



Short Research Report

The impact of the Sentituz programmes on emotional competence and social climate in the classroom

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The aim of this preliminary study was to evaluate the effects of two emotional education programmes in a charter school in Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain, on students' emotional competence and the social climate in the classroom. A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest repeated measures design with a control group was utilized in the study. The participants in the study were 105 students in Year 6 of primary school and Year 2 of secondary school. The Emotional Development Questionnaire (EDQ) and the Classroom Social Climate Scale (CES) were used to assess the effect of the intervention. The results indicate that the 'Sentituz 10-12' programme is effective in improving students' social competence and the quality of student-teacher relationships, whereas the 'Sentituz 12-14' programme is effective in promoting the emotional autonomy and overall emotional competence of students. This was however, a small scale preliminary study, and further and more rigorous studies are also need in order to evaluate the impact of these two emotional education programmes.

Keywords: classroom climate; social climate, social-emotional learning; emotional education; emotional competence

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Introduction

Emotional education (EE), understood as an educational process oriented towards the acquisition of emotional competence (EC), aims to offer students the tools they need to cope effectively with the challenges, tasks and situations of everyday life (Cefai et al., 2018). Over the past two decades, many studies have analysed the

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impact of programmes of this nature. Several meta-analyses have reported a positive impact on emotional skills, prosocial behaviour, academic performance and interpersonal relationships (Corcoran et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2017).

Social climate in the classroom (SCC) is considered a key construct in school effectiveness and improvement, fostering school safety, peaceful coexistence, peer connectedness, emotional wellbeing and a good academic atmosphere (Grazia & Molinari, 2021). Several authors argue that the quality of interpersonal relationships between the members of the classroom community, teacher practice and students' level of emotional competence, are key elements for developing a positive SCC (Harvey et al., 2016). Several studies focusing on the effects of emotional education programmes have reported improvements in the SCC, in the form of better teacher-student relationships (Mira-Galvañ & Gilar-Cobi, 2021), better relationships among students and stronger emotional support for students by teachers in the classroom (Hagelskamp et al., 2013). Other studies, however, have failed to observe any positive effects of the development of emotional competence on either peer or teacher-student relations (Clarke et al., 2014). These contradictory results highlight the need to continue researching this issue.

The aim of the present study was to analyse the impact of the implementation of two emotional education programmes, Sentituz 10-12 and Sentituz 12-14, on emotional competence and social climate in the classroom among Year 6 primary and Year 2 secondary school students. The theoretical framework on which the study is based is the Research Group in Psycho-pedagogical Orientation (GROP from the original Catalan acronym) emotional competence model, which consists of five different dimensions: emotional awareness, emotion regulation, emotional autonomy, social competence and competencies for life and wellbeing (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007).

Method

A quasi-experimental design was used, with repeated pretest-posttest measures and a non-equivalent control group. An intentional sampling method was used, with the groups and the assignment of intervention to one or another group was determined by accessibility and proximity on the subjects to the researchers. The pretest was conducted before the beginning of the programme and the posttest at the end, nine months later. Participants were 105 students from a lower-medium-level socioeconomic and cultural context, attending two grant-aided private schools in San Sebastián (Spain). Of the total sample group, 55 students were in Year 2 of secondary school (27 in the experimental and 28 in the control group), and 50 were in Year 6 of primary school (23 in the experimental and 27 in the control group). The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study for using a questionnaire to collect data.

The Emotional Development Questionnaires - CDEs (Pérez-Escoda, 2016). The CDE 9-13 is designed for use with primary school students and the CDE-SEC is designed for use with secondary school students. These questionnaires evaluate five dimensions of emotional competence and also offer an overall emotional

competence score. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha reliability values obtained were between .72 and .87 for the dimensions of the CDE-9-13 and between .70 and .80 for the dimensions of the CDE-SEC.

The Climate Environment Scale (Moos et al., 1995). We used an *ad hoc* 30-item version of the scale, with 10 items each being used to measure the three selected sub-scales: involvement, affiliation and support. In the present study, the following Cronbach's alpha reliability values were obtained: .73 for involvement, .77 for affiliation and .76 for support.

Descriptive analyses were carried out for each of the dependent variables. To determine the impact of the programmes, analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed with the pretest scores, and analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) with the posttest scores.

Results

Changes in students' emotional competence

The ANOVA conducted during the pretest phase revealed no significant differences between the year 2 secondary experimental group and control group. In relation to the groups from year 6 primary, however, significant differences were observed in social competence, with the control group scoring higher on this variable ($p < .001$). The ANCOVA revealed that, at the end of the programme, the experimental group from year 2 secondary had improved significantly in emotional autonomy ($p < .01$), and overall emotional competence ($p < .05$) (see Figure 1). In the Year 6 experimental group, a significant increase was observed in social competence ($p < .05$) and a significant decrease in emotional awareness ($p < .05$), competencies for life and wellbeing ($p < .05$) and overall emotional competence ($p < .05$) (see Figure 2).

Changes in social climate in the classroom

The results of the pretest ANOVA revealed no significant differences between the control group and experimental group in terms of the social climate in the classroom. The results of the posttest ANCOVA revealed that, in Year 6 primary, the experimental group improved more than the control group in the support dimension ($p < .05$). No significant differences were observed among the secondary school students.

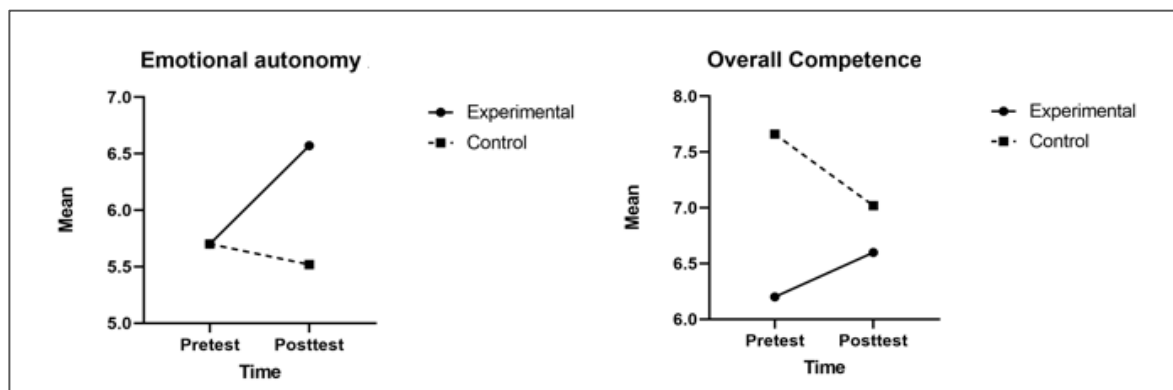


Figure 1. Effects of the intervention on Year 2 secondary school students

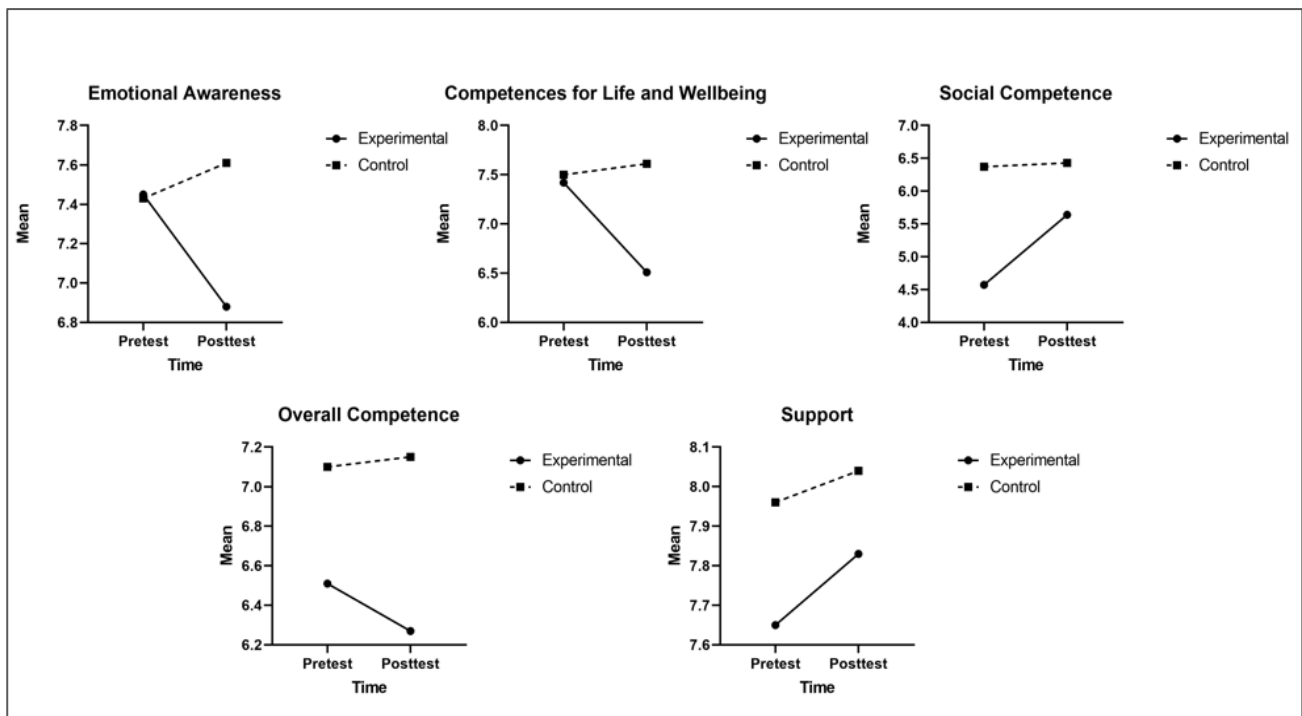


Figure 2. Effects of the intervention on Year 6 primary school students

Discussion

After participating in the Sentituz 12-14 programme, year 2 secondary students reported statistically significant improvements in emotional autonomy and overall emotional competence. This is consistent with the results reported by other studies, which found that social-emotional intervention programmes enhanced emotional competence (Taylor et al, 2017). Consistently with other studies (Van de Sande et al., 2022), this finding is important during the teenage years, when the development of self-esteem plays a key role in adolescents' psychological adjustment and wellbeing.

Following their participation in the Sentituz 10-12 programme, students from Year 6 primary reported greater improvements in social competence than their counterparts in the control group, and perceived an increase in their teacher's interest, attention and confidence in them. This finding is also consistent with that observed in other studies on the effects of social-emotional learning programmes on emotional competencies (Taylor, 2017) and social climate among primary school children (Hagelskamp et al., 2013; Mira-Galvañ & Gilar-Cobi, 2021; South & DeJarnette, 2022). In contrast, a significant decrease was observed in emotional awareness, competencies for life and wellbeing and overall emotional competence. These results may be due to the fact that the programme focused on developing students' self-awareness and identity. It is also possible that the differential effect of the programmes is due to age, as other variables (same instructor, content and methodology) were controlled for. However, further research is required to enable a more rigorous interpretation of this finding. Moreover, this was a small scale preliminary study, and further and more rigorous studies are also need in order to evaluate the impact of these two emotional education programmes.

Disclosure

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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