

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES IN FUTURE SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

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### Abstract

*Introduction:* The emotional intelligence (EI) of school counsellors is currently of particular relevance due to the increasing number of emotional problems affecting their mental well-being. This not only affects their professional performance, but also has repercussions on their personal lives. To date, training programmes seem to ignore this fact. *Objectives:* 1) to obtain information on the need to include EI in training programmes; 2) to determine whether the meta-knowledge of the three emotional dimensions assessed: attention (feeling/expressing their emotions appropriately); clarity (understanding their emotions well) and emotional repair (regulating their emotions appropriately) is adequate; 2) to assess whether they have the appropriate coping strategies to manage and solve emotional problems in their daily lives; 3) to analyse whether there is a significant correlation between the emotional dimensions and the coping strategies applied. *Method:* this is a non-experimental (ex post facto), descriptive and survey-based study, with non-probabilistic sampling of the incidental or accessibility type. Data collection to assess emotional intelligence was by self-report, applying the Trait-Meta-Mood Scale for the Assessment of Emotion Expression, Management and Recognition (TMMS-24). Data on the strategies used to solve everyday emotional problems were obtained by applying the Coping Strategies Inventory [CSI]. They were analysed using descriptive statistics, comparison of means and Spearman's correlation coefficient. The sample consisted of 36 subjects. *Results:* the results allow us to identify the emotional intelligence profile in the three dimensions evaluated, obtaining that between 66%-69% have an adequate profile and between 31%-34% need to improve by defect or excess. As for the coping strategies, four of them are within the average range and another four above the average, with respect to the normal population. There is a positive correlation between the emotional dimensions and the total CSI score. *Conclusions:* From the results obtained, we conclude that, although the sample of this study shows acceptable levels of EI, it is essential that emotional intelligence occupies a prominent place in the training programmes of these professionals, as a percentage of the total CSI score is higher than that of the normal population.

**Keywords:** *Emotional intelligence, coping strategies, school counsellor, master's degree in education, TMMS-24.*

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### 1. Introduction

Currently, school counsellors must face increasingly complex professional demands (Martínez Juárez et al., 2018) that they must manage as efficiently as possible, otherwise this profession can be a source of emotional tension (Fernández & Malvar, 2020) and have repercussions on their mental well-being, leading to work incapacity due to the stress, anxiety or depression that they may develop as a consequence (Morales & Martínez, 2023). Therefore, school counsellors must strengthen their emotional intelligence in order to understand, regulate and apply their emotions appropriately, minimising their negative impact (Barrutia, 2009). This leads us to consider the fact that educational administrations should be more involved in the initial and ongoing training of school counsellors, as proposed by Anaya et al. (2011), while basing their training on the European framework of higher education. Different studies consider emotional intelligence as a protective factor against the occurrence of stress (Extremuera et al., 2010) and as an enhancer of a positive mental state (Alvarez-Ramirez et al., 2017). On the other hand, the study by Cejudo (2016) provides evidence on the predictive validity of EI as a trait, considering it a relevant indicator of mental health.

## 2. Method

This is a non-experimental (expo-facto), descriptive and survey-based study, with non-probabilistic sampling of the incidental or accessibility type. The sample consisted of 36 subjects (see Table 1). Data collection to assess emotional intelligence was by self-report, applying the Trait-Meta-Mood Scale for the Assessment of Emotion Expression, Management and Recognition (Trait-Meta-Mood Scale [TMMS-24]) in an adaptation by Fernández-Berrocal et al. (2004) of the original Trait-Meta-Mood Scale [TMMS-48] by Salovey et al. (1995). It consists of 24 items, Likert-type from 1 to 5 points and can be passed collectively and individually. It takes about 5 minutes to administer. It assesses perceived intrapersonal emotional intelligence (attention to emotions, emotional clarity and emotional repair). The coping strategies have been extracted with the Coping Strategies Inventory [CSI], by Cano-García et al. (2007) from the original Coping Strategies Inventory by Tobin et al. (1989). It consists of 40 items, Likert-type from 0 to 4 points. It assesses 8 dimensions: problem solving, self-criticism, desiderative thinking, social support, cognitive restructuring, problem avoidance and social withdrawal. It consists of a first part where a problematic experience is recorded and how the student solves it and what strategies he/she applies. It is graded in centiles.

Table 1. Sample data.

Number of subjects	Mean age	Standard deviation	Sex	
N	M	DE	Males	Females
36	24,83	4,74	3(8,3%)	33 (91,7)

## 3. Results

The results obtained in terms of the profile obtained in the three key emotional dimensions are shown in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4. The data obtained in the Coping Strategies Inventory [CSI] were analysed by applying a comparison of means using Student's t-test at 95% confidence. The mean of the sample (n=36) was compared with the reference value given by the inventory ( $\mu=335$ ) for each of the variables (Molina Arias et al., 2020). The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 2. Profile in Emotional Care.

	Frequency	%
Needs improvement	5	13,9
Adequate	24	66,7
Excellent	7	19,4
Total	36	100

Table 3. Emotional Clarity Profile.

	Frequency	%
Needs improvement	5	13,9
Adequate	25	69,4
Excellent	6	16,7
Total	36	100

Table 4. Profile in Emotional Repair.

	Frequency	%
Needs improvement	8	22,2
Adequate	25	69,4
Excellent	3	8,3
Total	36	100

Table 5. Comparison of the sample mean(n) with the mean in the normal population ( $\mu$ ).

Variable	Sample mean $\bar{X}$	Normal population mean $\mu$	Student's T-interval (95%)
REP_problem solving	13,5*	14,25	12-14,9
AUC_self-criticism	7*	5,1	5,1-8,81
EEM_emotional expression	13,5**	8,98	12,1-14,8
PSD_desiderative thinking	12,5*	11,6	10,6-14,4
SSA_social support	15,05**	10,93	13,3-16,7
REC_cognitive restructuring	11,6**	10,17	11,6-14,7
EVP_problem avoidance	6,5*	8,81	4,9-8
RES_social withdrawal	5,7**	3,93	4,4-7

\*Within the mean of the normal population

\*\* Above the mean of the normal population

The results obtained regarding the correlation between the variables of the TMMS-24 scale and the total score of the CSI inventory are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. TMMS-24/CSI correlation.

	TMMS_24 /CSI_TOTAL		
Rho de Spearman	Attention	Clarity	Repair
	.25	.39*	.42*

\*Correlation is significant at the .05 level.4.

#### 4. Conclusions

From the results obtained, it is concluded that training programmes for school counsellors should be improved by including EI in both initial training (Clemente-Rocolfe & Escribá-Pérez, 2013) and ongoing training (Fernández & Malvar, 2020). This idea is reinforced by the results obtained in other studies, and according to data from the Institute of Emotional Intelligence and Applied Neuroscience, 94% of practising teachers surveyed think that their teaching practice would improve if they received training in emotional intelligence. On the other hand, according to the study by Pérez-Escada et al. (2019), university students are increasingly requesting this type of training, with 83% of university students agreeing to receive it, a fact that is currently not reflected in either bachelor's or master's degree studies. The different studies carried out show that emotional intelligence is therefore a quality that guarantees the professional development of teachers in the 21st century (García-Domingo & Pérez-Bonet, 2024). On the other hand, given the significant correlation at 0.05 between the total score of the CSI Inventory and the variables of emotional clarity and emotional attention of the TMMS-24, coping strategies in the face of everyday problems are also considered as they should be incorporated into the training programmes of school counsellors, despite the fact that the results in this study show that emotional intelligence is a quality that should be incorporated into the training programmes of school counsellors (García-Domingo & Pérez-Bonet, 2024).

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