

Impact of Emotional Education programs in the development of emotional competence in secondary students: A scoping review

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Abstract

In an educational context increasingly affected by psychosocial challenges, emotional competencies are recognized as essential for student well-being, social interaction, and holistic development. These include abilities such as recognizing, expressing, and regulating emotions and empathy, which are key elements for building healthy relationships and managing conflict. Despite their importance, low emotional competencies have been reported in secondary students. This scoping review examines the impact of emotional education programs on secondary students. The PRISMA Scoping method was used with the Web Of Science, Scopus, and Scielo databases. Out of 23 studies identified, five met the inclusion criteria. Findings indicate significant improvements in emotional awareness and regulation, interpersonal skills, and emotional understanding following school-based interventions. While results support the effectiveness of these programs, methodological limitations and limited systematization in Ibero-American contexts were observed, underscoring the need for more culturally grounded and pedagogically informed approaches to emotional education in secondary education settings.

Keywords: Emotional education; Secondary education; Social-emotional learning; Emotional competences; Scoping review.

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1. Introduction

Emotional competencies encompass the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that allow individuals to recognize and manage their emotions, relate effectively to others, and resolve conflicts constructively (Bisquerra & Pérez Escoda, 2007; CASEL, 2020; Rebolledo, 2018). The usefulness of emotional competencies lies in their link with better interpersonal relations, increased personal well-being, and academic success. Likewise, research has shown that emotional competencies are linked with resilience, i.e., the capacity to recover and positively adapt to adverse situations, such as handling stress (Ciarrochi, Scott, Deane & Heaven, 2003; Nelis *et al.*, 2011).

One of the most widely used theoretical models in emotional education is that of Bisquerra (Bisquerra & Chao, 2021; Bisquerra & Pérez Escoda, 2007), who defines emotional competencies as a structured set of interrelated abilities distributed across five domains: (1) emotional awareness, (2) emotional regulation, (3) autonomy, (4) social-emotional capacities, include social skills such as empathy, effective communication and cooperation. Lastly, (5) capacities for well-being promote self-care and self-acceptance. Various disciplines, such as psychology, neuroscience, and sociocultural studies, have contributed to a deeper understanding of how emotions are experienced, regulated, and expressed. Thus, affective neuroscience has developed a line of research on emotions in human learning and development (Bechara, Damasio & Damasio, 2000; Feldman, 2018; Immordino-Yang, 2016). These perspectives have reinforced the importance of the pedagogical function of emotional education.

In recent years, emotional education programs have moved to the forefront not only because of their proven benefits but also as an urgent response to today's educational challenges. The worldwide rise in mental-health disorders, school violence, bullying, and early dropout—trends documented for Latin America and elsewhere (Ministerio de Educación de Chile & UNICEF, 2021; Volkow, Han, Einstein & Compton, 2021) underscores the need to embed emotional-competence training in the school curriculum. Well-designed emotional-education initiatives have been shown to enhance students' well-being, strengthen positive peer relationships, and create safer, more inclusive learning environments (Wilson, 2003).

Despite this growing recognition, emotional competencies are still underrepresented in many educational systems. International organizations such as UNESCO (2023) have emphasized the need for more explicit, equitable, and sustained efforts to incorporate emotional learning into school practices. In Latin America, in particular, the implementation of emotional education remains fragmented and lacks a solid evidence base to inform educational policy.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs are structured educational interventions that explicitly teach, practice, and integrate into the school curriculum the skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, build healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020; Durlak *et al.*, 2015). In Ibero-American countries, SEL initiatives have yielded promising gains in students' emotional and social competencies, well-being, and academic achievement (Mahoney *et al.*, 2021; Oberle, Domitrovich, Meyers & Weissberg, 2016; Van de Sande *et al.*, 2019). However, systematic reviews acknowledge that SEL programs are most effective when tailored to each educational, cultural, and social context (Fernández-Martín, Romero-Rodríguez, Marín-Marín & Gómez-García, 2021). Contextualizing program content and delivery would, therefore, broaden its relevance and effectiveness for diverse regions, such as Latin America.

This scoping review addresses a key gap in existing literature by evaluating a wide range of emotional education programs implemented in secondary schools. Adolescence is characterized by intense emotional reactivity and increased vulnerability to risk behaviours (Bisquerra, 2003). This period also entails major social and academic transitions, which heighten the need for emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. In this context, secondary schools play a crucial role in the promotion of social-emotional competencies, which have been linked to improved academic performance, better peer relationships, and reduced emotional and behavioral problems (Durlak *et al.*, 2011; Domitrovich *et al.*, 2017).

Consequently, research underscores the importance of systematically assessing and developing socio-emotional competencies during this critical stage (Durlak *et al.*, 2011). Unlike previous reviews focusing predominantly on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks, this study includes SEL-based interventions and other often overlooked emotional education programs. In doing so, it offers a broader

perspective on how various program models contribute to developing emotional competencies. A scoping review approach was considered appropriate for this purpose, as it allows for mapping the scope, variety, and characteristics of existing evidence—particularly in a field as heterogeneous and still consolidating as emotional education in secondary education (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac, Colquhoun & O'Brien, 2010).

The guiding questions for this review are as follows:

RQ1. What impact do emotional education programs have on developing emotional competencies in secondary school students?

The following sections describe the methodological approach used to identify and analyze relevant studies, present the results in response to these questions, and discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, including limitations and future research directions. A particular focus will be made on the potential relevance of these programs in the Latino American and Chilean contexts, due to evidence that reveals emotional competencies are not adequately addressed in programs of these countries. By situating the discussion within this local framework, the study aims to offer insights that are not only scientifically grounded but also practically relevant for Latino American and Chilean schools and policymakers.

2. Design and Method

This study employs a scoping review methodology based on the framework proposed by Arksey & O'Malley (2005) and later expanded by Levac *et al.* (2010). This approach is justified by its capacity to synthesize diverse and heterogeneous evidence in fields that are still emerging, such as emotional education in secondary education. Furthermore, the review followed the PRISMA-ScR guidelines (Tricco *et al.*, 2018), ensuring transparency and rigor throughout the review process.

2.1. Identifying the research question

The initial research question guiding this scoping review was: How do emotional education programs impact the development of emotional competencies in secondary school students?

This question was developed iteratively and progressively refined based on insights from the initial literature review to ensure that it directly addressed the key gaps identified in the literature.

2.2. Search strategy

An exhaustive search was conducted from September to November 2023 to collect all available evidence in line with the previously determined eligibility criteria (Thoemmes & Kim, 2011). The restricted search was carried out for 2018–2023 in the WOS, Scopus, and Scielo databases.

The descriptor chain took place in English (“Emotional Competence” OR “Emotional Learning Programs” AND “secondary school”) and in Spanish (“Competencia emocional” AND “Programas de Educación Emocional” AND “Educación media” OR “Educación Secundaria”).

The inclusion criteria were:

- 1) Language. Only studies in English or Spanish were included. Other studies in different languages were excluded, even if their abstracts were written in English or Spanish.
- 2) Articles from specialized scientific journals. Articles published in non-specialized websites, blogs, digital newspapers, books, book chapters, doctoral thesis, or similar were excluded.
- 3) Receivers of the intervention. Only studies focused on Emotional Education Programs were included.
- 4) Age of participants. Only studies addressing secondary education interventions (10 to 17 years of age) were included, as this is a crucial stage for the development of emotional competencies. Studies addressing other educational stages were excluded.

- 5) Subject of the study. Only studies that used emotional education programs were included.
- 6) To adequately address our research questions, experimental studies that do not specify their sample, resources, and/or play elements were excluded.

2.3. Study selection

After selection, titles and abstracts were reviewed before the full texts. Finally, studies that met the inclusion criteria and had relevant empirical research were included. The Rayyan – Intelligent Systematic Review (2021) tool was used to identify duplicate documents based on their DOI and bibliographical reference of the source. Articles whose title, keywords, abstract, and content were not directly related to our research questions or did not meet all previously mentioned inclusion criteria were excluded. Five scientific articles were selected for systematic review (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 illustrates the general search and selection process for articles through the PRISMA flow diagram (Page *et al.*, 2021).

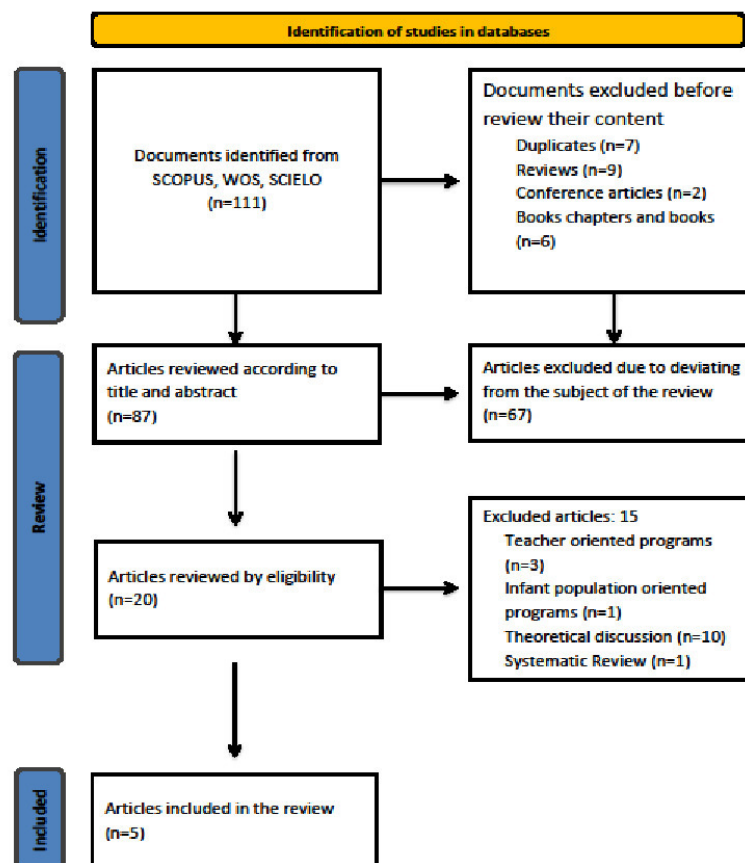


Figure 1 – Flow diagram of search and selection of analyzed sources from the WOS, Scopus, and Scielo databases.

2.4. Charting data

Tables were used to structure information. The first table provides a general overview of all selected studies, including the authors, year of publication, country of origin, sample, methodological approach, and study design.

Table 1 – Characteristics of studies on Emotional Education Programs
Note. M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation. Prepared by the authors.

Authors and year	Country	Age of students (M, SD)	Sample Size	Focus	Design	Evaluation of the Intervention
Pollak <i>et al.</i> , 2024	Austria	10.34 years old (.76)	476 (221 females)	Quantitative	Quasi-experimental	Pre- and post-test
Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño, 2023	Spain	13.74 years old (.54)	30 (16 females)	Quantitative	Quasi-experimental	Pre- and post-test
Coelho <i>et al.</i> , 2021	Portugal	12.95 years old (1.70)	995 (474 females)	Quantitative	Quasi-experimental	Pre- and post-test
Pozo-Rico <i>et al.</i> , 2018	Spain	16.75 years old (1.26)	158 (93 females)	Quantitative	Quasi-experimental	Pre- and post-test
Mahmud, 2021	England	11.3 years old (.47)	70 (32 females)	Mixed	Quasi-experimental	Pre- and post-test
			Total = 1729			

The countries of origin of the selected studies were Portugal (one), Spain (two), Austria (one), and England (one). They were published between 2018 and 2024: one in 2018, two in 2021, one in 2023, and one in 2024. Four of the studies were published in English and one in Portuguese. Five articles were selected out of all 20 initially reviewed studies.

In the sample, a total of 1729 participants were analyzed. The sample sizes varied between 30 and 995 participants. All studies included samples of males and females. The age of participants ranged from 10.34 years to 16.75 years, with SDs ranging from 0.47 to 1.70. This reflects variations in the homogeneity of the ages in each study.

As for the sampling techniques used, all five studies used non-probability sampling due to accessibility and convenience. Regarding group configuration, all five studies used non-randomized grouping.

Four studies used quantitative approaches, and one used a mixed approach. All studies used a quasi-experimental design, used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions in educational contexts where randomization is not possible. Based on the evaluation instruments, the studies mainly used standardized scales and included a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design to measure the impact of interventions focused on the emotional competencies of students. Particularly, in the Mahmud study (Mahmud, 2021), after quantitative data collection, they applied a focus group for better understanding the student's experiences to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

In terms of the context of the studies, most of the interventions were carried out in public schools in urban contexts. However, the study of Pollak (Pollak *et al.*, 2024) analyzed SEL programs implemented in rural and urban environments and compared the results.

This allows for an understanding of the necessity of adapting emotional competencies programs to the geographical context of students, especially those who move from rural to urban environments.

The analysis highlights the importance of considering sample size, participant age, and methodology when evaluating the effectiveness of emotional education programs.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the studies according to their aims, variables, and evaluation instruments used to measure the results associated with the emotional education programs.

Table 2 - Measures and Results of Emotional Education Programs
Note. Prepared by the authors.

Authors	Number of sessions	Objective	Variables	Instruments	Results
Pollak <i>et al.</i> , 2024	8	Evaluating the social-emotional learning program “You, me and the Little Monsters” on the skills connectedness with classmates and happiness.	Happiness. Connectedness. Social-emotional Skills. Classroom climate of students and teachers.	1) EPOCH Adolescent Well-Being Measurement (Kern, Benson, Steinberg, & Steinberg, 2016). - EPOCH Sub-scale connectedness with peers. - Sub-scale Verification of the List of self-reports for social and learning behavior (Lohbeck, Nitkowski, Petermann, & Petermann, 2014). 2) Perceived Classroom Responsibility Climate Questionnaire (Fernández-Río, Cecchini, Merino-Barrero, & Valero-Valenzuela, 2019) - Sub-scales for students and teachers.	The experimental group showed a statistically significant increase in social-emotional skills, peer connectedness, and happiness. The experimental group saw a decrease in classroom school climate, apparently caused by factors external to the intervention.
Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño, 2023	10	Providing teachers with a practical and flexible resource allows them to properly guide students' comprehensive development, where cognitive and emotional perspectives are key to human well-being.	Emotional Awareness. Emotional Regulation. Emotional Autonomy. Social Competence. Competence for life and well-being.	1) Emotional Development Questionnaire for Secondary School Students (CDE-SEC) (Pérez Escoda, 2016).	The experimental group shows statistically significant improvements in emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and total emotional competence.
Coelho <i>et al.</i> , 2021	9	Re-evaluating the effectiveness of the PASS SEL program in self-perceptions of secondary students. Evaluating the effectiveness of the PASS SEL program on secondary students.	Self-concept (three dimensions: social, academic, and emotional). Self-esteem.	1) Self-concept Form 5 (AF-5) (Garcia & Musitu, 2001.; García, Musitu, & Veiga, 2006). 2) Self-Description Questionnaire-II (Marsh, Relich, & Smith, 1983).	The experimental group showed improvements in social self-concept and self-esteem. There were gender differences in the initial levels of each self-perception. Males showed higher levels of social and emotional self-concept and self-esteem. Females, on the other hand, showed higher levels of academic self-concept.
Pozo-Rico, 2018	12	Analyzing the effectiveness of the Training Course on Emotional Intelligence (TCEI) program in developing emotional intelligence in secondary education.	Emotion perception. Use of emotions to solve problems. Management of relevant emotions.	1) Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) (Schutte et al., 1998). 2) Situational Test of Emotional Understanding (STEU) and Situational Test of Emotion Management (STEM) (MacCann, Wang, Matthews, & Roberts, 2010).	The experimental group showed a statistically significant increase in emotional perception and emotion use, as well as results in STEU and STEM, compared to the control group.

Authors	Number of sessions	Objective	Variables	Instruments	Results
Mahmud, 2021	6	Analyzing the effectiveness of a social-emotional learning program specific for improving skills, capabilities, and academic performance, as well as social-emotional skills of students transitioning from primary to secondary education.	Self-awareness. Empathy.	1) Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Child Form (TEIQue-CF) (Petrides, 2009). 2) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1983).	The experimental group showed a statistically significant improvement in empathy. The focus groups' findings highlight how the intervention helped students address negative emotions, deal with and handle difficult issues, and develop positive and negative strategies for future interventions.

3. Results

3.1. Objectives and scope of the reviewed interventions

The aims of the analyzed studies converge on a central purpose: to evaluate the impact of emotional education programs on the development of emotional competencies. There is a tendency to help students develop awareness and understanding of their own emotions, the ability to regulate them, and interpersonal skills (such as empathy, social self-concept, or a sense of connection with peers), thereby developing emotional competencies. The improvement and assessment of these competencies are a common central objective. The studies reviewed align with their goals, focusing on emotional awareness, regulation, autonomy, empathy, and connectedness with others.

However, differences appear at several levels. Regarding the program's scope, Pollak *et al.* (2024) focus their eight-session intervention on specific skills, happiness, connectedness, social-emotional skills, and classroom climate. At the same time, Pozo-Rico *et al.* (2018) conduct twelve sessions that cover emotional perception, the use of emotions to solve problems, and the management of relevant emotions. Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño (2023), for their part, propose ten sessions focused on five primary competencies (awareness, regulation, autonomy, social competence, and well-being). Coelho *et al.* (2021) reevaluate the PASS program, which consists of nine sessions distributed across several schools, focusing on self-concept (social, academic, and emotional dimensions) and self-esteem. It also reveals gender differences at the initial levels. Mahmud (2021) employs a more limited approach, conducting six sessions in a single school, to measure self-awareness and empathy, and incorporates focus groups to enrich the quantitative data.

The specificity of the objectives also varies across studies. Some, such as Pollak *et al.* (2024), focus on a narrow set of outcomes, peer connectedness, happiness, and classroom climate, while others, such as Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño (2023), propose broader goals that include providing teachers with resources for comprehensive cognitive and emotional development. Despite all the differences, it is worth noting that all studies emphasize the importance of emotional competencies within the educational context, taking into account the school's reality and the students' age. Each intervention adapts its objectives to the challenges specific to the adolescent age group it serves: Pollak *et al.* (2024) work on group cohesion and prosocial norms to cushion the uncertainty of the transition to secondary school (9–11 years); Mahmud (2021) reinforces empathy and self-awareness just as students (11–12 years) begin to forge new friendships; Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño (2023) address emotional awareness and regulation to prevent frequent disruptive behaviors at 13–14 years; Coelho *et al.* (2021) focus on self-esteem and social, academic, and emotional self-concept during the search for identity at 12–15 years; and Pozo-Rico *et al.* (2018) train the perception and management of emotions to help with academic pressure and vocational decision-making at 15–17 years.

These factors are crucial for designing and implementing programs that successfully develop emotional competencies. Therefore, this review focuses on the secondary stage, where socioemotional changes require skills that promote school adjustment and academic performance. For instance, Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño (2023) aim for comprehensive development that includes cognitive and emotional aspects.

3.2. Variables included in the assessment

All the studies focus on evaluating the effects of emotional education programs, which is evidence of their effectiveness. In general terms, the programs evaluated in the reviewed studies reflect that students' emotional skills improved and that fostering their connectedness with others was possible, thereby promoting well-being.

Pollak *et al.* (2024) and Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño (2023) studies evaluated social-emotional skills in general terms. Examples of this are empathy, emotional regulation, and social competence, which are fundamental for the comprehensive development of students. Empathy is evaluated in certain studies through the use of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index. This instrument defines empathy as one of an individual's reactions when facing experiences observed in others and includes four sub-scales (*perspective taking, fantasy, empathic preoccupation, and personal discomfort*). For Mahmud (2021) self-

awareness and empathy are fundamental aspects of social-emotional development. While they are specific measures in their study, they are implicitly included in social-emotional skills in other studies.

Other authors focus on emotional regulation and awareness, essential for adequately managing emotions and improving emotional well-being (Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño, 2023; Pozo-Rico *et al.*, 2018). The evaluation of these variables included using specific scales or measuring more general social-emotional skills.

While the variables studied in the programs agree, there are also differences in the specificity of using and managing emotions. This is reflected in the detailed evaluation of how students manage their feelings in different situations (Pozo-Rico *et al.*, 2018). Analyzing classroom climate through the assessment of how dynamics are affected by the SEL program adds a vital context dimension that is not a part of other studies (Pollak *et al.*, 2024).

For Coelho *et al.* (2021), self-concept and self-esteem provide a view into how students perceive themselves and their trust in different areas. The study highlights gender differences in initial levels for each self-perception. According to the results, males showed higher levels of social and emotional self-concept and self-esteem, while females showed higher levels of academic self-concept. This approach allows a better understanding of gender dynamics in training self-concept and self-esteem. Likewise, it provides for such differences in consideration in the design and implementation of educational programs that aim at students' emotional and academic development. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the specific educational context and the degree to which programs are tailored to the particular needs of each school and its students play a decisive role in the effectiveness of emotional-education interventions.

This diversity of measured variables provides a deep and more complex view of how emotional education programs can influence child development, ranging from happiness and connectedness to self-evaluation and school adaptation.

3.3. Evaluation instruments

The studies used different evaluation instruments but shared common aspects when addressing *emotional competencies, self-concept, emotional intelligence, and school adaptation*. They differ in the specific dimensions each study prioritizes and the tools used to measure them. This diversity in the evaluation of emotional education programs reflects the need to adapt instruments to the specific goals of each research study. Pollak *et al.* (2024) employed the EPOCH Adolescent Well-Being Measure to assess two specific indicators of adolescent adjustment: connectedness with peers and happiness. In turn, Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño (2023) employed the Emotional Development Questionnaire for Adolescents (CDE-SEC) to assess three core emotional competencies: awareness, regulation, and autonomy. Coelho *et al.* (2021) incorporated Self-Concept Scale Form 5 (AF-5) evaluates self-concept in social, academic, and emotional dimensions, focusing on specific aspects of self-concept (Coelho *et al.*, 2021). Pozo-Rico *et al.* (2018) assessed emotional intelligence in both academic and personal life using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) and the skills model (STEM/STEU), with a focus on variables related to emotion perception and its usefulness in problem-solving. Mahmud (2021) uses the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Child Form (TEIQue-CF) to evaluate self-awareness and empathy.

3.4. Effects of the Interventions

In terms of the effects of the reviewed studies, significant impacts on social-emotional development have been observed. Emotional education programs positively affect connectedness with classmates, happiness, emotional awareness, and emotional regulation. Evidence of essential improvements in emotional competencies, such as *self-concept and self-esteem*, contributes to a more positive perception of oneself. Regarding emotional intelligence, programs positively influence dimensions such as *self-awareness, empathy, and emotional management*, which suggests a comprehensive impact on the emotional health of participants. Additionally, an improvement in school adaptation can be seen in terms of peer relationships and learning skills, which reflects that the programs address strategies that are beneficial to emotional aspects and academic environments.

3.5. Methodological limitations

The studies show some significant methodological deficiencies. Firstly, the lack of randomization in studies limits equivalence between control and experimental groups, which might bias results and reduce the internal validity of the studies. More specifically, the study of Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño (2023) shows statistically significant differences in pre-test measurements between the experimental and control groups. Likewise, only two studies use follow-up measurements after post-test measurements (Mahmud, 2021; Pozo-Rico *et al.*, 2018). This prevents the evaluation of the long-term sustainability of the observed effects.

These limitations raise the need to implement a rigorous design in future research to reach more robust and generalizable conclusions about the effectiveness of emotional education programs.

4. Discussion

This scoping review analyzed five empirical studies to evaluate the impact of emotional education programs implemented in secondary schools. The findings reveal significant improvements in students' emotional and social competencies, particularly *emotional awareness*, *emotional regulation*, *interpersonal skills*, and *emotional recognition*. These outcomes are consistent with existing literature (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007; Cipriano *et al.*, 2023) and confirm that well-structured emotional education programs can contribute positively to student development, well-being, and academic performance. These studies show that the introduction of emotional competencies programs focuses on skills, attitudes, behavior, school climate and safety, school performance, and significantly better academic achievement by students. However, the significance of emotional education should not be confined to its measurable outcomes. Emotional learning involves acquiring skills and shaping how young people make sense of their emotions and those of others in authentic contexts. Recent studies emphasize that emotional education should be culturally responsive, ethically grounded, and pedagogically reflective (Mahoney *et al.*, 2021; Schonert-Reichl, 2019).

Studies in this review reported gender-based differences in emotional outcomes, reinforcing the need to personalize interventions. For instance, Coelho *et al.* (2021) and Pollak *et al.* (2024) found that males and females demonstrated differing levels of self-concept and self-esteem.

This raises a need to personalize programs to address such differences effectively. Additionally, the review also highlights empathy and trust as crucial classroom processes. For example, Mahmud (2021) observed a temporary drop in self-reported empathy immediately after the intervention; the author argues that this reflects students' sharper self-awareness and stricter self-assessment, rather than an actual loss of empathic skill. Taken together, the evidence suggests that socio-emotional development during adolescence is dynamic and nonlinear, shaped by learners' characteristics, peer culture, and broader life experiences (Jones, McGarrah & Kahn, 2019). Moreover, schools should be seen as relational and ethical environments where emotions are continuously negotiated. Weissberg (2019) argues that the emotional climate of schools built on trust, empathy, and respect plays a critical role in sustaining the effects of SEL programs over time. Emotional education should be viewed as a commitment to human development.

The review also underscores the importance of implementing emotional education programs in Latin American contexts, particularly in Chile, where adolescent mental health has declined in recent years (Centro de Estudios, 2023). This aligns with global concerns about rising emotional distress among youth, as observed in countries like Japan (Takizawa, Bambling, Matsumoto, Ishimoto, & Ediripulige, 2023). These data call for context-sensitive programs that respond to students' lived realities while affirming emotional competencies.

5. Practical Implications

The findings of this scoping review reinforce the urgent need to integrate emotional education into secondary school curricula. The study by Baeza & Barría (2022), which evaluated the Chilean Orientation and Philosophy courses through the lens of Bisquerra's emotional competence model (Bisquerra &

López-Cassá, 2020; Bisquerra, 2003; Bisquerra, 2005), revealed that emotional competencies are not addressed explicitly or systematically in these programs. While the Orientation course focuses on personal development and risk prevention, and Philosophy aims to promote critical and metacognitive thinking, neither systematically incorporates emotional education components.

Among the five core dimensions proposed by Bisquerra (2003), the emotional communication dimension, which encompasses emotional identification, expression, and regulation, was the least developed. This is particularly concerning given that emotional communication is foundational to adolescent development and essential for fostering empathy, self-regulation, and relational understanding.

Similarly, Prieto Rojas & González Arias (2022) found that emotional competencies were scarcely addressed in primary education and minimally integrated into learning objectives and educational practices. This highlights a broader trend: emotional education remains marginal in curricular design across educational levels in Chile.

Given these gaps, educational policy must move toward a curriculum that embraces emotions as central to the mission of education. Schools must not only promote academic achievement but also prepare students for life's emotional and social challenges, particularly in a post-pandemic hyperconnected world, marked by increased anxiety, loss of social connection, and psychological vulnerability among adolescents.

Implementing emotional education programs gives students essential tools to manage their emotional lives, build healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions. To be effective, such programs must be culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate, and sustained over time. Beyond isolated interventions, what is needed is a systemic and school-wide integration of emotional education supported by teacher training, curriculum redesign, and institutional commitment.

In this way, emotional education can fulfill its potential to support individual well-being and collective coexistence, ethical awareness, and the development of reflective, emotionally literate citizens.

6. Limitations of the study

One of the primary limitations of this scoping review is its reliance on self-reported measures to assess students' emotional and social competencies. While these tools offer valuable insights, they are inherently vulnerable to biases such as social desirability, limited introspective ability, and contextual interpretation (e.g., cultural understandings of emotional expression). These factors influence how students perceive and report their emotional development, potentially distorting the accuracy of the data.

Another significant limitation is the lack of longitudinal studies in the included literature. Most reviewed studies used cross-sectional designs, assessing immediate post-intervention effects but not providing evidence on the sustainability or long-term impact of emotional education programs. As a result, the persistence of improvements in emotional competencies remains unclear, limiting the ability to assess lasting change.

The main strong point of this scoping review was its methodology, as obvious methodological guidelines were used based on PRISMA-ScR. This lends the review a high degree of reliability and replicability of findings. On the other hand, the variability of the analyzed Emotional Education Programs, as opposed to other reviews, was not limited to specific programs, such as SEL programs. Conversely, our review considered a wider variety of emotional education programs, which gave way to a broader evaluation of their impact on different contexts and populations. Additionally, other factors were analyzed, such as gender differences and socioeconomic conditions, enriching the discussion on the issue of emotional education programs.

7. Conclusions

Findings from the five studies reviewed (Pollak *et al.*, 2024; Pozo-Rico *et al.*, 2018; Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño, 2023; Coelho *et al.*, 2021; Mahmud, 2021) show consistent gains in core emotional and social competencies (emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, connectedness, and self-concept) among secondary-school students. These improvements are associated with classroom

well-being (Pollak *et al.*, 2024) and more positive academic self-perceptions (Coelho *et al.*, 2021), underscoring their value for both scholastic achievement and holistic adolescent development.

Collectively, the evidence supports embedding emotional education as a cross-curricular priority delivered through structured sessions that blend explicit instruction, guided reflection, and opportunities to apply skills in authentic classroom contexts. Effectiveness, however, depends on tailoring programs to learners' developmental stage (roughly 12–16 years), baseline emotional skills, gender differences, and the sociocultural characteristics of each school (Coelho *et al.*, 2021; Mahmud, 2021).

Sustained teacher professional development in socio-emotional competencies and implementation strategies is crucial for fidelity and long-term impact (Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño, 2023). Accordingly, education authorities should incorporate clear emotional education standards into national curricula and allocate resources for their progressive rollout, particularly in Latin American systems where these competencies remain underrepresented (Baeza & Barría, 2022; Prieto Rojas & González Arias, 2022).

Teacher training in socioemotional competencies and implementation strategies is essential to ensure the fidelity and sustainability of interventions (Cabello-Sanz & Muñoz-Parreño, 2023). Educational authorities should incorporate Emotional Education standards into national curricula and provide resources for their progressive development, especially in Latin American contexts where emotional competencies remain marginal (Baeza & Barría, 2022; Prieto Rojas & González Arias, 2022).

We argue that future research and practice should adopt participatory, systemic, and culturally responsive approaches in line with contemporary perspectives (Jones *et al.*, 2019; Mahoney *et al.*, 2021). Emotional education must affirm students as both learners and as emotional and ethical beings capable of transforming themselves and their communities. As such, it is a foundational pillar of education for democratic life and human flourishing.

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