

Emotional Intelligence Strategy to Strengthen Citizenship Competencies

¹Juan José Palacios Acevedo, ²Edison Leonardo Rodríguez Gelves, ³Leidy Cristina Alvarado Vega

¹juan.palacios@unipamplona.edu.co — ORCID: 0009-0009-6047-3794 — Maestrante, Universidad de Pamplona, Colombia.

²edinson2896@gmail.com — ORCID: 0009-0003-4600-0284 — Maestrante, Universidad de Pamplona, Colombia.

³leidy.alvarado@unipamplona.edu.co — ORCID: 0009-0009-5061-192X — Universidad de Pamplona, Colombia.

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this paper is to develop a pedagogical intervention based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) theory of emotional intelligence. This intervention aims to strengthen the civic competencies of a fourth-grade student diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), promoting his inclusion, active participation, and comprehensive development in the school context. This research was conducted at the Colegio Cristiano Amigos de Jesús, located in Cúcuta, Norte de Santander, and is framed within a qualitative approach using a case study design.

The pedagogical proposal was developed based on the student's initial diagnosis through instruments such as semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and the Ice Barón inventory. Subsequently, seven adapted didactic interventions were implemented that integrated emotional skills and components of the civic competencies proposed by the Ministry of National Education (2004), such as emotional self-regulation, empathy, democratic participation, and respect for differences.

The results showed significant improvements in various emotional inventory scales, especially in stress management, adaptability, emotional expression, and interpersonal relationships. These transformations demonstrate the effectiveness of emotional intelligence as a teaching tool for promoting the inclusion and comprehensive development of students with ASD in school settings. The study concludes that the integration of emotional intelligence and citizenship competencies allows for the promotion of more equitable, participatory, and emotionally aware education.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, citizenship skills, autism type 2, educational inclusion, and case study

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this research is to create and carry out an educational strategy based on emotional intelligence, aimed at improving

citizenship skills in a fourth grade student who has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at the Friends of Jesus Christ Christian School, located in Cúcuta, Norte de Santander. This

initiative aims to promote an inclusive education that promotes recognition, expression and emotional regulation, fundamental factors to enrich social interaction, empathy and active participation of the student in their school and community environment. This proposal is based on the need to adjust educational practices to the specific characteristics of students with ASD, understanding that the development of emotional intelligence is vital for their integration and well-being. By carrying out this strategy, it is intended to support the strengthening of the student's citizenship competencies, promoting values such as respect, responsibility and peaceful coexistence, aligning with national educational policies that advocate for a comprehensive and equitable education for all students.

2. Background

The term emotional intelligence emerged as an alternative to the limitations of conventional intelligence models, which focused only on logical, mathematical or linguistic skills, without taking into account the emotional and social facet of the human being. The first related ideas are associated with Edward Thorndike (1920), who presented the notion of social intelligence as the ability to understand and manage interactions with other people.

Later, David Wechsler (1940) observed that non-intellectual aspects, such as motivation and feelings, affect intelligence in general. However, it was at the end of the twentieth century that the term emotional intelligence was established as an independent discipline in the field of psychology.

The model proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997) is considered the most serious and scientific. This approach defines emotional intelligence as a set of cognitive skills linked to the processing of emotions. These skills are organized in a hierarchical system with four branches:

- Emotional perception: ability to identify one's own emotions and those of others, either through facial expressions or gestures.

- Emotional facilitation of thought: the ability to use emotions as a compass to focus attention and improve reasoning.

- Emotional understanding: knowledge of the interrelationships between emotions, their origin and their effects.

- Emotional regulation: ability to manage emotions constructively both in oneself and in others, favoring well-being and personal development.

This model led to the creation of tools such as the MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test), which is used in educational and clinical studies (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2016).

This model has differed from other methods due to its scientific foundation and its usefulness in educational settings (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2016). It has also given rise to tools such as the MSCEIT and is complemented by other approaches such as Bar-On's (1997), which suggests a combined approach in which emotional intelligence encompasses social, interpersonal, adaptive and stress management skills.

In the educational field, numerous studies have shown that students with higher levels of emotional intelligence achieve better academic performance, have fewer school conflicts, and show greater empathy towards their peers (Bisquerra, 2020). In students with ASD type 2, who face considerable emotional and social challenges, an intervention focused on emotional intelligence can facilitate emotion recognition, behavior regulation, and active participation in school life.

Citizenship competencies are considered a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that allow students to live together in harmony, be an active part of their environment, and make responsible decisions within their community (MEN, 2004). Its incorporation into the Colombian curriculum responds to an ethical and political need to train critical citizens committed to social change.

The Ministry of National Education (2004) organizes citizenship competencies in three fundamental dimensions:

Cognitive: promotes analytical skills, moral judgment, and responsible decision-making.

Emotional: Promotes empathy, self-regulation, and emotional awareness.

Communicative and participatory: encourages dialogue, active listening and collaboration.

These skills must be developed in a transversal way in all areas of knowledge and their implementation requires specific pedagogical methodologies. In students with disabilities, such as those with ASD type 2, the promotion of citizenship skills has a special significance, as it allows social barriers to be broken down and active and respectful participation in the school environment (Porto Hoyos, 2023).

4. Methodology

Research Focus

Current research focuses on a qualitative method, which Creswell and Poth (2018) describe as a systematic method to investigate and understand the meaning that people or groups give to a social or human problem. This approach facilitates a deep understanding of complex phenomena in natural environments, which is essential when analyzing subjective processes such as emotional intelligence, school inclusion and the development of citizenship skills in a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) type 2.

The choice of this method is based on the need to understand educational experiences from the perspective of the interested party, in this case, a fourth grade student with ASD, within a specific environment such as the Friends of Jesus Christian School. The qualitative approach allows for a comprehensive, contextualized, and empathetic approach, which are key elements for analyzing the individual characteristics of the student, their emotions, their forms of interaction, and their participation in the school community (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018).

This type of research not only facilitates the description, but also allows us to interpret the meanings that arise in the educational environment in relation to the implementation of a pedagogical strategy based on the emotional intelligence model proposed by Mayer and Salovey. Unlike the quantitative approach, which focuses on numerical measurement and generalization of results, the qualitative method focuses on a deep, particular, and contextualized understanding of educational phenomena, especially when they are linked to diversity, subjectivity, and inclusion (Sandín, 2020).

In this analysis, the qualitative methodology will be carried out through a case study design, which, according to Yin (2018), allows for a detailed investigation of a current phenomenon within its real context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly discernible. This design is suitable for analyzing the application and effects of a pedagogical strategy focused on emotional intelligence on the citizenship competencies of a student with special educational needs.

The richness of the qualitative approach is also found in the ability to collect diverse voices and perspectives, such as those of the student, teachers, and family members, using techniques such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The variety of these sources will allow triangulation of information, increase the credibility of the findings, and generate a holistic view of the case (Tracy, 2020).

Research Design

The methodological approach selected for this research is based on the qualitative case study, a methodology suitable for thoroughly exploring a particular phenomenon in its real environment (Yin, 2018). The case study is characterized by offering the possibility of investigating and understanding complex phenomena in specific contexts, considering the various elements that form them, such as the experiences, emotions, bonds, and

environments that affect their development (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Given that the objective of this research is to examine how a strategy based on Mayer and Salovey's theory of emotional intelligence can improve citizenship competencies in a fourth-grade student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) type 2 within a particular educational setting, the case study is presented as the most appropriate design. This approach allows for a deep understanding of the student's experience in his or her natural environment: the classroom and the educational community of the Friends of Jesus Christian School in Cúcuta.

Case study design, as suggested by Stake (1995) and Yin (2018), is especially valuable when you want to answer "how" or "why" questions and when you need to capture the complexity of a specific process or situation. In this context, it is relevant to observe how pedagogical intervention affects the emotional and civic development of the student, taking into account their particular needs, their clinical diagnosis and the relationships with their teachers and classmates.

Key Informants

In this qualitative research, key informants play an essential role in understanding the educational phenomenon being analyzed. According to Stake (1995) and Yin (2018), in case studies, these informants provide access to varied and rich perspectives, which contributes to interpreting the case from different dimensions.

Given that this analysis focuses on the implementation of a strategy that uses the emotional intelligence of Mayer and Salovey to enhance citizenship competencies in a fourth-grade student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) type 2, a group of key informants who have a direct relationship with the student has been selected. Knowledge of the school context and an active role in the teaching-learning and coexistence processes.

The student with ASD (case subject)

It is the main focus of research and the primary reference for observation. Their experience, their emotional behaviour, their progress in citizenship skills and their evolution during the intervention will be the most relevant aspects to be examined. Although their participation will be carried out mainly through observations, their voice will also be recorded through interactions, school work and activity notes.

Fourth Grade Teacher

The teacher is a key subject, since he guides the educational process and has continuous contact with the student. Their perception of the child's emotional, social, and academic development, as well as their experience in implementing the strategy, will be fundamental in evaluating the relevance and effectiveness of the model applied (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Support Teacher or Inclusion Coordinator (if any).

If the institution has a professional in charge of supporting students with disabilities, his or her perspective will be crucial to understand the institutional processes related to attention to diversity, the curricular modifications and the support strategies that have been put in place.

Mother or Father

The family is the first area of socialization and is key to the emotional development of the student. The collaboration of the father or mother will allow obtaining information on family dynamics, educational practices at home and the assessment of the impact of the strategy from the context outside the school. For this research it will be done with the child's family nucleus, which is comprised of his grandmother and aunt, since he has not lived with his parents since he was 3 years old and they have an absent role in his upbringing (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018).

Classmates

Some of the students who share the learning environment with the child will be consulted ethically and with permission, using age-appropriate techniques (such as group

conversations or collaborative dynamics). Their contributions will facilitate the identification of changes in social interaction, mutual respect and the recognition of the other as a subject of rights.

Teaching Director (Rector)

The steering group offers an institutional and organizational perspective of the environment. Their statement will be fundamental to understanding internal policies on inclusion, institutional support for intervention, and the correspondence between educational philosophy and daily practice.

Ethical considerations

All key participants will do so voluntarily, with the prior signature of an informed consent (for adults) and an informed assent (for minors). The data collected will be handled confidentially and will be used only for academic purposes, respecting the ethical principles of qualitative research (Tracy, 2020).

Research Phases

Current research uses a qualitative method with a case study design, focused on the analysis and educational intervention to promote citizenship competencies in a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) type 2, based on the emotional intelligence model proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997). In line with this approach, the study is organized into six stages, each with its own strategies, objectives, and methods, which follows the interpretative logic of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Phase I. Contextualization

During this stage, a reconnaissance and characterization of the area of study was carried out, identifying the main issue, the context of the institution (the Friends of Jesus Christian School) and the circumstances of the student in question. The educational, family and social environment was evaluated in a critical and comprehensive way, seeking to understand how these conditions influence the emotional and civic development of the student.

Phase II. Rationale

Based on the analysis of the problem, a review and selection of relevant theoretical sources was carried out, both nationally and internationally. The emotional intelligence model of Mayer and Salovey (1997) was chosen as the conceptual basis and the guidelines of the Ministry of National Education of Colombia on citizenship competencies (MEN, 2015) were aligned.

Phase III. Diagnosis

Based on the contextualization, the theoretical foundation and the delimitation of the categories of analysis, a diagnostic instrument was developed that allowed to determine the initial state of the student in relation to his emotional intelligence and his citizenship skills. This instrument included observable indicators appropriate to the school level and the student's diagnosis.

Phase V. Evaluation

At the end of the intervention, an evaluation tool was developed that made it easier to measure the effectiveness of the proposal in the growth of the student's citizenship skills. Indicators such as the expression of emotions, the ability to make decisions, empathy and participation in group activities were taken into account.

Instruments for Information Collection

To achieve the purposes established in this qualitative study with a case design, three data collection tools were selected that allow a comprehensive, contextual and varied understanding of the educational phenomenon: the semi-structured interview, the non-participant observation and the BarOn EQ-i:YV emotional intelligence questionnaire (Youth Version). Each of these methods has been chosen for its ability to capture emotional, social and civic dimensions of the student, in line with the focus and analytical categories of the study.

The three chosen methods are mutually supportive. Observation provides direct data and in context, the interview provides the

narratives and meanings of the participants, and the BarOn EQ-i:YV questionnaire facilitates an organized assessment of emotional competencies. This combination of approaches improves the internal validity of the analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020) and allows us to understand the complexity of the phenomenon from various perspectives.

Semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview is a qualitative method that facilitates the obtaining of valuable and detailed information, by combining pre-established open questions with the opportunity to modify the conversation according to the interviewee's answers (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018). This adaptability allows access to the perceptions, experiences and evaluations of the educational actors regarding the student and the pedagogical strategy used. In this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with:

- The teacher in charge of the grade.
- The attendant (in this case the grandmother).

The educational director or academic coordinator. These interviews will help to investigate aspects such as the perception of the student's progress, their integration into the classroom, the social and emotional skills that are observed, and the effect of the intervention on school coexistence. By focusing on the participants' narratives, the interview becomes a useful tool to corroborate the findings from an interpretive approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Non-participant observation

Non-participant observation involves the methodical collection of information through direct observation, without the researcher intervening in the activities he or she is observing (Angrosino, 2017). As part of this research, it will be used to document the student's emotional behavior, social

interactions, and civic engagement both in the classroom and in other school activities. This method is especially useful for observing nonverbal expressions of emotions, identifying spontaneous behaviors of cooperation, empathy or self-regulation.

Record relevant situations related to coexistence. The observation will be carried out following a structured guide, in tune with the defined analytical categories, and the data will be organized in a reflective field diary. This tool offers a naturalistic and contextualized perspective of student behavior, which is fundamental in case studies (Yin, 2018).

Ice Baron Emotional Intelligence Inventory for Children and Teens

The BarOn ICE:NA measures various skills and competencies that constitute the core characteristics of emotional intelligence. It can be used as a routine screening tool in various settings such as schools, clinics, youth care centers, and private practices. Potential users can be psychologists, doctors, social workers, counselors, teachers, nurses, and people who specialize in working with children. It is a useful instrument that provides information about the emotional and social intelligence of the person.

The BarOn ICE:NA is easy to administer and qualification can be done in computerized form. The complete inventory takes 25 to 30 minutes and the abbreviated form

BarOn ICE: NA, in approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Both forms are designed to be administered between the ages of 7 and 18. The Complete form of the inventory contains 60 items and 8 scales and the Abbreviated form contains 30 items and 6 scales, for this research the complete version of 60 items will be used.

Mayer and Soley's Emotional Intelligence Categories

Categories Emotional Intelligence by Mayer and Soley

Author	Categories	Subcategories	Items
Mayer and Solvey's Emotional Intelligence	Emotional Perception	1. Identify and recognize one's own emotions	Can you identify your own emotions?
		2. Identify and recognize other people's emotions	Can you identify the emotion that other people present?
		3. Recognize emotion behavior and gestures	Can you recognize the signals and behaviors of the emotion?
	Facilitation or Assimilation	1. Relationship between emotion and thought	How does your emotions influence your cognitive processes?
		2. Ability to identify the relationship between the emotion and the situation that generated it	Can you identify which situations generate these emotions (happy, sad, angry and fear)?
		3. Recognize the relationships between the word and the meaning of the emotion itself	Can you relate the name of the emotion to its meaning?
		4. Ability to understand complex emotions	Does he have the ability to recognize emotions such as frustration, embarrassment, and shyness?
		5. Recognize transitions from one emotional state to another	Do you understand how and why there are emotional changes in your daily life?
	Emotional Regulation	1. Reflect on your own emotions	Are they able to reflect on their emotional states about whether they managed their emotion properly?

- | | |
|--|--|
| 2. Regulate one's own and others' emotions | Are you able to make proper use of strategies to regulate your emotions and those of other people? |
|--|--|

Table 1. Categories Emotional Intelligence by Mayer and Soley

5. Discussions

The section dedicated to the discussion of results is the moment in which the findings are analyzed in the light of the theoretical and conceptual framework defined above, as well as the background reviewed in the research. In this context, the findings of this study, which focuses on improving citizenship competencies in a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) type 2 through an intervention based on the emotional intelligence model of Mayer and Salovey of 1997, are coherently connected with the academic literature, supporting the relevance and effectiveness of the pedagogical strategy applied.

Connection to the theoretical basis

The progress observed in the student's emotional self-regulation, empathy, adaptation to change, and school participation are aligned with the ideas of Mayer and Salovey of 1997, who describe emotional intelligence as composed of four hierarchical skills: perception, facilitation, understanding, and regulation of emotions. These categories were defined in this research as criteria for both evaluation and intervention, allowing us to verify how their gradual development had a positive impact on the student's behavior in the classroom.

Likewise, the findings are consistent with the combined Bar-On model of 1997, especially with the scales of adaptability, stress management and general emotional state that were evaluated using the ICE:NA inventory. The positive progression of the student in these aspects reinforces the idea that emotional development can be stimulated through planned and organized educational interventions, especially in inclusive

environments, as Bar-On and Parker point out in 2000.

6. Conclusions

The theory of emotional intelligence formulated by Mayer and Salovey in 1997 has proven to be effective as a conceptual and practical foundation for the development of citizenship competencies in students with type 2 Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The relationship between emotional intelligence and citizenship skills, as mentioned by Bisquerra in 2020 and Goleman in 2006, was validated through empirical evidence, showing improvements in emotional regulation, empathy and student participation.

The qualitative methodology used, based on the case study, facilitated a deep understanding of the phenomenon, taking into account the individual's school, family, and emotional environment, according to Creswell and Poth in 2018.

The instruments used, such as non-participant observation, interviews, and the ICE:NA inventory, provided complementary and consistent information, contributing to a robust and reliable triangulation.

The initial diagnosis revealed significant difficulties in emotional regulation, stress management, social interaction and resistance to change, thus limiting the development of citizenship skills.

The pedagogical proposal focused on emotional intelligence turned out to be relevant, adaptable and contextualized, favoring the gradual improvement of the student's emotional and social skills.

The final evaluation showed notable progress with respect to the initial diagnosis: an increase

in the scales of adaptability, stress management and inter-personality; a reduction in oppositional behaviors and an increase in empathy.

A transformation was achieved in the cognitive, emotional and communicative areas of citizenship competencies, aligning with the standards of the 2004 MEN.

All the specific objectives established were achieved: initial diagnosis, design of the strategy, implementation and evaluation of its impact.

The general objective was to demonstrate that an intervention based on emotional intelligence enhanced the student's citizenship competencies, favoring their inclusion and active participation.

The discussion of the results indicated that this approach can be replicated in similar contexts to promote inclusive practices and fair and democratic school coexistence.

Emerging categories were identified, such as cognitive flexibility, willingness to change, progressive self-regulation, functional empathy and participatory citizenship.

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