



Emotional intelligence and resilience in secondary school Physical Education students during the COVID-19 pandemic

Inteligencia emocional y resiliencia en estudiantes de Educación Física de secundaria durante la pandemia por COVID-19

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) and resilience play an important role in the lives of adolescents, and this has been especially so during the coronavirus pandemic, which has affected the mental health of young people. The study objectives were: (i) to analyse the correlations between the EI variables and resilience; (ii) to analyse the differences between the resilience variable and the EI variables according to the sex variable; and (iii) to analyse the predictive relationship between the EI variables and the resilience variable according to sex. A cross-sectional, observational, and descriptive design study was carried out with a convenience sample consisting of 150 students (78 girls; 72 boys) between the ages of 12 and 18 years ($M=14.83$; $SD=1.72$). The scales administered were: The Emotional Quotient Inventory and the Resilience Scale. The descriptive statistics were calculated - Student's T test was used to check for differences based on the sex variable, and linear regression analysis was performed to check the prediction ratio of the EI subscales on resilience. The results demonstrated positive and significant relationships between the EI variables and resilience, with EI and resilience being higher in boys than in girls - this differs from previous data, perhaps influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. The results also reflect that EI positively predicts resilience to a greater extent in boys than in girls.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Resilience; Adolescents; Covid-19; Mental Health.

Resumen

La inteligencia emocional (IE) y la resiliencia cobran un papel importante en la vida de los adolescentes, sobre todo en tiempos de pandemia por coronavirus, donde la salud mental de los jóvenes se ha visto afectada. Los objetivos de estudio fueron: (i) analizar las correlaciones entre las variables de la IE y la resiliencia; (ii) analizar las diferencias entre la variable resiliencia y las variables de IE según la variable sexo; y (iii) analizar la relación de predicción entre las variables de la IE y la variable resiliencia en función del sexo. Se llevó a cabo un estudio de diseño observacional y descriptivo de carácter transversal con una muestra por conveniencia formada por 150 estudiantes (78 chicas; 72 chicos) de entre 12 y 18 años ($M=14.83$; $SD=1.72$). Se administraron las escalas: *The Emotional Quotient Inventory* y *Resilience Scale*. Se calcularon los estadísticos descriptivos, se usó la prueba T de Student para comprobar las diferencias en función de la variable sexo, y se realizó un análisis de regresión lineal para comprobar la relación de predicción de las subescalas de la IE sobre la resiliencia. Los resultados demostraron relaciones positivas y significativas entre las variables de la IE y la resiliencia, siendo mayor la IE y la resiliencia en chicos que en chicas, lo cual difiere con los datos obtenidos hasta el momento, pudiendo tener influencia la pandemia de Covid-19. También, se refleja que la IE predice de forma positiva la resiliencia en mayor medida en los chicos que en las chicas.

Palabras clave: Inteligencia Emocional; Resiliencia; Adolescentes; Covid-19; Estudiantes.

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Introduction

Over the last thirty years, emotional intelligence (EI) has gained great importance in different areas, such as in education, health, well-being, and business (Correa-Barwick et al., 2022; Salcedo & Prez, 2020). Although there has been a significant increase in EI research in the educational field (Salcedo & Prez, 2020; Santamaría & Valdés, 2017), since 2019 we have been facing a global pandemic due to COVID-19, which has taken many lives and negatively affected people's mental health (WHO, 2020). Adolescents have been one of the groups hardest hit by the pandemic and the restrictions imposed by the government to avert it. They have experienced higher rates of post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, irritability, moodiness and, in general terms, emotions of sadness, fear, guilt and uncertainty (Esteban Rivera et al., 2021; Sainz & Sanz, 2020).

The circumstances regarding confinement and experiencing this crisis have led to a deterioration in the health habits of the most vulnerable children and adolescents, many of whom have had their physical and mental well-being negatively affected (UNICEF 2020). This sector of society has been classified as the hidden victims of the coronavirus, having been affected by the government measures to try to stop the virus spreading, causing numerous adverse effects in dimensions such as education, and physical and mental health, which are especially involved in this stage of development (UNICEF, 2020).

This situation could cause the EI of young people to be altered, at the same time as potentially affecting their resilience, defined by the DRAE (2021) as "the ability of a living being to adapt to a disturbing agent or an adverse state or situation". Numerous studies corroborate that there is a close, significant, and positive relationship between resilience and emotional intelligence, stating that resilient people better understand and manage their emotions, which could also be related to higher levels of emotional intelligence (Cejudo et al., 2016; Espejo -Siles et al., 2022; Troy et al., 2017).

Therefore, understanding resilience as the ability to be strong in traumatic or crisis situations, such as the global pandemic we find ourselves in, it can be considered as a fundamental competence for developing emotional intelligence (Alvarado, 2015; Belykh, 2018; Bravo et al., 2022; Nuñez & Luzurraga, 2017). Given this situation, we believe it is important to carry out research on the relationship between EI and resilience in secondary school adolescents during times of global pandemic.

EI was first defined by psychologists Salovey and Mayer (1990) as: the ability to perceive, value, and express emotion adequately and adaptively; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; the ability to access and/or generate feelings that facilitate cognitive activities and adaptive action; and the ability to regulate emotions in oneself and others.

Goleman (1996), who was considered the great EI theorist, postulated the existence of two different and overlapping minds: a thinking mind and another that feels (this was also based on the studies by Salovey and Mayer [1990]). He understood EI as the fluctuation between five main competencies: the knowledge of one's emotions, the ability to motivate oneself, the ability to control one's emotions, recognising the emotions of the people around us and the control of relationships. Later, Goleman (1998) added to his theory by saying that EI is a set of skills that can be learned and strengthened. At the same time, he distinguishes between the intelligence quotient (IQ) and the emotional quotient (EQ), maintaining that these are not opposed to each other, but complementary, being evident in the interrelationships that occur between them.

According to Goleman (1998), EI is made up of the following dimensions: emotional self-awareness (the ability to understand what we feel and to always stay connected to our essence, our values); self-motivation (the ability to orient ourselves and focus on our goals); empathy (putting ourselves in the place of the other); social skills (a set of behaviours to relate and interact affectionately and satisfactorily with others); and self-regulation (the ability to control and manage our emotions and thoughts).

Currently, EI is of great research importance in academia, particularly in the educational field, and in society generally (Conejero-Pérez et al., 2022; Dueñas, 2012). The emotional development of children in the modern world is much more complex than in the past because we live in a society

characterized by consumption and new technologies, resulting in children receiving little attention at home, due to the adults' fast pace of life (Llorent et al., 2021; Porcayo, 2013).

Authors such as Flores (2010) and Nicolosi et al. (2021) state that it is essential to work on emotional development in the classroom during the first years of schooling to lay the foundations for the individual to progress optimally in the different developmental dimensions. To do this, they propose various emotional education programs, starting in early childhood education, and later extending to primary and secondary education. In children, it has been shown that EI strengthens family cohesion and reduces negative behaviours such as anger or aggression, thus improving their emotional capacities; this will allow them to face their problems in an appropriate emotional way, so that in the future they can be happier and more adapted people with better human development (García & Marín, 2021).

On the other hand, adolescence is characterized as being a period full of physical, biological, hormonal, and psychological changes, in which young people begin to discover their own identity, their body image and to form their personality in preparation for adult life (Lillo, 2004; Peláez & Vernetta, 2021). Several studies have demonstrated the great importance and influence that EI has during this evolving stage and the numerous benefits it brings in such important areas as physical and mental health (Clouder et al., 2008; Dueñas, 2012), drug use, interpersonal relationships, academic performance, or aggressive behaviours (Extremera & Fernández, 2013; Salguero et al., 2011).

The literature demonstrates that emotionally intelligent adolescents can better manage their emotional issues and have lower rates of depression, anxiety, attempted suicide, social stress, and somatization. They also solve problems that arise more effectively and have better academic results (Clouder et al., 2008). Adolescents with a lower EI have worse social and interpersonal skills, which lead to risky behaviours such as drug use or aggression. In contrast, emotionally intelligent adolescents are more skilled at perceiving, understanding, and regulating their own emotions. They can also use these skills with others, thus improving their interpersonal relationships (Extremera & Fernández, 2013; Cambil & Fernández-Molina, 2021).

Given all the above, various authors highlight the need to develop and support emotional and social skills in the classroom (Moreno-Murcia & Corví, 2021), thus fostering in students a positive emotional intelligence that will bring them numerous benefits during this complex evolving stage (Bello et al., 2010; Extremera & Fernández 2013). In this way, one can try to achieve a better society, formed by intelligent and creative adolescents, who, at the same time, are healthy, happy, and socially integrated (Salguero et al., 2011). In Spain, this type of education already exists in various schools as part of different programs, such as the INTEMO program (an emotional education project based on the EI theory of Salovey and Mayer); however, for it to have a real impact on society, it needs to be carried out in all educational centres (Extremera & Fernández, 2013).

Nowadays, there are different scales for measuring EI. One of the most used is the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS) developed by Salovey et al. (1995) and considered the leading scale for evaluating EI. The aim of the scale is to evaluate self-knowledge of one's own emotional states, measuring them via 48 different items. One of the first studies that made use of this instrument was carried out by Goldman et al. (1996), in which they demonstrated that, in times of stress, those university students who showed more attention to feelings were more likely to contract an illness or visit the medical centre.

Another of the main instruments used today for measuring EI, which we have used to carry out our study, is The Emotional Quotient Inventory or EQ-i (Bar-On and Parker, 2000). For our research, we will employ the short form of this scale to measure EI since it demonstrates great feasibility when specifically applied to children and adolescents between the ages of 7 and 18, coinciding with the age range of our study sample. The short format of the EQ-i Scale, -Y (Bar-On and Parker 2000), was the first to measure EI in adolescents under 18 years of age. It consists of 30 items (whereas the full version consists of 60) and five scales: the interpersonal scale, the intrapersonal scale, the positive impression scale, the adaptability scale and the stress management scale.

Currently, there are few studies that are concerned with investigating the influence of EI on the lives of students. Even so, those we did find show a significant and positive relationship existing

between EI and self-esteem, psychological well-being (Ysern, 2016), happiness, life satisfaction (Martínez et al., 2007) and resilience (Morán, 2015) during adolescence.

On the other hand, in the psychological field, the concept of resilience has recently begun to attract great interest and attention because several follow-up studies have indicated that children who have suffered various childhood traumas from having experienced difficult circumstances (hunger, abuse, abandonment, etc.) do not develop aggressive behaviours, mental health problems or drug use in adulthood (Guillén, 2005).

The term resilience comes from Latin, from the word *resilio*, which means to go back, bounce, highlight, jump back. Regarding the definition of resilience, there is some controversy among different authors although all agree that this concept involves competence, and effectively and positively coping with adversity or risk (Becoña, 2006). Garmezy (1991) defines resilience as “the ability to recover and maintain adaptive behaviour following abandonment or initial inability at the onset of a stressful event.”

Masten (2001) proposes a similar definition, conceiving it as “a type of phenomenon characterized by good results despite serious threats to adaptation or development”. González et al. (2012) conceive resilience as “the result of the combination or interaction between the attributes of the individual (internal) and those of the family, social and cultural environment (external), which enables them to overcome risk and adversity constructively”.

A person considered resilient is someone who, even having lived (or living) in a situation of exclusion, risk, or trauma for whatever reason, is able to normalize their life through the interaction between the personal and contextual variables in which their development takes place (Carretero, 2010). These people are characterized by emotional intelligence, being aware of their limits and capabilities, being tolerant and flexible in the face of adversity, being optimistic, having initiative, patience and perseverance to achieve their goals, knowing how to communicate their concerns, and having the necessary social skills to relate to others (Carretero, 2010).

As with EI, developing resilience also plays a very important role in the school context of child and adolescent development. The social and family context is ever present in the school life of the child, with the school being considered a resilient environment, where in addition to carrying out the cognitive function of teaching and learning, it provides a space for communication, granting all children the opportunity to create positive bonds that in certain cases can compensate for negative experiences endured in other areas (Uriarte, 2005).

Several studies demonstrate the great importance of resilience in student development, associating high levels of resilience in adolescents with high levels of self-regulation (De la Fuente et al., 2017), commitment to studies, academic effectiveness, and low levels of exhaustion and stress (Ríos et al., 2014; 2016). For their part, Day and Gu (2015) consider that resilience is essential for maintaining educational quality, seeing resilient educators as individuals committed to their work, and who foster resilience among their students.

There are various scales for measuring resilience, one of the best-known being Resilience Scale (ER-14) comprising 14 items (Wagnild, 2009), which is based on Resilience Scale (ER-25) of 25 items (Wagnild and Young, 1993). This scale measures the individual’s level of resilience, considering it a positive personality characteristic that allows the subject to adapt to adverse situations. In addition, this scale is negatively correlated with anxiety and depression (Abiola & Udofia, 2011; Nishi et al., 2010).

Another scale that has received much attention in the research field is the Connor and Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC); this is because it has good psychometric properties and can be applied to different population groups, making it one of the most used for measuring resilience. It evaluates five components: the first related to tenacity, individual competence, and the pursuit of significant goals; the second to tolerance of the negative and strengthening oneself against stress; the third to the positive acceptance of change and safe relationships; the fourth to control, and the fifth to spiritual influences (García et al, 2019). Due to its characteristics and feasibility, we will use this scale to carry out the present study.

Pierre (1996, quoted in Tomkiewicz, 2004) conceives four areas where resilience is applied:

- the family environment: with the child developing successfully despite belonging to an unstructured, conflictive family, being a victim of maltreatment, abandonment or abuse.
- the biological environment: in which the subjects have led a dignified and successful life despite having congenital or acquired somatic disadvantages due to accidents or disease.
- the micro-social environment: with individuals surviving in marginal environments characterized by poverty, lack of services, criminality, slums, drug use, and being forced to live in a state of continued social aggression.
- the macro-social, public, or historical environment: which refers to surviving in circumstances of natural catastrophe, terrorism, wars, and pandemics, etc.

Since 2019, we have been immersed in a macro-social environment, having to face the COVID-19 global pandemic, which has taken many lives and negatively impacted people's mental health (WHO, 2020). One of the groups most affected by the pandemic, and the restrictions imposed by the government to try to stop it, have been adolescents, who have experienced higher rates of post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, irritability, moodiness, and general emotions of sadness, fear, guilt, and uncertainty (Sainz & Sanz, 2020). As a result of this situation, we consider it of great interest to investigate the possible relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience in adolescents within the context of the global pandemic in which we find ourselves.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the relationship between EI and resilience, conceiving them as related concepts that are important in achieving well-being and happiness. For example, in a study looking at secondary school students, Estrada (2020) concluded that the higher the students' EI developmental levels, the higher their levels of resilience. Furthermore, both constructs are related to developing socio-emotional competencies (González-Fernández et al., 2022), so both capacities, along with the competencies associated with them, could be strengthened, and enhanced if they were worked on together in the educational field (Cejudo et al., 2016; Hernández-Andreo et al., 2021; Troy et al., 2017).

This research also focuses on studying EI in secondary school students, which, in itself, is important fieldwork for better understanding young people and education based on scientific evidence (Sánchez-Martín et al., 2022). Considering the complexity of adolescence, during which period significant personal, mental and physical growth takes place and where awareness, control and regulation of emotions is ever present, EI will be related to resilience. Moreover, as we have mentioned above, both variables might be strongly influenced by the current pandemic. In such an ambiguous and peculiar period, we believe that resilience should be one of the main focuses of EI-related research. Accordingly, the following objectives are proposed in this study: (i) to analyse the correlations between the EI and resilience variables; (ii) to analyse the differences between the resilience and EI variables based on the sex variable; and (iii) to analyse the predictive relationship between the EI and resilience variables according to sex.

As for the hypotheses, the following are proposed: (i) that there will be a positive correlation between resilience and EI; (ii) that the EI values will be higher in girls than in boys and that there will be greater resilience in girls; (iii) that there will be greater positive prediction in girls than in boys regarding the EI and resilience dimensions.

Method

Study design

The research design was observational, descriptive, cross-sectional and non-randomized. The inclusion criteria were: (i) being a secondary school student; and (ii) attending class regularly. In total, 150 Physical Education students (78 girls; 72 boys) from education centres in two Spanish provinces participated. Their ages ranged between 12 and 18 years ($M = 14.83$; $SD = 1.72$).

Instruments

Emotional Intelligence. The short form of the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory for young people (EQi-YV *BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory*, Bar-On & Parker, 2000) was used. This scale is used globally and is considered one of the most effective instruments for measuring EI. It can be applied specifically to children and adolescents between 7 and 18 years of age and has high levels of reliability and validity. This scale aims to evaluate the different components that make up Emotional Intelligence. The abbreviated format of this instrument consists of 30 items, tasked with measuring the following dimensions: adaptability, intrapersonal, stress management, interpersonal, and positive impression. The responses are collected using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never happens to me) to 4 (always happens to me).

Resilience. The CD-RISC (*Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale*) was used to measure this construct. CD-RISC was first developed by Connor and Davidson (2003) and consists of 25 items. Later, a new shorter version was published consisting of 10 items (Campbell & Stein, 2007). In our study, the reduced version adapted to Spanish was used (Notario et al., 2011). It consists of 10 items, such as "I am able to adapt to changes". on a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (always). A high level of resilience results in high scores on this scale.

Procedure

First, permission was requested from the school management teams via a letter of introduction in which the research objectives were explained along with the way the study would be carried out. In addition, the students, their parents, or legal guardians were informed of the research objectives and that the data would be collected in a voluntary, anonymous, and confidential way. Given that most of the students were minors, informed consent was required from their parents, guardians, or legal representatives in order for them to participate in the study. The surveys were carried out in April 2021 in the schools' computer room using the computers available to the students. One of the researchers was present throughout to resolve any possible queries that might arise. The students took about 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Statistical analysis

To carry out the data analysis, the SPSS version 28.0 statistical program for Windows was used. The descriptive statistics, correlation between subscales, variance homogeneity, internal consistency of each subscale, kurtosis values and asymmetry corresponding to each of the subscales used were initially calculated, being close to zero and <2.0 , as recommended by Bollen and Long (1994), which shows similarity to the normal curve in a univariate manner. On the other hand, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the sample has a normal distribution. To calculate the differences based on the sex variable, a mean difference analysis was carried out through the Student's T test for independent samples, taking into account Levene's test for homogeneity of variance. A linear regression analysis was performed to assess the prediction of the EI subscales (predictor variables) on resilience (the criterion variable).

Results

Descriptive and Correlation Analysis

Table 1 shows the descriptive values corresponding to the research variables. The results reflect that the students mostly present high average resilience scores. Regarding EI, the highest average was in interpersonal intelligence, followed by adaptability. The lowest averages corresponded to intrapersonal intelligence, stress management, and positive impression. Between the correlations, we can firstly highlight the positive and significant correlation of all the EI subscales with resilience, noting above all the high correlation with adaptability ($r = .62$). Therefore, H1 is met.

In relation to the reliability analysis (α), values $>.70$ are considered acceptable. Although some factors obtained an internal consistency value lower than $.70$ (but between $.60$ and $.70$), these can be considered marginally acceptable (Taylor et al., 2008) given the small number of items in the subscale. Therefore, the reliability values of all the factors used are considered acceptable, except the positive impression factor, whose α was $.43$.

Table 1.*Descriptive statistics, internal consistency, and subscale correlations*

Subscales	M	SD	α	Q1	Q2	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
I. Intrapersonal	2.27	.93	.91	.19	-1.17	-	.22**	.45**	.48**	-.14	.38**
II. Interpersonal	3.46	.39	.62	-.53	-.28	-	-	.44**	.21*	-.02	.41**
III. Adaptability	3.02	.65	.87	-.32	-.35	-	-	-	.26**	.05	.62**
IV. Positive Impression	2.70	.49	.43	.34	.58	-	-	-	-	.06	.34**
V. Stress Management	2.71	.75	.85	-.18	-.57	-	-	-	-	-	.21**
VI. Resilience	3.85	.68	.86	-.09	-.48	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; α = Cronbach's alpha; Q1= asymmetry; Q2 = kurtosis. *. The correlation is significant at the .05 level (bilateral) **. The correlation is significant at the .01 level (bilateral).

3.2. Differences as a function of the sex variable

Using Student's T test, a difference in means analysis for independent samples was performed, taking into account Levene's test for homogeneity of variance, the aim being to calculate the differences as a function of the sex variable. Table 2 shows the statistically significant differences between the EI and resilience subscales. These differences can be seen in three of the factors. The average score obtained is higher in boys than in girls for intrapersonal intelligence, adaptability, stress management and resilience. Therefore, H2 is not met.

Table 2.*Student's T test for independent samples according to the sex variable*

Subscales	Girls M (SD)	Boys M (SD)	t	gl	p	d
<i>Intrapersonal</i>	1.97 (.84)	2.60 (.92)	-4.41	148	.000	.72
<i>Interpersonal</i>	3.49 (.38)	3.44 (.41)	.70	145	.485	.11
<i>Adaptability</i>	2.87 (.67)	3.19 (.58)	-3.10	148	.002	.51
<i>Stress Management</i>	2.62 (.70)	2.81 (.78)	-1.61	148	.109	.26
<i>Resilience</i>	3.69 (.65)	4.02 (.69)	-3.01	148	.003	.50

Note. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; df = degree of freedom; d = Cohen's d.

3.3. Linear Regression

The linear regression analysis was carried out to determine to what extent the emotional intelligence subscales (the predictor variables) predict resilience (the criterion variable) in girls and boys. An evaluation was carried out of the tolerance index and the independence of the variables included in the regression equation. The tolerance index calculated was between .67 and .86 while the variance inflation factor (VIF) was between 1.01 and 1.45; these values rule out the probability of error derived from possible collinearity (Hair et al., 2018). Similarly, the values obtained for the Durbin-Watson statistic (between 1.67 and 1.92) confirm the independence of the data (Gil, 2003).

Table 3.*Multiple linear regression according to sex between the Emotional Intelligence (predictor variables) and Resilience (criterion variable) subscales*

Resilience Variables	Girls						Boys							
	F	B	EE	B	R ²	t	p	F	B	EE	B	R ²	T	P
<i>Intrapersonal</i>		.03	.07	.04		.428	.670		.18	.08	.25		2.29	.025
<i>Interpersonal</i>	12,04	.11	.17	.06	.36	.636	.527	16,11	.52	.18	.31	.46	2.94	.004
<i>Adaptability</i>		.53	.10	.55		5.22	.000		.36	.14	.31		2.69	.009
<i>Stress Management</i>		.16	.09	.18		1.93	.057		.20	.08	.22		2.34	.022

B = non-standardized coefficients; SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficients.

Table 3 shows the results of the linear regression analysis, differentiated according to the sex variable. In girls, the percentage of explained variance is 36% while in boys it reaches 46%. Overall, it should be noted that EI factors are shown to be positive predictors of resilience. As can be observed, among boys, the four dimensions of EI are positive and significant predictors of resilience. The more the interpersonal EI ($\beta = .31$) and adaptability ($\beta = .31$), the more likely the resilience. Moreover, a higher intrapersonal EI ($\beta = .25$) means one is more likely to develop resilience, as is the case for stress management ($\beta = .22$). Among girls, only adaptability ($\beta = .55$) is shown as a positive and significant predictor of resilience. Therefore, H3 is not met.

Discussion

In this paper, the following objectives were proposed: (i) to analyse the correlations between the EI variables and the resilience variable in secondary school adolescents; (ii) to analyse the differences between the resilience variable and the EI variables according to the sex variable; and (iii) to analyse the predictive relationship between the EI variables and the resilience variable according to sex. With regard to the first objective, it can be verified that there is a positive and significant correlative relationship between all the EI subscales and resilience, with an especially high correlation to adaptability. As for the second objective, boys have higher average scores in intrapersonal intelligence, adaptability, stress management and resilience than girls. However, in interpersonal intelligence, girls obtained a higher average score than boys. In relation to the third objective, it is verified that, among boys, the greater the interpersonal EI, adaptability, intrapersonal EI and stress management, the more likely they are to be resilient. In contrast, only adaptability is shown to be a positive and significant predictor of resilience in girls.

The different positive and significant relationships shown in this research between EI and resilience (H1) follow the work lines pursued by authors such as Ayacho et al. (2019), Benites (2019), Cejudo et al. (2016), and Roque (2020), diverse research in which positive associations were recorded between EI scores and the level of people's resilience. Therefore, it can be said that adolescents with a higher level of emotional intelligence can better adapt to adverse or risky situations, that is, they are more resilient. In the case of the present research, one can say that the most emotionally intelligent and resilient students are those who have adapted better to the adversities caused by COVID-19 during the pandemic. On the other hand, in the study carried out by Ayacho and Coaquira (2019), the correlation between resilience and adaptability is much lower than in our study, in which the value is high. This can be explained because an individual might be considered resilient although they do not have all the EI skills developed (in this case adaptability) or they might be a flexible person, able to recognize and control their emotions and feelings but, when faced with adversity, they do not know how to act and cannot adapt to the new reality (Limaymanta, 2014).

The results obtained also provide data on the difference in EI according to the sex variable. The initial hypothesis (H2), which proposed a higher score in EI values for girls than for boys, was not met - the scores for the adaptability, stress management and intrapersonal intelligence variables were higher in boys, the only exception being for interpersonal intelligence, in which the girls scored higher. In recent years, the relationship between EI and the sex variable has been a subject of controversy, as no conclusive results have been obtained. The results from our work do not coincide with other research (Ciarrochi et al., 2000; Mandell & Pherwani 2003), in which girls obtained higher average EI values than boys, justified by the female sex being traditionally considered more emotional, due to a closer socialization with feelings, showing more skills than males in certain interpersonal competencies. This last statement could be extrapolated to our work since the girls obtained a higher score in interpersonal intelligence than the boys. Other studies (Danvila & Sastre, 2010; Reyes & Carrasco, 2013) argue that there are no significant differences between women and men in terms of EI. These authors consider that the difference between EI levels in relation to sex is ever decreasing because of the cultural and educational influences on present generations. This fact could explain our research results, in which the boys obtained higher EI levels than the girls, since today (and even more so with the influence of the pandemic) the way of educating young people has been modified compared to the past, causing these changes to be reversed.

Likewise, the present study shows a higher resilience variable level for boys than girls, meaning that H3 is not met either. As with the EI variable, some controversy exists regarding resilience since we find studies that have different research results to those of our study, such as the works by De la Fuente et al. (2017), García et al. (2019), and Romero et al. (2018), in which no significant differences in resilience were found between men and women. Nonetheless, our results do coincide with some other studies, such as those of Fínez and Morán (2017), and González et al. (2008). As has been seen in all the EI dimensions (apart from interpersonal intelligence) and in the resilience variable, the averages are higher in boys than in girls; perhaps their well-being has been less affected during the pandemic, with them showing less concern than the girls, thus affecting their levels of resilience less. This development might be justified given that one of the most accessible ways to pass the time during quarantine has been to play video games, an activity more related to boys, offering them a form of distraction and daily enjoyment (Andrade et al., 2018; Callejo, 2016). We also see that the girls have suffered more stress during the pandemic, being more compliant with the rules and more pessimistic about the future than the boys, thus negatively affecting their mental health and potentially influencing their lower scores with respect to EI and resilience (Gómez et al., 2020).

As for H4, which posited a higher positive prediction of the EI variables on resilience in girls than in boys, this was not met. As mentioned before, the higher interpersonal EI, adaptability, intrapersonal EI and stress management found in boys meant that they are more likely to be resilient whereas in girls only adaptability is met. The study carried out by Galindo (2017) showed similar results to ours - students with higher averages in the different EI variable dimensions (interpersonal, adaptability, intrapersonal and stress management) had greater resilience; likewise, they also agree in terms of the EI variable for the interpersonal factor, where the girls outperform the boys.

This work is novel and particularly relevant given the pandemic we are living through, since it presents interesting results related to emotional intelligence and resilience in adolescents. Nonetheless, we should also recognise that it has certain limitations. One of them is that the sample consists of students from a single province in the autonomous community of Extremadura. As no probabilistic sample design was carried out, it is impossible to generalize the results obtained. In addition, the study relied on convenience sampling, hence we propose future studies are carried out using a larger sample that has a randomised and representative selection. Following this line of research, it would be interesting to propose other longitudinal studies, and even research using mixed designs (quantitative and qualitative). It would also be advisable to include schools located in different areas that have different socio-economic levels in order to analyse the differences that may occur.

Conclusions

Various conclusions can be drawn from this paper. First of all, a positive and significant correlation has been found between the EI dimensions and resilience, showing that the more emotionally intelligent a person is, the more resilient they are in the face of any adversities that may arise. In addition, EI and resilience values are generally higher in boys than in girls, which shows that boys have been more emotionally stable and more resilient when dealing with the pandemic compared to girls, the latter having been more affected in terms of their health and mental well-being. Finally, the above is reinforced by the fact that there is a positive and significant prediction, especially in boys, of the EI variables on resilience. In this way, we must continue to strengthen the development of EI, both in boys and girls, because, as has been proven in this work, this can mean a greater capacity for resilience.

With this research, we have been able to draw interesting conclusions about EI and resilience in adolescents during COVID-19, as well as the differences that arise with respect to the sex variable. Further research following this line is advisable to understand and compare the results in more detail. At the same time, it could be interesting to propose intervention programs that develop, work on and raise awareness of EI in schools, both for students and teachers, and then to analyse and check whether these programs have proved effective.

Thanks to this work, we have been able to verify the importance of EI in facing adverse and risky situations, such as in a pandemic, and the close relationship that EI has with people's resilience. We

support the idea of working and strengthening emotional intelligence from an early age in the educational field, to form emotionally stable individuals who are resilient and prepared to face any adverse situation that may arise during their lives.

Contribution of each Author: ST-G, AG-G and GL-G conceived the design of this study. ST-G participated in data collection. ST-G and AG-G analyzed the data. ST-G, AG-G and GL-G wrote the manuscript with the most significant input from AG-G. ST-G, AG-G and GL-G contributed to the data interpretation of statistical analysis and read and approved the final manuscript.

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