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Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence Variables And Strategies For Coping With Stress In Students Of A Private School In Cúcuta

Relación Entre Las Variables Inteligencia Emocional Y Estrategias De Afrontamiento Del Estrés En Estudiantes De Un Colegio Privado De Cúcuta

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ABSTRACT

Key Words:

COPE, Students, Stress Coping Strategies, Emotional Intelligence, TMMS-24.

The main objective of this research was to explore the association between emotional intelligence and coping strategies in a group of 141 ninth, tenth and eleventh grade students in a private school in Cúcuta, Norte de Santander. This study adopted a stratified random sampling approach with proportional allocation and was framed in a non-experimental cross-sectional research design. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS-24) questionnaire, while the COPE questionnaire was used to assess coping strategies to stress. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis in SPSS version 29 software, using Pearson's correlation formula. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and two specific coping strategies: those focused on problem solving and those oriented towards emotional management. However, no significant relationship was observed between emotional intelligence and coping strategies based on behavior modification. In summary, these findings indicate that people with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to employ effective strategies to manage stress, especially those related to regulating their emotions and problem solving. However, they do not necessarily adapt their behavior in response to stress.

RESUMEN

Palabras Claves:

COPE, Estudiantes, Estrategias de Afrontamiento del estrés, Inteligencia Emocional, TMMS-24.

El objetivo principal de esta investigación fue explorar la asociación entre la inteligencia emocional y las estrategias de afrontamiento en un grupo de 141 estudiantes de noveno, décimo y undécimo grado en una escuela privada de Cúcuta, Norte de Santander. Este estudio adoptó un enfoque de muestreo aleatorio estratificado con asignación proporcional y se enmarcó en un diseño de investigación transversal no experimental. La inteligencia emocional se midió utilizando el cuestionario Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS-24), mientras que el cuestionario COPE se empleó para evaluar las estrategias de afrontamiento al estrés. Los datos recopilados se sometieron a un análisis estadístico en el software SPSS versión 29, utilizando la fórmula de correlación de Pearson. Los resultados revelaron una relación estadísticamente significativa entre la inteligencia emocional y dos estrategias de afrontamiento específicas: aquellas centradas en la resolución de problemas y las orientadas hacia la gestión emocional. Sin embargo, no se observó una relación significativa entre la inteligencia emocional y las estrategias de afrontamiento basadas en la modificación de comportamientos. En resumen, estos hallazgos indican que las personas con una mayor inteligencia emocional son más propensas a emplear estrategias efectivas para manejar el estrés, especialmente aquellas relacionadas con la regulación de sus emociones y la solución de problemas. No obstante, no necesariamente adaptan su comportamiento en respuesta al estrés.

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Introduction

Emotional intelligence and coping strategies are two concepts that have become topics of great interest in psychology today. As human beings face challenges and stressful situations in their daily lives, the ability to understand and regulate emotions effectively becomes crucial for psychological well-being and quality of life (Macías et al., 2013).

Emotional intelligence contributes to the individual's ability to identify, understand and manage his or her emotions, and at the same time those of the other people with whom he or she relates. High emotional intelligence has been associated with a series of benefits, such as better mental health, more satisfactory interpersonal relationships, and higher academic and work performance.

With respect to coping strategies, these are tools that are adopted for the management of stressful or adverse situations in daily life. These strategies can be adaptive or maladaptive, depending on their effectiveness in reducing stress and promoting well-being. Some adaptive strategies include social support, problem solving, and cognitive reappraisal, whereas maladaptive strategies may involve avoidance, denial, or substance use.

The different existing theories and models related to emotional intelligence and coping strategies were reviewed, analyzing the practical implications of these concepts in daily life and in different professional fields. The connection between both concepts is evident, since a good emotional intelligence can help the individual to choose the most effective and adaptive coping strategies in each situation.

In short, this research aims to contribute to the knowledge about the importance of emotional intelligence and coping strategies in the promotion of mental health and psychological well-being, offering an integrative and updated view of these concepts and their relationship. Consequently, the population

chosen for this study is focused on school adolescents given that during their development they go through significant experiences that have repercussions in different areas of their lives, especially in the educational context.

In view of this, the Ministry of National Education (2021) establishes in its National School Guidance Plan indications based on laws and decrees in order to contribute to the progress of competencies at cognitive, emotional, social and occupational levels of children, adolescents and young people; intertwining their integral formation, their family environment and their school context through actions based on prevention, promotion and attention. For this reason, the National School Guidance Plan, in relation to the socioemotional factor of the student, suggests developing workshops aimed at interpersonal relationships, expression of emotions, emotional control and search for a life project.

In accordance with the above, this research was based on the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies, exploring how emotional intelligence intervenes in the choice of coping strategies and how these in turn can enhance or limit emotional intelligence.

Materials and Methods

The research was framed within the quantitative paradigm to determine statistically the behavior and trends of the variables to be studied. The quantitative methodology, which uses data collection to be able to test hypotheses in relation to numerical calculation and statistical analysis, and its purpose is to form patterns of behavior and test theories (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014). Likewise, within this approach the study corresponded to the correlational project modality, which according to Ramos Galarza (2020) "in this research arises the need to pose a hypothesis in which a relationship between two or more variables is proposed".

A non-experimental, cross-sectional correlational design was proposed, where this study sought to determine the relationship between two variables without the objective of eventuality, i.e., the evaluation of the variables proposed was carried out at a single moment and it was not intended to measure a change over time (Hernández et al, 2010).

Participants

The population of this research was composed of the total number of students in grades nine through eleven, which is made up of 168 students. The universe was made up of 393 students and the

population was taken as the ninth, tenth and eleventh grades. Following this, a simple random probability sampling was carried out with an admitted margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%. Finally, in order to guarantee a proportion according to the size of people assigned to each grade, a stratified random sampling with proportional allocation was used, where the total sample was 117 participants.

The 117 students ranged between 13 and 17 years of age, of which 58 (49.6%) were male and 59 (50.4%) were female. The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants are presented below (see Table I).

Table I. Sociodemographic Characteristics Of Participants

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	58	49,6%
	Female	59	50,4%
Age	13	3	2,6%
	14	40	34,2%
	15	40	34,2%
	16	27	23,1%
	17	7	6,0%
Grade	Ninth	50	42,7%
	Tenth	37	31,6%
	Eleventh	30	25,6%

Instruments

Instruments were used for the elaboration of this study according to the respective variables.

The first instrument was the COPE Coping Appraisal Inventory (20) dispositional version, which allows the evaluation of the forms or styles of coping that people use in the face of stressful events. It consists of 52 items, divided into 3 coping styles: problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and other coping styles. In turn, these are grouped into 13 coping strategies. The inventory is answered by means of a Likert-type scale with four response alternatives: 1= I almost never do this to 4= I do this very often. The score obtained per style fluctuates between 4 and 16 points (Bonilla et al., 2018).

Taking into account the variable Emotional Intelligence, The TMMS (Trait Emotional Meta-Mindfulness Scale) questionnaire was used. It is slightly based on the original model of Salovey and Mayer, it can be considered the first measure of Emotional Intelligence, in general, and of Trait Emotional Intelligence, in particular.

It is composed of 24 items, which are answered on a 5-point Likert scale. The TMMS provides scores on three factors, named: attention to emotions, emotional clarity and emotional repair (Taramuel Villacreces and Zapata Achi, 2017).

Data analysis

Once the information was collected, the data were categorized in Excel and the data obtained were processed using the IBM SPSS version 29.0

program (IBM, USA) to determine the frequencies, percentages and arithmetic averages that allowed the elaboration of statistical tables and graphs for the interpretation of the results. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to relate the variables.

Results

It can be observed that in the first dimension "attention to emotions" of the 117 students surveyed, 46.1% (54) have adequate attention, 13.7% (16)

should improve their attention because they give too much importance to it, and 40.2% (47) should improve it because the level of importance given to it is low. Regarding the second dimension "emotional clarity", 93 (79.5%) students should improve their emotional clarity and 20 of them have adequate emotional clarity. Finally, in the third dimension "emotional repair", 49.6% of the participants have an adequate emotional repair, 43.6% (51) should improve it and 6.8% (8) have an excellent emotional repair (see Table II).

Table II. Distribution Of Frequencies And Percentages According To Dimensions And Levels Tmms-24

Dimensions	Level	Frequency	Percentage
Attention to emotions	Adequate attention	54	46,1%
	Needs to improve attention: pays too much attention	16	13,7%
	Needs improvement in attention: pays too little attention	47	40,2%
Emotional clarity	Adequate emotional clarity	24	20,5%
	Needs improvement in emotional clarity	93	79,5%
Emotional repair	Adequate emotional repair	58	49,6%
	Must improve their emotional repair	51	43,6%
	Excellent emotional repair	8	6,8%

The results are found at the general level of the three levels of coping style, it is evident in the first place that the level "coping style focused on the problem" has a percentage of very high of 0.9% and a frequency of 1, in the high level 40.2% and a frequency of response of 47, in relation to low there is a percentage of response of 56.4% and a frequency of 66, and finally in the very low level there is a percentage of response of 2.6% and a frequency of 3.

In the level "coping style focused on emotion" it can be seen that it has a response percentage of high of 45.3% and a frequency of 53, in low there is a response percentage of 53.8% and a frequency of 63; and very low with a response percentage of 0.9% and a frequency of 1. Finally, the level "coping styles focused on behavior" it can be observed that there is a very high response percentage with 0.9 and a frequency of 1, high with a response percentage of 28.2% and a frequency of 33, low with a response percentage of 62.4% and a frequency of 73; and

very low with a response percentage 8.5% and a frequency of 10 (see Table III).

Table III. Distribution Of Frequencies And Percentages According To Stress Coping Styles

Style	Level	Frequency	Percentage
Level - Problem-Focused Coping Style	High	47	40,2%
	Low	66	56,4%
	Very High	1	0,9%
	Very Low	3	2,6%
Level - Emotion-focused coping style	High	53	45,3%
	Low	63	53,8%
	Very Low	1	0,9%
Level - Behavior-focused coping styles	High	33	28,2%
	Low	73	62,4%
	Very High	1	0,9%
	Very Low	10	8,5%

It can be observed that in the problem-focused coping style scale there is a low correlation with attention to emotions (0.366) and emotional clarity (0.404), while in emotion repair (0.496) there is a moderate correlation. Likewise, a significant bilateral value is evident in the three EI variables. Emotion-focused coping style has a low correlation with the EI variables: attention to emotions (0.396), emotional clarity (0.363) and emotion repair (0.389), showing a significant bilateral value in the three EI variables.

Finally, in the behavior-focused coping scale, there is a null correlation with attention to emotions (0.054), a low inverse correlation with emotional clarity and a very low inverse correlation with emotion repair; where it is evident that only emotional clarity has a significant bilateral value (0.000) (see Table IV).

Table IV. Pearson Correlation By Coping Scales And Tmms-24 Variables

Pearson's correlation		PD - Problem-focused coping styles	PD - Emotion-focused coping style	PD - Behavior-focused coping styles
PD - Attention to emotions	Correlation coefficient	,366**	,396**	0,054
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,000	0,000	0,561
PD - Emotional Clarity	Correlation coefficient	,404**	,363**	-,339**
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,000	0,000	0,00
PD - Emotional repair	Correlation coefficient	,496**	,389**	-0,166
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,000	0,000	0,074

Discussion

Based on the results of the study, it was possible to observe the relationship between the variables of Emotional Intelligence and Coping Strategies. In the Coping Strategies test, in the "Problem-focused coping style" and "Emotion-focused coping style" a significant value is evidenced in the three EQ variables, which are: "Attention to emotions", "Emotional clarity" and "Emotional repair".

With respect to "Behavior-focused coping style" a significant value is only evident in "Emotional clarity". This finding is related to the study conducted by Rangel Pagola, which concluded that there is a significant correlation between EI and EA in the dimensions of Problem-Focused Coping Style and Emotion-Focused Coping Style, but no relationship

was found in the Avoidance-Focused Coping Style (Rangel Pagola, 2022).

It was found that students have a low level in relation to the scales of Active coping, Suppression of competent activities, seeking social support, seeking emotional support, turning to religion, Analyzing emotions and Denial. This means that the students do not perform direct actions to avoid stress, do not look to anyone for support to get some advice or to relieve emotions, do not look to religion to reduce stress, and may also give up in these situations or even refuse to believe that the stressor exists; in short, they do not have the capacity to handle the situations that generate stress for them.

This coincides with the results of the study by Giraldo and Guzmán (2019), where they conclude that adolescents with higher levels of Emotional Intelligence more frequently use the Coping Style focused on the problem and emotion; in addition, this information is relevant since it allows institutional referents in charge of student characterization to identify aspects that should be included in the comprehensive training process of students.

Several investigations have shown that, along with other risk factors, low emotional intelligence is one of the important predisposing factors in the development of depressive symptoms (Salovey, Woolery, & Mayer, 2001), therefore, an adequate emotional intelligence in young adolescents can favorably influence in preventing the progression of depressive symptoms and facilitate the development of coping strategies, which can be originated by various family, school, social and economic situations (Veytia et al., 2012).

In the Trait Emotional Meta-Cognition Scale (TMMS-24) it could be evidenced that "Attention to feelings" and "Repair of emotions" is adequate, while in the dimension "Emotional clarity" it is found that it should be improved. This means that students are aware of their emotions, know how to recognize feelings and know their meaning, and are able to control positive and negative emotions, but they need to improve in relation to understanding emotions and understanding how they evolve.

This result is related to that of García, which states that the dimensions of "Emotional clarity" and "Emotional repair" are key to the coping strategies that students could use (García Martín, 2015). This finding is of great importance for the creation of educational strategies in the school setting, focused on teaching and promoting in students the understanding, awareness and evolution of their own emotions.

When relating the styles of coping strategies with the levels of emotional intelligence in students, the results show that there is a significant relationship between 6 dimensions of both EI and EA, in terms of active coping, planning, suppression of competent activities, postponement of coping, seeking social support, positive reinterpretation of the experience versus attention to emotions, emotional clarity and repair of emotions.

According to Sanchez's research in 2022, there is a similarity in results because the two researches point out that there is a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Coping Strategies in students, in addition it could be evidenced that there is a significant percentage of students with low levels of Emotional Intelligence and Coping Strategies (Sanchez Sagastegui, 2022).

Emotional Intelligence is the capacity of people to understand, register and work on their emotions and recognize those of others, in order to obtain positive results in the social, school, work and interrelational areas (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). These two authors implement this concept based on the hierarchy of skills that begin with the perception of emotions and reach emotional regulation as a higher state of complexity.

Conclusions

According to the results, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between the variables of emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies (problem-focused and emotion-focused). However, there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies (behavior-focused). That is, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Regarding the results of the COPE, it was found that the dimension with the highest predominance at a low level is behavioral coping strategies with a frequency of 62.4% in the students. Likewise, it

was found that there is a high level in the dimensions of planning, postponement of coping, positive reinterpretation of the experience, acceptance and mental disengagement.

It is determined that the population studied has low emotional clarity with 79.5%, which is the predominant dimension. According to the dimensions of attention to emotions and repair of emotions, it is evidenced that there are adequate levels for each of them; however, it is found that there is little difference compared to the percentages of improvement, showing that, although there are positive values, a similar number of students have difficulties in fixing their interest in what they feel and finding suitable tools to manage and regulate their emotional states.

It was evidenced that there is a greater relationship between behavior-based coping strategies and EI dimensions. Regarding the emotion-based strategies, it was observed that students do not consider religion as a coping strategy, as well as carrying out an analysis of their emotions. Also, according to the behavior-based strategies, the respondents show that there is no relationship of denial and mental disengagement with the dimensions of attention to emotions and emotional repair.

During adolescence, human beings go through biological, physical and psychological changes that influence later stages of their lives; among them, adolescents are in search of their identity, related to the acceptance of their own body, vocational identity or defining a personal ideology; self-knowledge, which is aimed at enabling the person to distinguish who they really are and who they want to be; and finally, autonomy, which allows them to establish deep emotional ties with their peers.

This stage is characterized by the development of emotional competence, where aspects such as affective lability, constant mood swings, the tendency to isolate oneself, the increase in experiencing

emotions and acquiring the ability to examine one's own feelings and those of others, are fundamental in the psychosocial factor of the adolescent. Based on the above, this research found a low capacity for emotional clarity in adolescents, evidencing a difficulty in the recognition and analysis of emotions, which indicates that this may have repercussions in the inadequate management of different situations in the short and long term.

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