
The role of school counselors in times of COVID-19

El rol de los orientadores escolares en tiempos de COVID-19

学校辅导员在 COVID-19 时期的作用

Роль школьных консультантов во времена COVID-19

M^a Dolores Fernández-Tilve

University of Santiago of Compostela

mdolores.fernandez.tilve@usc.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5047-8913>

M^a Laura Malvar-Méndez

University of Vigo

Imm@uvigo.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2530-951X>

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Abstract

There is a growing need in schools for counsellors with an increasingly wide range of competences, amongst which socio-emotional competencies occupy a preferential place. Undoubtedly these competences have an enormous potential for dealing with various, unforeseen educational situations, especially in times of Covid-19. As a result of this, a study was undertaken with a quantitative methodological design (Likert-type rating scale) with the aim of specifically finding out the evaluations of secondary school counsellors within the Autonomous Community of Galicia on the socio-emotional competences and thus contribute to the effectiveness of their educational work particularly in the complex scenarios like the ones we are live in. This study offers valuable information that may likely be implemented, including the fostering of the most relevant social-emotional competences.

Keywords: school counselors, Covid-19, emotional competences, online education.

Resumen

Se observa que la escuela requiere cada vez más de orientadores con una amplia gama de competencias, entre las que ocupan un lugar preferente las competencias socioemocionales. Sin lugar a duda, estas competencias tienen un enorme potencial para afrontar situaciones educativas diversas e inciertas, especialmente en tiempos de Covid-19. Consecuentemente, se emprendió un estudio con un diseño metodológico de corte cuantitativo (escala de valoración tipo Likert) con el propósito de conocer las valoraciones de los orientadores escolares de secundaria de la Comunidad Autónoma de Galicia sobre las competencias socioemocionales y así contribuir a la eficacia de su labor educativa en escenarios complejos como los que vivimos. El estudio realizado proporciona una información valiosa, posibilitando el conocimiento de las competencias socioemocionales más relevantes y susceptibles de implementarse.

Palabras clave: orientadores escolares, Covid-19, competencias emocionales, educación en red.

摘要

据观察, 学校越来越需要具有广泛技能的辅导员, 其中与社会情感领域相关的技能尤为重要。毫无疑问, 这些技能在应对多样化和不确定的教育情况, 尤其是在 Covid-19 时期可以发挥其巨大的潜力。因此, 我们采用定量方法设计(李克特型评估量表)进行了一项研究, 目的是了解加利西亚自治区中学辅导员对社会情感能力的评估, 从而有助于提高其在我们生活的复杂场景中教育工作的有效性。这项研究提供了有价值的信息, 包括培养可能实施的最相关的社会情感能力。

关键词: 学校辅导员、Covid-19、情感能力、在线教育。

Аннотация

Замечено, что школам требуются консультанты со все более широким спектром компетенций, среди которых центральное место занимают те, которые связаны с социально-эмоциональной сферой. Несомненно, эти компетенции обладают огромным потенциалом для противостояния различным, непредвиденным ситуациям, особенно во времена Covid-19. В связи с этим было проведено соответствующее исследование с использованием количественного методологического подхода (шкала оценки

типа Likert) с четкой целью узнать впечатления консультантов средних школ автономного сообщества Галисия о социально-эмоциональных компетенциях и таким образом способствовать эффективности их воспитательной работы, особенно в сложных сценариях, подобных тем, в которых мы живем. Данное исследование предоставляет ценную информацию, в том числе о формировании наиболее актуальных социально-эмоциональных компетенций, которые могут быть реализованы.

Ключевые слова: школьные консультанты, Covid-19, эмоциональные компетенции, онлайн-образование.

Introduction

Schools increasingly require guidance professionals with adequate competences that allow them to assume the tasks with guarantees of quality and success (Anaya et al., 2011; Hernández & Mederos, 2018). Among the school counsellors' wide range of competences, social-emotional competences occupy a preferential place. Undoubtedly these competences have an enormous potential for dealing with various, unforeseen educational situations, especially in times of Covid-19.

The relationships that school counsellors establish with members of the educational and social community are of great importance. As Le Bofert (2001) points out, they have to know how to manage a complex professional situation, reacting with relevance, mobilizing resources in a context and committing to ordinary and extraordinary tasks, whilst taking into account that all of them are decisive as collected in the study by Rodríguez et al. (2018).

Nowadays, network education can be defined as an unavoidable task for its praxis in complex scenarios such as those we live in, which is why socio-emotional competences are becoming increasingly important. Let us not forget that the network awakens emotions in its users and serves as a channel to express thoughts, feelings, interests, concerns, etc. (Serrano, 2016). In this sense, it is crucial for the school counsellor to intervene in the development of students' digital competence, providing tools in the socio-emotional area to some (students) and others (teachers). In the case of teachers, there seem to be clear indications of a lack of preparation in this field (Fernandez & Fernandez, 2016). On the other hand, the educational experiences of the past decades come to highlight the need to take into account popularly used communication spaces (Tuzel & Hobbs, 2017).

It is indisputable that digital technology, as recognised by some (Vidales & Sádaba, 2017), arouses great interest among the adolescent public, forming part of their daily practices. The Internet and mobile devices, in particular, occupy an important part of their lives, both inside and outside the school environment (Herrero-Diz et al., 2016; Rodríguez et al., 2018). The increase in the use of social media is a fact that is proven (International Telecommunication Union, 2017; Livingstone et al., 2011; Malo-Cerrato et al., 2018), even being a preferred learning space (Arriaga et al., 2016). Therefore, it is inevitable to integrate new technologies into educational processes in order to educate critical e-citizens with a sense of responsibility. This integration process will facilitate the teacher-student relationship, an essential factor for successful learning and teaching, as well as a responsible, stimulating use of these media (Gairín & Mercader, 2018; Hershkovitz & Forkosh-Baruch, 2017). Along these lines, numerous experts hint at the need to develop new educational models based on learning, which take into ac-

count the characteristics of the networked society and the generation with which work will be undertaken (García-Ruiz et al., 2018; Santoveña-Casal & Bernal-Bravo, 2019). This new idea of teaching and learning processes may imply the possibility of working on the educational potential of social media (Tur et al., 2017), which means that we would be taking advantage of the enormous educational possibilities of these powerful tools, as Kirschner (2015) puts forward. Creating new ways of social interaction and genuine environments for the production, communication and acquisition of knowledge and, naturally, transforming the role of formal learning institutions (Fernandez & Anguita, 2015).

The frenetic, unquestionable evolution of the Internet and its habitual, frequent use makes it an ideal place to adapt to the particularities of students, increase communicative modalities, offer new forms of guidance, favour interactive learning scenarios, strengthen coordination between educational centres, the family and the rest of the social agents, etc. (Gómez et al., 2015). In other words, it is a powerful resource for learning and convergence between emerging technologies.

We are, therefore, facing new ways and possibilities of learning (ubiquitous learning, invisible learning or expanded learning), where different elements and situations interact and end up disseminating knowledge (Hernández-Selles et al., 2015). In short, we are facing a new learning ecology that school counsellors will have to duly manage, assuming a relevant role.

The activity of being a counsellor can be a source of great emotional stress, given the changes that come from the social, cultural, technological, economic and labour sphere, the relationship established with families, changing profile of the student body, numerous tasks set, etc. It seems that, as stated by some authors (Martínez et al., 2018), we are witnessing unprecedented levels of complexity when acting as counsellors. It is perceived that the school institution increasingly needs guidance counsellors with appropriate competences, amongst which those that occupy a preferential place, which are not limited to technical content, but that refer to the way of working, the attitude towards work and towards others, the constant adaptation to change, the quality of relationships, etc. (Pena et al., 2016). In short, one must be able to integrate not only appropriate knowledge (knowing) and skills and abilities (know how) to handle difficult and authentic situations (knowing how to be and being) (Echevarría, 2007; García-Fuentes et al., 2006; Huertas & Romero, 2019; Vélaz-de-Medrano, 2008;). As has been shown in several studies (Barreira et al., 2005; Vélaz-de-Medrano et al., 2013), school counsellors must not only possess knowledge and skills specific to their profession, but also have a series of personal/professional and participative attitudes that allow them to face the constant changes in the educational system, as well as possible eventualities that may arise in the performance of their work, in order to perform their duties adequately.

In line with others (Alonso et al., 2018; Barrientos et al., 2020; Cejudo & López-Delgado, 2017; Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2017; Hernández, 2017; López-Cassá et al., 2018; Márquez-Cervantes & Gaeta, 2017; Pegalajar & López, 2015; Rodríguez-Corrales et al., 2019), socio-emotional competences make it possible to address complex and challenging situations, so they have to be carried out systematically in the school context hand in hand with other competences that in this case have been the subject of study on numerous occasions (conceptual and procedural).

It may be obvious that the performance of the guidance role requires initial and ongoing training in the socio-emotional domain, as suggested by some researchers (Amber

& Martos, 2017; Cejudo, 2017; Prieto, 2018). However, there are still few training proposals aimed at the search for emotionally competent professionals, as well as studies focused on the assessment of emotional competences. In this context, a study on the socio-emotional competences of school counsellors was undertaken. The research aim of this work is:

-To know the evaluations of secondary school counsellors of the Autonomous Community of Galicia on socio-emotional competences.

Methodology

This study has a quantitative methodological design (Likert-type rating scale).

Participants

The reference population is made up of secondary school guidance counsellors who carry out their professional work in public schools in Galicia, a total of 323. As a sampling method, all professionals were contacted and asked to participate in the study. A total of 184 completed and returned the requested questionnaire, which represents an effective response rate of 57%, a more than acceptable percentage for this type of study. All study participants gave their consent to be included in the final sample.

Of the subjects surveyed, 69.56% were under 50 years of age and 30.44% were over 50 years of age. 27.72% were men and 72.28% were women. 30.98% studied pedagogy, 35.87% psychology, 19.02% psycho-pedagogy and 14.13% had other studies. 25.54% had less than 7 years' counselling experience, 27.72% had between 7 and 12 years' experience and 46.74% had more than 12 years' experience. 33.15% work in ESO (Obligatory Secondary Education), 27.72% work in ESO and Baccalaureate and 39.13% work with students in ESO, Baccalaureate and training cycles. 72.28% work in an IES (Secondary Education Institute) and the remaining 27.72% in a CPI (Public Integrated Facility). 30.43% work in cities, 4.8% in towns with less than 50,000 inhabitants, 8.15% in towns with between 50,000 and 30,000 inhabitants, 16.3% in areas with between 30,000 and 20,000 inhabitants and 40.22% in towns with less than 10,000 inhabitants.

Instrument

A Likert-type rating scale was purposely designed, consisting of 92 items, graduated from minus to plus and with four response options, which make it possible to know the school counsellor's ratings of the socio-emotional competences and their relevance for the counselling task. The taxonomy of emotional competences has been prepared in order to identify the most notable competences in the profile of counsellor (Table 1).

Table 1

Taxonomy of competences of the rating scale

Competences			
Flexibility	Tolerance	Reflection	Mediation
Communication	Patience	Equity	Indolence

Competences			
Interpersonal skills	Stimulation	Concerns about success	Addressing diversity
Empathy	Involvement	Listening skills	Coordination
Assertiveness	Courage, risk-taking	Availability	Help
Excellence	Accessibility	Respect	Consultation
Collaboration	Coaching	Responsiveness	Research
Professional development	Creativity	Perseverance	Entrepreneurial spirit
Stress management	Commitment	Lifelong learning	Inclusion
Initiative	Enthusiasm	Updating	Social commitment
Team work	Advice	Tolerance to frustration	Opening
Ethical behaviour	Critical capacity	Assessment	Persuasion
Discretion	Capacity for self-criticism	Facilitator	Truthfulness
Confidentiality	Self-control	Situation analysis	Objectivity
Professional responsibility	Self-knowledge	Non-verbal communication	Sense of humour
Socialisation	Self-confidence	Asking effective questions	Integrity
Decision making	Analytical capacity	Self-discipline	Introspection
Problem solving	Public relations	Resilience	Sensibility
Leadership	Authority	Proactivity	Cordiality
Appreciation of diversity	Negotiation	Reliability	Dialogue
Acting autonomously	Affection	Self-development	Planning
Motivation	Coordinating with others	Optimism	Self-confidence
Innovation	Enthusiasm	Consensus	Self-concept

The instrument also included 23 general questions (age, gender, academic background, years' experience being a counsellor, administrative situation, years' service in the centre, type of centre, hours of training received on being a school counsellor, membership in a guidance counsellors' association, basic training in new technologies, etc.), as well as 2 open-ended questions.

The external and internal validity of the scale was assessed by judges (2 university professors and 8 secondary school guidance counsellors) and the pilot test (N=20), thus providing the instrument with greater comprehensibility (linguistic precision, cor-

rection of typos, revision of intervals in some variables, etc.). The expert judges have extensive experience in the area of study and educational methodology. The subjects participating in the pilot test have extensive professional experience in being a counsellor.

The analysis of the internal consistency of the competence rating scale is carried out by calculating Cronbach's coefficient α . In this case, an excellent result has been obtained both at global level ($\alpha_{\text{Global}} = .98$) and for each of the factors separately, especially if we take into account that some factors consist of only 4 items. In a complementary manner, the reliability coefficient was also calculated using the "Method of Two Halves" (Spearman-Brown), obtaining an overall value of .97. Therefore, it can be seen that the degree of internal consistency between the items of each of the factors is considerably high, and the reliability of the scale is noteworthy.

Process

After the *online* application of the questionnaires, the data were coded and recorded for cleaning, checking that there were no values outside the range established in each of the items of the questionnaire. In order to detect inconsistencies, both frequency and contingency tables were used to correct the anomalies detected. Subsequently, to estimate the quality of the final data matrix, a representative sample of questionnaires ($n = 37$), 20% of the total number of questionnaires answered, was selected for spot checking. Given that the percentage of error found was less than .05%, following the criteria established by the International Society of Survey Research Professionals (SIPIE), the quality of the data was assumed to be high and we proceeded with the final analysis. This cleaning and pre-analysis phase was carried out using the SPSS statistical package (version 20).

Data analysis was performed with different statistical analysis techniques, using the SPSS.20 statistical package and the AMOS.20 programme:

- Univariate and bivariate tabulation, including percentages for categorical variables and descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for quantitative variables.
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using the Principal Components method, to identify competency factors or macro competences.
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to analyse the construct validity of the scale used and the confirmation of the macro-competences identified in the exploratory phase.

Analysis and results

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to study the internal structure of the scale and identify the underlying factors, using the Principal Component Method. As input data, we used the direct scores referring to training in 88 of the 92 initial items, leaving out 4 of them, given the low relevance and applicability assigned by the counsellors surveyed. The KMO index was 0.935 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (13795.49) was statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the input matrix could be considered suitable for factorization. The analysis resulted in a total of 14 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, which together explained 70.04% of the variance of

the data. Subsequently, a Varimax rotation was applied to facilitate the independence of the factors and thus achieve a better characterisation. The percentage of variance explained by each factor is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Results of the initial EFA with 88 items

Factor	Eigenvalue	% Explained variance	% Exp accumulated var.
1	39.66	8.01	8.01
2	2.90	7.54	15.55
3	2.33	6.42	21.97
4	2.14	6.05	28.03
5	1.82	6.04	34.08
6	1.72	5.87	39.95
7	1.57	4.94	44.89
8	1.50	4.93	49.83
9	1.40	4.67	54.50
10	1.34	4.41	58.92
11	1.23	3.34	62.27
12	1.14	2.89	65.17
13	1.09	2.89	68.06
14	1.03	1.97	70.03

With the new scale, composed of 60 items, a second EFA was performed, again using the Principal Components Method and a Varimax rotation. The KMO index was .942 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was 8641.37 ($p < .001$). In this case, the analysis provided a total of 10 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, which together explained 68.62% of the variance of the data, barely 1% less than that obtained with 88 items. The percentage of variance explained by each factor is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Results of the EFA with 60 items

Factor	Eigenvalue	% Explained variance	% Exp accumulated var.
1	5.13	8.56	8.56
2	5.01	8.35	16.91
3	4.90	8.17	25.08
4	4.50	7.51	32.60

Factor	Eigenvalue	% Explained variance	% Exp accumulated var.
5	4.26	7.10	39.70
6	3.99	6.65	46.36
7	3.67	6.12	52.48
8	3.56	5.94	58.42
9	3.14	5.23	63.66
10	2.97	4.95	68.62

The factor structure achieved is much clearer and more easily interpretable, both from a theoretical and applied point of view. Table 4 groups the items that make up each of the 10 factors of the final scale.

Table 4
Factors and items of the final scale

Factor	No. of items	Items	Name
1	6	General critical capacity (F1.1) Self-criticism capacity (F1.2) Analytical capacity (F1.3) Reflection (F1.4) Introspection (F1.5) Self-knowledge (F1.6)	Self-knowledge
2	8	Initiative (F2.1) Leadership (F2.2) Autonomy (F2.3) Motivation (F2.4) Innovation (F2.5) Value (F2.6) Creativity (F2.7) Entrepreneurial spirit (F2.8)	Entrepreneurial attitude
3	8	Stimulation (F3.1) Accessibility (F3.2) Enthusiasm (F3.3) Self-confidence (F3.4) Enthusiasm (F3.5) Availability (F3.6) Optimism (F3.7) Cordiality (F3.8)	Dynamism and collaboration
4	7	Responsiveness (F4.1) Perseverance (F4.2) Lifelong learning (F4.3) Upgrading (F4.4) Situational analysis (F4.5) Consultation (F4.6) Research (F4.7)	Pragmatic and resolute approach

Factor	No. of items	Items	Name
5	6	Excellence (F5.1) Reliability (F5.2) Veracity (F5.3) Integrity (F5.4) Commitment (F5.5) Sensitivity (F5.6)	Integrity and human values
6	4	Ethical behaviour (F6.1) Discretion (F6.2) Confidentiality (F6.3) Professional responsibility (F6.4)	Ethics
7	8	Appreciation of diversity (F7.1) Tolerance (F7.2) Listening capacity (F7.3) Respect (F7.4) Consensus (F7.5) Address diversity (F7.6) Help (F7.7) Dialogue (F7.8)	Tolerance
8	5	Self-control (F8.1) Frustration tolerance (F8.2) Self-discipline (F8.3) Resilience (F8.4) Stress management (F8.5)	Self-regulation
9	4	Communication (F9.1) Interpersonal skills (F9.2) Empathy (F9.3) Assertiveness (F9.4)	Communicative and personal Relationships
10	4	Socialisation (F10.1) Coordination (F10.2) Social Commitment (F10.3) Planning (F10.4)	Socialisation and commitment

After having a scale with a consistent factor structure, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to verify the presence of the 10 factors identified in the exploratory phase. This type of analysis will also strengthen the construct validity of the scale used. Given the metrics of the data and the non-compliance with the multi-variate normality assumption (Mardia= 29.67), which could condition the robustness of the results, the Unweighted Least Squares (ULS) procedure was used for parameter estimation, which is more robust than the maximum likelihood (ML) procedure in the event of non-compliance with normality. The estimated standardised parameters are shown in Tables 5 and 6. As can be seen, all of them were statistically significant ($p < .01$) and the factor loadings were greater than .60, except in two specific cases. Several indexes were considered simultaneously to assess the fit of the model: χ^2 , GFI (Goodness of Fit Index), AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index), NFI (Normed Fit Index) and PNFI (Parsimony Normed Fit Index). The empirical fit of the initial model is high, with GFI, AGFI and NFI values above .95 and a PNFI value above .90 (Table 7).

Table 5

Empirical factor structure (standardised estimated parameters l: factorial saturations)

Parameterl		Parameterl	
General critical ability ← F1	.73	Reliability ← F5	.84
Self-critical ability ← F1	.78	Veracity ← F5	.74
Analytical capability ← F1	.72	Integrity ← F5	.76
Reflection ← F1	.71	Commitment ← F5	.75
Introspection ← F1	.73	Sense ← F5	.71
Self-knowledge ← F1	.80	Ethical behaviour ← F6	.73
Initiative ← F2	.75	Discretion ← F6	.81
Leadership ← F2	.68	Confidentiality ← F6	.77
Autonomy ← F2	.71	Professional responsibility ← F6	.72
Motivation ← F2	.77	Appreciation of diversity ← F7	.68
Innovation ← F2	.73	Tolerance ← F7	.69
Value ← F2	.74	Listening capacity ← F7	.77
Creativity ← F2	.72	Respect ← F7	.76
Entrepreneurial spirit ← F2	.73	Consensus ← F7	.76
Stimulation ← F3	.71	Address diversity ← F7	.62
Accessibility ← F3	.78	Help ← F7	.76
Enthusiasm ← F3	.73	Dialogue ← F7	.80
Self-confidence ← F3	.69	Self-control ← F8	.76
Enthusiasm ← F3	.66	Frustration tolerance ← F8	.74
Availability ← F3	.73	Self-discipline ← F8	.74
Optimism ← F3	.77	Resilience ← F8	.79
Cordiality ← F3	.82	Stress management ← F8	.52
Response capacity ← F4	.80	Communication ← F9	.70
Perseverance ← F4	.81	Interpersonal skills ← F9	.77
Lifelong learning ← F4	.67	Empathy ← F9	.82
Updating ← F4	.72	Assertiveness ← F9	.68
Situation analysis ← F4	.70	Socialisation ← F10	.68
Consultation ← F4	.71	Coordination ← F10	.78
Research ← F4	.56	Social commitment ← F10	.76
Excellence ← F5	.68	Planning ← F10	.69

Table 6

Empirical factor structure (standardised estimated parameters) j: correlations between factors)

Parameterj		Parameterj	
F1↔F2	.78	F4↔F5	.84
F1↔F3	.80	F4↔F6	.72
F1↔F4	.79	F4↔F7	.87
F1↔F5	.86	F4↔F8	.81
F1↔F6	.76	F4↔F9	.76
F1↔F7	.84	F4↔F10	.84
F1↔F8	.75	F5↔F6	.82
F1↔F9	.75	F5↔F7	.86
F1↔F10	.77	F5↔F8	.82
F2↔F3	.87	F5↔F9	.70
F2↔F4	.84	F5↔F10	.86
F2↔F5	.82	F6↔F7	.81
F2↔F6	.77	F6↔F8	.68
F2↔F7	.77	F6↔F9	.69
F2↔F8	.86	F6↔F10	.79
F2↔F9	.74	F7↔F8	.81
F2↔F10	.86	F7↔F9	.72
F3↔F4	.81	F7↔F10	.87
F3↔F5	.89	F8↔F9	.70
F3↔F6	.77	F8↔F10	.79
F3↔F7	.88	F9↔F10	.77
F3↔F8	.86		
F3↔F9	.71		
F3↔F10	.85		

Table 7

Measurement model for goodness-of-fit indicators

χ^2	gl	p	GFI	AGFI	NFI	PNFI
254.81	1665	< .01	.98	.98	.98	.93

On the other hand, the high correlation values between factors (around .70 and .80 in all cases) is worth highlighting, evidencing the convergent validity of the scale and, therefore, the theoretical proximity of the factors of which it is composed.

The following pages contain descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum) for each of the 92 items that make up the scale (see tables 8a, 8b and 8c).

Table 8a

Descriptive statistics for assessing socio-emotional competences

Assessment of relevance	Mean	Typical D.	Minimum	Maximum
Communication	3.85	.35	3	4
Confidentiality	3.85	.38	2	4
Listening skills	3.85	.37	2	4
Interpersonal skills	3.83	.38	3	4
Addressing diversity	3.83	.38	3	4
Empathy	3.81	.42	2	4
Discretion	3.79	.43	2	4
Respect	3.79	.44	2	4
Professional responsibility	3.76	.48	2	4
Appreciation of diversity	3.76	.46	2	4
Assertiveness	3.74	.45	2	4
Inclusion	3.73	.47	2	4
Tolerance	3.71	.52	2	4
Team work	3.70	.52	2	4
Ethical behaviour	3.70	.51	2	4
Accessibility	3.70	.53	2	4
Dialogue	3.70	.50	2	4
Cordiality	3.68	.50	2	4
Problem solving	3.66	.55	1	4
Coordinating with others	3.66	.53	2	4
Asking effective questions	3.65	.55	2	4
Flexibility	3.64	.48	3	4
Self-control	3.64	.49	2	4
Reliability	3.64	.56	2	4
Mediation	3.64	.53	2	4

Assessment of relevance	Mean	Typical D.	Minimum	Maximum
Collaboration	3.63	.61	1	4
Professional development	3.62	.59	2	4
Patience	3.62	.57	2	4
Advice	3.61	.61	1	4
Negotiation	3.61	.54	2	4
Responsiveness	3.61	.55	2	4
Sensibility	3.61	.54	2	4
Help	3.59	.53	2	4
Consultation	3.58	.56	2	4
Opening	3.58	.59	2	4

Table 8b

Descriptive statistics to assess socio-emotional competences (Cont.)

Assessment of relevance	Mean	Typical D.	Minimum	Maximum
Integrity	3.58	.58	2	4
Reflection	3.57	.54	2	4
Updating	3.57	.56	2	4
Consensus	3.57	.61	1	4
Coordination	3.57	.57	2	4
Decision making	3.55	.57	2	4
Assessment	3.55	.55	1	4
Planning	3.55	.53	2	4
Tolerance to frustration	3.54	.57	2	4
Motivation	3.53	.59	2	4
Situation analysis	3.53	.58	2	4
Commitment	3.53	.64	1	4
Self-concept	3.53	.54	2	4
Socialisation	3.52	.57	2	4
Involvement	3.52	.57	2	4
Self-criticism capacity	3.51	.58	2	4
Self-knowledge	3.51	.56	2	4
Equity	3.51	.55	2	4

Assessment of relevance	Mean	Typical D.	Minimum	Maximum
Lifelong learning	3.51	.61	1	4
Resilience	3.51	.59	2	4
Objectivity	3.51	.62	1	4
Analytical capacity	3.50	.56	2	4
Perseverance	3.49	.55	2	4
Optimism	3.49	.59	2	4
Stress management	3.48	.69	1	4
Stimulation	3.48	.60	2	4
Facilitator	3.48	.62	1	4
Excellence	3.47	.63	1	4
Innovation	3.47	.63	2	4
Initiative	3.46	.60	2	4
Availability	3.46	.63	1	4
Social commitment	3.46	.63	2	4
Self-discipline	3.45	.56	2	4
Self-confidence	3.45	.55	2	4
Self-confidence	3.43	.54	2	4
Enthusiasm	3.41	.64	1	4
Public relations	3.41	.64	1	4
Proactivity	3.41	.59	2	4
Affection	3.40	.66	1	4
Coaching	3.39	.67	1	4
Critical capacity	3.36	.64	2	4
Enthusiasm	3.36	.65	1	4

Table 8c

Descriptive statistics to assess socio-emotional competences (Cont.)

Assessment of relevance	Mean	Typical D.	Minimum	Maximum
Truthfulness	3.36	.73	1	4
Self-development	3.35	.65	1	4
Entrepreneurial spirit	3.33	.65	1	4
Leadership	3.32	.65	2	4

Assessment of relevance	Mean	Typical D.	Minimum	Maximum
Courage, risk-taking	3.32	.67	1	4
Concerns about success	3.31	.71	1	4
Creativity	3.27	.64	1	4
Non-verbal communication	3.24	.72	1	4
Research	3.23	.66	1	4
Autonomous performance	3.21	.63	2	4
Introspection	3.14	.69	1	4
Persuasion	3.13	.74	1	4
Sense of humour	2.94	.86	1	4
Authority	2.69	.75	1	4
Indolence	2.62	.99	1	4

Tables 8a, 8b and 8c show the socio-emotional competences considered most important. This is: "communication" (3.85), "confidentiality" (3.85) "listening skills" (3.85), "interpersonal skills" (3.83), "attending to diversity" (3.83), "empathy" (3.81), "discretion" (3.79), "respect" (3.79), "professional responsibility" (3.76) and "appreciation of diversity" (3.76).

Three of the competences rated have a clearly lower average than the rest, in this case below 2.95: "indolence" (2.62), "authority" (2.69) and "sense of humour" (2.94).

The data show that "communication" and "confidentiality" are the most relevant socio-emotional competences in the guidance function, while "indolence" and "authority" are of lesser relevance.

The "empathy" competence receives a high score in relevance, as do the "respect" and "professional responsibility" competences. The "assertiveness" competence, on the other hand, ranks eleventh.

The "teamwork" competence is among the fifteen most valued socio-emotional competences. The "cordiality" and "problem solving" competences appear in positions eighteen and nineteen, respectively.

The "coordinating with others", "asking effective questions", "flexibility", "self-control" and "reliability" competences receive similar scores.

The "mediation" competence is among the twenty-five highest scores. The "counseling" competence is placed at a high average (3.61). The "motivation" competence received a score of 3.53 from the counsellors consulted.

The "research", "creativity", "concern for success" and "risk-taking" competences receive low scores. Something similar happens with the "leadership" and "self-development" competences, which appear among the twenty with the lowest indexes.

The "optimism", "enthusiasm", "perseverance" and "enthusiasm" competences receive modest scores.

The “reflection” and “self-knowledge” competences receive acceptable scores in the study. The “stress management” competence receives a rating of 3.48 here. The “introspection” competence is among the competences with the lowest averages (3.14).

Next, the data concerning the relevance of each factor (mean and standard deviation) are presented as a result of applying an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to the items, allowing the competences studied to be grouped into ten factors according to the saturations produced (saturations greater than .35).

Table 9a
Descriptive statistics for the relevance of each factor

Assessment of relevance	Mean	Typical D.
Factor 1: self-knowledge	3.43	.40
General critical capacity	3.36	.64
Self-criticism capacity	3.51	.58
Analytical capacity	3.50	.56
Reflection	3.57	.54
Introspection	3.14	.69
Self-knowledge	3.51	.56
Factor 2: entrepreneurial attitude	3.36	.43
Initiative	3.46	.60
Leadership	3.32	.65
Autonomy	3.21	.63
Motivation	3.53	.59
Innovation	3.47	.63
Value	3.32	.67
Creativity	3.27	.64
Entrepreneurial spirit	3.33	.65
Factor 3: dynamism and collaboration	3.50	.39
Stimulation	3.48	.60
Accessibility	3.70	.53
Enthusiasm	3.41	.64
Self-confidence	3.43	.54
Enthusiasm	3.36	.65
Availability	3.46	.63
Optimism	3.49	.59

Assessment of relevance	Mean	Typical D.
Cordiality	3.68	.50
Factor 4: pragmatic and decisive attitude	3.50	.40
Responsiveness	3.61	.55
Perseverance	3.49	.55
Lifelong learning	3.51	.61
Updating	3.57	.56
Situation analysis	3.53	.58
Consultation	3.58	.56
Research	3.23	.66

Table 9b
Descriptive statistics for the relevance of each factor (Cont.)

Assessment of relevance	Mean	Typical D.
Factor 5: integrity and values	3.53	.41
Excellence	3.47	.63
Reliability	3.64	.56
Truthfulness	3.36	.73
Integrity	3.58	.58
Commitment	3.53	.64
Sensibility	3.61	.54
Factor 6: ethics	3.78	.34
Ethical behaviour	3.70	.51
Discretion	3.79	.43
Confidentiality	3.85	.38
Professional responsibility	3.76	.48
Factor 7: tolerance	3.72	.32
Appreciation of diversity	3.76	.46
Tolerance	3.71	.52
Listening skills	3.85	.37
Respect	3.79	.44
Consensus	3.57	.61
Addressing diversity	3.83	.38

Assessment of relevance	Mean	Typical D.
Help	3.59	.53
Dialogue	3.70	.50
Factor 8: self-regulation	3.52	.40
Self-control	3.64	.49
Tolerance to frustration	3.54	.57
Self-discipline	3.45	.56
Resilience	3.51	.59
Stress management	3.48	.69
Factor 9: communicative and personal relations	3.81	.31
Communication	3.85	.35
Interpersonal skills	3.83	.38
Empathy	3.81	.42
Assertiveness	3.74	.45
Factor 10: socialisation and commitment	3.52	.42
Socialisation	3.52	.57
Coordination	3.57	.57
Social commitment	3.46	.63
Planning	3.55	.53

As shown in Tables 9a and 9b, at factor level, the highest averages correspond to three specific factors: "Communicative and personal relationships" (3.81), "Ethics" (3.78) and "Tolerance" (3.78).

The "Entrepreneurial attitude" (3.36) and "Self-knowledge" (3.43) factor, would have somewhat secondary averages.

A more detailed item-by-item analysis makes it possible to identify the most important socio-emotional competences for counsellors. Once again, "communication" (3.85), "listening skills" (3.85), "confidentiality" (3.85), "interpersonal skills" (3.83), "attention to diversity" (3.83), "empathy" (3.81), "respect" (3.79), "discretion" (3.79), "appreciation of diversity" (3.76) and "professional responsibility" (3.76) would be the most relevant socio-emotional competences for them.

Competences such as "introspection" (3.14), "autonomy" (3.21), "research" (3.23) and "creativity" (3.27) would be the least important for the respondents' praxis.

Finally, a percentage analysis is included to help confirm the results (Table 10).

Table 10

Percentage of subjects giving "Fairly" or "Very" high relevance

Assessment of relevance	% with a rating of 3 or higher
Factor 1. self-knowledge	79.3%
Factor 2. entrepreneurial attitude	72.8%
Factor 3. dynamism and collaboration	83.2%
Factor 4. pragmatic and decisive attitude	84.8%
Factor 5. integrity and human values	82.1%
Factor 6. ethics	91.8%
Factor 7. tolerance	95.7%
Factor 8. self-regulation	83.7%
Factor 9. communicative and personal relations	92.9%
Factor 10. socialisation and commitment	78.8%

It is confirmed that the "Tolerance", "Communicative and personal relationships" and "Ethics" factors register higher percentages by guidance professionals when considering "Quite" or "Very high" relevance. The "Entrepreneurial attitude" factor, on the other hand, is once again the least relevant.

Discussion and conclusions

As can be seen, the professional profile of the counsellor is complex. The exercise of their functions, as mentioned above, requires the interaction not only of conceptual and procedural competences but also of socio-emotional competences. In this sense, as Martínez and Echeverría (2009) point out, a good counsellor must have knowledge, know how to do and know how to be, so as to therefore be endowed with professionally valid and collectively approved competences. The competences of know-how and knowing how to be represent the vertex between the performance of the guidance role and the demands of the context of action. However, the current regulatory framework does not explicitly include these types of competences. Competences of a conceptual and procedural nature are primarily dealt with in initial training, but those requiring an attitudinal component seem to be left to the mercy of each professional's intuition. This study therefore provides valuable information that contributes to the development of the profession with a minimum of success and professional well-being, making the knowledge of the most relevant socio-emotional competences possible, which may be implemented in the counselling practice.

The assessment of socio-emotional competences is a great challenge, given the scarcity of previous studies focused exclusively on this subject. But here there is also the opportunity to underline, once again, the need to study these types of competences in school guidance.

The conclusions of the study are of a provisional nature, given that it is necessary to continue delving in the future, in the processes of identification, development and rating of the socio-emotional competences that are in demand at any given moment. It may be necessary to continue with this line of research from a qualitative perspective, using the focus group as a data collection technique.

However, taking into account that the purpose of this study is to learn about the rating of secondary school guidance counsellors in Galicia on socio-emotional competences, the findings obtained make it possible to identify priority areas that need to be improved for the successful practice of being a counsellor. On the other hand, they make it possible to adjust the training policies of school counsellors, both in the area of initial training as well as ongoing training, taking into account that the assessment instrument used has suitable psychometric properties.

Likewise, the findings facilitate the identification of the most relevant socio-emotional competences for guidance praxis, helping to draw a competence profile of guidance counsellors that is better adjusted to the socio-educational reality and to quality guidance. A competence profile made up of competences such as: "communication", "confidentiality", "listening skills", "interpersonal skills", "attending to diversity", "empathy", "discretion", "respect", "professional responsibility", "appreciation of diversity", "assertiveness", "teamwork", "problem solving", "coordinating with others", "asking effective questions", "flexibility", "self-control", "reliability", "mediation", "counselling", "motivation", "stress management", etc.

The "communication" (first position) competence, in the light of the results obtained, becomes the driving force that makes the development of the guidance activity possible, facilitating interpersonal relationships with teachers, students, families, etc. The "confidentiality" competence (second position), ends up being defined as one of the ethical principles to be followed by school counsellors (Cobos, 2010).

The "empathy" (position 6) competence is defined as a competence of utmost importance for the knowledge of the person that is guided.

Another of the socio-emotional competences that stands out is "respect", thus confirming the advantageous position that counsellors have to influence the different sectors of the educational community (Cobos, 2010). Their actions require, at the same time, competences such as "professional responsibility", also highly valued in the study conducted by Barreira (2002). Therefore, the ethical component somehow ends up conditioning guidance practice, making competences such as "professional responsibility" a priority.

The value assigned to the "assertiveness" competence is striking, occupying eleventh place. A competence of extraordinary relevance for guidance practice, taking into account that it implies being able to maintain a balanced behaviour between aggressiveness and passivity (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007).

The "teamwork" competence, located within the fifteen most relevant socio-emotional competences, clearly shows its relevance for the guidance task, since, as pointed out by Cano de Escoriza and García (2009), it facilitates a qualitative improvement in the teaching-learning process. Today, more than ever, both teachers and guidance professionals are called to work as a team, that is, they need each other to act with a certain degree of efficiency (Repetto & Pena, 2010). The counsellors surveyed seem to be well aware of this. This is undoubtedly a big step forward.

When analysing the data carefully, it can be seen how the “problem solving” competence appears in position nineteen, logically situations that cause distress, discrepancy, mismatch and confrontation seem to be part of the identity of every profession. Therefore, having the ability to manage conflicts is important for guidance, in fact, guidance counsellors in Galicia are specifically entrusted with the support and advice in conflict resolution.

The “motivation” competence is certainly relevant to the successful task of guidance.

The “counselling” competence, placed at a high average, seems to be relevant to the counselling profession. In fact, as pointed out by some theorists (Fernández, 2005; Monereo & Pozo, 2005; Velaz-de-Medrano et al., 2001), it constitutes one of the main duties of the guidance task.

The “mediation” competence, among the twenty-five highest scores, seems to be part of the counselling task, either to mediate between students, families and teachers. We are facing a competence that is demanded by the users of guidance themselves.

The “interpersonal skills”, “coordinating with others”, “asking effective questions”, “flexibility”, “self-control” and “reliability” competences, with similar scores, should also be taken into account in the competence profile of guidance professionals.

A revealing fact is the scores attributed to the “research”, “creativity”, “concern for success” and “risk-taking” competences. Something similar happens with the “leadership” and “self-development” competences, which appear among the twenty with the lowest indexes. In this sense, it seems that guidance counsellors in Galicia have few expectations related to entrepreneurial spirit, so it may be a priority area of intervention to be taken into account in the future.

Optimism, enthusiasm, perseverance, enthusiasm and cordiality facilitate the optimal development of the guidance work, creating a productive framework for action. In the study, these types of competences receive modest scores, with the exception of the “cordiality” competence, which receives a better score.

Competences such as reflection, introspection and self-knowledge, help to recognise and regulate feelings, to adequately manage the relationships established with others, etc. These types of socio-emotional competences are fundamental to understand the configuration and meaning of guidance as a profession. Consequently, the counsellor not only needs to activate knowledge, but also to cope with relationships with others. Here the “Self-regulation” factor is essential to be able to manage emotions adequately and thus neutralize negative situations. In general terms, these socio-emotional competences received acceptable scores in the study, except for the “introspection” competence, which is among the competences with the lowest averages.

The “stress management” competence, with a modest rating, according to the subjects surveyed, is core for the counselling profession. It is a competence characterised by excessive requirements, a high level of demands, ambiguity of the duties to be performed, etc. (Guerrero & Rubio, 2008). A severe lack of training at this level may end up minimising the presence of other key competences in guidance activities such as initiative, leadership, autonomy, motivation, innovation, creativity, entrepreneurial spirit, self-control, resilience, etc.

In short, the study highlights the relevance of three specific factors in the work of counsellors: “Communicative and personal relationships”, “Ethics” and “Tolerance”. Determining factors in the competence profile of guidance professionals.

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