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Emotional intelligence and creativity in first- and second-year primary school children

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to describe emotional intelligence and creativity in Primary Education schoolchildren. These two constructs were evaluated in first- and second-year Primary Education schoolchildren who went to different schools in the Spanish Autonomous Community of Aragón. The study sample was formed by 631 schoolchildren (313 boys and 318 girls) aged 6-7 years. The results showed differences in emotional intelligence for gender, but the differences obtained for creativity were not significant. Finally, a cluster analysis was done to analyse how the different variables were grouped according to clusters, where differences were found for creativity levels, but not for emotional intelligence levels.

This research indicated how emotional intelligence did not influence our pupils' creativity as the cluster with the highest creativity level had the lowest level of elaboration (quantity of details in responses). This indicated that, despite being creative, these pupils were concise and pragmatic when responding. This situation should make schools reflect on what type of students we are training. As future research lines, work should be done with programmes that include creativity and emotional intelligence, and that investigate the way positive emotions and creativity can be combined.

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1. Introduction

In his book “Emotional Intelligence” (1995), Goleman pointed out that as people, we have two minds, one that thinks and one that feels, and they interact to construct our mental life. The rational mind is the mode of comprehension with which we are aware, more awake, more thoughtful, and better able to consider and reflect. The emotional mind is another kind of more impulsive and powerful knowledge that can sometimes be illogical. Emotional skills are considered predictive of better facing daily life events, and higher levels of well-being and psychological adjustment (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler & Mayer, 1999; Salovey, Stroud, Woolery, & Epel, 2002). There is some evidence that Emotional Intelligence, defined as the skill to perceive, assimilate, understand and regulate our own emotions and those of others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), plays a key role as a person’s own resource.

This term emotional intelligence (EI) has been introduced into psychology and schools according to two perspectives: one is skill (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) and the other is a mixed approach that combines cognitive dimensions and personality (Antoñanzas, Salavera, Teruel, Sisamón, Ginto, Anaya et al., 2014; Bisquerra, Martínez, Obiols & Pérez, 2006; Salavera, Antoñanzas, Noé & Teruel, 2014).

We all know creativity as some people’s capacity to make original and novel things. We also believe that it is a faculty that all people possess to a greater or lesser extent, but can be developed with training and can be seen as being artistic, literary, scientific, etc.

Along these lines, Guilford’s Structure of Intellect (1967) roused an interest in studying creativity by considering it an intellectual activity that forms part of the so-called “divergent thinking”, which is defined as this type of thinking, when faced with a given problem, can elicit alternative responses as opposed to what would be “convergent thinking”, which occurs when only one possible solution is available.

Basically, convergent thinking is the process used to solve problems by conventional and predetermined procedures; divergent thinking would be the operation that implies the production of various responses or solutions for one same problem.

Divergent production includes four creativity characteristics or factors that Guilford proposed (1950): fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. Torrance (1974) spoke about creativity as the process of discovering problems or gaps in information, of forming ideas or hypotheses, of testing them, amending them and communicating the results by assigning creativity a global skill nature.

Creativity, however, is a relevant quality of children’s personality and during their maturity process given its relation with flexible thinking and problem-solving skills, as indicated by Guilford (1950) and Torrance (1982), and is extremely important in children’s functioning. In fact, studying these two aspects in children in the first years of Primary Education is important for working on their development in classrooms.

The objective of this study was to describe EI and creativity in primary education schoolchildren. For this purpose, we evaluated these two constructs in first- and second-year pupils who went to different schools in the Spanish Autonomous Community of Aragón.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The study sample was formed by 631 first- and second-year Primary Education schoolchildren, 313 boys (49.6%) and 318 girls (50.40%), who voluntarily participated in this study, of whom 311 (49.3%) were first-year and 320 (50.7%) were second-year Primary Education pupils (see Table 1). All their parents or legal guardians signed an informed consent and the ethical considerations of the Declaration of Helsinki were observed.

Table 1. Sample distribution according to age (n=631)

	Boys	Girls	Total
First year	149	162	311 (49.3%)
Second year	164	156	320 (50.7%)
Total	313 (49.6%)	318 (50.4%)	

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