

Educating for emotional wellbeing in uncertain times: a study from a school counselling perspective

Educación para el bienestar emocional en tiempos convulsos: un estudio desde la perspectiva de la orientación escolar

Educar para o bem-estar emocional em tempos turbulentos: um estudo desde a perspectiva da orientação

在动荡时期培养情感福祉：从学校指导的角度进行研究

التعليم من أجل الرفاهية العاطفية في الأوقات المضطربة: دراسة من منظور التوجيه

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Abstract

Emotional competencies have become a powerful tool for use in counselling practice that pursues high quality standards. Thus, counselling professionals are increasingly aware that emotions play an essential role within their practice. For this reason, the present study strives to identify perspectives of school counsellors working in the autonomous community of Galicia regarding the utility of emotional competencies in their day-to-day practice. A descriptive, non-experimental and quantitative study was conducted. A Likert scale was used to gather information as this tool enables specific and clear data to be collected quickly in order to provide a more complete description of the state of the issue. The quantitative data gathered provides valuable information pertaining to the most effective and useful emotional competencies for use in counselling practice and, therefore, favours efficient assessment of wellbeing.

Keywords: counselling, competences, emotions, wellbeing, education

Resumen

Las competencias emocionales se han convertido, actualmente, en una poderosa herramienta para el ejercicio de una acción orientadora que persiga unos altos estándares de calidad. Por lo tanto, los profesionales de la orientación cada día son más conscientes de que las emociones juegan un papel determinante en la práctica orientadora. Esto nos ha llevado a emprender un estudio con el objetivo de conocer la opinión de los orientadores/as escolares de la Comunidad Autónoma de Galicia acerca de la aplicabilidad de las competencias emocionales en su quehacer diario. Un estudio cuantitativo no experimental descriptivo, en el que se ha utilizado una escala de valoración tipo Likert como instrumento para la recogida de información y así acceder de manera rápida y clara a unos datos que nos ayudarían a disponer de un retrato completo sobre el estado de la cuestión. Los datos cuantitativos resultantes proporcionan una valiosa información para conocer las competencias emocionales más efectivas y útiles en la praxis orientadora y así afrontar de manera satisfactoria y favorable el bienestar.

Palabras clave: orientación, competencias, emociones, bienestar, educación.

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Resumo

As competências emocionais tornaram-se, atualmente, uma ferramenta poderosa para o exercício de uma ação orientadora na procura de elevados padrões de qualidade. Por conseguinte, os profissionais de orientação estão cada vez mais conscientes de que as emoções desempenham um papel decisivo na prática orientadora. Isto levou-nos a realizar um estudo com o objetivo de conhecer a opinião dos orientadores escolares da Comunidade Autónoma da Galiza sobre a aplicabilidade das competências emocionais no seu trabalho diário. Um estudo quantitativo não-experimental descritivo, em que se utilizou uma escala de classificação do tipo Likert como instrumento para a recolha de informação, de modo a aceder de forma rápida e clara a dados que nos ajudassem a ter um retrato completo do estado da questão. Os dados quantitativos resultantes fornecem informações valiosas para conhecer as competências emocionais mais eficazes e úteis na prática orientadora, a fim de abordar o bem-estar de forma satisfatória e favorável.

Palavras-chave: orientação, competências, emoções, bem-estar, educação

摘要

情感技能现已成为追求高质量指导行动的重要工具。因此，指导专业人员越来越意识到情感在指导实践中起着决定性的作用。这促使我们开展了一项研究，旨在了解加利西亚自治区的学校指导员对情感技能在其日常工作适用性的看法。

本研究为一种定量非实验性描述性研究，使用李克特量表作为信息收集工具，从而能够快速清晰地获取数据，帮助我们全面了解问题现状。所得的定量数据提供了宝贵的信息，以了解在指导实践中最有效和有用的情感技能，从而积极和有利地促进福祉。

关键词: 指导、职能、情感、幸福、教育。

ملخص

أصبحت الكفاءات العاطفية حالياً أداة قوية لممارسة العمل التوجيهي الذي يسعى إلى تحقيق معايير الجودة العالية. ولذلك، فإن المتخصصين في الاستشارة يدركون بشكل متزايد أن العواطف تلعب دوراً حاسماً في ممارسة الاستشارة. وقد دفعنا ذلك إلى إجراء دراسة بهدف معرفة رأي المرشدين المدرسيين في إقليم غاليسيا ذي الحكم الذاتي حول مدى إمكانية تطبيق الكفاءات العاطفية في عملهم اليومي. دراسة كمية وصفية غير تجريبية، تم فيها استخدام مقياس التصنيف من نوع "الليكرت" كأداة لجمع المعلومات وبالتالي الوصول بسرعة ووضوح إلى البيانات التي من شأنها أن تساعدنا على الحصول على صورة كاملة لحالة المسألة. توفر البيانات الكمية الناتجة معلومات قيمة لمعرفة الكفاءات العاطفية الأكثر فعالية وإفادة في ممارسة الإرشاد وبالتالي معالجة الرفاهية بطريقة مرضية ومواتية.

الكلمات الدالة: التوجيه، المهارات، العواطف، الرفاهية، التعليم.

Introduction

The complexity of technological and cultural advances promote changes in society that oblige us to deal with an increasingly complex world, full of diverse questions and limited answers. Undoubtedly, this goes hand in hand with an increasingly digital and digitalised society (Luengo-Horcajo et al., 2021), with technology bursting onto the scene at breakneck speed, without allowing for time to foresee and evaluate the implications it is likely to have in the near future. Indeed, it is characterised by dynamism (Moreno-Parra et al., 2022) and the demand for immediacy in all settings.

This leads to configuration of a society defined by opportunities that are ephemeral and transient in nature (Vargas-Hernández & Salas-Pérez, 2023). This goes hand in hand with stress and perceptions of a lack of control, which increase as a consequence of constant demands, not only, on one's capacity to instantly adapt, but, also, to respond effectively to different stimuli. In this sense, a need seems to exist to know how to be grounded in any given domain of one's setting at both an interpersonal and intrapersonal level (Ávila-Muñoz, 2019).

Evidently, changes emerge in societies that point to new educational challenges which are reflected, as would be expected, in the day-to-day tasks of schools. Education must not be far removed for progress and social change. Consequently, schools must meet this new challenge and effectively address the demands made by society. Particularly, schools must navigate the challenge posed by coexisting in the so-called information and communication society, characterised by globalisation, accessibility, internationalisation of the economy, immigration, poverty, etc. (Briceño-Núñez et al., 2023; Fernández-Batanero, 2020).

Consequently, questions arise around determining the types of strategies adopted by schools to address the issues discussed above, without ignoring the fact that one of the main aspects to consider is related with provision

regarding different manifestations of diversity and personalisation of teaching and learning processes. Perhaps, this consideration must begin by posing a series of questions which, for instance, confirm whether the school is truly prepared to take on new changes or whether it is committed to accepting reality and becoming complicit in the act of social transformation.

When considering this overwhelming and uncertain landscape, educational counselling takes on particular importance, given that it constitutes an intervention tool that favours development of functions such as adaptation and socialisation. From this standpoint, counselling is consolidated as a key component of education (Delgado-Galindo et al., 2021), given that it is grounded in a process that is deeply linked to the context in which it is developed. It represents, therefore, an ideal means for the creation of social, cultural and educational conditions that enable the development of feelings of independence, resilience and competence. In other words, it is a powerful tool for creatively tackling the challenges, obstacles and adversities imposed by society (Morales-Carrero, 2020).

In the present day, counselling is perceived to be of growing importance within academic institutions (Hernández-Salamanca, 2020). Specifically, such institutions are under pressure to be constantly changing and expected to form a direct relationship with contemporary society (Delgado-González et al., 2023; Torrecilla-Sánchez et al., 2022). To a certain extent, this circumstance is reflected through the increasing importance being given to the promotion of non-cognitive processes, in addition to the need for schools to be transformed into targeted spaces for emotional growth (Bisquerra-Alzina & Chao-Rebolledo, 2021; Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2022; Losada-Puente et al., 2022; Stake & Visse, 2023). Given this backdrop, schools have a growing need to employ counselling professionals with the right competencies that enable them to perform tasks with guarantees of quality and success. In this sense, emotional competencies take on an important role as an alternative that

encourages reflexion and promotes the development of social and individual skills appropriate for dealing with frustration, stress and conflict from a flexible and strategic standpoint (Morales, 2021; Ortiz-Álvarez et al., 2023).

Such a degree of turbulence is experienced in changing settings that must be tackled through counselling that, in uncertain times, such as those currently being witnessed, more resilient, adaptive and highly emotionally competent counsellors are needed than ever before. Such qualities allow them to carry out their professional duties in such a way that they can make a successful contribution to tackling daily challenges and directly help to maintain emotional stability when faced with negative events. Undoubtedly, the development of emotional competencies constitutes a vital element of counselling practice, turning them into an extraordinary resource for dealing with crises at school and more effectively engaging in professional practice (Gómez-Veloz & García-González, 2022). In relation to this, it serves to highlight that counselling professionals must be emotionally competent in order to tackle, on a daily basis, dizzying social and professional change (Vargas-Hernández & Salas-Pérez, 2023). Indeed, in light of the globalisation process being undergone by society, emotional competencies take on greater meaning and value (Ramírez-Díaz, 2020).

The complexity and variety of tasks that must be performed through counselling may lead to high levels of stress and dissatisfaction at a personal and professional level (García-Domingo, 2021). Thus, the capacity to better interpret one's emotions implies access to more resources for tackling negative behaviours in one's surroundings and lower dissatisfaction following negative experiences, instead focusing on the positives (Ávila-Muñoz, 2019; Soledad-Martínez & López-Sarmiento, 2023). Likewise, strategies for increasing frustration tolerance may be preferred instruments (Hernández-Salamanca, 2020).

This being said, what is meant when emotional competence is discussed? The response to this question is a set of emotional, individual and interpersonal abilities that influence the overall ability of individuals to cope with the pressure exerted by their surrounding environment (Palomera et al., 2019). Thus, this brings into play the integration of knowing how to be and how to act in relation to the diverse interactions and different settings in which human beings operate (Rendón-Urbe, 2015).

In light of that discussed above, the importance of emotional development and the influx of emotional competencies in counselling practice is highlighted (Cejudo, 2017; García-García & Sánchez-Calleja, 2017; Gómez-Veloz & García-González, 2021). Thankfully, counsellors' emotions are starting to be considered as an important variable for understanding aspects related with their wellbeing and physical and mental health (Amor-Almedina & Serrano-Rodríguez, 2020; López-López et al., 2020).

In this context, the need arises to perform an in-depth examination of the professional competencies required by counselling professionals (Sánchez-Tarazaga & Matarranz, 2023). For this reason, there is growing need for research to outline a competency profile of counsellors, as a means of ensuring that both basic initial training and ongoing lifelong training are geared towards responding to the needs of an ever changing society (Ferrando-Carretero et al., 2020). In other words, the outcome of the present research will help ensure that counsellors are equipped with professional and personal competencies that favour effective intervention processes geared towards the transformation of social life (Morales-Carrero, 2020).

Emotional wellbeing is a key element to be developed during the initial and ongoing training of counsellors. Failure to do so will leave this professional group ill-equipped to take on educational challenges, such as relating with the educational community in a positive

and appropriate way (Ávila-Muñoz, 2019). Some studies (Rueda-Carcelén & Filella-Guiu, 2016; Sánchez-Calleja et al., 2019) have already highlighted the importance of equipping counsellors with a series of skills or strategies to enable them to perform their daily duties (awareness and regulation, empathy, stress management, understanding and sensitivity, conflict prevention and resolution, etc.).

Given the issue outlined above, a study was conducted in the Galician context, with the ultimate aim of identifying the perception of practicing counsellors regarding the degree of applicability of emotional competencies in their daily practice. Findings of the present study are expected to serve as a support in the urgent task of developing the competency profile of counsellors.

Method

A quantitative, non-experimental and descriptive study was conducted.

Participants

The study population comprised 323 counsellors working at publicly ran secondary schools in Galicia. As a sampling method, contact was made with all professionals, inviting them to participate. A total of 184 invited participants returned the questionnaire. This equates to a 57% response rate which is deemed to be acceptable. All participants agreed to form part of the final sample. Participants were informed that data would be used exclusively for the purposes of the research. Thus, the study adhered to procedures and protocols established in accordance with ethical research standards.

Overall, 69.56% of surveyed participants were younger than 50 years old and 72.28% were female. With regards to academic training, 30.08% had studies in Pedagogy, 35.87% in Psychology and 19.02% in Psychopedagogy. A total of 46.74% counted on more than 12 years of counselling experience and 39.13% were working with students undertaking CSE, baccalaureate and vocational training courses.

Data collection procedure

A Likert scale was used as the main data collection instrument.

In order to address the aims of the present study, a Likert scale was elaborated that was made up of 92 items. Items were rating along a four-point scale ranging from total disagreement (1) to total agreement (4). In this scale, competencies were grouped according to ten factors. The first factor (F1) comprises items related with the applicability of self-knowledge at work. The second factor (F2) comprises all items associated with entrepreneurial attitudes, whilst the third factor (F3) corresponds to items linked with dynamism and collaboration in the professional context. The fourth factor (F4) groups together all items linked to the type of attitudes exhibited by counsellors when performing their daily duties with regards to pragmatism and resoluteness. The fifth factor (F5) houses items associated with the integrity and values of counselling praxis, whilst the sixth factor (F6) comprises items pertaining to the professional ethics of counsellors. The seventh factor (F7) groups together items that describe tolerance, whilst the eighth factor (F8) is composed of items that outline self-regulation and the ninth factor (F9) considers items related with communication and personal relationships. Finally, the tenth factor (F10) is composed of items that pertain to socialisation and commitment.

Data analysis procedure

In order to analyse gathered information, firstly, analysis was performed of the technical characteristics of the employed instrument.

An expert panel and a pilot test were used to examine validity of the scale.

Internal consistency of the scale was analysed by estimating the Cronbach α coefficient. In this case, outcomes indicated excellent internal consistency both overall (α overall = 0.98) and for each individual factor. Alongside this, reliability coefficients were estimated in terms of “split-half reliability” (Spearman-Brown), producing an overall

coefficient of 0.97. Thus, internal consistency between the items pertaining to each of the factors can be deemed to be fairly high, indicating excellent reliability of the scale.

Questionnaires were administered electronically. Following questionnaire completion, data were coded and recorded in order to be cleansed and analysed. For the detection of inconsistencies, both frequency and contingency tables were perused and any detected anomalies were dealt with.

In order to examine the quality of the final data matrix, a representative sample of questionnaires (n = 37) was selected. This pertained to 20% of the overall number of completed questionnaires. Given that estimated error was below 0.05%, in accordance with criteria established by the International Society of Research Professionals using Surveys (SIPIE), it was concluded that data were of high quality and final analysis was proceeded to. This stage of data handling and preliminary analysis performed using the statistical package SPSS.

Data analysis was performed using different statistical analysis techniques with the help of

the statistical package SPSS and the program AMOS. Univariate and bivariate data were tabulated, presenting percentages in the case of categorical variables and descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) in the case of quantitative variables. Next, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) via principal component analysis was performed in order to identify factors pertaining to the skills of counsellors.

Results

Analysis of instrument properties

As this work is part of a larger investigation, the study of the instrument can be reviewed in detail in Fernández-Tilve and Malvar-Méndez (2021).

Analysis of competencies

In response to the proposed study aim, descriptive outcomes (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum) pertaining to ratings made by counsellors regarding the degree of applicability of each of the competencies comprised by the elaborated scale are presented below.

Table 1a. Descriptive statistics pertaining to ratings of the degree of applicability of emotional competencies

Applicability rating	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Confidentiality	3.61	.59	1	4
Respect	3.59	.62	1	4
Interpersonal skills	3.57	.55	2	4
Accessibility	3.57	.60	1	4
Empathy	3.56	.62	2	4
Professional responsibility	3.56	.62	1	4
Listening capacity	3.55	.59	2	4
Communication	3.53	.54	2	4
Discretion	3.52	.55	2	4
Tolerance	3.49	.59	1	4
Cordiality	3.49	.54	2	4
Appreciation of diversity	3.47	.64	1	4
Ethical commitment	3.46	.62	2	4
Dialogue	3.46	.61	2	4
Attending to diversity	3.43	.66	1	4
Guidance	3.42	.65	1	4
Patience	3.40	.61	2	4
Consulting	3.40	.64	1	4
Reasonableness	3.39	.61	1	4
Assertiveness	3.38	.70	2	4
Self-concept	3.35	.58	2	4
Integrity	3.34	.61	1	4
Self-control	3.33	.58	1	4
Helping	3.31	.62	1	4
Posing effective questions	3.30	.62	2	4
Trustworthiness	3.30	.61	1	4
Flexibility	3.29	.63	2	4
Problem solving	3.29	.65	1	4
Self-knowledge	3.29	.54	2	4
Inclusion	3.29	.75	1	4
Commitment	3.29	.68	1	4
Coordination with others	3.28	.67	2	4
Situational analysis	3.28	.59	2	4
Perseverance	3.27	.64	1	4
Openness	3.27	.76	1	4
Self-critical capacity	3.26	.61	2	4
Mediation	3.26	.64	1	4
Decision making	3.25	.64	1	4
Availability	3.25	.72	1	4
Response capacity	3.25	.65	1	4
Public relations	3.24	.59	2	4
Reflection	3.24	.69	1	4
Self-esteem	3.24	.56	2	4
Engagement	3.23	.67	1	4
Negotiation	3.23	.63	2	4
Affect	3.23	.69	1	4

Table 1b. Descriptive statistics pertaining to ratings of applicability of emotional competencies

Applicability rating	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Consensus	3.23	.65	1	4
Socialisation	3.21	.65	1	4
Equity	3.20	.67	1	4
Optimism	3.20	.62	1	4
Self-confidence	3.19	.58	1	4
Analytical capacity	3.18	.62	2	4
Up-to-datedness	3.18	.71	1	4
Resilience	3.18	.67	1	4
Veracity	3.18	.71	1	4
Professional development	3.17	.77	1	4
Enthusiasm	3.17	.70	1	4
Frustration tolerance	3.16	.63	1	4
Facilitator	3.16	.69	1	4
Objectivity	3.16	.67	1	4
Evaluation	3.15	.66	1	4
Planning	3.15	.67	1	4
Motivation	3.12	.66	2	4
Self-discipline	3.12	.65	2	4
Initiative	3.11	.64	2	4
Teamwork	3.11	.77	1	4
Self-development	3.11	.72	1	4
Social commitment	3.11	.76	1	4
Thirst for success	3.10	.69	1	4
Non-verbal communication	3.10	.69	1	4
Coordination	3.09	.66	2	4
Collaboration	3.08	.86	1	4
Lifelong learning	3.07	.76	1	4
Dynamism	3.04	.60	2	4
Critical capacity	3.04	.68	1	4
Proactiveness	3.04	.61	1	4
Excellence	3.02	.74	1	4
Courage, risk taking	3.02	.67	1	4
Eagerness	3.00	.75	1	4
Autonomous action	2.98	.62	1	4
Coaching	2.95	.73	1	4
Leadership	2.94	.68	1	4
Introspection	2.93	.69	1	4
Creativity	2.91	.70	1	4
Stress management	2.90	.79	1	4
Innovation	2.90	.73	1	4
Persuasion	2.88	.74	1	4
Entrepreneurial spirit	2.84	.73	1	4
Sense of humour	2.83	.75	1	4
Research	2.75	.80	1	4
Authority	2.47	.73	1	4
Indolence	2.45	.85	1	4

The emotional competencies deemed to be of greatest relevance to counselling practice can be consulted in tables 1a and 1b. The most relevant is “confidentiality” (3.61), followed by “respect” (3.59), “interpersonal skills” (3.57), “accessibility” (3.57), “professional

responsibility” (3.57), “empathy” (3.56), “listening capacity” (3.55), “communication” (3.53), “discretion” (3.52) and “tolerance” (3.49).

Eight of the competencies evaluated present average values that are clearly lower than those produced for all other competencies. The competencies to receive lower average ratings, in this case, below 2.90 were “indolence” (2.45), “authority” (2.47), “research” (2.75), “sense of humour” (2.83), “entrepreneurial spirit” (2.84), “persuasion” (2.88), “innovation” (2.90) and “stress management” (2.90).

Outcomes reveal that “confidentiality” and “respect” are the two competencies with the most application potential when performing counselling duties relative to “indolence” and “authority”.

The competence of “empathy” was rated to have high applicability, as were the competencies of “interpersonal skills” and “accessibility”. The competence “listening capacity” emerges as one of the top ten competencies regarding application potential, alongside “professional responsibility”, “discretion” and “tolerance”.

The competence of “communication” was also rated highly in terms of applicability, as were the competencies of “cordiality”, “appreciation of diversity” and “ethical conduct”. The competency of “coordinating with others” was positioned thirty second,

constituting a crucial aspect of being able to perform counselling duties.

“Assertiveness” was one of the twenty five most highly rated competencies. The competence of “mediation” received the particularly high rating of 3.26 on behalf of surveyed counsellors.

The competencies of “dialogue” and “attending to diversity” are within the group of competencies to receive the greatest applicability indices. The competencies of “self-concept”, “integrity”, “self-control”, “helping” and “trustworthiness” received similar ratings.

“Guidance” is positioned as one of the twenty most applicable competencies. The competencies of “leadership”, “coaching”, “eagerness”, “creativity” and “introspection” received similar ratings.

The competencies of “motivation”, “initiative”, “proactiveness”, “collaboration” and “dynamism” received acceptable ratings in the present study. The competence of “resilience” received an average rating of 3.18. The competence of “proactiveness” received lower ratings (3.04).

Next, table 2 presents the six competencies with the highest applicability indices compared with the six most lowly rated competencies.

Table 2. Comparison between competencies with high and low average applicability ratings

Applicability rating			
Highest average applicability ratings		Lowest average applicability ratings	
Competence	Rating	Competence	Rating
Confidentiality	3.61	Indolence	2.45
Respect	3.59	Authority	2.47
Interpersonal skills	3.67	Research	2.75
Accessibility	3.57	Sense of humour	2.83
Empathy	3.56	Entrepreneurial spirit	2.84
Professional responsibility	3.56	Persuasion	2.88

Next, data is presented in relation to the applicability of each individual examined factor (mean and standard deviation).

Tabla 3a. Descriptive statistics pertaining to the applicability of each factor

Factor	Mean	SD
FACTOR 1: Self-concept	3.16	.44
General critical capacity	3.04	.68
Self-critical capacity	3.26	.61
Analytical capacity	3.18	.62
Reflection	3.24	.69
Introspection	2.93	.69
Self-knowledge	3.29	.54
FACTOR 2: Entrepreneurial attitude	2.98	.47
Initiative	3.11	.64
Leadership	2.94	.68
Autonomy	2.98	.62
Motivation	3.12	.66
Innovation	2.90	.73
Courage	3.02	.67
Creativity	2.91	.70
Entrepreneurial spirit	2.84	.73
FACTOR 3: Dynamism and collaboration	3.24	.44
Dynamism	3.04	.60
Accessibility	3.57	.60
Enthusiasm	3.17	.70
Self-confidence	3.19	.58
Eagerness	3.00	.75
Availability	3.25	.72
Optimism	3.20	.62
Cordiality	3.49	.54
FACTOR 4: Pragmatic and resolute attitude	3.17	.49
Response capacity	3.25	.65
Perseverance	3.27	.64
Lifelong learning	3.07	.76
Up-to-datedness	3.18	.71
Situational analysis	3.28	.59
Consultation	3.40	.64
Research	2.75	.80
FACTOR 5: Integrity and values	3.25	.48
Excellence	3.02	.74
Trustworthiness	3.30	.61
Veracity	3.18	.71
Integrity	3.34	.61
Commitment	3.29	.68
Reasonableness	3.39	.61

Table 3b. Descriptive statistics pertaining to the applicability of each individual factor

Factor	Mean	Standard deviation
FACTOR 6: Ethics	3.54	.46
Ethical conduct	3.46	.62
Discretion	3.52	.55
Confidentiality	3.61	.59
Professional responsibility	3.56	.62
FACTOR 7: Tolerance	3.44	.46
Appreciation of diversity	3.47	.64
Tolerance	3.49	.59
Listening capacity	3.55	.59
Respect	3.59	.62
Consensus	3.23	.65
Attending to diversity	3.43	.66
Helping	3.31	.62
Dialogue	3.46	.61
FACTOR 8: Self-regulation	3.14	.49
Self-control	3.33	.58
Frustration tolerance	3.16	.63
Self-discipline	3.12	.65
Resilience	3.18	.67
Stress management	2.90	.79
FACTOR 9: Personal relatedness and communication	3.51	.49
Communication	3.53	.54
Interpersonal skills	3.57	.55
Empathy	3.56	.62
Assertiveness	3.38	.70
FACTOR 10: Socialisation and commitment	3.14	.50
Socialisation	3.21	.65
Coordination	3.09	.66
Social commitment	3.11	.76
Planning	3.15	.67

Como puede apreciarse en las tablas 3a y 3b, a nivel de factores los promedios más elevados corresponden a tres factores concretos: “Ética” (3,54), “Comunicativa y relaciones personales” (3,51) y “Tolerancia” (3,44).

El factor “Actitud emprendedora” (2,98) presenta un promedio en el polo opuesto. Parece que el colectivo orientador lo percibe como menos aplicable en el ejercicio de su profesión.

Un análisis más pormenorizado, permite identificar aquellas competencias emocionales más funcionales para los orientadores/as gallegos. En este sentido, las competencias “confidencialidad” (3,61), “respeto” (3,59), “habilidades interpersonales” (3,57), “empatía” (3,56), “responsabilidad”, As can be

observed in tables 3a and 3b, at the factor level, the highest average ratings correspond to three specific factors, namely, “ethics” (3.54), “personal relatedness and communication” (3.51) and “tolerance” (3,44).

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the “entrepreneurial attitude” (2.98) factor presents the lowest average rating. Counsellors appear to perceive this factor to be less applicable when exercising their profession.

More in-depth analysis enables identification of the most functional competencies required by Galician counsellors. In this sense, the most applicable competency in this context is “confidentiality” (3.61), followed by “respect” (3.59), “interpersonal skills” (3.57), “empathy” (3.56), “professional responsibility” (3.56),

“listening capacity” (3.55), “communication” (3.53) and “discretion” (3.52).

The least applicable competence reported by counsellors for their praxis in the present study was “research” (2.75), followed by

“entrepreneurial spirit” (2.84), “innovation” (2.90) and “stress management” (2.90).

Finally, descriptive outcomes showing the proportion of counsellors reporting each given factor to be fairly or highly applicable are reported in table 4.

Table 4. Percentage of counsellors rating factors to be fairly or highly applicable

Factor	% reporting a rating of 3 or above
Factor 1. Self-knowledge	52.2%
Factor 2. Entrepreneurial spirit	37.5%
Factor 3. Dynamism and collaboration	63.6%
Factor 4. Pragmatic and resolute attitude	57.1%
Factor 5. Integrity and human values	61.4%
Factor 6. Ethical	75.5%
Factor 7. Tolerance	78.8%
Factor 8. Self-regulation	48.4%
Factor 9. Personal relatedness and communication	76.1%
Factor 10. Socialisation and commitment	50.0%

Thus, once again, higher rates of counselling professionals report high applicability scores for the factors of “tolerance”, “ethics” and “personal relatedness and communication”. Further, the “entrepreneurial attitude” again emerges as the least applicable factor.

Discussion and conclusions

Given the many professional challenges faced by school counsellors in the changing and uncertain environment surrounding them, the need arises for a polyhedral professional profile that continuously adapts to new demands and, therefore, prepares for a future that is mapped out with a degree of predictive insufficiency (Sanz-López & Manzanares-Moya, 2018). Definitions of the duties performed during counselling must evolve in accordance with an increasingly fluid society. As outlined by a number of studies (Amor-Almedina & Serrano-so Rodríguez, 2020; Carey et al., 2018; Traver-Albalat & Sanahuja-

Ribés, 2022), the quantity, ambiguity and dispersion of areas of action in which counselling professionals must act is unacceptable. Further clarification of their duties is an ever eluding task.

Suitable management of emotions in the digital society in which we live is key to be able to align with social characteristics. Given this landscape, emotional competencies stand out due to their great malleability, at the same time as they emerge as an essential element of the training of flexible and proactive counsellors with the ability to self-manage. This stands in contrast to the need to meet technical and procedural demands up until now (Martínez-Clares et al., 2020). As urged by Sola-Reche et al. (2020), it is crucial to join forces in order to make better use of training resources and enable basic standards of efficacy to be achieved in professional practice.

As outlined by Vélaz de Medrano et al. (2013), very few studies exist that unveil the perception of school counsellors regarding the emotional competencies required to exercise their profession. For this reason, the present study is pertinent, acquiring notable value in the stable and robust exercise of counselling practice. Present findings contribute, ultimately, towards protecting the mental integrity of counselling professionals, helping to minimise risk factors such as stress, anxiety, depression, etc. Data gathered in the present study enable identification of the most functional emotional competencies for counselling practice, outlining a competency profile that is more in tune with educational counselling immersed in a productive system that demands ongoing adaptation to different settings and the continuous redefining of competencies (Martínez-Clares et al., 2020).

Thus, the present study set out to uncover the perceptions of school counsellors regarding the degree of applicability of emotional competencies in their praxis. From this, it can be concluded that emotional competencies emerged that, in some way, may assist school counsellors to overcome important challenges in a society that is characterised by the fragility and overwhelming nature of constant change. Thus, in light of present findings, it can be observed, for example, that the competence of “confidentiality” constitutes a cornerstone of counselling practice, as shown through the high ratings reported by participants in the present research.

It was also possible to verify that competencies such as “accessibility”, “discretion”, “tolerance”, “integrity”, “commitment”, “flexibility” and “respect” are inherent to the day-to-day practice of counselling. Presence of such competencies appears to contribute towards improving the working conditions of counsellors, with a subsequent large knock-on effect on the educational system.

Likewise, the competence of “communication” stood out, indicating improvements in areas of action shared with

students, teachers and the educational community in general. As indicated by other studies (Ferreira & Vieira, 2021; Grañeras & Parras, 2008), this competence appears to be decisive with regards to the professional profile of counsellors. Indeed, in the present study, this competence was rated highly in terms of applicability. This leads to the conclusion that this aspect must be contemplated when it comes to exercising in the counselling profession.

The competencies of “empathy”, “assertiveness”, “self-knowledge” and “self-control” appear to play an important role in the implementation of counselling practice. Counsellors appear to be aware of their own emotions and manage to keep them duly in check so that they do not negatively interfere with their work. At the same time, counsellors appear to be able to put themselves in the position of those who seek counselling and understand the perspectives and emotions of users, lending support and connecting with others.

The quality of the counselling provided appears to depend on the mastery of the “guidance” competence. This competence appears to be one of the pillars upon which the counselling profession leans. Its high applicability coincides with findings presented in another study (Vélaz de Medrano et al., 2013).

The positive impact of the competence of “flexibility” also stands out. Counsellors appear to be committed to aligning with the context, keeping in mind that counselling practice implies constant interaction with the setting. It, therefore, presents an intervention tool that favours the consolidation of functions such as adaptation and socialisation (Morales-Carrero, 2020).

The “research” competence appears not to form part of counselling practice, given that study participants gave a low rating to their role as researchers. This represents a lowly ranked competence, possibly due to its importance, time and preparation (Asensio-Muñoz et al., 2021). This finding is highly

notable given that it speaks to a highly tenuous relationship between research and practice. This leads us to consider whether the quality of counselling practice strengthens one's role as a research counsellor. This is despite the fact that numerous studies argue that research stands out, not only, as a function of educational counselling, but, also, as a mechanism that contributes to the quality of education (Fuente-Arias, 2017; Peña-Ramírez et al., 2017). When considering the complexity of counselling practice and its responsibility in relation to processes striving towards educational improvement, this finding is clearly of concern (Gómez-Núñez & Cano-Muñoz, 2020).

The competence of "stress management" received a low rating regarding applicability from the surveyed participants. Nonetheless, numerous studies (Bisquerra-Alzina & Pérez-Escoda, 2007; Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2004; Guerrero & Rubio, 2008; Morales-Carrero, 2020; Peñalva-Vélez et al., 2013; Repetto-Talavera & Pena-Garrido, 2010) maintain that stress management is an excellent competence for those in the counselling profession and that its implementation is worthwhile, given that it enables factors of work-related stress to be managed.

The competence of "resilience" contributes towards the instilling of resistance that enables counselling professionals to handle adversity and frustration at low personal expense. It is defined as an essential competence in counselling work (Ferrer & Caridad, 2017). Nonetheless, data gathered in the present study are more conservative. Present findings do not reflect the potential of this competence as a buffer against adversity, acting as a support and sustainability factor when tackling the constant challenges faced by educational counsellors (Olmo-Extremera et al., 2021).

The competence of "creativity" appears not to have a place when exercising counselling practice, despite the fact that creativity can be transformed into a core tool for creatively overcoming the setbacks, obstacles and adversities imposed by the context (Morales-

Carrero, 2020). Perhaps, reflection is needed on the potential contribution of this competence in the present context characterised by change and adjusting to new challenges.

From the standpoint of Morales-Carrero (2020), educational counselling strives, amongst other things, to promote capacities related with leadership. Findings of the present study do not support this stance, given that fairly low ratings were reported for the competence of "leadership". In light of this, it would be useful to propose new leadership approaches that enable an effective response to ongoing continued change in the economic and social setting. Such approaches should favour the elaboration of mechanisms that promote stability when faced with difficult situations through self-confidence and self-esteem (Ferrer & Caridad, 2017).

The competence of "commitment" appears to shape the counselling landscape, having a positive impact on laying a path that helps navigate social change. According to participants in the present study, this competence is considered important for dealing with adjustments that are perceived to be imminent.

The competence of "motivation", understood as a driver that stimulates and leads to action, generating school climates and atmospheres that are full of energy, possibility and the desire to act (Olmo-Extremera et al., 2021), was not rated highly. This finding may reflect that counselling is considered to be a timid and secondary action.

The competence of "problem solving" was highly rated. Surveyed counsellors appear to be aware of the need to address the conflictive situations and potential conflicts inherent to contemporary society.

Achieving a better understanding of the emotional competencies that form the backbone of the counselling profession presents a fascinating and, yet, hugely complex challenge. It can be concluded that the present study outlines an emotional competency profile that is strongly grounded in factors

pertaining to “ethics”, “tolerance” and “personal relatedness and communication”. Presumably, these factors are linked to the growing importance of educational counselling.

Finally, it serves to mention that the present study has a number of limitations that must be considered and addressed in future research work. It is recommended, for example, to broaden the study sample to include counsellors working in primary education, potentially even extending it to consider the entire Spanish context and, in this way, examine potential similarities and differences between autonomous communities. Likewise, although beyond the scope of the present study, it would be interesting to perform comparative analysis as a function of gender, years of experience working in school counselling, school type, counselling training, etc, in order to outline potential differential effects on ratings.

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Professor of the Department of Pedagogy and Didactics in the University of Santiago de Compostela. Doctor in Philosophy and Educational Sciences. Her teaching activity and extensive research has been widely recognized. Her fields of interest are related to the field of training and professional development of educational professionals. A field of study which intersects diverse lines of work (socio-educational inclusion, emotional wellbeing, educational reforms, new technologies, heritage education, etc.).

As a researcher she has a high-impact scientific production (books, book chapters, articles, reviews, notes, technical review of books, coordination of monographs, patents and trademarks in operation, supervision of doctoral theses, organization of conferences, etc.), coming mainly from her active participation in numerous European, national and regional research competitive projects, as well as Educational Research and Innovation Networks. Professor Tilve has made different stays in foreign research centers and participated in programs of teaching mobility, with founding from public organizations. She has led numerous courses and conferences at national and international level. Currently, she coordinates ATALAIA Research Group at the University of Santiago de Compostela (<https://atalaia.usc.es>).

Author contribution: (M^aDFT) Project administration, conceptualization, acquisition of funds, methodology, validation, computer resources and analysis tools, supervision, writing (review and editing).

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Advisor to Techers Resource Centre of Pontevedra and Associate Professor at the University of Vigo. Doctor Malvar, a professional with more than two decades of experience in educational guidance in Public Secondary Schools in the Galician Autonomous Region. In her management as Head of the Guidance Department, she has led transformative initiatives to integrate emotional education into the curriculum and promote attention to diversity in the educational system, generating inclusive environments that contribute to the growth of both students and teachers themselves. She is also deeply concerned about promoting heritage education as a strategy for its effective implementation in society.

She has actively participated in numerous research projects related to the field of training and professional development of educational professionals. Her commitment to continuous improvement is reflected in her research activity and in the delivery of various courses and workshops. As author of numerous academic articles of impact, her innovative approach focuses on developing strategies that do not only enrich the theoretical field, but also provide practical solutions to promote an enriching educational environment. As an advisor she plays a key role in empowerment of educators to apply innovative pedagogical practices. Her collaboration in social projects with local institutions demonstrates her dedication for building a more equitable society through education. Currently, she is a member of ATALAIA Research Group at the University of Santiago de Compostela; which is being considered as an educational reference in the context of Galician Education.

Author contribution: (M^aLMM) conceptualization, acquisition of funds, methodology, validation, software, data organization, formal analysis, writing (original draft).

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