Journal of Posthumanism
2025
Volume: 5, No: 6, pp. 2634–2648
ISSN: 2634-3576 (Print) | ISSN 2634-3584 (Online)
posthumanism.co.uk

DOI: https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i6.2387

Impact of Emotional Self-Regulation and Stress Management on Socioemotional Wellbeing: A Study in Secondary School Students

Nicolás Alejandro Torres Gámez[1], Marcelo Chávez Galleguillos[2], Misael Silas Letelier Sánchez[3]

Abstract

Background: Emotions self-regulation is an important field of study in psychology today since it helps people take better decision in their daily life. In the context of education, an emotional self-regulation will help students reach a positive learning environment in their development in society and as students This study focuses on emotional management through the analysis of the abilities to recognize and express emotions. The study aims to explore the relation between emotional self-regulation and socioemotional wellbeing in secondary education students. Methods: A non-experimental design was carried out with a cross-sectional modality in August 2024. It has a quantitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach seeking to describe the phenomenon in its context. The instrument applied was the BarOn EQI Questionnaire (Emotional Quotient Inventory) to measure emotional intelligence in adolescents and adults and evaluate five principal sub-components with subscales. Results: The study found positive correlations between emotional wellbeing dimensions, including the intrapersonal component (CIA) and stress management (CME), with the latter being a key predictive variable. Conclusions: According to the results, the need to implement pedagogical strategies for developing socioemotional skills in students is imperative, considering aspects as the institutional context and gender differences. In the same vein, it is necessary to strengthening stress management in both genders, adapted to the characteristics of each group for a better socioemotional wellbeing. Future research should aim at including longitudinal focus and qualitative data to enrich the comprehension of emotional dynamics in school contexts, exploring this topic in different cultural environments under local educational policies.

Keywords: *Knowledge, Administration, Medications, Pharmacology, Pediatrics, Nursing.*

Introduction

Emotional skills let people integrate themselves into a broader society and have a sense of humanity which responds to social needs (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2013). There are clearly some recurring or blinding emotions which deeply affect people, making them unable to make important life decisions, but being able to recognize emotions lets us move forward in handling them. This clearly does not keep bad things from happening, and it does not keep us from being exposed to "negative" emotions given that they are necessary, but it does let us have better responses and maintain emotional wellbeing (García, 2015; Casassus, 2009).

Socioemotional wellbeing among secondary school students is crucial for promoting a positive learning environment and facilitating healthy interpersonal relations, contributing to students' integral development (Barkhuizen, 2017; Brackett et al., 2019). Socioemotional skills including

[1] Universidad Andrés Bello, Email: ntorres.gamez@uandresbello.edu, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2385-5514.
[2] Universidad Andrés Bello, Email: h.chavezgalleguillos@uandresbello.edu, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-4908-3615
[3] Universidad Andrés Bello, Email: mis.letelier@uandresbello.edu, (Corresponding Author), ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9800-6368.

emotional self-regulation play a central role in this process, since they let students recognize, understand, and manage their emotions in an effective way, which is fundamental for their personal and academic satisfaction. This is known as emotional management, which is the ability to handle emotions properly. In this regard, Chu & Chow (2019) propose that it is necessary to guarantee the following conditions in order to develop emotional management in a person: a) *Be aware of the relation between emotion, cognition, and behavior,* recognizing that there is a direct relation between the emergence of one or more emotions, and that these take place in a cognitive process which is in turn expressed in physical and verbal behavior (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017).

b) *Adequately expressing emotions* in an honest, authentic, and respectful way (Keltner & Haidt, 2017). It is important to be able to recognize and understand emotions and then find ways to express them which are appropriate for the situation and the person with which one is interacting (Tracy & Randles, 2011; Barrett, 2017). The ability to understand internal emotional status does not necessarily correspond to an external expression of the emotion, even more so if one recognizes how such an expression affects others (Gross, 2015; Levenson & Ruef, 2017).

In order to be aware of the need for emotional regulation, it is necessary to recognize in contexts and environments (Grandey & Steiner, 2017) that the emotions expressed will depend on the type of personal relation with the other, and the degree of immediacy or expressive sincerity of the emotion (Gendron et al., 2014; Heerdink et al., 2017).

The importance of emotional self-regulation in a school context has been widely documented. Students who can manage their emotions are better prepared to face the inherent challenges of their educational stage, including stress, frustration, and pressure (Hakanen et al., 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2016). The ability to properly manage these emotions not only improves the quality of interactions between students but also promotes a positive emotional climate in the classroom. This environment, characterized by security and mutual support, can have a significant impact on academic performance and the quality of relations between students and teachers (Ibarrola, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011; Rusk et al., 2018).

Despite the advances in research about socioemotional wellbeing, there are still gaps in understanding how emotional self-regulation is developed and can be effectively encouraged among secondary school students. Recent studies have stressed the need for pedagogical strategies which integrate the development of socioemotional skills into the school curriculum, highlighting the role of teachers in this process (Datnow & Castellano, 2020; Englert et al., 2021; Finlayson & McCrudden, 2022; Sembill et al., 2021). However, more research is needed to better understand how these skills affect students' long-term wellbeing, and how interventions can be adapted to different school contexts (Wuttke & Seifried 2020; Rausch, 2023, Graham & de la Paz, 2023; Kuhl & Sembill, 2024; Castro & Gottfredson, 2022)

The present investigation proposes to approach this topic by studying the relation between emotional self-regulation and socioemotional wellbeing in secondary education students (Aldao, A. et al. 2021; Osher, D. et al.2022; Zimmer-Gembeck, M. et al. 2022). In particular, we will explore how these skills influence the emotional climate within the classroom and interactions between students (Kälin, S. et al. 2023; Korpershoek, H. et al. 2020; Weinstein, N. et al. 2022). Since emotional self-regulation is key for developing healthy interpersonal relations, it is important to understand how to support students in developing these skills (Hawkins, R. et al. 2020; Vigna, L. et al. 2021; González, R. et al. 2023; Bluth, K. et al. 2022).

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of emotional self-regulation on the

socioemotional wellbeing of secondary school students. Specifically, we will consider how the capacity to manage emotions influences the quality of relations between students and teachers, as well as the general emotional climate in the classroom.

This study will contribute to better understanding emotional dynamics in school environments and provide evidence for designing more effective educational interventions. By integrating socioemotional skill development into secondary school, we hope for our results to guide future educational policies and pedagogical practices to promote a healthier, more productive learning environment.

Background

The emotional wellbeing of adolescent students has become a relevant factor due to the various benefits which it offers. According to Patel (2021), these include better adaptation to life transitions and possible academic performance improvements. Jones (2002) emphasized early interventions to prevent future mental health problems. Emotional wellbeing is fundamental for adolescents' integral development, including resilience and social skills (Thornicroft, 2021).

The problematic situation arises from the acute crisis which happened during the pandemic, which generated strong depression and anxiety levels in adolescents. According to Racine (2021), lockdowns and uncertainty about the future, along with the interruption of school and social routines, have been important factors contributing to the rise of emotional wellbeing factors. Vinner (2020) indicated that these expressions can contribute to mental health problems, including academic burnout and greater anxiety.

Social isolation and the lack of peer interaction have been identified as critical factors which negatively affect adolescents' emotional wellbeing. Loades (2020) indicates that reducing social interactions has led to increased feelings of loneliness and despair, which in turn can aggravate mental health problems.

This is socially relevant, since this problem has driven the creation of national and international public policies for mental health and prevention programs. In 2021 the WHO created directives and objectives for global mental health, where Agenda 2030 and SDOs include specific targets for mental health, reinforcing the need to promote public policies aligned with this objective. SDO 4 promotes education which encourages mental health and emotional wellbeing; SDO 5 addresses gender equality, which can affect mental health in adolescent girls; and SDO 16 promotes peaceful and inclusive societies, which are fundamental for mental health.

Its pertinence arises because adolescence is a crucial period for physical, emotional, and social development. During this stage, adolescents face significant changes which can affect their long-term mental and emotional health. Providing adequate support at this stage can have an enduring positive impact.

This topic is very timely, as many students were affected by the pandemic and there has been a significant rise in cases of anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems among adolescents. According to Lee (2020), there is a strong need for emotional or psychological support.

Method

The study uses a non-experimental design, implying that there was no manipulation of variables. It is also cross-sectional, since data gathering took place during one specific period (August

2024). It has a quantitative, exploratory, and descriptive focus, since it seeks to systematically and objectively describe a phenomenon which has seen little study in its context.

The BarOn EQI Questionnaire (Emotional Quotient Inventory) was used, designed by BarOn & Parker (2000). This instrument measures emotional intelligence in adolescents and adults and evaluates five principal sub-components with the following subscales. a) *Intrapersonal*: Self-awareness and emotional self-evaluation; b) *Interpersonal*: Empathy and interpersonal relations; c) *Stress management*: Impulse control and stress tolerance; d) *Adaptability*: Flexibility and problem-solving; and e) *General Mood*: Optimism and happiness.

Descriptive analysis for the study was based on using fundamental statistical measurements to understand data distribution and the key characteristics of the analyzed variables. We calculated central trend measurements, including the mean and median, to describe the typical values for each component of emotional wellbeing (CEG). We also considered dispersion measurements including standard deviation, and position measurements including minimum and maximum values, to evaluate the variability and ranges observed in the data. This allowed for a complete characterization of each CEG component, providing a solid reference framework for later analyses. Moreover, we calculated Pearson correlations between the CEG components to let us identify significant relations between the evaluated dimensions. The hypothesis tests carried out confirmed that these relations were statistically significant, making the analysis interpretations more robust.

To guarantee measurement instrument reliability, Cronbach's was calculated obtaining a value of 0.95, indicating a high internal consistency and validity in the data gathered. For statistical modeling, we used ordinary least squares (OLS) models to examine how qualitative variables including gender, institution type, and teacher experience could affect the overall socioemotional wellbeing score. This focus included the consideration of interactions between key variables, including gender and years of teaching experience, to capture moderating effects in the analysis. The visualizations generated, including distribution and association graphs, complemented the comprehension of the results and highlighted relevant trends and patterns, such as the relation between stress management and gender.

Sample

The sample defined for the present study was drawn from a pool of students between 13 and 18 years old from 2 mixed-funding schools in Chile, one from a low-income stratum and another from a middle layer according to the schools' vulnerability index, leaving us with a sample of 811 students in total.

Instrument

In order to fulfill the study, we gathered data by applying an instrument; specifically, the BarOn EQI Questionnaire for adolescents and adults, developed and validated by BarOn & Parker (2000).

The BarOn EQI Questionnaire (Emotional Quotient Inventory) is a tool designed to measure emotional intelligence in adolescents and adults. This evaluation is centered on five main components, each with subcomponents approaching different emotional intelligence aspects. The scales and subscales are:

1. *Intrapersonal*: Evaluating the capacity for people to comprehend themselves and express their emotions in an adequate way. Includes aspects like emotional self-evaluation and

self-awareness.

2. *Interpersonal*: Measures social skills and the ability to establish and maintain effective interpersonal relations. This component includes empathy and interpersonal relations.

3. *Stress Management:* Evaluates the ability to manage stress and control impulses. Includes subscales like impulse control and stress tolerance.

4. *Adaptability*: Examines flexibility and the ability to adapt to new situations, as well as effective problem solving.

5. *General Mood:* Evaluates optimism and overall happiness, which influences emotional disposition and positive perceptions of life.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Variable	N	Mean/Prop.	SD	Min	P25	P50	P75	Max
Emotional comprehension (SM)	1620	24.5	4.1	16	22	25	27	33
Assertiveness (AS)	1620	19.5	3.3	13	17	20	22	27
Self-concept (AC)	1620	27.5	4.8	20	23	27	31	39
Self-realization (AR)	1620	22.3	4.4	17	18	22	25	32
Independence (IN)	1620	13.6	3.9	7	10	13	16	24
Intrapersonal (CIA)	1620	107.4	16.1	76	94	108	119	147
Empathy (EM)	1620	27.8	4.1	17	25	28	31	40
Interpersonal Relations (RI)	1620	34.3	5.0	24	30	34	38	47
Social responsibility (RS)	1620	27.9	4.6	19	24	27	31	39
Interpersonal (CIE)	1620	89.9	11.1	64	83	89	99	118
Problem solving (SP)	1620	27.2	3.7	20	24	28	30	34
Reality test (PR)	1620	24.6	5.4	12	20	24	28	38
Flexibility (FL)	1620	22.9	4.0	14	20	23	26	33
Adaptability (CAD)	1620	74.7	10.6	51	66	75	83	99
Stress tolerance (TE)	162	26.2	5.0	14	22	27	30	38

	0							
Impulse control (CI)	1620	19.9	4.5	12	17	19	22	37
Stress management (CME)	1620	46.2	8.4	32	39	46	52	72
Happiness (FE)	1620	25.7	3.9	19	23	26	28	38
Optimism (OP)	1620	28.5	4.5	20	24	29	32	38
General mood (CAG)	1620	54.2	7.4	39	47	56	59	71
CEG	**1620**	**372.3**	**47.5**	**269**	**337**	**377**	**402**	**498**
Years of teaching experience								
Between 13 and 14 years	535	0.330						
Between 15 and 16 years	517	0.319						
Between 17 and 18 years	569	0.351						
Gender								
Male	938	0.579						
Female	682	0.421						
Institution type								
Public	812	0.501						
Private	808	0.499						

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 describes the general components which form the total CEG score. The average for the Intrapersonal component (CIA) was 107.4 points. For the Interpersonal component (CIE) it was 89.9 points. The Adaptability component (CAD) had an average of 74.7 points, the Stress Management component (CME) had an average of 46.2 points, and the General Mood component had an average of 54.2 points. In the CEG indicator, composed of all the preceding indicators, the lowest score obtained by the sample was 269 points and the highest was 498 points, while the average was 372.3 points, with a standard deviation of 47.5 and a median of 377. These results indicate a certain symmetry in the observed data.

Table 1 indicates the sample composition, showing that 57.9% is male and 42.1% is female. Regarding years of teaching experience, 33% were between 13 and 14 years, 21.9% were between 15 and 16 years, and 35.1% were between 17 and 18 years. Finally, 50.1% of participating teachers worked in a public institution, while 49.9% were in a private one.

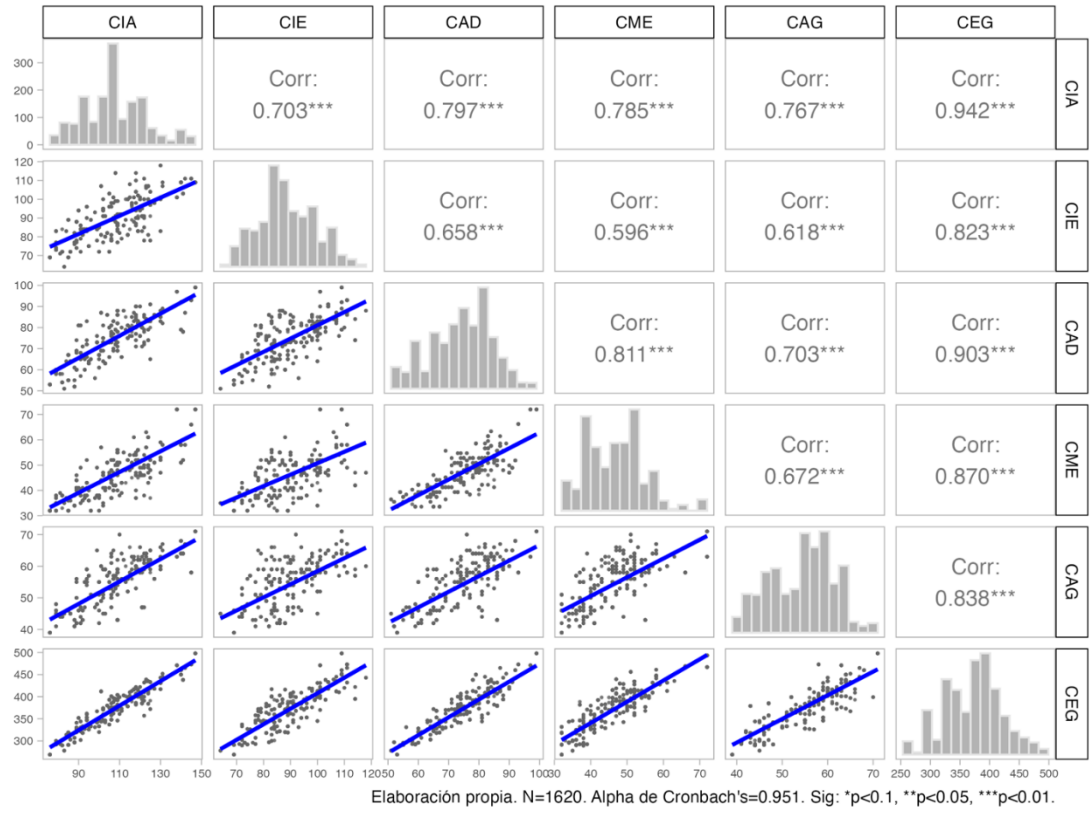

Figure 1. Ceg Correlations Matrix

Upon seeing the correlations matrix for the CEG components in Figure 1, we can observe that all the associations between components are positive and significant at conventional confidence levels. The correlations between each component and CEG are also positive and significant ($p<0.01$). The components' distributions indicate a trend towards normality. In turn, the observed Cronbach's α of 0.95 indicates a good result to us, meaning that the indicator is reliable and consistent in its internal structure. For the purposes of our present analysis, it is also relevant to highlight the high correlation between the CIA and CME dimension, which at 0.785 is statistically significant.

Statistical Modelling

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**
(Intercept)	375.299***	368.947***	365.456***	365.567***	373.037***
	(-1.547)	(-1.664)	(-2.044)	(-2.670)	(-3.063)
Gender: Female	-7.014***			-5.400**	-21.509***
	(-2.385)			(-2.426)	(-4.089)
Institution: Private		6.806***		5.204**	5.198**

		(-2.355)		(-2.399)	(-2.383)
Teaching experience: 15 to 16 years			10.706***	9.891***	-1.028
			(-2.916)	(-2.918)	(-3.851)
Teaching experience: 17 to 18 years			9.905***	9.405***	-1.211
			(-2.849)	(-2.845)	(-3.744)
Female x Between 15 and 16 years					24.607***
					(-5.837)
Female x Between 17 and 18 years					24.091***
					(-5.714)
R^2	0.005	0.005	0.010	0.018	0.032
Adj. R^2	0.005	0.005	0.009	0.015	0.028
Num. obs.	1620	1620	1620	1620	1620
***p < 0.01; **p < 0.05; *p < 0.1. Standard error in parentheses. The reference categories are "Male" for gender, "Public" for Institution, and "Between 13 and 14 years" for teaching experience.					

Table 2. Models of Ordinary Least Squares For CEG

Table 2 shows various models of ordinary least squares for CEG. We will now carry out a descriptive reading of each component for the first four models, and then describe model 5, where an interaction between the most significant variables is carried out. Finally, we will summarize the analysis with the most relevant aspects.

Model 1 indicates that:

$\hat{\beta}_1\ gender =$ Women have an average of 7 points less on CEG than men, which is relevant at 99% confidence.

Model 2 shows that:

$\hat{\beta}_1\ institutions =$ Teachers at private institutions have an average of 6.8 more points on CEG than teachers at public institutions, which is relevant at 99% confidence.

Model 3 indicates that:

$\widehat{\beta_2}\ teaching\ experience =$ People whose teaching experience was between 15 and 16 years have an average of 10.7 more points for CEG compared to those with between 13- and 14-years' experience, controlling for the other variables. This is significant at 99% confidence.

$\widehat{\beta_3}\ teaching\ experience =$ People with between 17- and 18-years' teaching experience had an average of 9.9 more points on CEG compared to those with between 13- and 14- years' experience, controlling for other variables. This is significant at 99% confidence.

Model 4 indicates the following:

$\hat{\beta}_1\ gender =$ Women have an average of -5.4 points less for CEG than men, controlling for the rest of the variables. This is significant at 95% confidence.

$\widehat{\beta_1}\ institution =$ People working in a private institution scored 5.2 points higher on CEG on average than people working in public institutions, controlling for the rest of the variables. This is significant at 95% confidence.

$\widehat{\beta_2}\ teaching\ experience =$ People with between 15- and 16-years' teaching experience scored 9.8 points higher on CEG on average compared to those with between 13- and 14-years' teaching experience, controlling for the rest of the variables. This is significant at a 99% confidence level.

$\widehat{\beta_3}\ teaching\ experience =$ People with between 17- and 18-years' teaching experience scored 9.4 points higher on CEG on average than those with 13 to 14 years' experience, controlling for the rest of the variables. This is significant at a 99% confidence level.

The preceding models allow us to see the importance of the gender variables, which is significant at both 90% and 95%, as well as years of teaching experience, which is significant at 99% in the previous models, upon the CEG score which can be obtained. For this purpose, in Model 5 interactions were generated between these variables, obtaining a significant interaction in all confidence levels. This means that, as women gain more years of teaching experience, they have a lower CEG score in comparison with men.

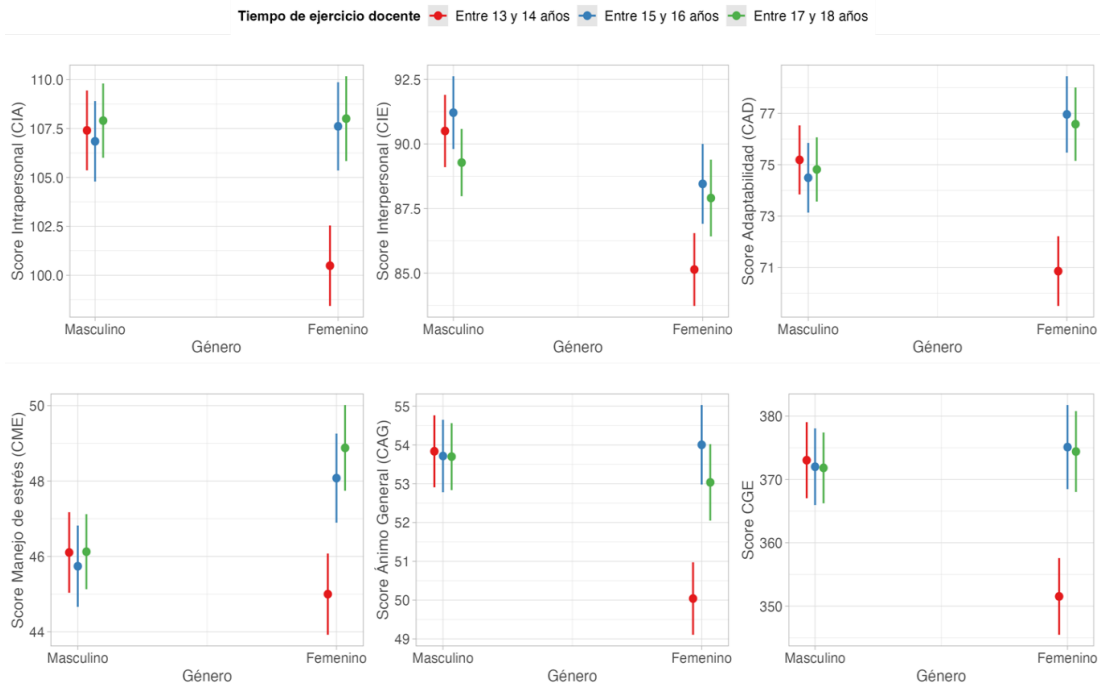

Figure 2. Analysis of Interactions for Gender and Years of Teaching Experience Upon CEG Components

Figure 2 shows the interactions for gender and years of teaching experience on CEG components. We can observe that with men, all cases show no sizeable difference between their scores by years of teaching experience. This is clearly not the case for women, with a much

lower score in the lower range of teaching experience (between 13 and 14 years), whereas with more years' experience their scores for each component rise, with slight differences between 15-16 and 17-18 years.

With the interpersonal components (CIA) we can note that for women, the score changes more between those with 13- and 14-years' experience and those with greater experience, while men show little difference between years of experience, with the 15- and 16-year interval showing a slightly lower score.

In the stress management components (CME), it can be observed that women overall had higher stress management scores than men. The trend of more experience correlating with higher scores also continued. Although scores were lower for men than for women, they do not show.

Statistical Modeling

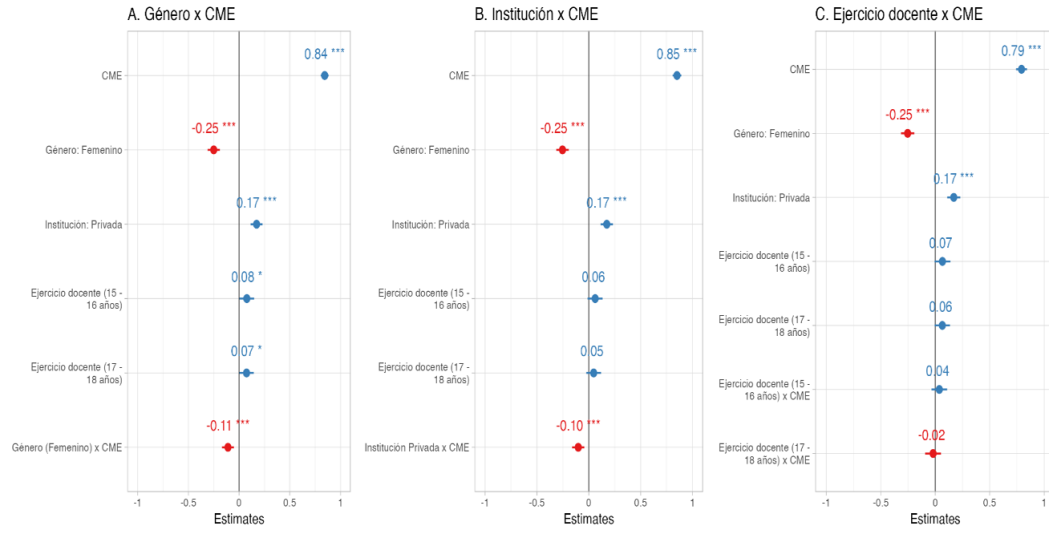

Figure 3. Least Squares Models with Standardized Coefficients for Socioemotional Wellbeing (CIA)

Figure 3 shows three models for Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) evaluating the relation between stress management (CME) and socioemotional wellbeing (CIA) as a function of three moderating variables: gender, institution type, and teaching experience.

Panel A: Gender x CME

CME has a significant positive coefficient (0.84), indicating that stress management is positively related to socioemotional wellbeing.

Gender: The gender variable presents a negative coefficient (-0.25), suggesting that women report lower socioemotional wellbeing levels compared with men.

The interaction of Gender (Female) x CME has a negative and significant coefficient (-0.11), implying that the positive effect of CME on CIA is slightly lower for women.

Panel B: Institution x CME

As in the previous image, CME has a significant positive coefficient (0.85), indicating a positive

relation with CIA.

Institution: This has a positive coefficient (0.17), suggesting that teachers in private institutions reported higher CIA levels than those in public institutions.

The Private Institution x CME interaction shows a significant and negative coefficient (-0.10), indicating that the CME – CIA relation is less positive for those working in private institutions.

Panel C: Teaching Experience X CME

CME maintains a significant positive coefficient (0.79), indicating that stress management contributes to socioemotional wellbeing.

The effects of teaching experience are positive but not very strong, with the highest level at 15-16 years' experience (0.07).

The Teaching Experience (17-18 years) x CME interaction has a negative coefficient, albeit very small and not significant (-0.02), indicating that teaching experience does not substantially modify the relation between CME and CIA.

In all the models, stress management (CME) has a consistent positive effect on socioemotional wellbeing (CIA). However, the moderating effects show that gender, institution type, and teaching experience slightly affect this relation. For instance, women seem to benefit less from the positive relation between CME and CIA, as well as teachers in private institutions. Teaching experience has a smaller effect and is not as relevant as the other moderations in these models.

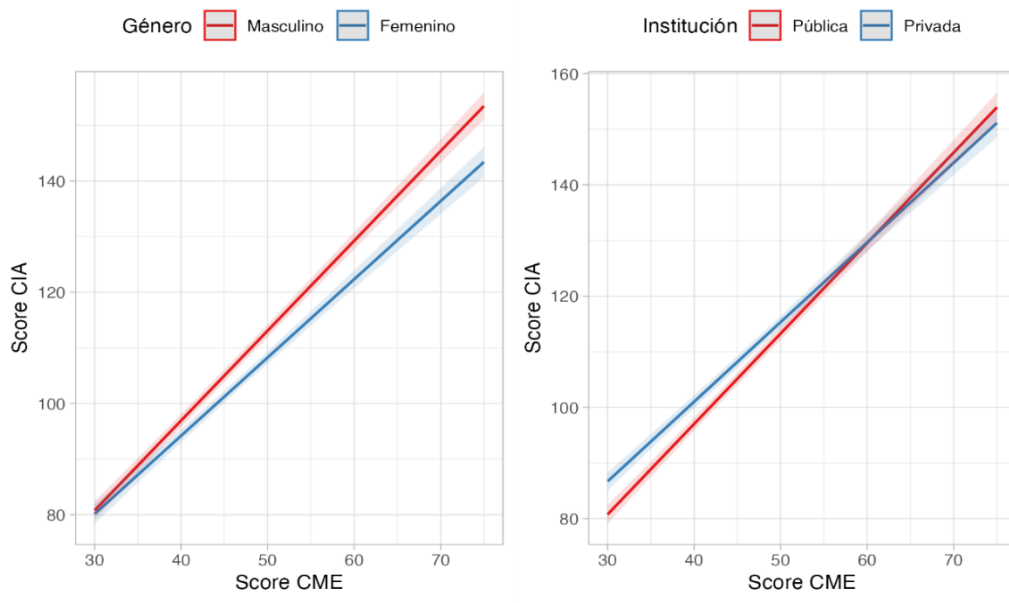

Figure 4. Analysis of Interactions for Gender and Teaching Experience on Socioemotional Wellbeing (CIA)

Figure 4 presents two-line graphs illustrating the relation between stress management (CME) and socioemotional wellbeing (CIA), with moderation by gender and institution. The graph on the left shows the relation between CME and CIA, with the red lines corresponding to men and

the blue to women.

Both groups show a positive relation between CME and CIA, indicating that better stress management is associated with greater socioemotional wellbeing. However, the line slope for men is slightly stronger than for women, suggesting that the positive impact of stress management on socioemotional wellbeing is slightly greater in men. This coincides with the negative moderating effect observed for women in the preceding figure.

The second graph shows the relation between CME and CIA for teachers in public institutions (red) and private ones (blue). In this graph, both lines are very similar, but the slope for public institutions is slightly higher, indicating that the relation between stress management and socioemotional wellbeing is somewhat stronger for teachers in public institutions. This graph supports the interpretation of the preceding figure, in that the effect of CME on CIA was less positive for private institutions.

Both graphs confirm that stress management is positively related to socioemotional wellbeing (CIA). The differences between gender and institution type are subtle but consistent, suggesting that stress management has a somewhat stronger impact in men and for public school teachers compared to women and private school teachers.

Discussion

The results of this study highlight the central role of emotional self-regulation and stress management in the socioemotional wellbeing of secondary education students, confirming prior findings about the relevance of these skills in an educational context (Hawkins et al., 2020; González et al., 2023). The analysis indicated significant and positive correlations between emotional wellbeing dimensions, including the intrapersonal component (CIA) and stress management (CME), with the latter being a key predictive variable.

One of the most relevant findings was the interaction between gender and stress management, where women, although showing better initial CME scores, presented a lower benefit in their relationship with socioemotional wellbeing compared with men. This suggests that the positive impact from stress management on socioemotional wellbeing may be influenced by gender factors, possibly related to social expectations or differences in stress perception and their coping strategies (Barrett, 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2016).

The type of institution also showed significant differences, with teachers in private institutions having better scores on specific components including CIA. However, the interactions indicate that this benefit is smaller when considering stress management. Teaching experience, in turn, showed a positive trend, especially among women, suggesting that time in professional practice could mitigate gender differences in some cases.

These results reinforce the need to implement pedagogical strategies which integrate the development of socioemotional skills in an inclusive way, bearing in mind the institutional context and gender differences. Interventions aimed at strengthening stress management in both genders, adapted to the characteristics of each group, could strengthen students' socioemotional wellbeing, aligning with recent proposals on Social Emotional Learning (Durlak et al., 2011; Osher et al., 2022).

The study findings are consistent and provide a solid basis for future research. However, there is room for improvement, such as by including longitudinal focus and qualitative data which can further enrich the comprehension of emotional dynamics in school contexts. Future studies

should explore these topics in different cultural environments and consider the impact of other moderate variables, such as family environments and local educational policies.

Data Availability

The data underlying this article are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors

Ethics Approval and Consent

This study was conducted in accordance with institutional guidelines. Ethical approval was not required as per institutional policy, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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