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Classroom emotional intelligence and its relationship with school performance



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Abstract Despite the importance of emotions in classrooms, no measurements have been developed to assess group emotional intelligence (EI). The aim of this work was to develop a questionnaire for measuring group EI (G-TMMS) in educational contexts. The psychometric properties of G-TMMS were examined in a sample of 794 participants (47% female; mean age = 16; SD = 1.4), divided into 59 classrooms. The G-TMMS showed a one-factor structure. It also demonstrated to have adequate internal consistency, temporal stability, and convergent validity. Moreover, group EI was associated with higher group school performance. The implications of this new scale in educational contexts are discussed.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Inteligencia emocional grupal;
Validación de test;
Desempeño escolar

Inteligencia emocional del aula y su relación con el desempeño académico

Resumen A pesar de la importancia nuclear de las emociones en el contexto académico no existen medidas de Inteligencia Emocional (IE) grupal aplicadas al aula. El objetivo del presente trabajo consistió en desarrollar un cuestionario para la medida de la IE grupal (G-TMMS) en contextos académicos. Las propiedades psicométricas del G-TMMS fueron examinadas en una muestra de 794 participantes dividida en 59 aulas (47% mujeres; Media_{edad} = 16; DT = 1.4). El G-TMMS mostró una estructura unifactorial, una consistencia interna adecuada, estabilidad

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temporal y validez convergente. Además, la IE grupal del aula se mostró asociada con un mayor desempeño escolar grupal. El trabajo discute las implicaciones de esta nueva escala en el contexto educativo.

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Introduction

The study of emotions in classrooms is central to understand motivation and learning patterns among students (Beilock & Ramírez, 2011). Emotional experience is an integral component of all school activities and plays a key role not only in relation to learning but also with respect to achievement over time (Pekrun & Schutz, 2007). In academic contexts, individual self-perceived emotional intelligence (EI) has been shown to be related to better psychological and social adjustment and social adaptation (Balluerka, Aritzeta, Gorostiaga, Gartzia, & Soroa, 2013; Castillo, Salguero, Fernández-Berrocal, & Balluerka, 2013; Pedrosa, Suárez-Álvarez, Lozano, Muñiz, & García-Cueto, 2014) and to school performance (Ferrando et al., 2011; Joseph & Newman, 2010) in adolescence. However, despite these findings and the vast amount of studies about emotions in school contexts (Humphrey et al., 2011; Inglés et al., 2014; Rodríguez et al., 2014) research on collective or group emotions in classrooms is still scarce.

The collective construct of group EI has been widely used and discussed in other fields of Psychology as a fundamental source of variability for a number of variables related to individual and group behaviour; for example, team effectiveness and performance (Härtel, Ashkanasy, & Zerbe, 2009), and a number of measures of group EI have been developed, for instance, the Workgroup Emotional Intelligence Profile (WEIP) of Jordan, Ashkanasy, Härtel, and Hooper (2002) or the Group Emotional Intelligence (GEI) Survey of Druskat and Wolff (2001). However, these measures have been developed to measure "intact teams" and they do not meet the specific needs of classrooms.

Therefore, taking into account the relevance of group emotional phenomena for learning and teaching processes (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Pekrun & Schutz, 2007) and the need to integrate variables across multiple levels of analysis to provide a more veridical account of educational phenomena (Osterman, 2010), the main goal of this study was to develop a questionnaire aimed at measuring group EI in classrooms. Moreover, in order to add validity evidence for the construct of group EI, we tested specific hypotheses regarding associations of group EI with group school performance, as well as with group gender composition and the class tutor's gender.

The classroom emotional intelligence

Many studies in the field of EI have focused on the creation of instruments for assessing individual EI (Extremera,

Salguero, Fernández-Berrocal, & Ruíz-Aranda, 2009). One of the most extended theoretical models is the one proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997), Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995) being one of the most widely used instruments to measure perceived EI. The TMMS is a measure of individual's beliefs about the importance of paying attention to one's own emotions and feelings, about the capacity for understanding one's own emotions and about the ability to regulate negative emotional states and prolong positive ones.

If we accept the notion of group emotions (Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007), and also take into account that stable classes can be considered as groups (Boekaerts, 2001), then we would expect different classes to show different levels of EI. Psychosocial processes like emotional contagion (Totterdell, Kellet, Teuchmann, & Briner, 1998), vicarious affect processes (Fultz & Nielsen, 1993) and interaction synchrony processes (i.e., the non-conscious mechanism whereby an individual's behaviour is adjusted or modified in order to coordinate or synchronize it with that of another) (Siegman & Reynolds, 1982) support the idea that individual-level affective experiences may combine to form an affective collective construct.

The Classroom EI represents a group-level construct that is based on group members shared, subjective emotional experiences. These shared experiences help to generate a set of norms or expected behaviours that guide emotional experience (Wolff, Druskat, Koman, & Messer, 2006). The group EI examined here is, therefore, a consequence of the type of interaction that occurs between students and generates a group construct different from group members' traits and thus, it can be considered a "collective construct" associated with the classroom (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999). Specifically, and based on Salovey et al. (1995) TMMS, the group EI examined here measures: the level in which students consider that their class (reference group) pays attention to and values the feelings of classmates; whether is clear rather than confused about the emotions felt in the classroom, and uses positive thinking to repair negative moods in the class.

Other collective emotional constructs such as group climate also have been shown to be significantly related to students' adaptive behaviour. Positive and supportive classroom climates have been related to goal-directed behaviour, whereas permanently negative and non-supportive and ambiguous climates (e.g., sometimes supportive and sometimes non-supportive) have been associated with avoidance, disruption and cheating behaviour (Patrick, Turner, Meyer, & Midgley, 2003). Similarly, it has been found that students in high-involvement classrooms (defined by happiness,

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