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LEVELS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS AT A PERUVIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

NIVELES DE INTELIGENCIA EMOCIONAL EN ESTUDIANTES DE LA CARRERA DE PSICOLOGÍA DE UNA UNIVERSIDAD PÚBLICA PERUANA

Claudia Dora Vallejos Valdivia¹

ABSTRACT

Objective: This research aimed to determine the levels of emotional intelligence in male and female psychology degree students at a public university in Lambayeque. **Methods:** Their levels were compared, according to sex, age, and academic semester. The study was descriptive, with a non-probabilistic sampling called snowball, which was made up of 112 participants. The BarOn Emotional Coefficient Inventory (I-CE) of 133 items, with a Likert-type response, was used. **Results:** The results indicated that in general, 27.7% of the students have emotional intelligence at an average level and 10.7% are at a high level. Regarding sex, men have a higher level (43%) compared to women (22%). However, 30% of men and 26.8% of women are at the average level. Regarding age, the results indicate that 50% of the students between 27 and 31 years of age are at an average level. Similarly, 32.40% of advanced semester students report an average level of emotional intelligence. **Conclusion:** Finally, it is concluded that almost a third of the students present an average level of emotional intelligence, and another group to a lesser extent, has a high level.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; Social skills. (Source: MeSH NLM)

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El objetivo de esta investigación fue determinar los niveles de inteligencia emocional en estudiantes hombres y mujeres de la carrera de psicología, de una universidad pública de Lambayeque. **Métodos:** Se compararon sus niveles, según sexo, edad y ciclo académico. El estudio fue de tipo descriptivo, con un muestreo no probabilístico denominado bola de nieve, con una muestra conformada por 112 participantes. Se utilizó el Inventario del Coeficiente Emocional de BarOn-(I-CE) de 133 ítems, de respuesta tipo Likert. **Resultados:** Los resultados indicaron que en general, el 27.7% de los estudiantes presentan inteligencia emocional en un nivel promedio, y el 10.7% se ubica en un nivel alto. Con respecto al sexo, los hombres presentan un nivel más alto (43%) en comparación con las mujeres (22%). No obstante, el 30% de los hombres y el 26.8% de las mujeres se ubican en nivel promedio. En cuanto a la edad, los resultados indican que el 50% de los estudiantes entre 27 y 31 años de edad se ubican en un nivel promedio. Igualmente, el 32.40% de los estudiantes de ciclos avanzados reportan un nivel promedio de inteligencia emocional. **Conclusiones:** Finalmente, se concluye que, casi un tercio de los estudiantes presentan un nivel de inteligencia emocional nivel promedio y; otro grupo en menor medida, en un nivel alto.

Palabras clave: Inteligencia emocional; Habilidades sociales. (Fuente: DeCS BIREME)

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INTRODUCCIÓN

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused vertiginous changes in the areas of: health, education, and organization, which has presented growth opportunities, but also frustration due to the tension of facing what is new. Although difficult, said change and its demands can be faced adaptively, as long as people have the required skills, even more so in a "post-pandemic scenario [where] soft skills, as well as the ability to use new technologies, are key pieces for any professional who wants to stay competitive⁽¹⁾. "

The labor market requires emotional intelligence, skills in handling information technologies, as well as communication skills to face the most complex tasks and resolve inevitable conflicts within the collaborators of any organization, public or private, profit or non-profit, secular or non-secular⁽²⁻⁴⁾.

Goleman calls these skills emotional intelligence, which, in his definition, is the person's ability to perceive, express, assimilate and regulate emotions⁽³⁾. Also includes knowing how to manage the own life through discipline and planning, those are essential skills to achieve individual goals, both academically and at work.

The emotional intelligence construct is described based on the proposed mixed theoretical models⁽⁵⁾. These authors elaborated the dimensions of the variable calling them "competencies", which leads some researchers to use the term interchangeably with "emotional competencies"⁽⁴⁾. Likewise, Bar-On explains social-emotional intelligence as a "cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies in terms of competencies, skills, and facilitators that determine how effectively a person can understand himself, understand others, express himself, relate with others, and face the demands and pressures of the environment in which it is circumscribed⁽⁵⁾. "

Currently, the study of emotional intelligence is considered extremely important due to its impact on daily interactions, in relation to others, and even on health, both mental and physical. Not surprisingly, in 1998, Goleman stated that "people with a higher level

of emotional intelligence will also be healthier, happier and more productive in their daily lives⁽⁶⁾." Currently, conclusions have been reached that the emotional coefficient (EC) is also a useful parameter, especially in the field of health, since it encompasses the person's ability to feel, understand and control his moods and those of the ones in their environment⁽⁷⁾. For this reason, in Mexico, in medical school, emotional intelligence is a topic that is widely addressed⁽⁷⁾, especially when there is information that has been documented for more than two decades that the major causes of morbidity and death appear to be associated with chronic stress and unhealthy lifestyles. In Canada, for example, cardiovascular diseases and cancer have a rate of 60%, which suggests the importance of emotions concerning health^(8,9). Other studies have also documented the significant impact of emotional intelligence on the physiological dimension, such that high levels of EI are associated with greater well-being^(8,10).

Despite these findings, the reality seems to indicate that people are not fully prepared to face the current challenges, challenges that could be mediated by emotional intelligence to prevent negative impacts on health, both physical and mental. For example, the presence of stress, depression, and anxiety derived from the pandemic situation due to the presence of the Covid-19 is reported, with fatigue and insomnia being the most significant symptoms^(11,12).

Similarly, in studies conducted in the United States, the findings indicate that college students with high levels of emotional intelligence reported fewer physical symptoms, as well as less social anxiety and depression. They also reported better levels of self-esteem, greater interpersonal satisfaction, greater use of coping strategies to solve their problems, as well as less rumination⁽¹³⁾. It was also reported that, when students were exposed to stressful conditions in the laboratory, they perceived the stressors as less threatening and, consequently, their cortisol and blood pressure levels were lower, and they recovered better than those with negative mood states⁽¹⁴⁾.





In another study carried out with nursing students in the seventh semester at a university in Huancayo, it was found that the levels of emotional intelligence were not adequate, which, according to the researcher, could limit not only the quality but also the quantity of the network of social support, a factor that, at the same time, could exacerbate the existing academic stress⁽¹⁵⁾.

Among other studies, based on this situation, emotional intelligence or emotional competence, according to Goleman and Baron⁽⁴⁾, emerges as a proposal that seeks to favor "a coping with life circumstances with greater chances of success"⁽¹⁶⁾, since, as Goleman theorized, the intelligence coefficient is not enough, but also the emotional intelligence to be able to achieve a balance in personal and social well-being.

The stress and other problems currently experienced by university students suggest that emotional skills are necessary for students to adequately manage external stimuli, which trigger certain discomforts that can impact health, academic performance, and job performance⁽¹⁷⁻²⁰⁾.

Facing this problem, this research had the general objective of determining the levels of emotional intelligence in psychology degree students, at a public university in Lambayeque, 2021, and, concerning the specific objectives, it was considered to compare their levels according to sex, age, and academic semester.

In short, this research provides valuable and objective data that could be useful to identify areas for improvement, and later -in conjunction with other research- design interventions that contribute to the development of emotional intelligence in college students in the public university of Lambayeque.

METHODS

Study design type and area

According to its scope, it is descriptive and transversal because it was carried out at a set time⁽²¹⁾.

By design, it is non-experimental⁽²²⁾. Regarding its purpose, it is considered implementation research because, based on the results of this research, recommendations will be derived to develop emotional intelligence in the sample studied.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of 226 psychology degree students from a public university in Lambayeque, that offers the psychology degree in the Faculty of Historical Social Sciences and Education.

The sample consisted of 112 male and female students from the even semesters: II, IV, VI, VIII, X, and XII, enrolled in the 2020-II academic semester, selected according to inclusion criteria such as: being enrolled in the corresponding academic semester, being 17 years of age or older and having signed the informed consent. Those who did not answer all the questions of the instrument or had answered twice, students from other careers, and those who were receiving psychotherapy were excluded. The type of sampling was the so-called snowball, non-probabilistic type, for which the researcher selected a participant who connected the researcher with a third party and so on⁽²³⁾.

Variables and instruments

To measure emotional intelligence, the BarOn I-CE Emotional Coefficient Inventory was used, consisting of 133 items on a Likert-type scale, adapted in Lima by the researcher teacher Nelly Ugarriza (2001)⁽²⁴⁾, which measures emotional intelligence in five dimensions. The instrument was validated in the Lambayeque region, achieving coefficients of .70. Regarding its reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficients show a high internal consistency of .93 for the I-CE in general, and for its components, it presents an oscillation between .77 and .91⁽²⁵⁾.

Procedures

A demographic data sheet was prepared. Then, the Baron ICE inventory was adapted to the Google Forms format due to its limitation in being physically present. Informed consent was included in this form.



The link to the digital inventory was shared through institutional email and WhatsApp. The data collection was carried out by the author, through Google Forms where an Excel database was generated for later statistical analysis.

Statistical analysis

A descriptive analysis was carried out for the qualitative variables of the study, for which frequencies and percentages were determined. It was processed using the SPSSv26 program, and to elaborate the graphs Microsoft Excel 2017 program was used.

Ethical aspects

The ethical principles regarding research involving

human beings were complied with, for which an informed consent form was included. Likewise, the research work was registered on the Selgestium platform for its respective approval and evaluation, for which an approval resolution was issued. The advances of this research were periodically sent to the Faculty of Historical Social Sciences and Education. (FHSSE) The research unit of the public university of Lambayeque.

RESULTS

254 records of participants in the Google questionnaire were obtained. Of these participants, those who did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded, finally 112 participants were considered. (Table 1).

ORIGINAL PAPER

Table 1. Emotional intelligence of psychology students at a public university in Lambayeque.

Emotional Intelligence	Frequency	Percentage
Very low	24	21.4%
Low	14	12.5%
Average	31	27.7%
High	12	10.7%
Markedly high	31	27.7%
Total	112	100%

Source: Levels of emotional intelligence applied to psychology degree students at a public university in Lambayeque.

According to table 1, 27.7% of the psychology degree students of a public university in Lambayeque are located at a markedly high level of emotional intelligence.

Likewise, 27.7% have an average level, 21.4% have a very low level, 12.5% have a low level and 10.7% have a high level of emotional intelligence.

Table 2. Levels of emotional intelligence, according to the sex of the psychology degree students at a public university in Lambayeque.

Emotional Intelligence	Sex of the students				Total	
	Man n	%	Women n	%	n	%
Very low	3	10.0%	21	25.6%	24	21.4%
Low	1	3.3%	13	15.9%	14	12.5%
Average	9	30.0%	22	26.8%	31	27.7%
High	4	13.3%	8	9.8%	12	10.7%
Markedly high	13	43.3%	18	22.0%	31	27.7%
Total	30	100.0%	82	100.0%	112	100.0%

Source: Levels of emotional intelligence applied to psychology students at a public university in Lambayeque





According to table 2, of the male psychology students, 43.3% have a markedly high emotional intelligence, 30% have an average level, 13.3% have a high level, 10% have a very low level and 3.3% have a low level of emotional intelligence.

Of the female students, 26.8% have an average level of emotional intelligence, while 25.6% have a very low level, 22% have a markedly high level, 15.9% have a low level, and 9.8% have a high level of emotional intelligence.

Table 3. Levels of emotional intelligence, according to the age of psychology degree students at a public university in Lambayeque.

Emotional Intelligence	Age of the students						Total	
	17 n	a 21 años %	22 a 26 años n	%	27 a 31 años n	%	n	%
Very low	12	34.30%	11	15.90%	1	12.50%	24	21.40%
Low	4	11.40%	10	14.50%			14	12.50%
Average	7	20%	20	29%	4	50%	31	27.70%
High	2	5.70%	9	13%	1	12.50%	12	10.70%
Markedly high	10	28.60%	19	27.50%	2	25%	31	27.70%
Total	35	100%	69	100%	8	100%	112	100%

Source: Levels of emotional intelligence applied to psychology students at a public university in Lambayeque.

According to the data in Table 3, of the psychology degree students who are between 17 and 21 years old, 34.3% have very low emotional intelligence, while 28.6% are at a high level, 20% are at an average level of emotional intelligence. On the other hand, 11.4% have low emotional intelligence and 5.7% have high emotional intelligence. Of the students who are between 22 and 26 years old, 29% have average emotional intelligence, 27.5% have a markedly high

emotional intelligence, 15.9% are located in a very low level, 14.5% are located in a low level of emotional intelligence and 13% have high emotional intelligence. Of the psychology degree students who are between 27 and 31 years old, 50% have emotional intelligence at an average level, 25% are markedly high, 12.5% are located at a very low level and the same percentage represents those with a high level of emotional intelligence.

Table 4. Levels of emotional intelligence according to the academic semester of psychology degree students at a public university in Lambayeque.

Emotional Intelligence	Semester				Total	
	n	I - VI %	n	VII - XII %	n	%
Very low	14	31.80%	10	14.70%	24	21.40%
Low	4	9.10%	10	14.70%	14	12.50%
Average	9	20.50%	22	32.40%	31	27.70%
High	4	9.10%	8	11.80%	12	10.70%
Markedly high	13	29.50%	18	26.50%	31	27.70%
Total	44	100%	68	100%	112	100%

Source: Levels of emotional intelligence applied to psychology degree students at a public university in Lambayeque, 2021.





According to table 4, 31.8% of the students from the I to VI semester have a very low emotional intelligence, while 29.5% have a markedly high level. 20.5% have an average level, 9.1% are at a high level, and the same percentage have a low level. From VII to XII, 32.4% are at an average level of emotional intelligence, and 26.5% have a markedly high level. On the contrary, 14.7% have a very low level and the same percentage has a low level, while 11.8% have a high level of emotional intelligence.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to determine the levels of emotional intelligence in psychology degree students at a public university in Lambayeque, 2020-II, as well as to compare their levels, according to gender, age, and academic semester. In general, it was found that, regarding the levels of emotional intelligence, 27.7% of the students present a markedly high level, 10.7 report a high level, while 27.7% present an average level. At the extreme, 21.4% have a very low level and 12.5% have a low level.

Regarding the levels of emotional intelligence⁽²⁶⁾, in a sample composed of 263 college students, they found that 46.5% of the students presented an average level of emotional intelligence, while in the current study 27.7% are located at the average level. Regarding gender, Paez and Castaño did not report differences in EI levels, contrary to the current study in which differences were reported. 43.3% of men reported EI markedly high, compared to 22% of women who are at the same level. On the other extreme, 10% of men and 25.6% of women reported a very low level of EI on the contrary, in the study carried out by⁽²⁷⁾ with a sample of 175 students, it was reported that women presented higher levels of EI than men. In this case, women ($M = 30.78$) obtained higher scores than men ($M = 26.42$). 30% of men and 26.8% of women were located at an average level. Regarding age, Gutiérrez reported that students whose ages are up to 20 years old obtain a higher average than the rest, as in the case of attention and emotional regulation.

Except for the case of emotional clarity, where the age group that obtains a higher average corresponds to the one between 30 and 39 years old. Gutierrez's results somewhat suggest that the older you get; the more

likely the levels of emotional intelligence tend to increase.

Although with a different career⁽²⁸⁾, they carried out a correlational investigation on emotional intelligence and academic performance with 300 students, men, and women from the I to the X semester, of the accounting degree career. The results revealed that in EI in general, 3.7% are located at a high level, while 62% are located at an average level, 27% at a low level, and 7.3% very low; much lower percentages compared to what was obtained in the present study, except 62%, which is located at an average level.

Regarding the above, the lower percentages in the other levels, except the average level, reported by accounting degree students, unlike psychology degree students, is probably since psychology is known as a career in humanities or health sciences in which skills for interaction with people are necessarily required.

In the study carried out with entrants to different careers of the 2017-I academic semester of a public university in Lambayeque, 66.7% reported an average level, 17% below that level and the remaining 16% presented a level above average⁽²⁹⁾, percentages that differ from the present study in which 27.7% are located in an average level of EI, making the distribution a little more proportional in the other levels (very low, low, average, high, and markedly tall). However, it is imperative to mention that the sample of the study carried out by Tarrillo and Castro is diverse, so it represents different careers, unlike the present study, which only had psychology degree students as a sample due to limitations because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding differences according to sex, Tarrillo and Castro reported that, on average, women present a higher percentage in EI compared to men, a different finding from the present investigation in which 43.3% of men have a markedly high level, compared to 22.0% of women who are at the same level. 30% of men and 26.8% of women are at an average level of EI 10.0% of men and 25.6% of women fall into the very low level.





On the contrary⁽³⁰⁾, in their study with 452 college students, they found levels of EI within the average limits, as well as significant differences according to the sex of the student.

According to the results presented above, it can be seen that there are more men than women who are located at a markedly high level of EI. However, it must be considered that the sample of the study by Tarrillo and Castro is nine times larger than that of the present study, which is why it is a methodological detail to consider because for this study only psychology degree students were considered.

In another study recently carried out by Idrogo and Asenjo (2021), which sample consisted of 325 students of both sexes from the I to the VIII semester, with an average age of 20.3 years, of a university in Chota; it was found that 51.1% had a high level of EI, followed by 40.6% who were at an average level and 8.3% at a low level. These percentages show much more favorable results in EI than those found in the present study, where 27.7% are located at an average level and 10.7% at a high level.

In a study carried out with 332 university students of both both sexes, in the schools of psychology, social

work, communication sciences, arts, and business graphic design of a private university, from semesters I, V, IX, X, and XI, it was found that the highest level of EI is located at a medium level reported by 46.7% of the students, followed by a high level reported by 26.8% and 26.5% is located at a low level of EI⁽³¹⁾.

Limitations

This study focused only on emotional intelligence evaluated in a general way and its levels according to sex, age, and academic semester, but not by dimensions. These results could facilitate its intervention more specifically in those areas of EI where the participants reported a low or intermediate level. For future research, this aspect could be considered in a homogeneous sample, as well as expanding the sample and comparing the levels with students from other careers. Likewise, another limitation was the form of data collection, which was limited to virtual participation due to restrictions because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Finally, it is concluded that almost a third of the students present an average level of emotional intelligence, and; another group to a lesser extent, a high level.

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