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Application of a Socio-Emotional Skills Program in Adolescents in 1st Grade of Secondary School for the Development of Their Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of a social-emotional skills program on adolescents in the first grade of secondary school, with the objective of developing their emotional intelligence. The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) was administered at the outset and conclusion of the intervention, employing a quasi-experimental design with a sample of 46 students. The findings revealed a significant enhancement in overall emotional intelligence, accompanied by discernible growth in specific domains, including interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood. Moreover, participants reported a notable enhancement in their interpersonal relationships and an elevated capacity to discern and regulate their emotions. The findings suggest that the intervention not only reinforced the emotional well-being of adolescents but also enhanced their ability to cope with stressful circumstances and adapt to changes. It is recommended that this type of program be incorporated into the educational domain to advance emotional and social growth, optimizing both academic performance and the general well-being of students.

Keywords: *Socio-emotional skills, Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Relationships, Emotional Development, Secondary Education.*

Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been defined as the capacity to perceive, understand, and regulate one's own and others' emotions, which enables more effective adaptation to the demands of the social, academic, and personal environment (Goleman, 1995). The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has gained prominence in recent years, as evidenced by a growing body of research indicating that an adequate level of EI can not only enhance an individual's mental and emotional well-being but also facilitate success in various domains of life, including academic performance, personal satisfaction, and the capacity to cultivate healthy interpersonal relationships (Corbera, 2018).

During adolescence, a period of significant physical, cognitive, social, and emotional transformation, emotional intelligence is of paramount importance in the formation of the self-concept and identity. This transition stage, which is typified by the pursuit of autonomy and independence, necessitates that adolescents cultivate the capacity to discern and modulate their emotions. This enables them to more effectively confront the challenges that accompany this developmental phase (World Health Organization, 2019). The inadequate management of emotions can result in a range of adverse outcomes, including stress, low self-esteem, depression, and substance use. These factors have the potential to significantly impact an

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In this context, the development of socio-emotional skills through educational programs has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy for enhancing emotional intelligence in adolescents. Such programs facilitate the acquisition of the capacity to identify, recognize and manage emotions in an appropriate manner, thereby reinforcing self-esteem and fostering the development of more constructive interpersonal relationships (Bisquerra, 2019). Furthermore, the development of emotional intelligence enables adolescents to tolerate frustration, enhance their empathy, and enhance their ability to adapt to academic and social demands (Goleman, 1995).

A number of studies have highlighted the value of implementing targeted programs in educational settings that foster emotional intelligence, given the correlation between a high level of EI and enhanced outcomes in both personal and academic domains (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2013). Such programs not only foster a positive school climate, but also reduce disruptive behaviors and improve peer cohesion, thus promoting a more harmonious and productive learning environment (Azpiazu et al. 2015).

This study focuses on the implementation of a socio-emotional skills program for adolescents in the first year of secondary school, with the objective of evaluating its impact on the development of their emotional intelligence. It is anticipated that the program will facilitate improvement in the adolescents' capacity to identify and regulate their emotions, manage stress effectively, and build more positive interpersonal relationships. This type of intervention is crucial for equipping adolescents with the emotional tools they need to navigate the challenges of their environment in a healthier and more resilient manner, thereby contributing to their overall well-being and academic success.

The period of adolescence is one of preparation for adult life, during which several significant developmental experiences occur. In addition to the physical and sexual maturation that occurs during this period, adolescents undergo a number of other significant experiences. These include the transition to social and economic independence, the development of identity, the acquisition of the skills necessary to establish adult relationships and assume adult roles, and the capacity for abstract reasoning. Furthermore, it is a period of elevated risk, during which the context can exert a significant influence (World Health Organization, 2019).

During adolescence, a deeper and more meaningful coexistence with peers is formed, which can cause changes in emotional and mental state, both positively and negatively. The latter is mostly caused by poor self-knowledge and a lack of understanding and emotional control.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as the capacity to understand one's own emotions and those of others, to discern the emotional nuances of each, and to regulate them constructively and effectively. It is crucial to cultivate optimal social relationships, emotional well-being, and a more positive self-perception (Jiménez, 2018).

Emotional regulation (ER) can be defined as the capacity to manage emotions constructively and appropriately. It entails becoming conscious of the interconnection between emotions, cognition, and behavior; developing effective coping mechanisms; and cultivating the capacity to generate positive emotions autonomously (Bisquerra, 2019).

The ability to identify and manage emotions can lead to an enhanced quality of life, as it enables individuals to perceive situations more clearly and respond effectively to stressful circumstances

that arise in various contexts, including personal, professional, academic, and interpersonal domains.

In light of the aforementioned definitions, it becomes evident that the implementation of a workshop aimed at fostering emotional intelligence in adolescents is of paramount importance. Such a workshop would equip adolescents with the ability to identify the various emotions that arise in their daily lives, recognize them, and manage them in an optimal manner. The experience of emotions begins at an early age, with the gradual acquisition of the nuances that differentiate one emotion from another. However, the capacity to understand and regulate emotions is not fully developed until adulthood. This is contingent upon the extent to which an individual is aware of their emotions and their full self. When this awareness is present, emotions can be managed in a constructive manner, which in turn facilitates optimal functioning in daily life.

In the contemporary era, a multitude of challenges are emerging within various social contexts. The ever-evolving landscape is necessitating a heightened capacity for acceptance and adaptation among individuals to navigate their daily lives. To this end, they must possess a deeper understanding of themselves and their capabilities, enabling them to make decisions that promote their overall well-being.

It is therefore crucial to implement educational programs that facilitate students' understanding of their emotions, encourage the development of both intellectual and emotional capabilities, and enhance their ability to function effectively in academic and professional contexts, as well as to cope with challenging circumstances. In addition, it is essential to assess the efficacy of the interventions. To this end, the following research question is posed.

Does a socio-emotional teaching-learning process have an impact on the level of emotional intelligence of adolescents?

The aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of an intervention designed to enhance emotional intelligence on the emotional intelligence skills of a group of adolescents in their first year of secondary school. The specific objectives were as follows: a) to assess the level of emotional intelligence of adolescents before the implementation of the program; b) to implement a program for the development of emotional intelligence; c) to assess the level of emotional intelligence of adolescents after the application of the program.

Methodology

This research is quantitative and descriptive in scope, employing a quasi-experimental design with a test and post-test, without a control group. A quantitative approach is one that employs data collection techniques with the objective of testing hypotheses based on numerical measurement and statistical analysis. This is done in order to establish behavioral patterns and to test theories (Hernández et al. 2014). The objective of descriptive studies is to define the properties, characteristics, and profiles of individuals, groups, communities, objective processes, or any phenomenon that is subjected to analysis. The quasi-experimental design is employed with the objective of establishing the existence of a causal relationship between two or more variables. In the absence of randomization, quasi-experiments permit the estimation of the impact of a treatment or program, provided that an appropriate basis of comparison can be established (Hedrik et al., 1993).

The workshop was conducted at the educational institution Escuela Secundaria y de Bachilleres Oficial No. 8 Emiliano Zapata, specifically in the secondary section's morning shift, which is

located at Avenida. Las Palmas s/n, Colonia Las Palmas, CP 93320, in the city of Poza Rica, Veracruz.

The room in which the workshop was conducted was that of the first-year class, Group 1° “G”. It is approximately 7 meters wide by 10 meters long and contains 46 tables, a paint, a desk, electrical connections, adequate lighting, four large windows on two sides of the room and an access door.

The study was conducted with a sample of 46 students, comprising 17 girls and 31 boys aged 11 and 12 years, belonging to the first grade of secondary school group G. The students were selected by the social worker of the institution.

Techniques and Instruments

The instrument used for the evaluation before the workshop was the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory, which had been adapted into Spanish by Nelly Ugarriza Chavéz. The results obtained were evaluated with the assistance of the Excel 2013 program.

In the initial and concluding sessions, the EQ-I Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory measurement instrument was administered to a sample of 46 secondary school students, 17 (36.95%) of whom were female and 31 (63.04%) males. The participants were aged between 11 and 12 years and were enrolled in the official secondary school and high school No. 8 “Emiliano Zapata”.

The manual for the development of social, emotional, and mindfulness skills for young people, written by Laura Celma Pastor and César Rodríguez Ledo and distributed by Tea Ediciones in Madrid, Spain, was used as the basis for the intervention sessions with the young people.

Characteristics of the Instrument

The instrument is designed to assess the overall emotional intelligence (EI) of the individual, with the assessment comprising multiple domains, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, tension management, and general mood. This allows for a comprehensive evaluation of the student's EI performance across these key areas.

Nombre original: EQ-I BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory

Spanish Name: (I-CE) BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory

Autor: Rueven Bar-On

Origin: Toronto-Canada

Peruvian Adaptation: Nelly Ugarriza Chávez

Administration: Individual or collective. Booklet type.

Duration: No time limit. Approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

Application: Subjects 16 and older. The reading level of 6th grade of primary school.

Qualification: Manual or computerized.

Significance: Assessment of the emotional aptitudes of the personality, as determinants to achieve overall success and maintain positive emotional health.

Test Description

This inventory has 113 items and generates a general emotional quotient and 5 emotional quotients composed in the scores of 15 subcomponents.

The 5 main conceptual components of emotional and social intelligence that involve the 15 factors measured by the I-CE are:

- Intrapersonal Component (CERA).
- Interpersonal Component (CEER).
- Adaptability Component (CEAD).
- Component of Tension Management (CEMT).
- General Mood Component (CEAG).

Statistical analysis

An analysis with descriptive statistics was carried out, applying the t-student test to determine whether or not there were significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores.

Materials

Beside the spacious and well-lit living room equipped to play audiovisual content, the research required the following material in order to develop the activities:

- Instrument containing the items of the I-CE, answer sheet, correction template, results, and profile sheet (AB) or Microsoft Excel 2 tool with the qualification template.
- Photocopies of the instrument for the first and second evaluation of the sample.
- SEA Program:
- Manual
- Index card notebook
- Copies of the workbook for the participants.
- DVD of the SEA program.
- Photocopies of the SEA program workbook for participants.
- Painting
- Markers
- Recorder
- Laptop
- Projector
- White Sheets
- Cardboards
- Adhesive tape

Procedure for applying the instrument

Each participant is provided with a booklet and an answer sheet. They are informed that they must read each of the sentences written in the booklet and indicate on the answer sheet with numbers from 1 to 5 how much they agree with each of the sentences. The numbers correspond to the following degrees of agreement: 1 = never, 2 = once, 3 = twice, 4 = many times, and 5 = always.

First phase: Contact

The educational institution Escuela Secundaria y de Bachilleres Oficial No. 8 Emiliano Zapata was visited in the morning. The director was informed of the purpose of the research and the procedures that would be carried out during the sessions. The director gave his authorization, the sample with which the work would be carried out was established, and the group 1° “G” was assigned for this purpose.

Second phase: Application

The instrument was administered in Room 1° “G” of the secondary section of the educational institution Escuela Secundaria y de Bachilleres Oficial No. 8 Emiliano Zapata. The room was in good condition, with large windows, a blackboard, a desk, and fans.

The objective of the questionnaire and the subsequent sessions were explained to the young people. Each subject was provided with a booklet and answer sheet for the inventory. They were instructed to complete the inventory on the answer sheet and any queries were addressed on an individual basis.

Third phase: Data collection

Once the questionnaires were answered, the Microsoft Excel 2010 tool was used for the qualification of the first and second applications and the results were compared by representing them in bar graphs.

Results

The data obtained from the research are presented in detail, with a particular focus on the data acquired from the application of the EQ-I Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory instrument. This was carried out before and after the application of the SEA program, specifically during the first and last sessions. The data were analyzed using a T-test for two paired samples with Microsoft Excel 2010, with a significance level of $p=.05$.

Results of the Emotional Quotient of the Sample

Figure 1 presents the results of the total emotional quotient evaluated before and after the program, showing statistically significant changes ($t= -14.02$, $p<.001$).

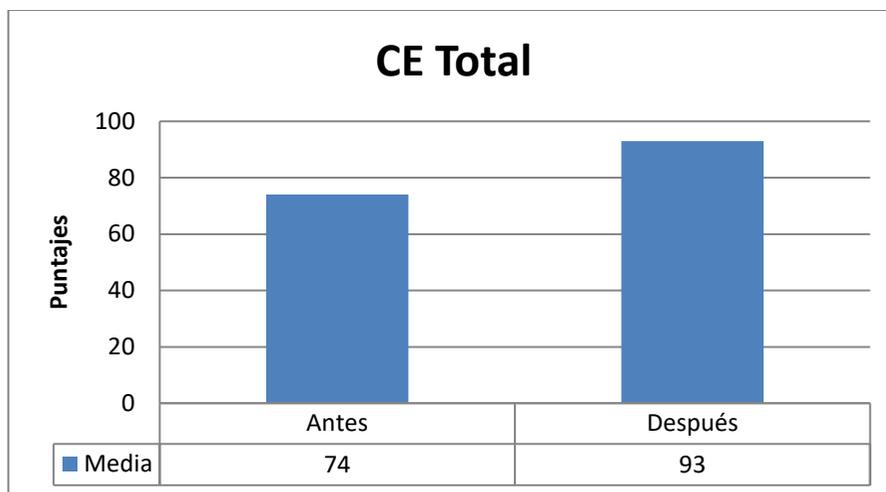


Figure 1. Evaluation of the total EC of the sample

Results of the conceptual components of emotional and social intelligence

The results of the 5 conceptual components of emotional and social intelligence evaluated before and after the implementation of the SEA program are presented below.

Figure 2 presents the results of the intrapersonal emotional quotient evaluated before and after the program, showing statistically significant increase changes ($t=-9.30$, $p<.001$).

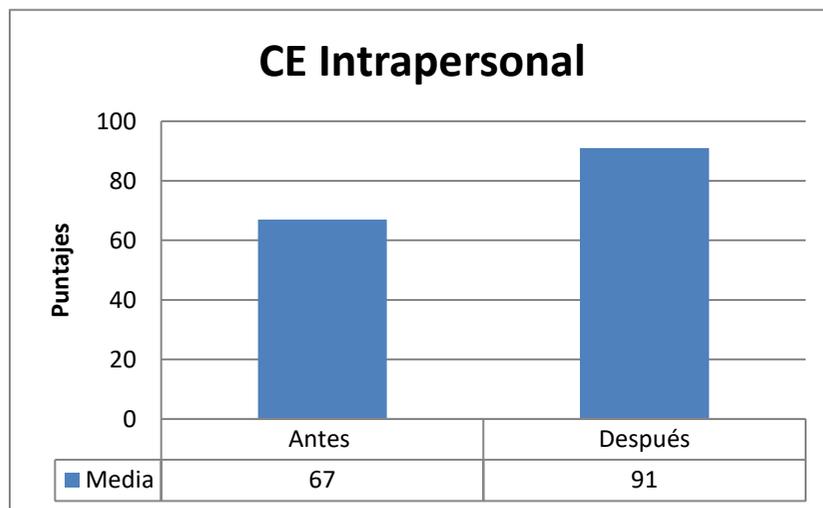


Figure 2. Evaluation of the Intrapersonal CE of the sample

Figure 3 presents the results of the interpersonal emotional quotient evaluated before and after the program, showing statistically significant increase changes ($t=-6.18$, $p<.001$).

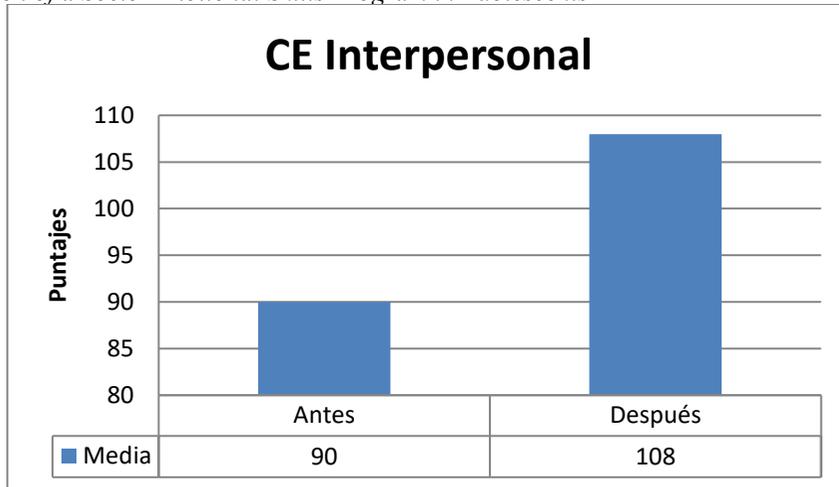


Figure 3 EC Interpersonal Sample Assessment

Figure 4 presents the results of the emotional quotient of adaptability evaluated before and after the program, showing statistically significant increase changes ($t=-8.71, p< .001$).

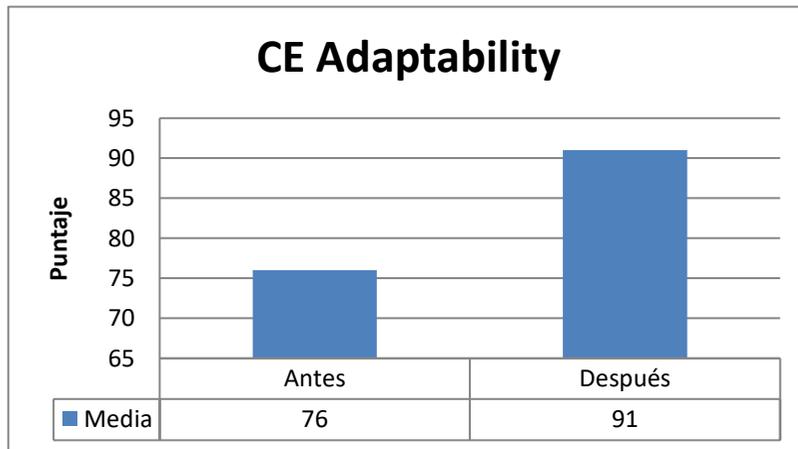


Figure 4 CE Sample Adaptability

Figure 5 presents the results of the emotional quotient of tension management evaluated before and after the program, showing statistically significant increase changes ($t=-9.49, p< .001$).

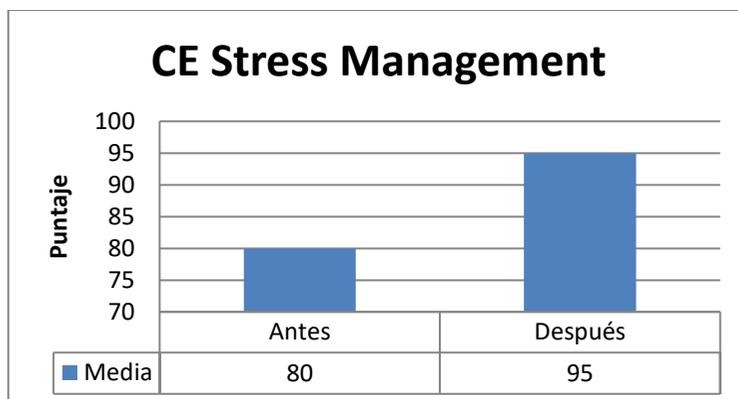


Figure 5 CE Sample Tension Management

Figure 6 presents the results of the general mood emotional quotient evaluated before and after the program, showing statistically significant increase changes ($t=-9.95$, $p<.001$).

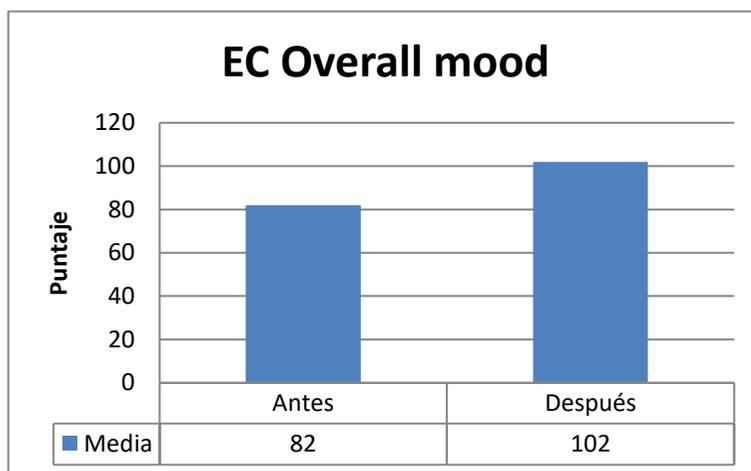


Figure 6 CE General mood of the sample

Each of the above graphs represents the increase in the EC of the sample in the different areas, which shows the effectiveness of the implementation of the program.

Evaluation of the impact of the workshop

A qualitative evaluation of the program was also conducted by the students who participated in it. The data presented in Figures 7 to 14 illustrate the strengths, weaknesses, and levels of satisfaction and interest in the program, as well as the perceived usefulness and integration of the techniques implemented on a daily basis. The results provide valuable feedback that can inform the design of future applications.

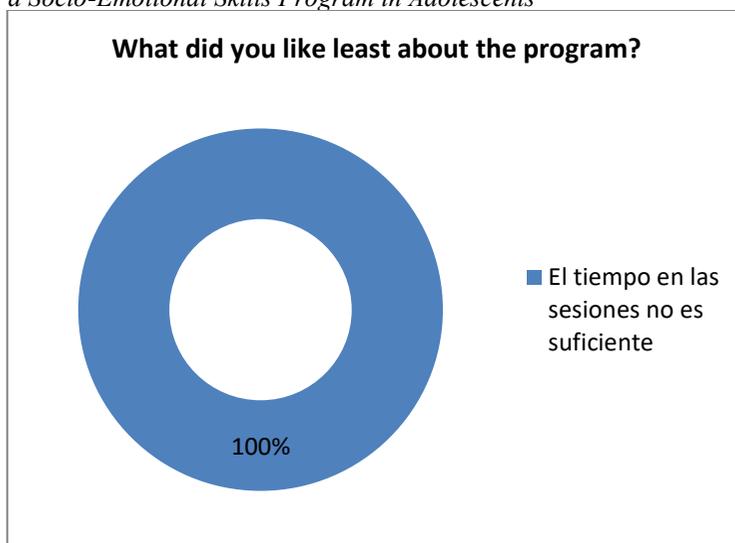


Figure 7 What they liked least about the program

As a weak point, 100 percent of the sample agreed that the duration of each session (1 hour) is insufficient to carry out the corresponding activities.

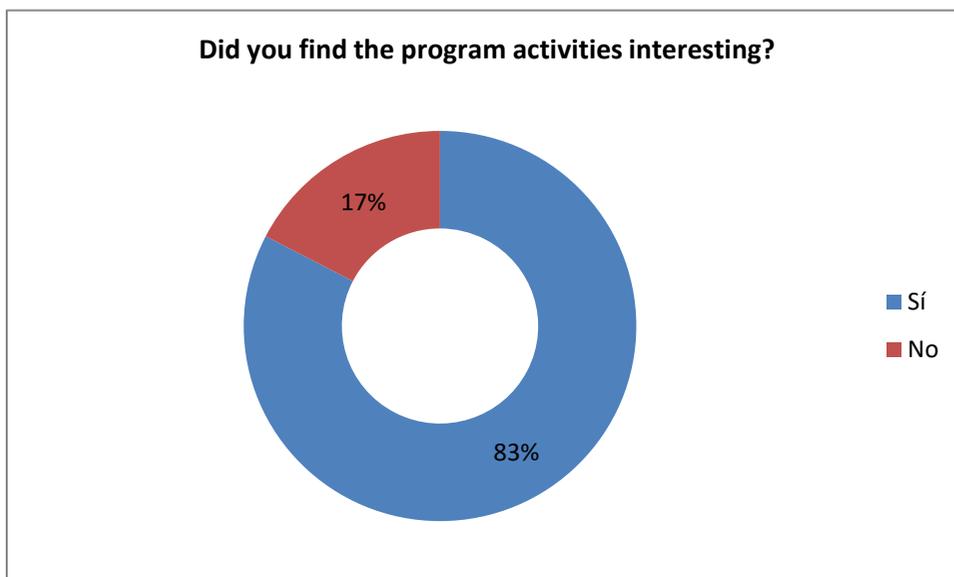


Figure 8 Interest in the Program

As strengths, 83 percent of the sample stated that they found the activities of the workshop interesting.

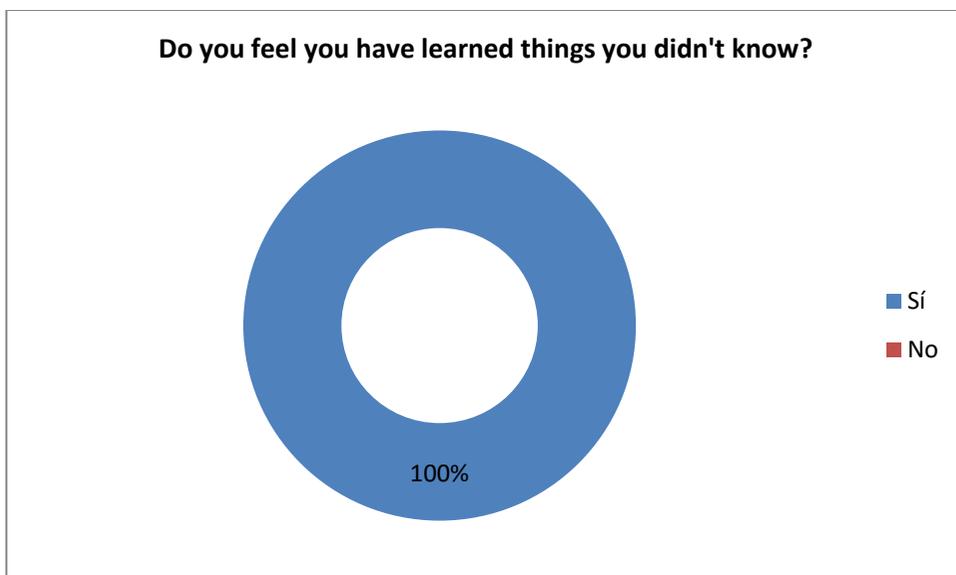


Figure 9 Learning 100 percent agreed that they learned things they didn't know.

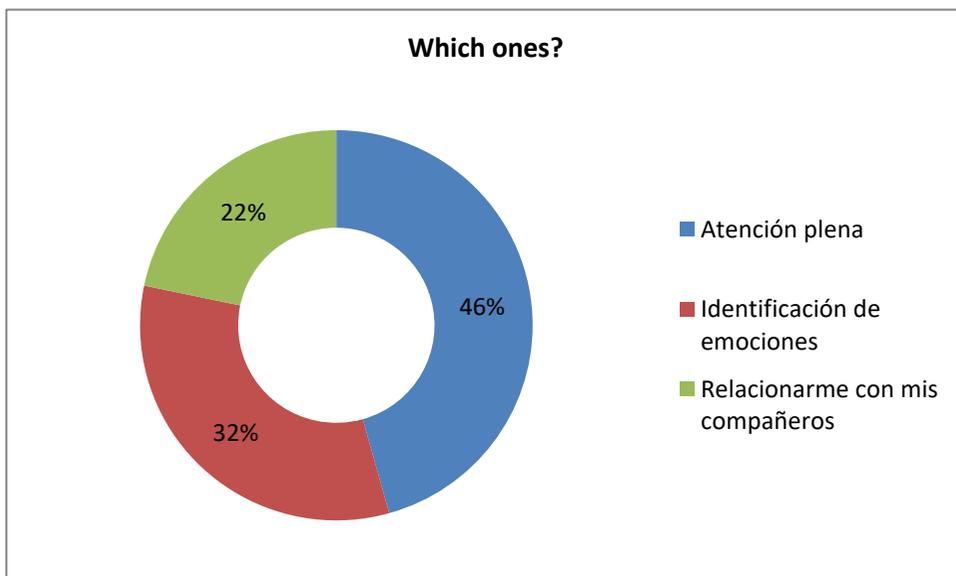


Figure 10 Things They Learned

These were mindfulness with 46 percent, identification of emotions with 32 percent and relating to peers with 22 percent.

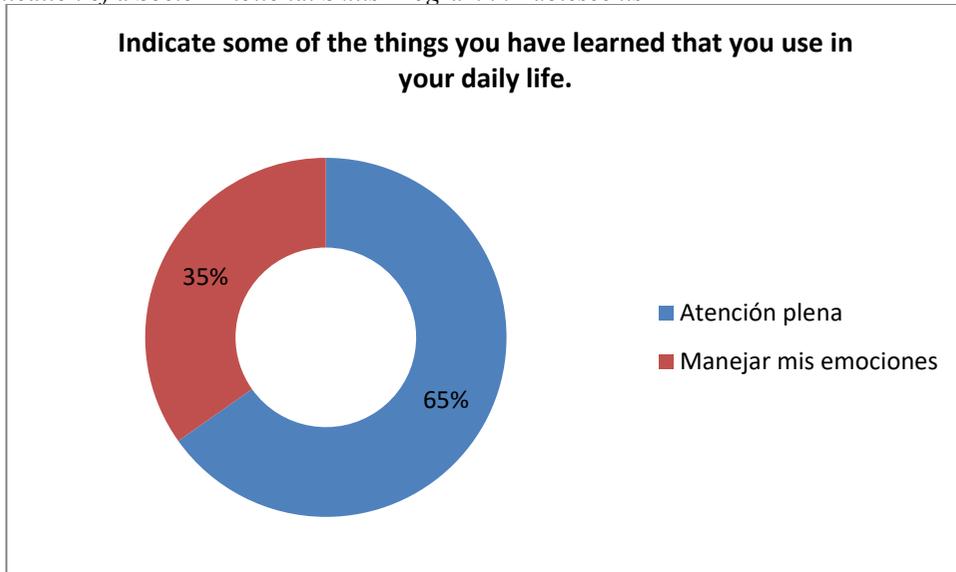


Figure 11 Utilization of Learned Resources

65 percent indicated that they use mindfulness techniques and 35 percent the management of their emotions in their daily lives.

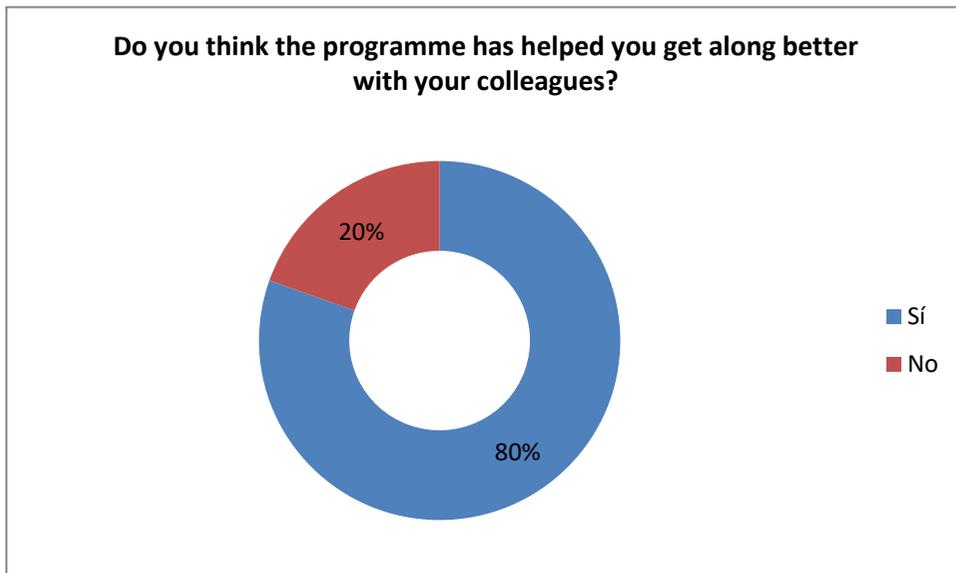


Figure 12 Improvement in Interpersonal Relationships 1

80 percent of the sample said that the program helped them to have a better relationship with their classmates.

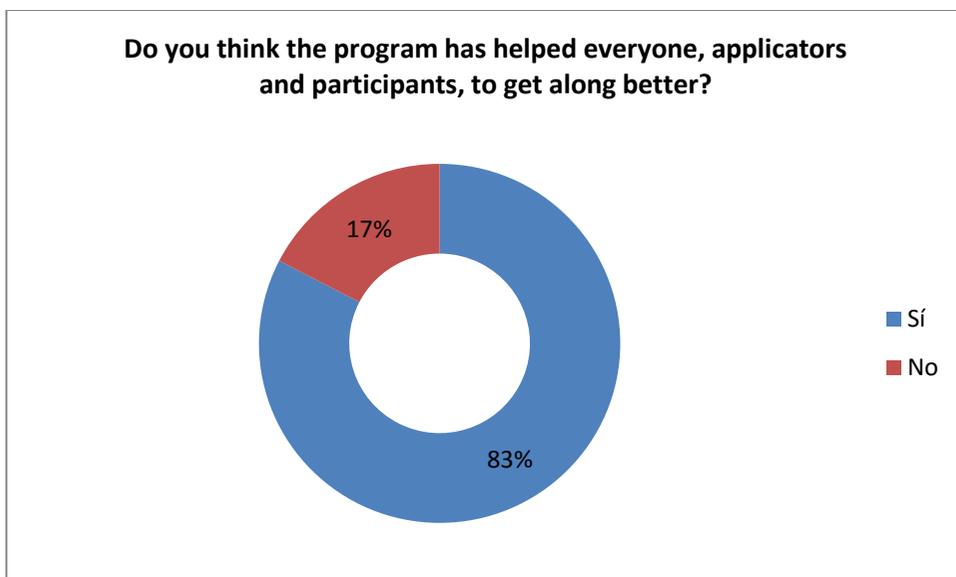


Figure 13 Improvement in Interpersonal Relationships 2

83 percent said that the program helped both participants and applicators to get along better.

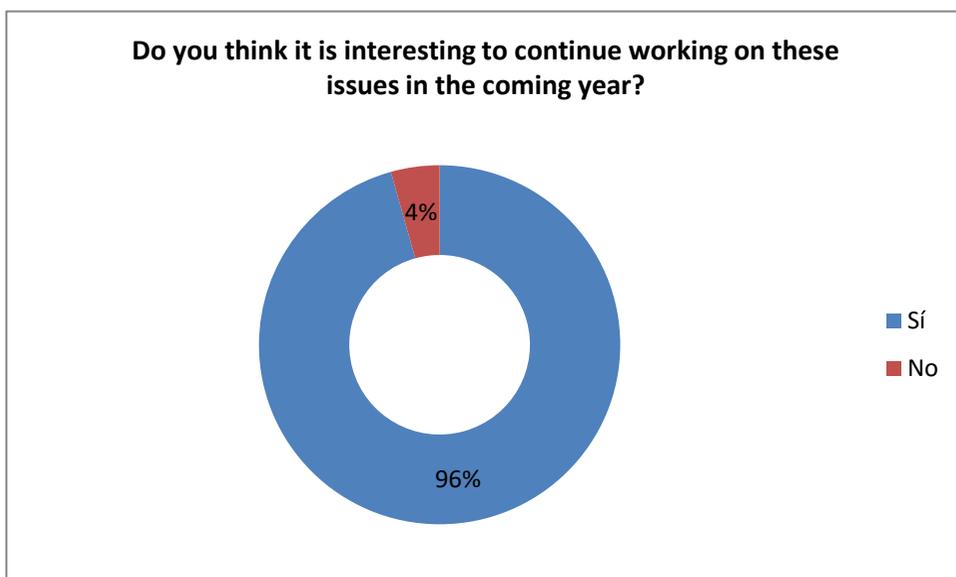


Figure 14 Program Monitoring

Finally, 96 percent would like to continue working on the agenda theme next school year.

Conclusions

The results of this study show that the implementation of the socio-emotional skills program had a significant impact on the development of emotional intelligence in the participating adolescents. Significant improvements were observed in several key areas, including emotional identification and regulation, interpersonal skills, stress management and adaptability. These

findings confirm the effectiveness of educational programs that prioritize the cultivation of socio-emotional competencies, thereby strengthening the emotional and social well-being of adolescents.

Emotional intelligence is not only a predictor of academic and social success, but also plays a crucial role in young people's mental health, particularly during a period of life characterized by emotional vulnerability, rapid change and the search for identity. Those who participated in the program demonstrated an increased ability to cope with challenging circumstances, to manage social and academic pressures effectively, and to improve the quality of their interpersonal relationships. This highlights the value of integrating this form of intervention into educational settings.

Similarly, the enhancement in stress management abilities and adaptability indicates that adolescents are more capable of coping with the demands of their environment and adapting to the evolving requirements of the academic and social milieu. This improvement in emotional regulation is of paramount importance in order to prevent risky behaviors, such as substance use or violence, and to promote a safer and more collaborative environment inside and outside the classroom.

It is important to note that, in addition to the positive results, the program also revealed areas in which improvement could be made. While improvements were observed in intrapersonal skills and general mood, these were less pronounced than in other areas, indicating a need for more targeted approaches that enhance self-awareness and self-efficacy in adolescents. This finding encourages further research into the development of strategies that reinforce these individual skills, potentially through a more personalized approach or an extended program duration.

Conversely, the implementation of the program yielded high levels of satisfaction among the participants, who expressed a desire to continue developing their socio-emotional skills. This emphasizes the necessity of maintaining and extending the promotion of this type of initiative within the education system, not merely as a one-off intervention strategy, but as an integral component of the academic curriculum. The strengthening of students' emotional and social skills contributes to the formation of individuals who are more resilient and empathetic, capable of facing life's challenges with greater confidence and emotional stability.

In conclusion, this study reinforces the necessity of integrating emotional intelligence development programs in educational institutions, particularly during adolescence, a crucial period for the formation of socio-emotional competencies. The favorable outcomes observed indicate that, with the appropriate resources, adolescents can markedly enhance their emotional and social well-being, which will have a sustained influence on their academic achievement, their interpersonal interactions, and their capacity to navigate life's challenges. As the field of education continues to evolve, it is essential to maintain a commitment to the promotion of programs that address not only cognitive development but also emotional development. This ensures that young people receive a comprehensive education that prepares them for a future full of opportunities.

Limitations

One of the primary constraints was the absence of a control group, which would have facilitated a more comprehensive analysis. This was due to the scheduling of the educational program and

the lack of accessibility of other educational institutions.

A further limitation was the modification of sessions in which audiovisual material was used, given that the educational institution had only one classroom with audiovisual equipment, and this was in some cases used for events held by the institution.

Furthermore, the behavior of the sample in the initial sessions presented a challenge for the program implementer. The group was described by the teachers as “restless” and consisted of a considerable number of participants. However, the program was successfully implemented through the utilization of various techniques to focus the group's attention on the activities.

In addition to these limitations, the sessions were constrained by a reduced time of 50 minutes, which was insufficient for the completion of the 60-minute sessions. This resulted in the inability to conclude certain activities within the allotted time.

Recommendations

The findings of the SEA Program indicate that this type of program has the potential to facilitate the development of socio-emotional skills in adolescents. These skills can be integrated into their daily lives, particularly in social, academic, and familial contexts. Additionally, the program equips adolescents with strategies that enhance their academic performance.

As previously indicated, emotional intelligence is a series of skills and abilities that can be acquired and developed over time. It has the capacity to improve social relationships, facilitate the recognition, understanding and management of emotions, and enable individuals to adapt them to daily life (Goleman 1995; BarOn 1997; Extremera, 2006). Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, & Salovey (2011)

Providing adolescents with information about mental health and quality of life is also an important aspect of their optimal development and strengthening of their identity. During this period, the influences of their environment are accelerated and can be confusing to understand. Consequently, they are always exposed to risks and seek information to clarify their doubts.

The incorporation of curricula designed to enhance emotional literacy could also be integrated into the academic domain. Such initiatives have the potential to confer significant benefits on students' academic performance, equipping them with the capacity to navigate the challenges and difficulties they encounter within and beyond the classroom.

There is still considerable scope for improvement, particularly at the individual level. It is therefore recommended that each case be subject to individual follow-up, with the aim of enabling students who have not yet achieved sufficient improvement to gain an understanding of their situations and to strengthen the deficient areas.

Contributions and observations of the researcher regarding the development of the SEA Program.

It is essential that the activities are adapted to the population with its characteristics in order to facilitate the correct development of the program. This entails implementing strategies that allow for a focused approach before each session. In addition to this, the applicator must be adequately prepared, the sessions must be meticulously planned, and in the case of the researcher, they should have access to the support of a health professional, such as a psychologist or therapist. This is crucial in maintaining control when working with a large population and in cases of emotional sensitization.

Additionally, the researcher observes the group. It is challenging for children who are encountering situations for the first time to articulate their feelings and the process they underwent. Therefore, the process of the workshop is crucial. It is an invaluable experience for them. By expressing their emotionality, they can develop useful resources for their lives.

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