

**IMPACT OF A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF STUDENTS BELONGING TO MAPUCHE INTERCULTURAL EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITIES IN THE ARAUCANÍA REGION - CHILE**

***IMPACTO DE UM PROGRAMA DE APRENDIZAGEM SOCIOEMOCIONAL NA AUTOESTIMA DE ESTUDANTES PERTENCENTES ÀS COMUNIDADES EDUCATIVAS INTERCULTURAIS MAPUCHES NA REGIÃO DE ARAUCANÍA-CHILE***

***IMPACTO DE UN PROGRAMA DE APRENDIZAJE SOCIOEMOCIONAL EN LA AUTOESTIMA DE LOS ESCOLARES PERTENECIENTES A COMUNIDADES EDUCATIVAS INTERCULTURALES MAPUCHES EN LA REGIÓN DE LA ARAUCANÍA-CHILE***



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**ABSTRACT:** This study describes the results of an intervention program in Socioemotional Learning (ASE in the Portuguese abbreviation) and the strengthening of the self-esteem of students from two intercultural schools in the Araucanía region of Chile. The type of research was quasi-experimental with pre-post-test, with experimental (n=122) and control group (n=84). The analyses showed statistically significant differences between the groups ( $t(204)=2.04$ ,  $p=0.043$ ), where the experimental group showed higher mean scores ( $M=18.25$ ,  $SD=4.74$ ) than the control group ( $M=16.87$ ,  $SD=4.86$ ). The results showed that the effect of an intervention program in Socioemotional Learning was moderate ( $\eta^2>0.25$ ) on students' self-esteem

**KEYWORDS:** Socio-emotional learning. Self-esteem. Interculturality. Intervention program.

**RESUMO:** Este estudo descreve os resultados de um programa de intervenção em Aprendizagem Socioemocional (ASE) e o fortalecimento da autoestima de estudantes de duas escolas interculturais da região de Araucanía, Chile. O tipo de pesquisa foi quase-experimental com pré-pós-teste, com grupo experimental (n=122) e controle (n=84). As análises mostraram diferenças estatisticamente significantes entre os grupos ( $t(204)=2,04$ ,  $p=0,043$ ), onde o grupo experimental apresentou escores médios mais elevados ( $M=18,25$ ,  $DP=4,74$ ) do que os do grupo controle ( $M=16,87$ ,  $DP=4,86$ ). Os resultados mostraram que o efeito de um programa de intervenção na Aprendizagem Socioemocional foi moderado ( $\eta^2>0,25$ ) sobre a autoestima dos estudantes

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Aprendizagem socioemocional. Autoestima. Interculturalidade. Programa de intervenção.

**RESUMEN:** Este estudio describe los resultados de un programa de intervención en Aprendizaje Socioemocional (ASE), y el fortalecimiento de la autoestima de estudiantes provenientes de dos colegios interculturales de la región de la Araucanía, Chile. El tipo de investigación fue cuasi experimental con pre-post test, con grupo experimental (n=122) y control (n=84). Los análisis mostraron diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre los grupos ( $t(204)=2.04$ ,  $p=.043$ ), donde el grupo experimental presentó puntuaciones promedio superiores ( $M=18.25$ ,  $DE=4.74$ ) a las del grupo control ( $M=16.87$ ,  $DE=4.86$ ). Los resultados mostraron que el efecto de un programa de intervención en Aprendizaje Socioemocional fue moderado ( $\eta^2>0.25$ ) en la autoestima de los estudiantes.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Aprendizaje socioemocional. Autoestima. Interculturalidad. Programa de intervención.

## Introduction

Over the years, social-emotional learning, the quality of education and academic performance have become part of the educational policy in several countries. In this scenario, there are several programs recognized worldwide such as: Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in the United States; in England the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), in Spain the RULER method, in Colombia the PISOTÓN program and in Chile the BASE program; these are some of the efforts that countries are making to strengthen socioemotional learning (BERGER *et al.*, 2014; HUMPHREY *et al.*, 2007). In this same construct, Gómez-Ortiz, Romera and Ortega (2017) conclude that the promotion of emotional intelligence, social competence and moral mastery of students, favor learning, improve individual well-being and are essential elements of school coexistence. The literature review has confirmed that various personal and external factors influence subjective well-being (CHOI *et al.*, 2019), and academic performance (CERDA *et al.*, 2019). Several authors point out that socioemotional learning is the "missing piece" in providing an effective education to children and adolescents (ELIAS, 1997). Adequate levels of emotional learning allow the development of skills to adequately manage anxiety, depression and increase self-esteem (PUERTAS-MOLERO *et al.*, 2020). A central concept in socioemotional development is self-esteem defined as the subjective and general evaluation that the subject makes about himself (KIVIRUUSU *et al.*, 2015), i.e., he feels good and accepts himself as he is, without the need to make others feel bad (BRUMMELMAN; THOMAES; SEDIKIDES, 2016). An adequate self-esteem in children and adolescents, allows developing better social relationships, strengthening personal and social bonds in acceptance of who he/she is, from culture, origin and family and personal worldview, which favors mental and physical health (ORTH, 2022a) and a reduction of antisocial behavior, associated with low self-esteem, characterized by feelings of inferiority, generating hostile and aggressive reactions towards others (TRACY; ROBINS, 2003). In this approach Wissink *et al.* (2008) mention that a higher sense of cultural identity is related to a higher level of self-esteem, which is linked to less antisocial behavior, including various forms of bullying, as a means to obtain power and social attention at school and later in working life (OSTROWSKY, 2010). In turn, if there are adequate levels of self-esteem and quality interpersonal relationships, they are considered a protective factor. (BI *et al.*, 2016). From an evolutionary point of view, childhood is the period in which the foundations that favor the development of positive self-esteem are built, mainly through significant adults who transmit messages of affirmations to children about their competencies and successful experiences

(ACEVEDO, 2008). In the stages of preadolescence and adolescence, low self-esteem is mentioned as a predictor of risk behaviors (FLORENZANO; VALDÉS, 2013). In this same context, self-esteem is influenced by factors such as peer evaluation, physical appearance, academic performance, parental expectations and social norms, which makes self-esteem very complex in this period (CANTERO *et al.*, 2016, apud DE TEJADA, 2010). Studies by Gilligan (1985) point out that, in Western culture, male identity is defined in terms of autonomy and individuation, while female identity is defined in terms of relationships and affiliations. In turn, Tajfel *et al.* (1971) propose that affiliation with specific social groups, such as cultures or ethnicities, strengthens the self-esteem of individuals. Zañartu *et al.* (2021) point out that the omission in the study of cultural identity and its link with socioemotional aspects is serious, due to the role that self-esteem plays in the development of these. The affiliation to a culture of origin is a factor that can act as a moderator of maladaptive behaviors and allow a harmonious relationship, generated by the rapprochement between coexisting cultures in the same territory. (UNESCO, 2006).

In this context, the objective of this research is to determine the effect of a socioemotional learning program on the self-esteem of intercultural students, identifying the categories of self-esteem and their relationship with the gender and age of the participants.

## **Method**

The research responds to a quantitative methodology (HERNÁNDEZ; FERNÁNDEZ; BAPTISTA, 2014), the design obeys to a quasi-experimental study with pretest-posttest with control group (KERLINGER; LEE, 2002) and for data analysis SPSS Statistical Software version 25 was used (KERLINGER; LEE, 2002) and for data analysis SPSS Statistical Software version 25 was used (KERLINGER; LEE, 2002).

## Participants

Two Mapuche intercultural schools in the Araucanía region of Chile participated in the study. The sample included all students from third to eighth grade in both schools, with a total of 206 participants.

The selection of schools was by convenience, and they were randomly assigned to the experimental group (n=122) and the control group (n=84). Table 1 shows the participants by grade, gender and group.

## Criteria for Inclusion

The inclusion criteria for this research were: (a) educational establishments with an enrollment of 20% or more of students with indigenous ancestry, in accordance with the Indigenous Law N°19.253 (CHILE, 1993) (b) students in third to eighth grade at the time of the research (c) authorization from their parents and/or legal representatives to participate in this study based on informed consent.

**Table 1** – Distribution of participants by school level, gender and group type

School Level	Pretest Group						Postest Group					
	Experimental			Control			Experimental			Control		
	F	M	O	F	M	O	F	M	O	F	M	O
3rd basic	6	11	-	5	11	-	6	11	-	5	11	-
4th basic	12	10	-	6	9	-	12	10	-	6	9	-
5th basic	14	7	-	7	4	-	14	7	-	7	4	-
6th basic	9	6	-	7	12	1	9	6	-	7	12	1
7th basic	15	11	-	5	9	-	15	11	-	5	9	-
8th basic	12	9	-	4	4	-	12	9	-	4	4	-
Total	68	54	-	34	49	1	68	54	-	34	49	1

Source: Prepared by the authors  
F=Female M=Male O=Other

## Tool

The instrument used to evaluate students' self-esteem is the School Self-Esteem Test (TAE in the Portuguese acronym), which was developed and standardized in Chile (MARCHANT; HAEUSSLER; TORRETTI, 2016), the test evaluates the self-esteem of basic general education students from 3rd to 8th grade (8 to 13 years old) due to a pre-established statistical norm by course and age, in a "T" score. The instrument is composed of 23 items, to which the student must answer yes or no, it is a single test. Once the T-score is obtained and the conversion table is used, it will indicate the student's level of self-esteem, which is defined in three categories: normal self-esteem, low self-esteem, very low self-esteem, as shown in the table 2 below.

**Table 2 – Self-esteem categories according to T-scores.**

Categories of Self-Esteem	T-score
Normal Self-esteem	>40 points (in the average, about this or up to a Deviation Standard (DS) below average)
Low self-esteem	between 30 and 39 points (1 DS below the average)
Very low self-esteem	< 29 points (2 or more DS below the average)

Source: Prepared by the authors

The TAE presents adequate reliability and validity indexes, corresponding to a high internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ). Kuder Richardson 20 coefficient: 0.79; Concurrent validity with the Piers-Harris Test: Pearson Product-Moment: 0.88.

## Program implementation

In the first instance, letters of introduction were sent to various institutions in the Araucanía region that met the inclusion criteria for the research. Three institutions responded to the invitation, and finally one declined to participate for particular reasons. The two schools participating in the research belong to the province of Cautín, Araucanía region, one located in Gorbea and the other in Nueva Imperial, both with similar characteristics. In March 2021,

parents and guardians were asked to sign the informed consent form in person in times of pandemic, following the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health of Chile, and the ethical recommendations approved in the Helsinki declaration (WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, 2013). The concerns of parents and guardians were answered, and instructions were given regarding the voluntary nature of their participation and the safeguarding of the information provided. The TAE and the social-emotional learning intervention program were applied in the different classes by the School Coexistence team and the School Integration Program of the experimental group, which were trained in times of pandemic through zoom meetings and instructional videos made by the principal researcher. The intervention program lasted 3 months, with 45 minutes per week. After analyzing the results of both institutions (control and experimental), the results of the self-esteem measurement were given to the institutional directors, paying special attention to the students who obtained very low self-esteem, and suggesting referral to specialists. For ethical reasons, the same material of the social-emotional learning program used in the experimental group was given to the control group.

## **Results**

The descriptive and frequency analyses of self-esteem assessed with the TAE instrument at the different moments of the research (pretest and posttest), for each of the groups (control and experimental), can be seen in Table 3. The results of the evaluation showed that, on average, the score of both groups, both control and experimental in each of the moments, was located in the category of normal self-esteem. Likewise, there was homogeneity in the dispersion of the groups' scores in each of the moments, since the TAE score ranged between 16.69 and 18.25 points.

The category of self-esteem (normal, low and very low) showed that normal self-esteem was the most frequent for each of the groups, both for pretest and posttest. The categories of low and very low self-esteem presented frequency ranges that went from 18 to 24% in all groups and in the two evaluation moments. The effect of the change in the mean scores after the program will be analyzed below.

**Table 3** - Descriptive and frequency analyses of the TAE scores for each of the groups and the evaluation moments.

Group			Pre test	Post test
Group control	Descriptive	M1	16.87	16.69
		OF	4.85	4.85
	Frequency	Normal self-esteem	63 (75%)	60 (71.4%)
		Low self-esteem	15 (17.9%)	18 (21.4%)
		Very low self-esteem	6 (7.1%)	6 (7.2%)
Group experimental	Descriptive	M1	18.25	17.43
		OF	4.73	4.94
	Low self-esteem Frequencies	Normal self-esteem	100 (82%)	96 (78.7%)
		Low self-esteem	17 (13.9%)	20 (16.4%)
		Very low self-esteem	5 (4.1%)	6 (4.9%)

Source: Prepared by the authors

Analyses of association between self-esteem scores and gender and age were carried out, taking into account each of the application moments (pretest and posttest). Age had a low, inverse and statistically significant association with self-esteem score at pretest level ( $r=-0.17$ ,  $p=.015$ ), indicating that as age increased, self-esteem score decreased. However, because the strength of the correlation coefficient between the variables was low, this association may not be linear between them. At the post-test level, there was no association between SAD score and age ( $r=-0.10$ ,  $p=.147$ ).

In order to know the association between gender and SAD category at the different evaluation moments, Chi-square analyses were performed. The analyses can be seen in Table 4. The results showed that there is no association between the frequencies of the Self-esteem categories and the gender of the participants. ( $p>.05$ ).



**Table 4** – Association between gender and TAE score categories..

Time	Category Self esteem	Gender						x <sup>2</sup>	p
		Female		Male		Other			
		f	%	f	%	f	%		
Pre Test	Normal	81	49.7	82	50.3	0	0	5.80	.214
	Low	17	53.1	14	43.8	1	3.1		
	Very low	6	54.5	5	45.5	0	0		
Post test	Normal	78	50	78	50	0	0	4.64	.326
	Low	20	52.6	17	44.7	1	2.6		
	Very low	6	50	6	50	0	0		

Source: Prepared by the authors

Finally, the effect of the Socioemotional Learning program on Self-Esteem was evaluated in the intercultural student groups. First, an intergroup comparison was made between the SAD scale scores between the control and experimental groups at pretest level. The analyses showed statistically significant differences between the groups ( $t(204)=2.04$ ,  $p=.043$ ), where the experimental group presented higher mean scores ( $M=18.25$ ,  $SD=4.74$ ) than the control group ( $M=16.87$ ,  $SD=4.86$ ). Therefore, to evaluate the effectiveness of the program at the post-test level, the scores of the TAE scale at the first moment of evaluation (the pretest measures) were taken as a covariate for the subsequent analyses.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the program at the post-test level, comparisons were performed with the mixed ANOVA or repeated measures ANOVA statistic with intersubject factor. The results can be seen in Table 5. These results showed that the experimental group presented a statistically higher mean score than the control group, after the application of the Socioemotional Learning program, when controlling for TAE scores at pretest level. Likewise, the results showed that the effect of the intervention program was moderate ( $\eta^2>0.25$ ), which indicates that the change on the mean of the groups after the intervention is moderately explained due to the intervention performed on the experimental group, so that the application of the socioemotional learning program can improve the self-esteem of the students to whom the intervention is applied. These results present an adequate statistical power ( $\beta-1>0.8$ ) and are reliable.

**Table 5** – Effect of the Socioemotional Learning Program on self-esteem at the post-test level.

Grupo	M	DE	F(gl)	p	$\eta^2$	$\beta-1$
Control	16.69	4.85	78.62 (1)	<.001	0.28	1
Experimental	17.43	4.94				

Source: Results of the program effect are shown having pretest measures as a covariate. Own elaboration.

## Discussion

The main objective of this research was to determine the effect of a socioemotional learning program on the self-esteem of students from Mapuche intercultural school communities. Considering the general objectives set by the General Education Law of Chile (CHILE, 2009), in which the educational processes aim to achieve a full personal and social development of the student, developing a positive self-esteem and self-confidence, strengthening the affective, moral, spiritual and physical areas, among others. In this context, the integral development of the student is an imperative, so all actions, programs and interventions carried out to achieve these objectives are a significant contribution to the development of students. In this area, ORTH (2022b) mentions that well-designed and properly implemented interventions to strengthen self-esteem benefit not only the students, but also the school community and ultimately society as a whole.

The results of the present research show the effectiveness of an intervention program in socioemotional learning on the self-esteem of intercultural students. At the post-test level, the results showed that the experimental group presented a statistically higher mean score than the control group. The results showed that the effect of the intervention program generated moderate modifications, in favor of self-esteem ( $\eta^2 > 0.25$ ). These results are reliable as they present an adequate statistical power ( $\beta-1 > 0.8$ ). These results coincide with a systematic review of socioemotional learning programs implemented in Chile (RUBILAR, 2022), in which self-esteem is evaluated with pre- and post-tests. The intervention programs analyzed reported an increase in students' self-esteem after the intervention, however, those that presented better results were those where the entire educational community was involved in the process (AGUILERA; BOLGERI, 2021; MARCHANT; MILICIC; ALAMOS, 2015; BERGER; MILICIC; ALCALAY; TORRETTI, 2014; MARCHANT; MILICIC; ALAMOS, 2013; RAMÍREZ; DUARTE; MUÑOZ, 2005; VALDÉS, 2001). Regarding meta-analytic evidence,

the results of this research are consistent with the review of 116 studies conducted by Haney (1998), which evidenced a significant improvement in the self-esteem of children and adolescents presenting a mean effect size of ( $= 0.57$ ).

Regarding the categories of self-esteem, this study showed that the self-esteem of the students in pre- and post-test, was identified in the range of normal self-esteem, being the most frequent in both groups, which is consistent with what was reported in the research of Aguilera and Bolgeri (2021) and Marchant, Milicic and Pino (2017).

In relation to self-esteem and the association with the gender variable, the results showed in the present research, that there is no association between the frequencies of the self-esteem categories and the gender of the participants ( $p = .05$ ). This coincides with the results of the research conducted by Aguilera and Bolgeri (2021). However, these results disagree with those presented in other research (MILICICIC *et al.*, 2009) and that of several longitudinal studies, which indicate that there is a difference in the development of self-esteem between men and women, with men reporting slightly higher self-esteem than women. (EROL; ORTH, 2011; ORTH; ROBINS; WIDAMAN, 2012; ORTH; MAES; SCHMITT, 2015; VON *et al.*, 2016).

Regarding the age of the participants, self-esteem had a low, inverse and statistically significant association with self-esteem score at the pretest level ( $r = -0.17$ ,  $p = .015$ ) indicating that as age increased, self-esteem score decreased, which is consistent with a longitudinal study conducted from childhood to early adulthood. (CHUNG *et al.*, 2017). At the post-test level, there was no association with age ( $r = -0.10$ ,  $p = .147$ ).

For years there has been a debate in the scientific literature regarding the benefits of self-esteem, however, today there are several investigations and meta-analyses, which show that high self-esteem provides benefits throughout the life cycle, in various areas of life such as: in social relationships, in good school performance and future work performance, enjoy better mental and physical health and refrain from antisocial behaviors Orth (2015). These benefits do not discriminate against age, gender, creed, racial or ethnic groups.

## **Conclusion**

Educational communities (schools), anywhere in the world or in the "last place in the world", as in this research, remain an essential pillar for the construction of a society that learns to live in cooperation, solidarity and greater harmony with the extraordinary forms of life and unprecedented risks that characterize our planet (UNESCO, 2022). In this scenario, all efforts in research work, whether grandiloquent or austere, aimed at delivering the necessary knowledge to illuminate the path of the longed-for quality education, with equal opportunities, without distinction of gender, race, ethnicity or creed, is fundamental in the construction of a society with greater opportunities for our children and adolescents.

In this context, when analyzing the results of this research, it is evident that the intervention with a socioemotional learning program, in the different stages of the life cycle, favors the variability of the self-esteem of intercultural students.

In relation to self-esteem and the gender of the students, there is a difference between women and men; however, it is not statistically significant in this research. In this area, and in accordance with the growing awareness of respect for diversity, the gender option "I do not wish to report" was included. Having a response in this option in the pre- and post-test, opens a door to research in this area not declared in the Mapuche context.

With respect to the age of the participants, differences were observed between the pre- and post-test, indicating that as age increased, the self-esteem score decreased. At the post-test level, there was no association between the TAE score and age.

Regarding the limitations and strengths of the present study, one of them is that it was developed entirely during the pandemic period, so that all interventions, except for the authorization of parents/guardians and tutors, were carried out telematically, which leaves several questions such as: Would the result of the research be the same if the interventions were carried out in person? Did the teachers have the necessary tools to transmit the intervention in socioemotional learning, from virtuality as an "emergency response" to COVID 19? Were family, confinement, connection difficulties in rural areas (inequality), among others, the reason for the moderate increase in self-esteem?

In this regard, it is considered necessary to carry out new research on this topic, in a post-pandemic period, with short- and long-term methodological designs, considering from elementary school to university entrance. In response to the little existing documentation in the Chilean literature on this subject (ZANARTU, 2021), and to register the variability in time of the intervention in socioemotional learning, in the self-esteem of intercultural students.

Finally, it should be mentioned that limitations can be the greatest opportunity to "reimagine" a true integral and intercultural education, where everyone can contribute to transform an uncertain future into a future for and for peace, from the richness of diverse cultures, knowledge and self-acceptance.

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