

Intrapersonal Skills and Music Performance in Elementary Piano Students in Spanish Conservatories: Three Case Studies

This study is based on the premise that emotional skills –comprised of an intrapersonal and an interpersonal dimension– help to achieve personal balance, which in turn can enhance performance. Following from this premise, the improvement of music students' emotional skills might have a positive effect on their musical performance. The recognised relationship between music and emotion therefore suggests that music education is a suitable context for developing emotional skills.

The paper examines the relationship between intrapersonal skills and the musical performance of elementary students studying the piano in a Spanish conservatory. The research was developed as an action research process and involved the study of three 10-year-old students. A set of activities were designed specifically for students attending the third course of piano studies; these activities were intended to develop students' intrapersonal skills throughout the school year and were implemented in the subjects of piano and ensemble playing in parallel with the musical tasks. The relationship between intrapersonal skills and musical performance is investigated and discussed for each of the three cases.

Keywords: music conservatories; emotional skills; intrapersonal skills; music education; musical performance.

Introduction

Intrapersonal skills, also known as personal skills, are one of the two components of emotional skills (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007), the other being interpersonal skills. This study addresses the intrapersonal skills dimension, and forms part of a larger project exploring the relationship between emotional skills and musical performance in Spanish music conservatories.

Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills are interconnected (Mayer & Stevens, 1994), although each has specific psychological characteristics and functions: intrapersonal skills concern the recognition and appropriate management of one's own emotions, whereas interpersonal skills are applied to recognise and understand the feelings of other people (Campayo & Cabedo, 2017).

The present study focuses on emotional awareness, regulation and autonomy, what are part of the emotional skills model proposed by Bisquerra and Pérez (2007). According to this model, each group is divided into a number of smaller skills or subskills, as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Emotional skills and associated subskills

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS	EMOTIONAL REGULATION	EMOTIONAL AUTONOMY
Emotional self-awareness	Enhancing awareness of the interaction between emotion, cognition and behaviour	Self-esteem
Naming emotions	Emotional expression	Self-motivation
Understanding emotions of others	Emotional regulation	Responsibility
	Coping skills	Emotional self-efficacy
	Skill in self-generating positive emotions	Critical analysis of social rules
		Resilience

Source: Bisquerra and Pérez, 2007, pp. 70-72

Although emotional awareness, emotional regulation and emotional autonomy are strongly interconnected, the literature suggests that emotional awareness is the main foundation on which other emotional skills are developed (Goleman, 1996; Mayer & Stevens, 1994; Mayer & Salovey, 1995).

Some studies contend that both students and professional musicians may be predisposed to emotional problems such as stress, anxiety and/or rumination (Kenny, Driscoll, & Ackermann, 2014; Roy, Radzevick, & Getz, 2016; Sternbach, 2008). This tendency could lead to depression, fatigue or stage fright (Hildebrand,

Nübling, & Candia, 2012). Some research has also explored the role of emotional learning in controlling performance anxiety (Altenmüller, Wiesendanger, & Kesselring, 2006; Kenny, 2010). Despite its significance in music making, few studies in the literature specifically address the importance of developing emotional skills in music education. However, the general relationship between emotional development and musical performance has attracted greater academic attention, and most of the research finds that emotional development probably has a positive influence on music performance (Costa & Faria, 2015; Kumar et al., 2015; Mohzan, Hassan, & Halil, 2013), although these studies focus on general education in schools, not music education in music schools or conservatories.

Learning a musical instrument has the potential to develop students' emotional skills, including self-esteem (Kenny, 2010), perseverance, discipline and responsibility (Chung, 2010; Hallam, 2010a; Lund & Kranz, 1994). In addition, given the natural interconnection between music and emotion (Pellitteri, Stern, & Nakhutina, 1999), music education provides for the enhancement of emotional expression (Juslin, 2005; Woody & McPherson, 2010) and emotional self-awareness (Sloboda, 1985). Thus, music education may allow students to develop intrapersonal skills at the same time as acquiring professional skills (De Bezenac & Swindells, 2009). To this end, teachers should reflect on how to integrate emotional aspects into musical contexts in a coherent and coordinated manner, since emotional skills are not automatically learned (Bisquerra, 2009).

Increasing self-esteem is an important issue for musicians: students who perceive themselves as competent and self-efficacious in certain tasks tend to persist (Nielsen, 2004), to manage difficulties more efficiently (Dweck & Molden, 2005) and to achieve academic accomplishment (Bandura, 1993). Students' self-

esteem can be undermined if they base their perspective on comparisons with others and the opinions of other people (McDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2002). To avoid this, students should base their self-esteem on their own efforts and learning processes (Dweck, 2000) and learn to be responsible for their own actions (Dweck & Repucci, 1973). When students perceive their skills as being fixed, they tend to think that their performance does not depend on their own efforts. This could have a negative impact on students' self-esteem and might even lead them to give up (Dweck & Master, 2009). Conversely, students who perceive their skills as changeable tend to think that they can improve their performance if they persevere in their efforts. Such students are more likely to achieve their goals (Dweck, 2000).. Finally, it is worth noting that self-esteem has a direct influence on self-confidence (O'Neill & Sloboda, 1997) and that a high level of self-confidence leads to well-being (Hernández, 2002).

Another essential intrapersonal skill that has a positive impact for music students is emotional expression. Emotional expression and communication in performance should be addressed in the early stages of music teaching, since it fosters children's autonomy (Byrne, 2005; Filliozat, 2001). However, in music education, teachers often attach less importance to these areas than to technical aspects (Hallam, 2010b; McPherson, Davidson, & Faulkner, 2012). Moreover, students will be more motivated if they understand what it is they have to express through music (McPherson et al., 2012), which in turn will lead to a more expressive musical performance (Woody & McPherson, 2010). According to Hallam (2010b), self-expression can be developed in composition, improvisation or the interpretation and performance of musical works created by others.

Emotional autonomy is a complex concept that encompasses a range of features such as self-esteem, self-motivation and responsibility, among others (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007). According to Chirkov (2009), emotional autonomy is closely related to the need for autonomy, which was developed by Deci and Ryan (1985) in their self-determination theory (SDT). Furthermore, autonomy is an indicator of the amount and quality of individuals' emotional self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2006), and as such is pivotal in the achievement of good academic performance (Goleman, 1996; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Although the development of autonomy is seen to be important in music education (Küpers, Dijk, Geert, & McPherson, 2015), music teaching processes will not foster autonomy if the teacher leads and controls the entire music learning process without allowing the students to participate (Creech, 2012; McPherson, 2005). The teacher's recognition of and attitude to students' awareness is essential to promote and support their autonomy (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). These authors note that strategies providing "choice and meaningful rationales for learning activities" (p. 141) could enhance autonomy.

This study was developed in the context of elementary music studies in Spanish conservatories. The elementary level spans four academic years and is normally attended by students aged between 8 and 12 years old.

The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to examine the relationship between intrapersonal skills and musical development in the framework of Spanish conservatories; and second, to provide data from an intervention designed to explore this relationship in conservatories.

Methodology

The action research followed the model devised by Kemmis (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The action plan was first evaluated by an expert in action research at the beginning of the intervention, and subsequently by three critical colleagues –one per term– through non-participant observation. Assessments were taken into account to improve the design of the intervention. The teacher-researcher also assessed the action plan at the end of each term in order to optimise the proposed objectives.

The intervention was developed in parallel with the contents of the piano curricula and ran from the first day to the last day of the academic course. The intrapersonal skills worked on during the intervention were based on Bisquerra and Pérez's (2007) model, as described in the introduction section. Only those intrapersonal skills considered most relevant to improving the students' musical practice were selected. The musical contents concerning the development of intrapersonal skills were properly sequenced and organised to guarantee their systematicity and effectiveness (Bisquerra, 2009).

Procedure

The research was carried out by implementing a set of activities designed in accordance with the contents of the curricula for the third year of piano studies in Spanish conservatories, and with the aim of developing emotional education. The curricula for this course comprises four subjects-piano, piano ensemble, choir and music theory. The designed activities were intended to develop both students' piano performance and their intrapersonal skills. The intervention consisted of cross-cutting and specific activities. Cross-cutting activities were integrated into the study of the repertoire, and were therefore implemented in parallel with the contents of

the curricula throughout all the sessions. In turn, specific activities were introduced in a timely manner to develop specific issues of intrapersonal skills that could reinforce musical practice (see Appendix 1). Some of these activities were designed to be implemented in the subject of piano – a individual subject that enables students to develop technical and performing skills- and others in the subject of piano ensemble -subject that provides groups of up to four students, all of them with the same technical level, with the opportunity to play together. Author 1 taught both subjects.

Participants

The participants were three students attending the third course of elementary piano studies in a Spanish conservatory. The criteria for selecting the participant students were that: (1) they had similar psychosocial characteristics -all of them were 10 years old, attended state schools and came from affluent families with some educational background; (2) they were classmates in the group subjects. Data was obtained through the students' personal information collected by the teacher –Author 1– at the beginning of the course. This allowed her to follow up on the three cases.

Juan, Laura and María were the three student participants. Real names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. Some main specific characteristics of the students' family situation and experience in the context of musical training are described below:

Juan: Both parents are employed. His mother is a civil servant and his father works in the construction sector. Juan is an only child. He likes describing what he has

done each day and he makes friends easily, reflecting his open, friendly personality. He is somewhat disorganised and tends to get distracted.

María: Her parents are both doctors. She is the second of three children – two girls and one boy. She helps at home, especially in taking care of her little brother. She is a very self-confident girl with clear ideas. She shows great conviction about what she wants.

Laura: Both parents are employed. His father is a policeman and his mother works at a petrol station. She is a year older than the rest of the participating students. She is the eldest of two sisters. She is a very responsible child who is concerned to obtain good grades both at school and at the conservatory to please her father.

Data collection and analysis

Four types of data were collected at different points throughout the intervention:

- (1) *Interview*. Semi-structured interviews were conducted before and after the intervention (see Appendix 4). The purpose of the interviews was to establish some baseline information to compare with events and experiences that occurred during the intervention in relation to the students' intrapersonal skills. The interview questions were divided into two thematic categories: 1) general questions about how the students manage their emotions in the personal and school environment; 2) specific questions to explore the relationship between students' intrapersonal skills and their performance in music studies. To obtain a triangulated perspective of students' intrapersonal skills, the three participating students, their parents and their music theory teacher were all interviewed.

All the interviews were recorded. In addition to the sound recording, an audio-visual record was also made in order to capture the interviewees' body language, thus adding to the depth of information gathered from the interviews.

- (2) *Teacher's diary*. The teacher wrote down her reflections on the most meaningful events during the lessons (Porlán & Martín, 1991), specifically those regarding intrapersonal skills and their influence on academic performance. Detailed descriptions of these situations were also made in this document. The date of each session was noted at the beginning of each entry and, following Elliott (1990), the notes were written at the end of the class to capture the impressions in greater detail and to enhance reliability. This instrument was used in each individual piano session and in the ensemble lessons throughout the intervention.
- (3) *Video recordings*: Video recordings were made to reinforce the information obtained through the teacher's diary. Data were thus collected that might otherwise have gone unnoticed, referring to both the student and the teacher. One lesson per month was recorded throughout the academic year in both piano and ensemble lessons.
- (4) *CE-360° assessment protocol*. CE-360° consists of a set of three questionnaires, which were administered on two occasions, once before and once after the intervention. A questionnaire was administered to the participating students and three of their peers, all of whom were piano students and classmates in the subject of music theory and who knew the participating students well. The three members of staff who taught them piano, music theory and choir during that academic year also completed the

questionnaire. Each item was measured on a ten-point scale, where 0 represents the minimum level of skill and 10 the maximum. This questionnaire was designed and validated by the *Grup de Recerca en Orientació Psicopedagògica [Research Group in Psychopedagogic Orientation]* (GROP) as an instrument to assess students' emotional skills (Bisquerra, Martínez, Obiols, & Pérez, 2006). Given that the questionnaire was designed for secondary school students, some of the items were adapted to include more accessible and understandable language. The CE-360° assessment protocol provided the numerical data for the study.

Qualitative analysis was performed based on data from the interviews, the teacher's diary and the video recordings. The transcribed interviews, the teacher's diary and the session recordings were analysed using MAXQDA 12 software. To ensure the reliability of the results, the information was triangulated and categorised (Ruiz, 2005). The categorisation process was previously and independently carried out by two different researchers, and was a deductive process based on the Bisquerra and Pérez (2007) model detailed in Table 1. However, some of these categories were modified or excluded and new ones were included as a result of the researchers' perceptions of which intrapersonal skills would be most important for enhancing musical performance throughout the intervention. The identified categories were divided into different subcategories according to their thematic nature as presented below:

- (1) Emotional awareness: ability to become aware of one's own emotions and those of others, including the ability to grasp the emotional atmosphere of a given context.

1.1 Emotional self-awareness: ability to perceive one's own feelings and emotions accurately.

1.2 Name emotions: ability to select suitable emotional vocabulary depending on the context.

(2) Emotional regulation: ability to manage emotions appropriately.

2.1 Emotional expression: ability to express one's own feelings and emotions accurately.

2.2 Emotional control: ability to manage one's own emotions properly.

(3) Emotional autonomy: a broad, complex concept that includes a set of skills related to personal self-management. Some of these skills are:

3.1 Self-motivation: ability to engage actively in different tasks.

3.2 Responsibility: capacity to assume the consequences of one's own actions and carry out required tasks.

3.3 Self-esteem: the judgement that individuals make of their own capacities.

3.4 Self-confidence: feeling based on the strong awareness of one's own ability to face possible difficulties in a particular area.

3.5 Positive attitude: ability to see the bright side of things.

Having categorised the information, the summaries of the categories were extracted. This procedure was carried out using MAXQDA 12. The information for the categories was therefore conveniently grouped and organised, which facilitates the triangulation procedure.

The research complied with the ethical standards of confidentiality, parental and school authorisation, and secure storage of the participants' data.

Results

The results show the analysis for the categories presented above.

Analysis of Interviews, Videos and Teacher's Diary

Intrapersonal subcategories were analysed separately on the basis of interviews, videos and the teacher's diary.

1. Emotional awareness

1.1. Emotional self-awareness

Each student developed differently in this subcategory throughout the year. Juan had difficulty in identifying the emotion conveyed by a piece of music, whereas María and Laura seemed to find this task easier.

Teacher's diary (5 November, 2015): Juan finds it difficult to differentiate emotions. This is clear in his improvisations. He prefers to describe objects rather than express emotions.

Video recording (7 May, 2015).

[After listening to a piece of music]

Teacher: What did the music convey to you?

Laura: [Sadness!]

María: [Sadness!]

Teacher: And you, Juan?

Juan: [He shrugs his shoulders and says nothing].

1.2 Naming emotions

Initially the students struggled to find the right words to define emotions or emotional processes, but by the end of the school year all three of them showed improvement in this ability and were able to name and define emotions and responses to emotions more effectively.

Teacher's diary (21 May, 2015): I have noticed that they find the words to define emotions more easily than before.

The same process was observed when they had to name the emotions aroused by the music, or that they wanted to express through their instrument. This gave them a more precise idea about how they should perform the music.

Teacher's diary (15 April, 2015): Laura is more autonomous when she needs to specify the characteristics of the work through adjectives related to emotional states or character traits.

2.1 Emotional expression

At the beginning of the intervention the students showed difficulties in expressing their emotions, especially when playing the piano.

(Video 1 October, 2014).

Teacher: What do you want to express through this piece of music?

Laura: I don't know. When you are... [In silence, she looks thoughtful for a few seconds].

Teacher: It doesn't matter if you can't think of anything.

Laura: I can't think of anything. Happiness? [looking up with a questioning tone].

When they were asked if they were able to express what they felt easily or, conversely, if they found this process difficult, they replied as follows:

Laura: Sometimes. It is quite complicated.

María: It is difficult for me.

Juan: Easily.

Although gradual improvements were seen in their emotional expression in playing the piano throughout the intervention, it was Laura whose piano performance was the most natural.

Laura's father: I have noticed that she feels the music. She looks more relaxed when she is playing. Last year she sat straighter and didn't move. Now she feels the music, plays the piano and feels ... [pause].

Juan found it easier to express his emotions through improvisation:

Teacher's diary (29 April, 2015): It is difficult for him to identify the emotions that a work expresses but, once identified, he expresses them very well when he is improvising.

2.2 Emotional control

Given the broadness of this concept, this section focuses on the emotions that arose most frequently throughout the intervention.

(1) Impatience

To varying degrees, impatience seemed to be the most common characteristic shown by the students, especially Juan and María. Both of them overcame this, which helped them to learn to study in a more organised way. This had a positive impact on the quality of their piano playing performance.

Teacher: Do you think he is more focused when he is practicing the piano?

Juan's mother: Yes. Since mid-way through the course. Now, when he studies he stops when something is going wrong and repeats it, instead of playing the piece from top to bottom again.

Teacher: Throughout this year have you noticed any other changes in the way she studies the piano?

[pause]

María's mother: She used to read the score but not work on the detail...That has changed this year.

(2) Anger

Neither Laura nor María became angry easily, but when they did, they had strategies to positively manage their anger. They were also aware of their ability to deal with anger.

Teacher: When you are studying and something is going wrong, how do you feel?

María: I get a little angry, but then... I do something different and after that I try it again.

The data show that Laura developed a tendency to get upset easily in music theory lessons:

Music theory teacher: She gets upset sometimes. That happens when something isn't what she expected. But it isn't overstated...

In contrast, Juan often tended to get angry, especially in the face of adversity:

Teacher: When he is studying and has problems with a specific passage, how does he react?

Juan's mother: He gets angry.

(3) Frustration

Juan showed attitudes that indicate that he did not always tolerate frustration. He found it difficult to accept that he was not the best in every field, which meant he often became discouraged and wanted to give up:

Teacher's diary (18 March, 2015): Juan left the music theory lesson quite upset because he can't sing high notes and the teacher told him that if he wanted to do things well, he had to make an effort to sing them. Juan thought that teacher meant he was going to fail and he wasn't good at singing. In fact, just after this lesson, he couldn't go to the choir lesson because he felt depressed.

Laura, and especially María, tolerated frustration quite well. María's desire to improve enabled her to overcome difficulties. At the beginning of the intervention she often showed pride and became upset when the piano teacher corrected her, although a remarkable improvement in this respect was observed throughout the year.

Laura, in turn, constantly expressed an attitude of victimisation at the beginning of the intervention. The videos reveal Laura sighing, frowning and expressing herself in tones of regret, illustrating the difficulties she faced in controlling this aspect of her personality. However, some of these attitudes improved throughout the implementation:

Teacher's diary (15 April, 2015): Her attitude is no longer so much one of victimisation. She has begun to do things with a calmer, less concerned attitude.

(4) Performance anxiety

The students had to perform in public several times during the year. In general, all of them showed good control of their anxiety on stage. Based on observations of his performance, Juan showed no symptoms of anxiety.

On the other hand, both girls presented higher levels of anxiety than Juan before they were due to play in public.

María's mother: She has got more nervous about having to play in public since the time she made a mistake.

During the classes this issue was sometimes addressed and after a while, the students stated that they felt more relaxed and confident.

Teacher: How did you feel before playing?

Laura: Nervous at the beginning, but only a little bit. What seems normal to me is that I used to be very, very, very nervous like in most of my auditions [full of emotion and smiling]. (Video 28 March 2015)

2.3 Positive view

Differences were observed in the way all three of the students were able to face challenges positively.

María started the year with a high level of positivity, which remained stable throughout the course. Conversely, Juan adopted negative attitudes when something went wrong. He tended to assess himself negatively in terms of his music studies. Nevertheless, this aspect improved during the year:

Teacher's diary (30 April, 2015): Although Juan still fails to see the positive aspects in terms of his music, at least he doesn't focus so much on the negatives as at the beginning of the year. This attitude is closer to reality, because there actually are aspects of musical practice that he still finds difficult.

Although Laura tended to see the positive side of things, her attitude was one of victimisation, although this aspect improved during the course:

Teacher's diary (18 February, 2015): Laura said she found it easier to study for her exams. This has attracted my attention, since she usually focuses on how difficult everything is and how badly she feels about doing exams.

3. *Emotional autonomy*

3.1 Self-motivation

From the beginning, María and Laura showed positive motivation towards studying music in the conservatory. María's self-motivation remained stable throughout the course. However, some of the evidence suggested that Laura's self-motivation might be waning: her perseverance in studying the instrument deteriorated and so did her musical performance. Furthermore, during the post-intervention interview, Laura said she had not followed the study schedule provided at the beginning of the course to organise her study time.

Unlike the girls, Juan did not initially show any special interest in music studies, although his interest grew throughout the year. In order to acquire a more complete picture of students' progress, every term they were asked questions about how they felt about music and going to the lessons in the conservatory. In the first term, Juan suggested that he went to music lessons because his parents wanted him to, but by the third term, he said that he came to the conservatory because he liked it. One of the main factors that raised his motivation was the good relationship he had with his peers.

Teacher: Have you noticed if Juan is happy about coming to the conservatory for this course?

Juan's mother: At the beginning he came...

Teacher: Reticently?

Juan's mother: Yes. But now he is really pleased to come. Also, he says, "come on, I have to get there first!" [Excitedly]

Teacher: I guess it is because of the group lessons, do you think?

Juan's mother: Yes. When he is in the corridor talking with his classmates...he likes that [laughs]

3.2 Responsibility

Laura and María showed a high level of responsibility for their studies, either because they have younger siblings or because their parents had instilled it into them.

Laura's excessive sense of responsibility is worth noting because it eventually caused her to suffer.

Teacher's diary (5 November, 2015): Today Laura's studies are getting on top of her. She wants to excel at everything and she is afraid of making mistakes.

This situation could be related to a high level of self-demand, probably fostered by her father:

Laura's mother: I think this is because ever since she was little her father has instilled in her a sense of responsibility for her studies. Studies come first and then...

Laura's father: Perhaps, I have made a mistake in that sense and I have been too demanding.

The piano teacher informed Laura's parents of the situation during a meeting. The parents seemed to be receptive and wanted to help reduce Laura's excessive sense of responsibility.

Laura eventually managed to reduce the excessive sense of responsibility that caused her to suffer throughout the intervention.

Teacher's diary (15 April, 2015): I'm glad to see Laura isn't as concerned as before, when she wasn't able to study enough and when she didn't play as she wanted to.

In the case of María, no relevant changes were observed. However, whereas both the girls seemed to assume higher levels of responsibility and appreciate the consequences of their actions, Juan tended to make excuses for himself and often did not assume his responsibilities:

Teacher's diary (13 May, 2015): Juan often makes excuses for things he can't explain. I mean, when he is playing and something doesn't go well, he tends to say that he didn't have a problem with that at home. With this attitude he is never going to assume the responsibility for studying in a different, more effective way.

3.3 Self-esteem

Unlike Juan, both Laura and María seemed to have high levels of self-esteem with regard to their musical abilities. They had a high perception of their musical skills, whereas Juan tended to doubt his musical abilities, although he was improving by changing the way he studied and thereby enhancing his performance.

Teacher's diary (4 March, 2015): I can see he is happier with what he does and he feels better as a result.

Teacher's diary (10 June, 2015): Juan's concentration has improved and this has enabled him to perform better. This situation, at the same time, has increased his self-esteem, so he now has more faith in his musical skills than before.

Overall, the fear of failure when performing in public was what most affected their self-esteem with regard to musical performance:

Teacher's diary (12 February, 2015): Something that I also noticed is that when they had to say if they liked playing in public or not, almost all of them responded by focusing on what others think of them instead of focusing on themselves.

However, throughout the intervention, the students reflected on how to reduce their fear of performing in public:

Teacher's diary (23 April, 2015): I think they increasingly feel that they are in a space of trust and that if they make a mistake, nothing will happen. I consider this as essential for the development of their self-esteem.

3.4 Self-confidence

Throughout the year all the students showed higher self-confidence in playing their instruments. This was most notable in the case of Juan who, as mentioned before, was reluctant to trust his musical skills. His self-confidence in music and in other fields also gradually increased, as his mother reported.

Juan's mother: Little by little he is becoming more self-confident in his music studies, and this allows him to do things better. This is happening in other areas as well...with tennis, with drawing...

Another indicator of his growing self-confidence was his greater willingness to participate in group lessons:

Music theory teacher: At the beginning of the year he sat at a desk at the back of the classroom and he didn't participate in class. Now he enjoys responding quickly when he knows the right answer to a question.

Laura showed a certain lack of faith in her musical abilities at the beginning of the year. However, this aspect improved throughout the school year:

Teacher: Have you noticed if Laura is more self-confident when she plays the piano?

Laura's father: Yes, she is. She has improved. She is more self-confident.

María presented a good level of self-confidence from the beginning of the intervention. She liked to participate in class and was satisfied with her work throughout the course:

Teacher: Does she participate actively?

Music theory teacher: Yes, indeed she does. She is one of the most motivated students in the class.

Teacher: In all of the activities?

Music theory teacher: In everything, in everything ... in theory, in singing, everything is fine. She is one of our model students.

CE-360° Assessment Protocol Analysis

The assessment process of this questionnaire –described in the methodology section– counteracts the high subjective component of the emotional skills assessment (Bisquerra et al., 2006).

The assessment protocol measures various aspects of emotional skills. This study only considers those items related to the following intrapersonal skills: (1) emotional expression, (2) impulsivity control, (3) anger control, (4) behaviour in class control, (5) frustration tolerance, (6) positive view, (7) motivation for studying and (8) awareness of the relationship between emotion and behaviour. The questionnaire items do not correspond exactly to the categories derived from qualitative analysis. However, all of them refer to intrapersonal skills and are closely interconnected. Table 2 reports the values for intrapersonal skills in each case.

Table 2. Assessments of intrapersonal skills items from the CE-360° assessment protocol

Questionnaire		(1) Emotional expression		(2) Impulsivity control		(3) Anger control		(4) Behaviour in class control	
		Value 1	Value 2	Value 1	Value 2	Value 1	Value 2	Value 1	Value 2
Juan	Teacher 1	6	7	6	7	6	8	7	8
	Teacher 2	6	5	8	8	7	8	8	7
	Teacher 3	7	6	7	10	7	8	7	8
	Peer 1	6	6	1	7	7	10	5	8
	Peer 2	8	9	6	3	8	10	7	9
	Peer 3	8	5	5	9	10	10	10	8
	Self-evaluation	7	7	8	8	9	8	9	6
María	Teacher 1	8	9	7	9	10	10	9	10
	Teacher 2	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	Teacher 3	7	8	8	9	8	9	9	9
	Peer 1	9	8	10	8	10	9	10	8
	Peer 2	10	9	10	9	10	10	10	10
	Peer 3	9	8	7	9	10	9	10	9
	Self-evaluation	9	9	10	10	9	9	10	10
Laura	Teacher 1	7	8	8	7	8	6	7	7
	Teacher 2	7	7	7	7	9	7	8	6
	Teacher 3	8	8	6	9	8	9	9	9
	Peer 1	9	8	9	9	10	9	9	9
	Peer 2	7	8	7	4	10	10	9	9
	Peer 3	10	7	9	10	8	10	8	10
	Self-evaluation	9	7	10	5	10	7	10	9

Questionnaire		(5) Frustration tolerance		(6) Positive view		(7) Motivation for studying		(8) Awareness of emotion-behaviour relationship	
		Value 1	Value 2	Value 1	Value 2	Value 1	Value 2	Value 1	Value 2
Juan	Teacher 1	7	9	10	7	1	8	6	6
	Teacher 2	9	6	4	6	3	6	5	6
	Teacher 3	6	6	8	6	8	7	7	6
	Peer 1	6	6	9	9	4	9	10	10
	Peer 2	10	2	10	7	8	5	10	7
	Peer 3	8	9	8	8	1	9	8	7
	Self-evaluation	9	7	10	9	7	7	9	8
María	Teacher 1	8	8	10	10	10	10	8	10
	Teacher 2	8	8	9	8	9	8	7	8
	Teacher 3	7	9	9	9	10	10	7	7
	Peer 1	9	9	10	8	9	10	8	7
	Peer 2	9	10	10	8	10	9	10	9
	Peer 3	6	8	10	9	9	9	7	8
	Self-evaluation	9	10	10	10	10	10	9	9
Laura	Teacher 1	7	6	8	9	8	9	7	8
	Teacher 2	9	7	8	7	8	6	7	7
	Teacher 3	8	8	8	7	10	6	8	7
	Peer 1	9	8	10	9	8	9	8	8
	Peer 2	7	9	9	10	8	9	7	8
	Peer 3	7	8	9	10	10	10	10	8
	Self-evaluation	8	5	9	8	10	9	9	6

The values for Juan and María's intrapersonal skills reported in Table 2 increase slightly throughout the intervention, and more so in the case of Juan. However, the level of Laura's intrapersonal skills fell slightly. Discrepancies are seen in the assessments made by the different groups of evaluators: in general, the teachers tended to give lower assessments than the peers. Also of note is the slight fall in self-evaluation values in most cases.

The relationship between intrapersonal skills development and the students' musical performance was analysed as follows. The measure of intrapersonal skills development is based on the arithmetic mean (\bar{x} value) of the intrapersonal skills evaluations by the teachers, peers and from the self-evaluation before (\bar{x} value 1) and after (\bar{x} value 2) the intervention. The measure of musical performance (\bar{x} cal) is based on the arithmetic mean of the grades for subjects assessed in the first term (\bar{x} value 1) and in the third term (\bar{x} value 2). These values fall within a range of 0 to 10 points for four subjects: piano (piano), musical theory (mus_the), ensemble (ensemble) and choir.

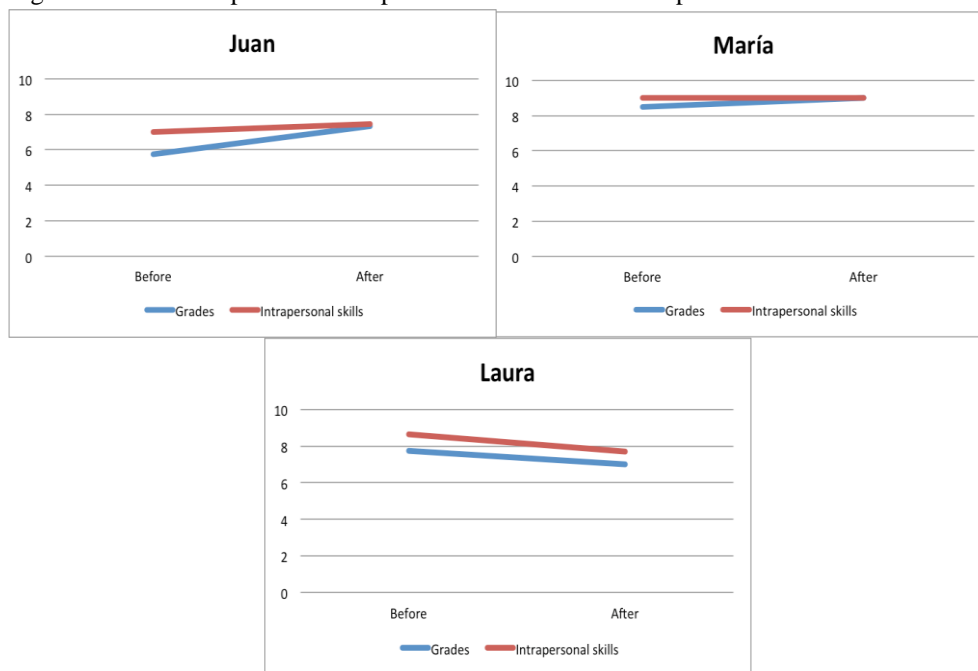
Table 3 reveals an interrelationship between the development of students' intrapersonal skills and their academic performance: the students whose intrapersonal skills increased also experienced an improvement in their academic performance, and vice versa.

Table 3. Values from arithmetic mean for the development of intrapersonal skills and academic performance

	Intrapersonal skills							
	Teachers' \bar{x} value 1	Teachers' \bar{x} value 2	Peers' \bar{x} value 1	Peers' \bar{x} value 2	Self-evaluation \bar{x} value 1	Self-evaluation \bar{x} value 2	Value 1 \bar{x}	Value 2 \bar{x}
Juan	6.50	7	7.20	7.58	8.25	7.75	7.31	7.44
María	8.30	8.75	9.25	8.75	9.50	9.60	9.01	9.03
Laura	7.80	7.37	8.75	8.70	9.40	7	8.65	7.69
	Musical performance							
	Subjects	Grades value 1	Grades value 2	Grades \bar{x} value 1	Grades \bar{x} value 2			
Juan	Piano	6	7	5.75	7			
	Mus_the	6	8					
	Ensemble	6	8					
	Choir	5	5					
María	Piano	9	9	8.50	9			
	Mus_the	8	9					
	Ensemble	9	9					
	Choir	8	9					
Laura	Piano	7	6	7.75	7			
	Mus_the	9	8					
	Ensemble	8	7					
	Choir	7	7					

Figure 1 shows a positive relationship between intrapersonal skills and musical performance for all three students. In the cases of Juan and María, both grades and intrapersonal skills showed an upward trend, and conversely, in the case of Laura, both grades and intrapersonal skills decreased. In the first two cases (Juan and María), grades increased at a faster rate than their intrapersonal skills; consequently the growth of these two variables occurs at different rates. However, in the case where intrapersonal skills and grades decrease (Laura) they did so in parallel.

Figure 1. The development of intrapersonal skills and musical performance



Discussion

The main aim of this research was to explore the possible relationship between the intrapersonal skills and musical performance of three piano students in a Spanish conservatory. It is important to note that we did not aim to study each one of the intrapersonal competences separately, but to provide a global perspective of the set of intrapersonal skills and how these can relate to the students' musical performance.

Numerical data support the qualitative data: a relationship was found between intrapersonal skills and musical performance in all three cases. Juan and María experienced a slight improvement in their intrapersonal skills and academic performance. Conversely, the results suggest that these two variables decreased slightly in Laura's case. Several aspects should be taken into account in the general interpretation of the findings:

1. The numerical values indicate small variations in both intrapersonal skills and musical performance for each of the students.

2. The most significant case was Juan. At the beginning of the intervention, he presented the lowest intrapersonal skills (based on the CE-360° assessment protocol) and level of musical performance. This suggests that progress is more obvious in cases starting from a lower level, since the margin for improvement is greater.

3. Accurate assessment of the processes involved in the development of emotional aspects is a complex matter. According to Sameroff's transactional model (1975), learning is affected by different factors and does not always develop linearly. This could be the case of Laura. However, longitudinal studies would be necessary to obtain more reliable findings for each of the students.

4. Teachers' perceptions are different from those of students. This is clear from the numerical data: children tend to assess more highly than teachers, possibly because of their different interpretation of reality (Piaget, 1936). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the students' self-assessments at the end of the intervention were lower than at the beginning. Following Piaget (1936), the fact that the students were entering adolescence –11 years of age– might condition the change in their self-perception. However, it may also be the case that the development of their intrapersonal skills influenced their self-perception.

This study is exploratory and these results cannot be extrapolated to draw any general conclusions. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that all of the subcategories are interconnected, such that when students develop one of them they are developing others at the same time. In fact, emotional awareness emerges as the first step in the development of the other intrapersonal skills (Goleman, 1996; Mayer & Stevens, 1994; Mayer & Salovey, 1995) and autonomy appears as a consequence of the development of intrapersonal skills.

Identifying and naming emotions helped the students to understand more clearly what they wanted to perform, and thus integrate emotional expression into their playing. It improved the students' musical expression and helped them to play the piano more fluently (Woody & McPherson, 2010). To this end, activities related to improvising and associating music with personal experiences or stories were effective in making the score easier to understand and therefore easier to play.

Enhanced emotional regulation was observed in all three students during the year through the work with emotional expression and emotional control. Two activities were identified that helped them to improve their emotional expression when they played the piano: (1) improvisation, and (2) associating the music they

had to play with something that was familiar to them. Regarding emotional control, Juan and María experienced impatience when they studied, skipping steps during their studies, playing quickly, and without thinking or addressing difficulties in their playing. However, they managed to follow the study schedule and the set of study guidelines provided by the teacher at the beginning of the course. This helped them to organise their studies and led to an observed improvement in their concentration and their musical performance. This had a significant impact on Juan's self-esteem and level of frustration: he showed a low level of self-esteem about his musical skills at the beginning of the intervention and therefore felt frustrated (Dweck & Master, 2009). As his self-esteem rose, it was perceived that his frustration and anger decreased, in musical performance and also in other areas of his life.

The results suggest that self-motivation and musical performance may be strongly interconnected. This was the case for Laura, who became gradually less focused and perseverant, such that her musical performance was negatively affected, which could have negatively impacted her self-motivation (Austin, Renwick, & McPherson, 2006). However, it is possible that the process happened in reverse. Conversely, Juan experienced improvement in both these aspects. Self-motivation can be promoted by extrinsic motivation derived from relationships (Peza, 2015), and Juan's relationship with his peers was a key factor in his increased self-motivation.

Students who show responsibility for their home and school work tend to perform better academically (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2014). The results revealed that Laura and María learned to be more responsible than Juan in this respect. Although responsibility can foster autonomy (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007), Laura's

case demonstrates that if this sense of responsibility is too extreme, it can cause anxiety and have negative effects on performance. Laura may have internalised her father's demands for her to take responsibility for her studies, and, consistent with Hallam's (2002) research, could become harmful by exacerbating her sense of responsibility not to make mistakes. It is important for teachers to talk to the parents if they identify a similar situation. In Laura's case, this intervention helped her parents to resolve her behaviour.

Being judged by others emerged as the students' main source of concern, especially when performing in public, since their self-esteem depended heavily on the assessment of other people (McDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2002). Boosting students' self-esteem by focusing on their own work and progress relieved this concern (Dweck, 2000). Some aspects that helped this process were (1) sharing feelings with peers, (2) collaborating with and helping peers, and (3) achieving what they wanted through effort.

The results show that students who tend to see the positive side of things have higher self-esteem and self-confidence (Dweck, 2000). This was the case for both María and Juan. María's positive attitudes to life were beneficial for her self-esteem and self-confidence, whereas Juan had the opposite attitude at the beginning of the intervention. However, his increased self-esteem during the intervention resulted in an improvement in his ability to see the positive side of things. Again, an interrelation between the different intrapersonal skills is observed.

A positive relationship between emotional intelligence and music can be found in the literature (Costa & Faria, 2015; Kumar et al., 2015; Mohzan et al., 2013), and this article contributes to the understanding of this relationship through

the development of intrapersonal skills in the environment of instrument lessons in conservatories. This is a case study with three subjects, and therefore its results are not intended to be generalised. Nonetheless, the data provide us with a detailed approach to the phenomenon studied. This allows us to explore in depth the difficulties that can arise when implementing a kind of teaching that aims to develop emotional aspects with music students in conservatories. This could be a starting point both for teachers interested in carrying out this type of teaching and for future research in this field.

Furthermore, the findings have direct implications for teaching. The results suggest that teaching which integrates students' emotional work can improve their performance in the musical context. More studies are needed to corroborate these results in order to promote a holistic model of education that enhances both the personal and professional development of students in conservatories.

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Appendix 1: Specifically designed activities

CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITIES		
Musical contents	Intrapersonal skills	Procedure
Musical expression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dynamics ➤ Tempo ➤ Articulation ➤ Phrasing 	Emotional regulation Emotional awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain verbally what each of the musical expression terms means and relate it to emotions. 2. Make students aware of what they want to communicate when they play and what expressive resources they will use for such communication to occur.
Autonomy of study Improvisation	Emotional autonomy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage the students to identify possible mistakes in their performance autonomously and propose possible solutions for them. 2. Encourage students to propose different ways of interpreting the same piece of music, justifying the reason for each of them. 3. Make a study schedule. 4. Write down what to study and how to study different aspects of the repertoire in a notebook intended for this purpose. 5. Free improvisation based on emotions or descriptions. 6. Guided improvisation based on chords, rhythms and given motives.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES		
Musical contents	Intrapersonal skills	Procedure
Development of concentration Autonomy of study Self-control on stage	Emotional awareness Emotional regulation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “The balloon”. This activity can be used with students who have difficulty sustaining attention. Students have to imagine that the mind is like a balloon on a string held in the hand. If the “balloon flies”, they have to pull it back down to take ownership of it. 2. “Do we know how to study?” The students share their ways of studying and then assess and discuss whether they think their own system is the most

