

Didactic Strategies to Improve Emotional Intelligence in Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of a program of socioformative didactic strategies in the improvement of emotional intelligence of students of the VII cycle of semester 2021-I, of the Academic Professional School of Nursing of the National University of Cajamarca, Jaén Branch. The study used a quantitative, explanatory and pre-experimental design with pre-test and post-test. The study population consisted of 172 students, of which 120 formed the experimental group. The Socioformative Didactic Strategies Program was applied to improve emotional intelligence. Observation techniques and BarOn's Inventory of Emotional Intelligence (I-CE) adapted by Ugarriza were applied. The results showed significant improvements in students' emotional competencies, especially in empathy, interpersonal relationships and stress management. Although the Wilcoxon test did not reveal statistically significant differences between pre-test and post-test, qualitative observations suggest a positive impact of the program on students' emotional development. In conclusion, the implementation of socioformative didactic strategies significantly improved the emotional competencies of nursing students, underscoring the importance of integrating emotional intelligence development programs into the nursing curriculum to improve students' personal and professional well-being and better prepare them for the challenges of their future professional practice.

Keywords: Nursing; Emotional Intelligence; Interpersonal Relations; Empathy; Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence seeks to understand the relationship between emotion and reason, advancing theories of intelligence and recognizing that emotional regulation is key to meeting new social demands (Dávila, 2019). According to Goleman, cited by Ubago-Jiménez et al. (2019), emotional intelligence (EI) is a person's innate ability to manage and self-regulate their own feelings, understand the emotions of others, and use both emotions and feelings as a guide for their actions and thoughts (Ubago-Jiménez et al., 2019). Goleman also highlights that EI is crucial to the success of an organization, as it facilitates the development of positive relationships and improves the performance of work teams (Dâmbean & Gabor, 2021).

In recent years, emotional intelligence has aroused significant interest in the educational field, being considered an essential skill for the well-being and performance of both teachers and students (Vizoso, 2022). In the field of health, EI is gaining more and more importance. It has been shown to have a positive impact on the biopsychosocial well-being of healthcare professionals, increasing their individual resilience, their perception of social support, their empathy, their job performance and satisfaction, and reducing stress (Nightingale et al., 2018).

Currently, this skill is the protagonist of educational training because the demanding university coexistence challenges students to cope with various social difficulties (Ancira, 2020; Silva-Ramos et al., 2020). Various studies at the national and international level show universal adherence to these conflicts. For example, a psychological study by the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru revealed that 58% of high school students in

Lima face high academic stress. Likewise, in a study carried out on students in the area of health at the University of Los Lagos, Osorno, Chile, it was shown that the consequences of this internal imbalance throughout the university course lead to headaches, migraines, restlessness, anxiety, despair, eating problems, and reduced interest in academic activities, affecting more than 60% of students in each condition (Jerez-Mendoza & Oyarzo-Barría, 2015).

The high figures regarding the mental state of students show the need to investigate and apply social strategies that meet their emotional needs, composing an essential factor in human development. This emotional education must be a tool that accompanies the person at each stage of development, because it is essential to face conflictive situations throughout our existence (Cano & Murcia, 2023). In addition, a procedure different from that applied at the school level would obtain better results to face the new stage of higher education (Ibarra & Luna, 2021). In the same way, in order to train trained professionals, it is essential to use formidable techniques of intellectual development, as well as emotional education to guide student success (Dávila, 2019).

The need for emotionally intelligent leadership in the health professions is internationally recognized through the nursing and midwifery literature. The concepts of emotional intelligence and emotional-social intelligence have emerged as important factors for effective leadership in these professions and require further exploration and discussion.

The socio-educational model is oriented towards the integral formation of the student through the development of an ethical life project and a holistic perspective. This approach facilitates the application of knowledge to solve problems that improve social reality (Casanova et al., 2018). In addition, it allows for a comprehensive evaluation of the curriculum, considering the challenges of the knowledge society. It is necessary to address social problems with the aim of improving the quality of life through the social and economic development of the immediate environment (Crespo-Cabuto et al., 2021). It is essential that the school evaluates its educational reality from the teacher's perspective, identifying their needs and interests in order to develop appropriate socio-formative pedagogical counseling programs. This will contribute to improving the socio-emotional well-being of teachers as individuals, helping to prevent premature burnout and reduce frustration and cynicism (Acosta et al., 2022).

In this context, the research question arises: What is the influence of the program of socio-formative didactic strategies to improve the emotional intelligence of students of the academic semester 2021-I, of the Professional Academic School of Nursing of the National University of Cajamarca, Jaén Branch, 2021?

The general objective of this research is to determine the influence of a program of socio-formative didactic strategies on the improvement of the emotional intelligence of students of the academic semester 2021-I, of the Professional Academic School of Nursing of the National University of Cajamarca, Jaén Branch. Specific objectives include: identifying students' level of emotional intelligence prior to program implementation, implementing such a program to improve students' emotional intelligence, and assessing students' level of emotional intelligence after program implementation. Likewise, the hypothesis of the research is: The program of socio-formative didactic strategies significantly influences the improvement of the emotional intelligence of the students of the academic semester 2021-I, of the Professional Academic School of Nursing of the National University of Cajamarca, Jaén Branch, 2021.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of 172 students enrolled in the Professional Academic School of Nursing of the National University of Cajamarca, Jaén Branch, during 2021. From this population, a sample of 120 students from the 2021-I academic semester was selected through stratified random sampling, with a confidence level of 95%. Each of these nursing students constituted a unit of analysis in the study.

The inclusion criteria for the study were: students enrolled in the Professional Academic School of Nursing of the National University of Cajamarca, Jaén Branch, during the academic semester 2021-I; students who agreed to voluntarily participate in the study, signing the informed consent; and students who regularly attended the sessions of the socio-formative didactic strategies program. The exclusion criteria were: students who did not complete the pre-test or post-test; students who, for personal or academic reasons, did not regularly attend the sessions of the program; and students who did not sign informed consent to participate in the study.

Instruments

The instrument used is the Emotional Intelligence Inventory Test (I-CE) by BarOn (1997), adapted in Peru by Ugarriza (2001), it consists of 133 items that evaluate five components of emotional intelligence, ideal for university students, showed high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.93 for total internal consistency, and values between 0.77 and 0.91 for individual components. The validity of the instrument was confirmed by the Chi-square test, which verified the fit of the model proposed by BarOn.

Procedures

The study design was quantitative, explanatory, pre-experimental with pre-test and post-test. The Program of Socio-Formative Didactic Strategies was applied to improve emotional intelligence in the experimental group. The hypothetical-deductive method was used for experimentation, contrasting hypotheses based on universal and empirical premises to understand phenomena and explain their causes. In addition, the inductive-deductive method was applied for the descriptive part, establishing a general diagnosis based on particular facts. The research, of an applied type, focused on generating changes in the diagnosed problem and is explanatory by establishing causal relationships. The longitudinal study was carried out at various times to observe the evolutionary development of the subjects, and was quantitative in using objective and reliable measurements.

Data Analysis

For the analysis and interpretation of the data, the SPSS version 26 software was used, using statistical measures of centralization (arithmetic mean) and dispersion (variance, standard deviation and coefficient of variation). Wilcoxon's statistical test was applied.

The assessment of emotional intelligence using the BarOn Inventory (I-CE) encompassed five components or dimensions, each of which contains 15 interrelated subcomponents. The components and subcomponents are as follows:

Board 1. The components and subcomponents of the instrument

DIMENSION	
D1. Intrapersonal Emotional Component	- Emotional understanding of self (CM)
	- Assertiveness (AS)
	- Self-concept (CA)
	- Self-actualization (AR)
	- Independence (IN)
D2. Interpersonal Emotional Component	- Empathy (MS)
	- Interpersonal Relationships (IR)
	- Social Responsibility (SR)
D3. Emotional component of adaptability	- Troubleshooting (SP)
	- Reality Check (PR)
	- Flexibility (FL)
D4. Emotional Component of Stress Management	- Stress tolerance (ET)
	- Impulse Control (IC)
D5. Emotional component of the general mood	- Happiness (FAITH)
	- Optimism (OP)

Source: Own elaboration

RESULTS

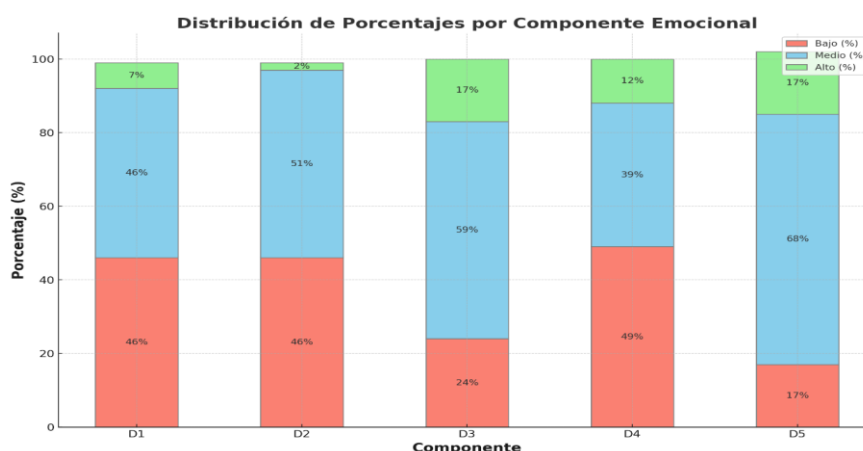


Figure 1. Distribution of percentages per emotional participant in the Pre-Test. In original language Spanish Source: Authors.

In the analysis of the Pre-Test, it was found that most of the students of the academic semester 2021-I, of the Professional Academic School of Nursing of the National University of Cajamarca, Jaén Branch, have low to medium levels in the components of emotional intelligence. In the Intrapersonal Emotional Component, few reach high levels, especially in independence. In the Interpersonal Emotional Component, low empathy and deficiencies in interpersonal relationships and social responsibility predominate. In the Emotional Component of Adaptability, few achieve high levels of problem solving, reality testing, and flexibility. In the Emotional Component of Tension Management, significant difficulties are observed in stress tolerance and impulse control. Finally, in the Emotional Component of the General Mood, most of them have low levels of happiness and optimism. These results underscore the need to implement the program of socio-formative didactic strategies to improve students' emotional intelligence, and thus their well-being and academic performance. Likewise, the results reveal that the students of the academic semester 2021-I of the Professional Academic School of Nursing of the National University of Cajamarca, Jaén Branch, present predominantly low to medium levels in most of the components of emotional intelligence, indicating significant deficiencies in the understanding and management of their emotions, assertiveness, empathy, interpersonal relationships, adaptability and tolerance to stress. In addition, the low score on happiness and optimism reflects a negative overall mood. These shortcomings underscore the critical need to intervene with specific educational programs such as the Program of Socioformative Didactic Strategies. Improving emotional intelligence will not only contribute to students' personal and academic well-being, but will also enable them to perform more effectively in their future professional practice in nursing, where emotional intelligence is essential to providing high-quality, compassionate care. These are the results of the questionnaire applied after the implementation of the program of socio-formative didactic strategies.

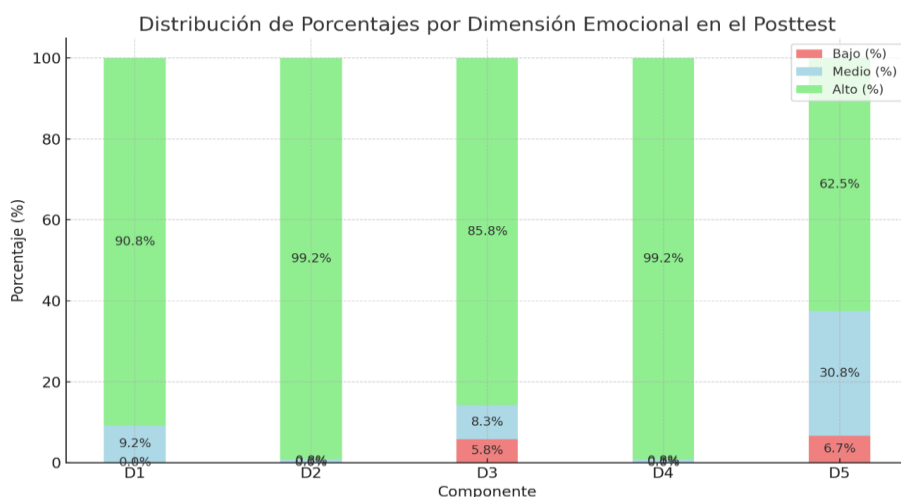


Figure 2. Distribution of Percentages by Emotional Dimension in the Post-test. In original language Spanish Source: Authors.

The results of the post-test show significant improvements in almost all dimensions of the emotional intelligence of nursing students after the implementation of the Program of Socioformative Didactic Strategies. The areas that improved the most were empathy, interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, assertiveness and impulse control. However, areas such as independence and problem-solving still require additional attention to reach an optimal level in all students. These findings underscore the effectiveness of the program of socio-formative didactic strategies in improving students' emotional competencies, better preparing them for the challenges of their future profession.

Table 2. Metrics to compare the Pretest and Posttest.

Metric	Pre-test	Posttest
Variance	367.53	2222.22
Standard deviation	19.171043	47.140452
Coefficient of Variation	57.63%	141.42%
Wilcoxon Statistic	55.00	
Wilcoxon p-value	0.803955	

Source: Authors.

The results show that the mean of the percentages of the levels of emotional competence is practically the same in the pre-test (33.27%) and the post-test (33.33%), indicating that the general average of answers has not changed significantly. However, the median at the post-test is 0%, compared to 29% at the pre-test, suggesting a significant concentration of responses at the high level (100%) at the post-test. This implies that, although the overall average is maintained, the responses in the post-test are more concentrated in the highest level of emotional competence.

Dispersion metrics, such as standard deviation and variance, are considerably higher in post-test, indicating greater variability in responses. The coefficient of variation is also much higher in the post-test (141.42% vs. 57.63% in the pre-test), which reinforces the observation of a greater relative dispersion in the post-test responses. Despite these differences in data dispersion and variability, the Wilcoxon test does not reveal a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest distributions (p-value of 0.803955), suggesting that the observed variations could be attributable to chance and not to a significant effect of the intervention.

DISCUSSION

The results of the pre-test and post-test show a significant improvement in the emotional competencies of nursing students after the implementation of the Socioformative Didactic Strategies Program. In the pretest, most of the students had low to medium levels in the emotional intelligence components, highlighting deficiencies in empathy, interpersonal relationships, and stress tolerance. After the intervention, a notable improvement was observed in almost all the dimensions evaluated, with a significant concentration of responses at the high level in the post-test, especially in emotional understanding of oneself, assertiveness and empathy.

The results obtained in this study are consistent with the findings of Carragher & Gormley (2017) who highlighted the importance of fostering emotional intelligence to support the delivery of high-quality, compassionate care. The improvement in the emotional competencies of nursing students observed in the present study reinforces the idea that emotionally intelligent leadership is essential in the health professions.

Likewise, the study of Ireland (2022) It suggests that a combination of formal and informal strategies, along with a systemic approach, are essential for cultivating emotional intelligence competence in students. The program of socio-formative didactic strategies implemented, which includes both structured activities and more flexible approaches, has proven to be effective in this regard, since a significant improvement was observed in most of the dimensions evaluated.

On the other hand Glenn & Claman (2020) emphasized the importance of cultural awareness and self-reflection in professional practice. Although the present study did not specifically focus on cultural awareness, the improvement in empathy and interpersonal relationships suggests that students are more prepared to interact effectively and compassionately with diverse populations. The study of Vargas-Hernández & Tovar Vergara (2022) He concluded that didactic strategies focused on meaningful learning, applied in appropriate contexts, obtain better results in the training of professionals. The findings support this conclusion, since the implementation of socio-formative didactic strategies has resulted in substantial improvements in students' emotional intelligence.

The research of Solano (2020) Strengthening empathy through self-knowledge in an advanced undergraduate course is also relevant to this study. The didactic strategy used in this program helped students develop greater self-knowledge and empathy, which is essential to provide humanized care. The students were able to experience in their own lives what is expected of patients, which is an invaluable experience for their future professional practice. Additional studies also support the findings. For example Codier et al. (2009) They found that emotional intelligence is positively correlated with nurses' clinical performance, underscoring the importance of developing these competencies during academic training. Similarly, studies of Fernandez et al. (2012) and Por et al. (2011) They highlight that educational programs that include emotional intelligence components can significantly improve the well-being and academic performance of nursing students.

Foster et al., (2017) They found that implementing emotional intelligence programs in the nursing curriculum not only improved students' emotional competence, but also reduced stress and anxiety levels, improving their overall well-being. Casafont et al., (2021) They found that guidance, follow-up, and emotional support are essential for inexperienced healthcare workers to overcome stressful emotions during crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This study highlights the importance of prior academic education and training to help future nurses feel more confident in their tasks and improve resource management and staff safety. The findings of this study align with these results, showing that socio-formative didactic strategies can better prepare students to face stressful situations in their future professional practice.

Cao et al. (2022) They showed that emotional intelligence has a significant protective effect against burnout among health workers and that it can reduce the incidence of burnout by decreasing the frequency of workplace violence. The results of the present study show improvements in assertiveness, empathy and stress management,

reinforcing the idea that developing emotional intelligence in nursing students can have positive long-term effects on their professional and personal well-being. Khazaei et al., (2024) They explored stress management strategies in emergency medical service providers, highlighting the importance of mental preparedness, risk management, and supportive communication. The present study, which shows improvements in stress tolerance and impulse control among students, suggests that socio-formative didactic strategies can equip future health professionals with the necessary tools to manage stress effectively, improving both their well-being and the quality of patient care.

Qin et al. (2023) They found that emotional intelligence positively predicts nurses' life satisfaction and that this relationship is mediated by self-efficacy and resilience. The present study shows that socio-formative didactic strategies can improve emotional intelligence, which could lead to greater life satisfaction, aligning with the findings of the aforementioned research. Budler et al. (2022) They showed that the emotional intelligence of nursing students improves with time and education, suggesting that emotional intelligence skills can be developed throughout the educational career. This finding is consistent with the results of this study, which show improvements in emotional intelligence after the implementation of socio-formative didactic strategies.

Dodson (2023) He highlighted the effectiveness of expert modeling videos as an educational strategy to improve the learning and clinical competence of nursing students. Although this study did not use this methodology, the results suggest that incorporating innovative educational technologies and methods can complement socio-formative didactic strategies to further improve students' emotional and clinical competencies. Lin et al. (2021) They found significant differences in cultural competency levels between undergraduate students and nurses at different stages of their careers. This study, although it did not focus on cultural competence, suggests that socio-formative didactic strategies can be adapted to address various competencies, including cultural competence, and improve the comprehensive training of nursing students.

Despite the observed improvements, the Wilcoxon test did not reveal a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest distributions, suggesting that the observed variations could be attributable to chance. This discrepancy could be due to several factors, including sample size and the inherent variability in student responses. However, the concentration of responses at the highest level of emotional competence in the post-test indicates that the program had a positive impact on many students. This result is consistent with the existing literature that highlights the importance of educational interventions in the development of emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSION

The results obtained showed that, after the implementation of the Program of Socioformative Didactic Strategies, there were notable improvements in several dimensions of students' emotional intelligence. In the pretest, the students presented predominantly low to medium levels in most of the emotional components, highlighting deficiencies in areas such as emotional understanding of themselves, assertiveness, empathy and adaptability.

In the post-test, a significant improvement in intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional competencies was observed, with a high proportion of students reaching high levels of empathy, interpersonal relationships and social responsibility. This suggests that the didactic strategies applied were effective in developing self-awareness, self-confidence, and the ability to manage interpersonal relationships.

However, the Wilcoxon test did not detect a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest distributions, indicating that the observed improvements may not have been uniformly significant across the group. This lack of statistical significance highlights the need to consider more personalized and adaptive approaches in future interventions, to better address the individual needs of students and maximize the impact of socio-formative didactic strategies.

Finally, the implementation of the program significantly improved the emotional competencies of the students, underscoring the importance of integrating emotional intelligence development programs into the nursing curriculum. These improvements not only contribute to students' personal and academic well-being, but also prepare them to improve their future professional practice in nursing, where emotional intelligence is essential to providing high-quality, compassionate care.

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