

Emotional intelligence and Locus of control in college students

La inteligencia emocional y su relación con el locus de control en estudiantes universitarios

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to know the correlation between emotional intelligence and locus of control in a sample of young university students from southern Sonora, as well as to know the levels of emotional intelligence and locus of control of the participants. It was a quantitative study, with a correlational scope and included the random participation of 204 students whose average age was 21 years, all belonging to the seventh semester of their respective educational programs. The results showed the presence of a significant correlation between different areas of emotional intelligence and the locus of control, which coincides with what was found by different authors. It is recommended to implement intervention programs in young people to help them better identify, understand and regulate their emotions, as well as remember the importance of perceiving themselves as self-sufficient and as a causal agent of what happens in their daily lives.

Resumen

El objetivo de la presente investigación fue conocer la correlación entre inteligencia emocional y locus de control en una muestra de jóvenes universitarios del sur de Sonora, así como conocer los niveles de inteligencia emocional y locus de control de los participantes. Se trató de un estudio cuantitativo, de alcance correlacional y se contó con la participación aleatoria de 204 estudiantes cuya media de edad fue de 21 años, todos pertenecientes al séptimo semestre de sus respectivos programas educativos. Los resultados arrojaron la presencia de una correlación significativa entre diferentes áreas de la inteligencia emocional y el locus de control, lo cual coincide con lo encontrado por diferentes autores. Se recomienda implementar programas de intervención en los jóvenes para ayudarles a identificar, comprender y regular mejor sus emociones, así como recordar la importancia de percibirse autosuficiente y como un agente causal de lo que ocurre en la propia vida cotidiana.

<p>Objective</p> <p>Was to know the correlation between emotional intelligence and locus of control in a sample of young university students.</p>	<p>Methodology</p> <p>Sample: It was a quantitative study, with a correlational</p> <p>Participantes: 204 university students.</p> <p>Tools: TMMS-24 and Locus of Control Scale of Cervantes.</p>
<p>Results</p> <p>showed the presence of a significant correlation between different areas of emotional intelligence and the locus of control.</p>	

<p>Objetivo</p> <p>Conocer la relación que existe entre la inteligencia emocional (IE) y el locus de control en estudiantes universitarios.</p>	<p>Método</p> <p>Diseño: Cuantitativo, no experimental, de alcance correlacional.</p> <p>Participantes: 204 estudiantes universitarios.</p> <p>Instrumentos: TMMS-24 y escala de Locus de control de Cervantes.</p>
<p>Resultados</p> <p>Se encontró relación significativa entre diferentes dimensiones de la IE y el locus de control.</p>	

Inteligencia, Emociones, Control

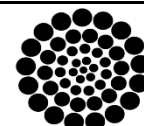
Intelligence, Emotions, Control

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Introduction

This study seeks to address the relationship between the variables emotional intelligence (EI) and locus of control, as we are aware of the impact that mental health can bring with it and its importance in achieving success.

In this regard, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) indicates that mental health is a state of well-being that favours coping with stressful moments in life, as well as strengthening the ability to make decisions and form relationships; it is an essential element for development and is not only the absence of mental disorders, as it is a complex variable that is affected by different reasons; psychological and environmental factors such as the emotional abilities of the subject have a broad impact on the way they process information from their environment and therefore, in problem solving.

EI has been extensively studied. Research by Sojer et al. (2024) analysed 277 data sets collected through an online questionnaire. Gender differences in EI were sought and in the results, women scored significantly higher than their male counterparts.

In addition, emotional intelligence and locus of control in higher education students have previously been studied in tandem, with the result that there is a significant correlation between the two variables (Duru and Söner, 2024).

On the other hand, the lack of mental health has serious consequences; the WHO (2021) reports that suicide is the second leading cause of death in people aged 15-29 years, so emotional education and attention to the regulation of emotions cannot remain in the background.

In addition, not having a good (internal) locus of control could lead to problems of security and self-confidence in the individual. In this regard, the Manuel Escudero Centre (2024) states that emotional insecurity is a trigger for the feeling of nervousness, discomfort or fear associated with different situations, both in the social context and when having to make decisions.

They go on to say that lack of security can lead to other problems, such as lack of confidence in their abilities, states of shyness or even social isolation.

For this reason, and taking into account the importance that has been given to emotional health in different studies carried out in recent times, it is planned to carry out an analysis of the levels of emotional intelligence and locus of control perceived by students from a university in southern Sonora, Mexico, belonging to different educational programmes.

This work seeks to provide relevant information for the analysis of attention, clarity and emotional regulation in young people, as well as the internal, external and affiliative control they perceive when making decisions and facing challenges.

Objective

To find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and locus of control through the application of different measurement instruments in order to provide relevant information that can be used to improve university emotional education.

The specific objectives were (1) to know the state of emotional intelligence of the participants according to gender in its three different areas; attention, clarity and regulation. (2) to analyse the level of internal, external and affiliative locus of control.

Method

Design. This is a quantitative, non-experimental study of correlational scope, as it seeks to find the relationship that exists between the variables of this study. Hernández et al. (2014) indicate that correlational studies are those that seek the degree of association between two or more concepts, categories or variables, which is why this scope of study has been chosen.

Participants. This was a random sample by convenience and was made up of 124 women (60.78%) and 80 men (39.22%), resulting in a total of 204 students from a university in Sonora, Mexico, with ages ranging from 18 to 37 and an average of 21 years old, all belonging to different educational programmes consisting of undergraduate and engineering degrees.

Instruments

Two instruments were used, which are described below. The TMMS-24 was used to measure emotional intelligence, which is based on the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS) of Salovey and Mayer's research group in its Spanish translation (Fernández-Berrocal, 2004).

It is a scale that measures the perception of emotional states by means of 48 items with responses that are rated from 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (strongly agree). The TMMS-24 has a validity of .932 according to KMO and Bartlett's Test factor analysis.

In addition to this, the instrument has a reliability of .947 according to Cronbach's Alpha.

To measure Locus of Control, the Cervantes Locus of Control Scale (2000, retrieved from Serrano, 2007) was used, which is a new version elaborated for a Sonoran sample.

The scale is composed of 59 items with 7 different response options, which are selected depending on how identified the person feels with what the item indicates; the more the person feels in agreement, the more he/she should select the answer that is closest to the question, and the more he/she feels in disagreement, the more he/she should select the answer that is furthest from the question.

The instrument presented a validity of .943 according to KMO and Bartlett's Test factor analysis, and a reliability of .959 according to Cronbach's Alpha.

Procedure

After the relevant theoretical analysis to support the present research, the instruments to be used were selected and transcribed into a Google Form so that they could be applied electronically and participants could respond from their devices.

After this, permissions were requested from the corresponding authorities of different educational programmes of the institution for its subsequent application, and thus to be able to access the classrooms of the students in the seventh semester of the different careers.

The students were informed of the objective of the data collection and the application of the instruments was carried out digitally, sharing the access link with the sample through electronic devices such as mobile phones and laptops. Participation was completely anonymous, so the subjects did not sign any informed consent.

Likewise, before starting, they were informed verbally and in writing that answering the instruments was completely voluntary and that they could stop at any time they wished.

At the end of the data collection, the data were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet and subsequently entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24, where frequency analyses were carried out to determine the mean and standard deviation of the sample, as well as the levels and scores of the different variables.

In addition, Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to determine the relationship between the variables emotional intelligence and locus of control.

Results

The results obtained from the application of the instruments and the corresponding statistical analyses are presented below.

1. Levels of emotional intelligence as a function of gender in university students

Table 1 shows that the mean of the 80 male participants was 26.16 with a standard deviation of 7.118, while the 124 female participants obtained a mean of 28.09 and a standard deviation of 7.803.

In addition to this, 50.2% of the males and 43.3% of the females obtained adequate emotional attention scores, meaning that they pay enough attention to what they feel without it being detrimental to their well-being, however, 27.7% and 33.6% respectively pay little attention, as well as 22.7% and 22.5%, who pay a lot of attention.

Box 1**Table 1**

Emotional care dimension

	Men n=80	Woman n=124
Emotional care *	26,16 ± 7,118	28,09 ± 7,803
Levels of emotional attention**		
Pay little attention	27,7% (22)	33,6% (42)
Adequate attention	50,2% (40)	43,3% (54)
It pays a lot of attention	22,7% (18)	22,5% (28)

* Data presented as mean and standard deviation

**Data presented as a percentage

On the other hand, in Table 2 it is possible to observe that males obtained a mean of 26.29 and a standard deviation of 7.754 and females a mean of 25.02 and a standard deviation of 7.922. In addition, 31.4% and 18.9% of men showed adequate and excellent emotional understanding.

However, 50.2% need to improve their understanding and identification of their emotions. Contrary to this, the female sample obtained 46.6% of adequate and 11.2% excellent emotional understanding. However, 41.7% need to improve.

Box 2**Table 2**

Emotional clarity dimension

	Men n=80	Women n=124
Emotional clarity *	26,29 ± 7,754	25,02 ± 7,922
Levels of emotional clarity **		
It must improve its understanding	50,2% (40)	41,7% (52)
Adequate understanding	31,4% (25)	46,6% (58)
Excellent understanding	18,9% (15)	11,2% (14)

*Data presented as mean and standard deviation

**Data presented as a percentage

Finally, males presented a mean of 28.23 and a standard deviation of 7.383, while females presented a mean of 26.09 and a standard deviation of 7.851.

In addition to this, 58% and 18.9% of males presented adequate and excellent emotional repair; 46.5% and 15.2% of females also obtained adequate and excellent scores, meaning that they are able to regulate their emotions. On the other hand, 24.1% and 37.6% respectively, need improvement (see table 3).

Box 3**Table 3**

Emotional repair dimension

	Men n=80	Woman n=124
Emotional repair *	28,23 ± 7,83	26,09 ± 7,851
Levels of emotional repair **		
Regulation must be improved	24,1% (19)	37,6% (47)
Adequate regulation	58% (46)	46,5% (58)
Excellent regulation	18,9% (15)	15,2% (19)

* Data presented as mean and standard deviation

**Data presented as a percentage

Levels of locus of control in university students

The locus of control scale adapted by Cervantes (2000) for a sample from Sonora is composed of three dimensions: external, affiliative and internal. The results of the sample used in the present study indicate that university students tend to present a higher level of internal locus of control with a mean of 93.34 and a standard deviation of 40.795, which means that they tend to take responsibility for their success or failure, as well as for what happens in their lives. In addition to this, the affiliative locus of control obtained a mean of 79.34 and a standard deviation of 28.621, which means that, in addition to trusting in their own abilities for the achievement of their goals, they also tend to trust in external factors such as belief in God, fate or their sympathy (see table 4).

Box 4**Table 4**

Locus of Control Levels

	Total n=204 X ± DE*
External locus of control	52,89 ± 23,721
Affiliative locus of control	79,34 ± 28,621
Internal locus of control	93,53 ± 40,795

*X Mean; SD Standard Deviation

1. Relationship between emotional intelligence and locus of control

A Pearson correlation was performed in which a significant correlation was found between emotional clarity and affiliative locus of control, meaning that the clearer the participants' emotions, the higher their affiliative locus of control.

In addition, a correlation was found between emotional regulation and internal locus of control, which means that students are better able to regulate their emotions when they have a higher internal locus of control than the other categories.

Box 5

Table 5

Correlation between dimensions of emotional intelligence and locus of control

		Locus of affiliative control	Internal locus of control
Emotional clarity	Pearson correlation	0,158*	0,18
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,024	0,093
Emotional repair	Pearson correlation	0,115	0,144*
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,101	0,039

Discussion

The results of the present study indicated that there was no significant difference in emotional intelligence presented according to gender while 50% of male and 43.3% of female persons obtained adequate emotional care. However, 50.4% of males and 56.1% of females need to improve their attention. This is consistent with the results obtained by Bojórquez (2022) in his study of university students, where it was found that 52.7% of the total sample needs to improve their emotional attention, either because they pay too little or too much attention to their emotions.

In addition to this, a study carried out on Colombian university students found that the male sample obtained a mean of 25.58 and the female sample a mean of 28.69 in emotional attention. This is similar to the mean obtained by students from Sonora, where men had a mean attention score of 26.6 and women 28.09 (Castro et al., 2022).

In the emotional clarity dimension, the female sample managed to obtain a better identification of emotions compared to the males, obtaining a total percentage of adequate and excellent of 57.5% and a mean of 25.02, in contrast to the male sample, which needs to improve its understanding of emotions by 50.2% and obtained a mean of 26.9.

This is in agreement with the results obtained by Castro et al. (2022), who had similar results for students with a male mean of 25.49 and a female mean of 25.92; although the difference is very small, the female mean of the Sonoran sample was higher.

Comparing the sample of the present study with another university sample, a significant difference was found between the results, where 93.2% of the total sample did not present problems in understanding their emotions (Bojórquez, 2022).

Finally, in the repair dimension, 76.9% of the men and 61.7% of the women obtained adequate and excellent emotional repair, which means that they are able to control and regulate what they feel.

Although the majority of the sample presented adequate levels, 24.1% of the male sample and 37.6% of the female sample need to improve their emotional repair, which means that they need to improve the regulation of their emotions.

This contrasts with Bojórquez et al. (2022), where the sample does not need to improve. In addition, Gómez and Calleja (2016) indicate that emotional regulation is capable of having an impact on people's behaviour, as it is a determinant for them to evaluate what happens to them, as well as the effort they put into their work and academic activities.

On the other hand, the internal locus of control was predominant, which means that the participants in the sample tend to attribute what happens to them in life, as well as their successes and failures, to their own abilities, making them responsible for their achievements. Peña (2022) indicates that people who tend to have a higher internal locus of control are also people who tend to achieve greater life satisfaction.

Secondly, the affiliative locus of control also obtained relevant scores, which means that the students in the sample, in addition to trusting in their own abilities, have a more moderate trust in factors such as spiritual beliefs, destiny or the sympathy they can generate in others.

In the present study, a correlation was found between emotional intelligence and locus of control, which contrasts with the results of Saenz (2022), who found no relationship between locus of control and emotional regulation in his sample.

On the other hand, in the study by Janampa (2019) a relationship was found between both variables, and in the research by Esquivel (2024) it was found that the higher the locus of control, the lower the emotional dependence of the participants, which could reinforce the evidence that emotional intelligence is related to locus of control; the importance of emotions on decision-making and, of course, the perception of control that the individual has over his or her life is well known. emotional skills and the perception of control held by young students.

From the above, it is possible to conclude that the better the emotional education, the stronger the decision-making skills and the visualisation of mastery over one's own life can be.

It is recommended to implement intervention programmes for young people to help them identify, understand and better regulate their emotions, as well as to remember the importance of perceiving themselves as self-sufficient and as a causal agent of what happens in their own daily lives.

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