo"). The English version of the scale<sup>60</sup> was translated into Spanish and back-translated into English with the collaboration of local English and Spanish experts. First, an English-Spanish bilingual speaker translated the scale from English to Spanish. Then, a native English speaker with high Spanish proficiency back-translated those items. Once both translations were finished, they were compared and a final version was created. As the original scale, the present instrument has shown good reliability with values of Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 in line with the 0.86 of the English version.<sup>57</sup>

### Job Search Self-Efficacy

A two-item measure of job search self-efficacy<sup>40</sup> from an adapted version by Ellis and Taylor<sup>83</sup> was used. A 5-point Likert scale was used to indicate agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). In the same way, as for proactivity on the above-mentioned scale, a back-translation was conducted by local English and Spanish experts. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.77, in line with the reliability shown in the original scale 0.70.<sup>84</sup>

### Career Outcomes

#### Employment Status

This factor was measured by asking participants if they were working or not when they completed the questionnaire.

#### Salary

Salary was measured, restricting it to the range presented in previous studies.<sup>85</sup> The amount of money received monthly was divided into seven categories: (1) no salary, (2) less than €600, (3) between €600 and €1000, (4)

between €1000 and €1200, (5) between €1200 and €1500, (6) between €1500 and €1800, (7) between €1800 and €2000 and (8) more than €2000.

#### Labour Stability/Job Security

This factor was measured by type of contract: none, temporary or unlimited.

## Analysis Strategy

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to examine the hypothesised model via the statistical packages SPSS and AMOS.<sup>86</sup> The analysis of the mediation effect was carried out by adopting the two-step procedure.<sup>87</sup> First, the measurement model was tested to furnish the link between the observed indicator variables and the underlying construct they were designed to measure.<sup>88</sup> Once the confirmatory measurement model was evaluated, the structural model was tested using the maximum likelihood method. The measurement section of the model consisted of: (a) a general factor model measuring job outcomes and (b) a three-factor model measuring employment status, salary, and contract. Thus, the following indices were used to evaluate the goodness of fit of the model:<sup>89</sup> chi-square statistics; comparative fit index (CFI); root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA); standardised root-mean-square residual (SRMR) and goodness of fit index (GFI). To compare the models, Akaike information criterion<sup>90</sup> and expected cross-validation index<sup>91</sup> were used. Previous work suggests that satisfactory model fit is indicated by CFI values above 0.95, RMSEA values of 0.06 or less, SRMR values no higher than 0.08, and a chi-square goodness of fit to degrees of freedom ratio no greater than 2.<sup>2,32</sup> For the Akaike and ECVI comparison criteria, the smallest values were chosen, which show a greater potential for replication. Finally, a bootstrapping procedure was used, using 95% confidence intervals and resampled 1000 times, which is thought to provide the most accurate confidence intervals for indirect effects.<sup>4,92</sup>

## Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics as well as correlations between predictor and criterion variables. As can be seen, emotion regulation was positively and significantly related to all aspects of career outcomes, proactivity and job search self-efficacy. Thus, proactivity and job search self-efficacy were positively associated with them and with employment status, salary, and contract type.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics, and Zero-Order Correlations

|                             | Mean | SD   | 1 | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       |
|-----------------------------|------|------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. Emotion regulation       | 4.81 | 1.06 |   | 0.222** | 0.187** | 0.165** | 0.297** | 0.179** |
| 2. Employment status        | 1.77 | 0.41 |   |         | 0.416** | 0.737** | 0.177** | 0.323** |
| 3. Salary                   | 4.13 | 2.52 |   |         |         | 0.472** | 0.150** | 0.150** |
| 4. Contract type            | 2.02 | 0.79 |   |         |         |         | 0.142** | 0.240** |
| 5. Proactivity              | 4.92 | 0.89 |   |         |         |         |         | 0.190** |
| 6. Job search self-efficacy | 2.71 | 1.13 |   |         |         |         |         |         |

Notes: N= 399. \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

## Measurement Model

For purposes of comparison, the hypothesised single-factor model and another three-factor model were compared. In order to compare and select among the competing structural models, fit statistics were analysed (see Table 2). According to the AIC value, the single-factor model showed a smaller index, 331,718, compared to the three-factor model which showed a 413.815 index. Furthermore, a slightly smaller ECVI value suggested (single-factor model 0.833 and for three-factor model 1.040) that the fit of the single-factor model was more satisfactory and contributed find the most appropriate model. Moreover, the ratio  $X^2/df$  for the three-factor model was 1.95 and for single-factor model, in turn, 1.14. In addition, following the principle of parsimony where the simplest equation modelling takes precedence,<sup>93</sup> the single-factor model showed more potential for replication.

The measurement model included 4 latent factors (emotion regulation, career outcomes, proactivity and job search self-efficacy) and 19 observed variables. The model shown in Figure 2 revealed satisfactory fit for the data,  $X^2 = 115.718$  ( $df = 101$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) being the ratio  $X^2/df = 1.14$ , CFI = 0.995, RMSEA = 0.019, TLI = 0.992, SRMR = 0.080, AIC = 331,718. All the factor loadings for the indicators of the latent variable were significant, which means that all the latent factors were well represented by each indicator.

## Structural Model for Mediation Analysis

The results of the proposed mediation analyses are shown in Table 3 and Figure 2. The direct path coefficient from the predictor (emotion regulation) to the criterion (career

outcomes) in the absence of mediators was significant,  $\beta = 0.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$  (95% percentile confidence interval 0.010–0.094). At the same time, the direct effect from emotion regulation to job search self-efficacy was  $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (95% percentile confidence interval 0.089–0.335) and proactivity was still relevant with a direct path of  $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (95% percentile confidence interval 0.213–0.547). In short, the standardised total effect of emotion regulation on career outcomes was  $\beta = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.01$  (95% percentile confidence interval: 0.027–0.120). Proactivity did not have a statistically significant direct effect on career outcomes,  $\beta = 0.06$  (95% confidence interval –0.004–0.054). However, job search self-efficacy had a statistically significant direct effect on career outcomes,  $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$  (95% percentile confidence interval 0.056–0.140,) along with indirect effects on career outcomes  $\beta = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.05$  (95% percentile confidence interval 0.011–0.049). The proportion of variance in career outcomes explained by the collective set of predictors was 17%.

Thus, as shown in Figure 2, emotion regulation exhibited a significant indirect effect on career outcomes via job search self-efficacy. However, no significant relationship was found when proactivity mediated the relationship between emotion regulation and career outcomes.

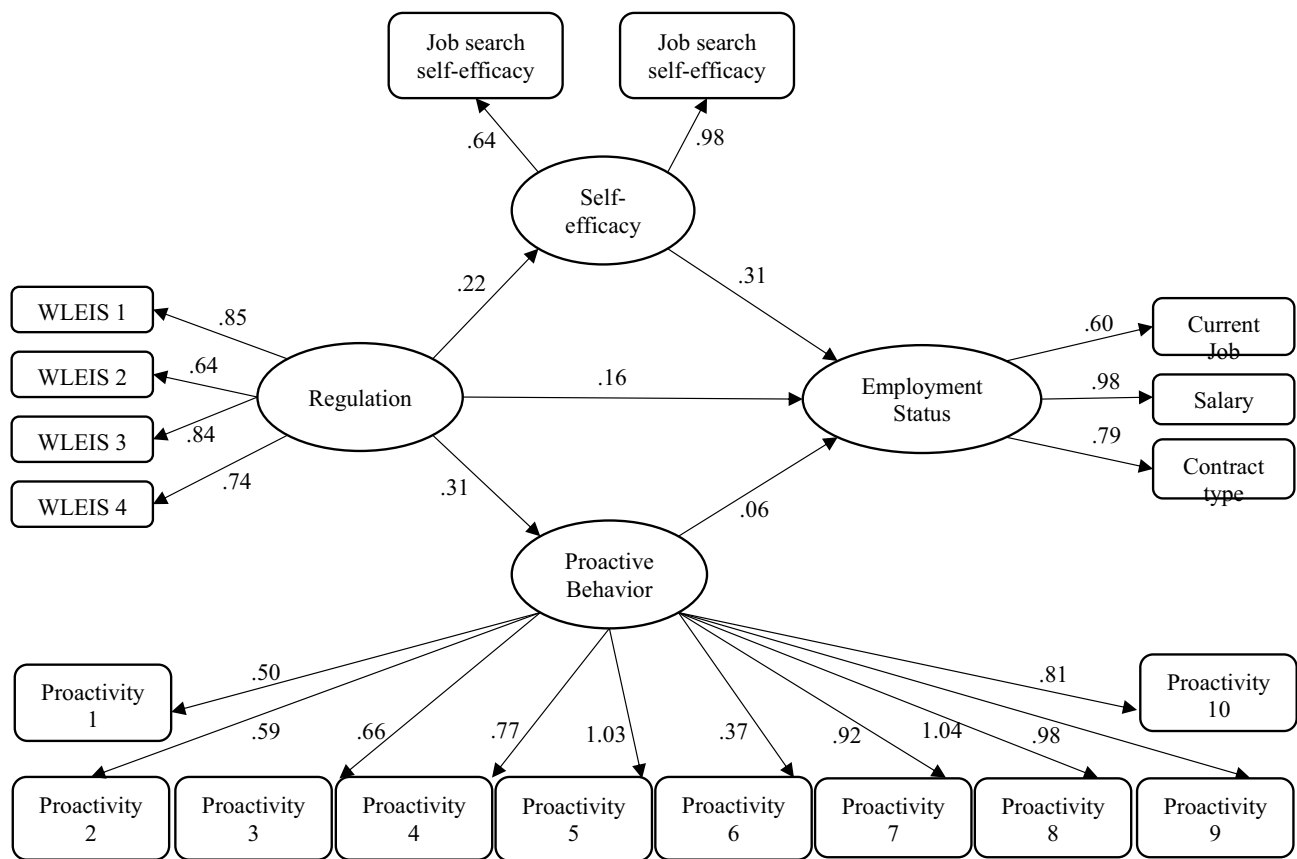
## Discussion

Although prior work<sup>94</sup> has suggested that emotion regulation might be a determinant of opportunities for gaining employment and obtaining better career outcomes, there is a lack of research examining the potential underlying mechanisms in this association. Thus, in the present study, we tried to

**Table 2** Fit Indices Among Competing Models

|                     | $x^2$   | df  | RMSEA  | SRMR  | CFI   | AIC     | ECVI  |
|---------------------|---------|-----|--------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| Single factor model | 115.791 | 102 | 0.0346 | 0.080 | 0.996 | 329.791 | 0.829 |
| Three factor model  | 199.549 | 102 | 0.049  | 0.051 | 0.969 | 413.815 | 1.04  |

Abbreviations: RMSEA, root mean square error approximation; SRMR, standardized root mean square residual; CFI, comparative fit index; AIC, Akaike information criterion; ECVI, expected cross-validation index.



**Figure 2** The finalized structural model (N=399).

**Abbreviations:** ER, emotion regulation, ER1-ER4, four parcels of emotion regulation; P, Proactivity, P1-P10, ten parcels of proactivity; JSSE, job search self-efficacy, JSSE1-JSSE2, two parcels of job search self-efficacy. Factor loadings are standardized.

integrate and expand the results from previous research by including the mediating effect of proactivity and job search self-efficacy in the link between emotion regulation and career outcomes.

Findings from the current study provide support for hypothesis 1, showing moderate correlations between emotion regulation and career outcomes in concordance with previous work.<sup>95</sup> Theoretically, emotion regulation might shape emotional experience and behaviour which may be crucial when individuals are involved in a job search and must also cope with the demands of everyday

life.<sup>96</sup> Finding a job entails a recruitment process managed by different interviews or situations where the job seekers deal with conflict resolution.<sup>97</sup> In these circumstances, people with a high capacity to elicit unpleasant emotions and adapt to different scenes tend to receive better interview feedback and outcomes.<sup>98</sup> In addition, those individuals who show high emotion-regulation ability are able to induce a positive effect in others,<sup>29,99,100</sup> which can be useful in relationships with interviewers or human resources. In sum, those employees who think that they can control their emotions effectively will perceive

**Table 3** Standardized Direct and Indirect Effects and the Associated 95% Confidence Intervals

|                          | Proactivity          |          | Job Search Self-Efficacy |          | Career Outcomes      |                     |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------|--------------------------|----------|----------------------|---------------------|
|                          | Direct               | Indirect | Direct                   | Indirect | Direct               | Indirect            |
| Emotion regulation       | 0.31** [0.217–0.552] |          | 0.22*** [0.086–0.335]    |          | 0.14* [0.014–0.084]  | 0.11* [0.044–0.173] |
| Proactivity              |                      |          |                          |          | 0.09 [-0.004–0.047]  |                     |
| Job search self-efficacy |                      |          |                          |          | 0.32** [0.064–0.136] |                     |

**Notes:** The upper and lower bounds shown in parentheses were based on the findings from a bootstrapping. \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

themselves as more employable, facilitating their job search process and subsequent job outcomes.<sup>99</sup>

Once the job is obtained, having job security becomes relevant because it has been shown that those employees with temporary contracts feel themselves with less quality of working life than those with permanent contracts.<sup>58,101</sup> In this line, it is recognised that people with a high ability of emotion regulation are capable of making predictions about consequences and modifying responses to a situation in order to maintain a balanced organisational position.<sup>35</sup> In addition, individuals who are able to facilitate interpersonal relationships in the workplace receive better supervisor remarks and as a result, obtain better merit pay.<sup>102</sup>

Regarding mediational approach, we found that job search self-efficacy mediates the relationship between emotion regulation and career outcomes in line with hypothesis 2. One plausible reason for the mediation is that emotion regulation might influence how intensively and successfully people look for employment, thus affecting their judgements, perceived self-efficacy, decisions and reactions in the job search process.<sup>62,68,82</sup> Furthermore, it has been shown that employees who are able to overcome difficulties during the job search and in the workplace feel more prepared to progress in their employment, improving their chances of success.<sup>69</sup> Thus, becoming confident about engaging in the job search process helps to support a more intense job search and increases the possibility of reaching better career outcomes. This may be related to the fact that individuals who assume higher self-efficacy beliefs tend to get a job sooner than those with lower conviction do.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, hypothesis 3 was not supported because, even if a direct effect between emotion regulation and proactivity appeared, no mediational effect was found. These results suggest that those individuals who are able to manage their emotions properly take initiative in diverse uncertain situations.<sup>103</sup> In turn, having more emotion regulation entail a more successful engagement in coping with work environment issues.<sup>104</sup> However, the fact of not finding significant mediational effects does not coincide with previous studies where proactivity was linked to perseverance, initiative and attempts to shape environment.<sup>105</sup> One plausible reason might be the stronger predictive capacity of proactivity for subjective occupational outcomes than for objective aspects like employment status, contract type or salary.<sup>106</sup> Another explanation might be related to the existing closeness between professional proactivity and calling. Somehow, people that showed a strong proactivity during

job search process could present career inflexibility and limit their employability options.<sup>107</sup> Accordingly, further research should include other underlying abilities involved in the job search process to examine a more integrative model of career outcomes. Some limitations of the present study should be noted. First, due to the operational definition of emotion regulation, the present study has used a theoretical approach of emotion regulation characterised by considering emotion regulation as a general perceived ability. However, other theoretical frameworks about emotion regulation conceptualized as a process are also relevant and may be considered for future research, examining its role both before and after emotional responses occur.<sup>108</sup> Further, this research relied on self-reported measures, which may be susceptible to several biases, including social desirability. There may be differences based on a shared variance method using multiple methods of performance approaches. Also, our results have relied on some instruments for the measurement of job search self-efficacy and proactivity not previously validated in Spanish population, which might limit the generalization of our findings. Future research with well-validated Spanish tools for measuring these constructs is needed to confirm the usefulness and validity of our findings.

Moreover, this study was based on a convenience sample with graduates from a wide variety of educational areas and jobs, but they came from the same university. Thus, our study included a largely female graduate sample, which may not necessarily generalise to normative populations. In addition, an online method was used, which may reduce the response control. Hence, future studies should address these issues using multimethod approaches and replicating other educational groups in different samples. Importantly, our study design was cross-sectional, which means that it is difficult to draw cause-effect inferences. Thus, future research should examine our proposed mediational model using longitudinal and experimental methods. Finally, it is important in further research to consider other variables that affect the job search process as important predictors of career outcomes. For instance, recent research has suggested that reemployment crafting might be a key variable to shape job performance.<sup>109</sup> In addition, given their adverse effects for the job search process itself, some economic dimensions such as levels of financial strain might be considered.<sup>110</sup> Finally, job search process is influenced by multiple personal resources, one of them might be psychological capital (Chen & Lim, 2012). Therefore, it would be important in



further studies with job seekers to determine if there are potential interaction between this personal resource (i.e. psychological capital) and emotion regulation in the prediction of job search outcomes.<sup>94,111</sup>

Despite these limitations, this study is one of the first attempts to examine the underlying mechanism between emotional regulation and career outcomes in university graduates. To the extent that job search process and workplace are characterized by competition, fast-paced innovation, and unpredictable and stressful settings, fostering emotion regulation abilities might be a key factor in this process.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, emotion regulation is required when employees are dealing with challenges such as job insecurity or unemployment situations, because it may lead to more effective strategies to fully develop their potential.<sup>112</sup> In addition, it is important to consider the reinforcement of job search self-efficacy due to the fact that it leads to persistent attitudes and it is related to different job search intentions and behaviour.<sup>113</sup> Thus, job search counsellors should focus on job search instruction and preparation and assist job seekers in becoming confident about finding new jobs.<sup>114</sup>

In conclusion, our study suggests the need for job network services and career counsellors to complement existing job search intervention programmes. Even though some ground-breaking programmes have promoted job club to increase self-efficacy<sup>56</sup> or the training of emotion-regulation skills and emotional self-efficacy to foster employability,<sup>115</sup> these programmes have been typically performed separately. Thus, considering that recent studies have reinforced the importance of developing emotion-regulation intervention programmes,<sup>116</sup> the inclusion of job search self-efficacy intervention might improve potential positive benefits. Accordingly, it would be interesting to include some activities such as role-playing, reflexive activities, readings or group activities based on a rigorous theoretical model.<sup>13</sup> This might be particularly important for young adults entering the workplace for the first time and for those who are in the process of initial stages of reemployment.<sup>19</sup> Keeping in mind all mentioned earlier, it calls for developing more integrative models of job search success that take into consideration the interplay of these personal resources to improve the job-seeking process.

## Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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