

Social-emotional learning programs for adolescents: a systematic review

Abstract

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process which allows acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (Durlak, 2022).

The present study had as a purpose review the scientific literature on SEL programs in order to seek which general outcomes have been obtained and the underlying procedure.

The search for articles was carried out in Psycinfo and Pubmed. The inclusion criteria included: publication between 2013 and 2023, not clinically affected population, articles with open access that were in English or Spanish within an experimental or quasi-experimental design. An amount of seven articles were finally selected, according to the characteristics and mainly assessment of outcomes, from the 153 initially searched.

Analysis of the selected articles showed different outcomes are targeted in SEL programs. All programs were generally centered in improving SEL knowledge and social and emotional competence (SEC), thereby increasing general wellbeing and positive relationships. Improvements were found with regard to the procedure applied in the program. Four out of seven improved emotional competence. Furthermore, some of them included measures for behavioral change, such as homophobic violence, bullying or alcohol consumption. Even though the mainly objective was to assess changes in social and emotional competences, there was no homogeneity in the program construction since SEL constitute a particularly broad spectrum. This is not shown in the selection of the sample or type of professionals who attend the program, but in the constructs that were addressed by the program. Therefore, each program focused on the importance of skills of one type, with the main objective being the improvement of overall social-emotional skills.

Following with limitations, socio-emotional learning skills should be demonstrated across the lifespan, however a large number of the articles found were directed at younger ages. As a future research interest, more SEL programs should be implemented within high schools. Limitations of the review itself included: lack of another professional in addition to the use of Pubmed since for this, several articles

were out of topic.

As a positive point, the present study allows us to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the existing programs in order to unify the strong points of the programs and minimize the weaknesses in future investigations.

Keywords: SEL programs, adolescents, formal educational contexts, positive relationships, emotional wellbeing.

Resumen

El aprendizaje socio-emocional (SEL) es el proceso que permite la adquisición y aplicación de los conocimientos, habilidades y actitudes para desarrollar identidades sanas, manejar emociones y alcanzar goles personales y colectivos, mostrar empatía por los demás, establecer y mantener relaciones de apoyo y tomar decisiones responsables (Durlak, 2022). El presente estudio tiene como objetivo revisar la literatura existente sobre programas SEL, los resultados obtenidos y el procedimiento subyacente.

La búsqueda de artículos se realizó a través de Pubmed y Psycinfo. Los criterios de inclusión fueron: publicación entre los años 2013 y 2023, población normal, artículos con acceso libre que estuvieran escritos en inglés o castellano y diseños experimentales o cuasiexperimentales. Un total de siete artículos fueron finalmente seleccionados, según sus características y evaluación de los resultados, de los 153 inicialmente encontrados.

El análisis de los artículos seleccionados denota los diferentes resultados a los que iban dirigidos los programas. Todos se centraron de forma general en mejorar el conocimiento y las competencias socio-emocionales (SEC), aumentando así el bienestar general y las relaciones positivas. Esta mejoría se encontró con independencia del procedimiento utilizado. Cuatro de los siete artículos mejoraron las competencias emocionales. Además, algunos de los artículos incluyeron medidas de cambio conductual como bullying o consumo de alcohol. A pesar de que el objetivo principal fuera evaluar esa mejora en competencias socio-emocionales, no hubo homogeneidad en la construcción de los programas ya que el concepto de SEL abarca un amplio espectro. Esta diferencia no se presenta en la elección del tipo de muestra o profesional que implementará el programa, sino se hace visible en los constructos abordados por el programa, ya que cada uno potencia unas habilidades, siendo la mejoría global en habilidades sociales y emocionales el objetivo en última instancia. Siguiendo con las limitaciones, las habilidades socioemocionales abarcan todo el curso vital. Sin embargo, gran cantidad de los artículos dirigían sus programas a población infantil. Como futuro interés investigador, más programas SEL deberían ser implementados en educación secundaria. Entre las limitaciones de la propia revisión encontramos: la falta de otro profesional, junto al uso de Pubmed, fuente médica, lo que produjo la exclusión de estudios por deberse a temáticas diferentes. Como punto positivo, el presente estudio permite valorar los puntos fuertes y débiles

de los programas construidos hasta la fecha con tal de, en futuras investigaciones, conjuntar los puntos fuertes de los programas y minimizar los débiles.

Palabras clave: programas SEL, adolescentes, contextos educativos formales, relaciones positivas, bienestar emocional.

INTRODUCTION

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process which allows acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (Durlak, 2022).

Through this wide range of action, school-based SEL programs are viewed as a promising way to promote student's behavioral and emotional well-being and prevent problems (Durlak, 2022).

The present review had as a purpose review the scientific literature on SEL programs in order to seek which general outcomes have been obtained and the underlying procedure of each program in formal educational contexts.

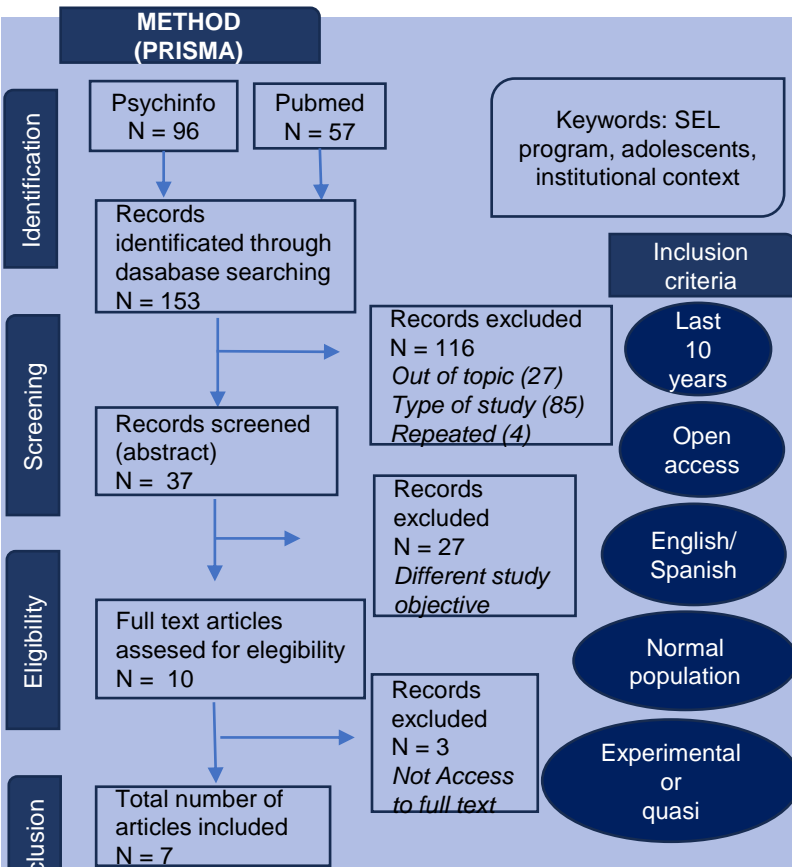


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow diagram of Search and Identification of articles for inclusion

RESULTS

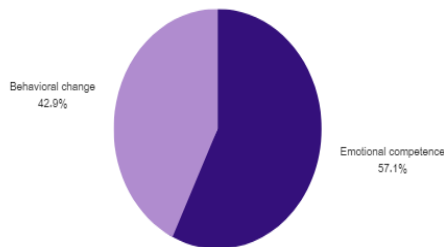


Figure 2: mainly addressed outcomes

CONCLUSION & DISCUSION

In conclusion, all of them showed positive outcomes that contributed to improve general wellbeing and positive relationships of students.

There was a lack of homogeneity in the program construction since SEL constitute a particularly broad spectrum. This is shown in the constructs addressed, but not in the selection of sample or professional who takes it out. Following with limitations, a large number of the articles found were directed at younger ages. As a future research interest, more SEL programs should be implemented within high schools.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations of the review itself included: lack of another professional to ensure the quality of the PRISMA method. In addition to another source not focused on medicine, since, because of Pubmed, several articles were out of topic.

Figure 3: Summary table of SEL programs included in the review

Autor	Program	Content	Instruments	Results
Mogro-Wilson & Tredennick (2020)	Social and Emotional Program Through Music and Visual Arts	Attendance, Achievement, Bullying, Life skills, Citizenship, Drug prevention and Well Being	Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI)	Social awareness, empathy, perspective taking
Castro-Olivo (2014)	Jóvenes Fuertes	SEL skills	Resilience (BERS-2) Knowledge-Test Social validity Students reports	SEL knowledge
Law & Seiden (2020)	Learning to BREATHE	BREATHE: Body, Reflections, Emotion, Attention, Tenderness, Healthy mind, Empowerment.	Anxiety (TAS), Students opinión (SOS-SF), Comprehension (RC)	Emotional control, Working memory, Self-monitoring, Anxiety, Depression
Fekkes et al. (2014)	Skills for Life	General skills: Specific situationships	Self-reported questionnaires	Alcohol consumption Suicide ideation bullying
Mcleod & Boyes (2021)	-	SEL strategies (communication, perspective-taking, etc) Study skills (time management, concept mapping, etc) HF breathing technique	TAS SOS-SF RC Semi-structured interviews	Self-efficacy Academic achievement Positive affect Worry
Franch et al. (2019)	Making connections	RRRR: Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships	Quantitative: Distress (K5), Resilience (RYDM),	SEL skills
Domitrovich et al. (2022)	Facing History and Ourselves	Civism and ethical Classroom climate Historial examples of intergroup conflict	IRI Bullying vignettes SDQ, California Civic Index	Empathy, Prosocial behavior, Civic beliefs

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