

Social Skills for Students in Helping Profession Working with Groups Under Risk

Sofija Georgievska

Associate Professor, Ss. Cyril and Methodious, Faculty of Philosophy, Skopje,
Republic of North Macedonia

Svetlana Trbojevik

Associate Professor, Ss. Cyril and Methodious, Faculty of Philosophy, Skopje,
Republic of North Macedonia

Natasha Stanojkovska-Trajkovska

Assistant Professor, Ss. Cyril and Methodious, Faculty of Philosophy, Skopje,
Republic of North Macedonia

Abstract

The lack of comprehensive information concerning the social skills of students in helping professions (psychologists, social workers, pedagogues, and special educators) imposes an important task for educational trainers. Students in training should learn appropriate communion skills for working with diverse vulnerable clients and communities in order to have adequate response to those in need. The data presented in this paper were obtain with use of qualitative and quantitative methods to measure empathy, altruism, and assertiveness in 450 psychology, pedagogue, social work and special education and rehabilitation students (IRI Index of interpersonal reaction, Davis, 1996, Scale of altruism, Raboteg-Šarić, 1993 and Scale of assertiveness, Zdravković, 2004) The results showed that there is a positive relation between the level of empathy and altruism, and a negative relation between the level of empathy and assertiveness in students. In addition, there are significant differences in the birth order, gender, year of study, the quality and the quantity of the education in the field (practical work) that they have participated in during the studies. The obtained results cannot be generalize to all helping professions because of the sample limitation, but they are significant for seeing the current state in regards of the examined characteristics and for building a strategy for their improvement. At the same time, the results present a significant indicator that confirms the idea of redesigning the current study programs that would provide opportunities for

the present students to get the needed competencies for providing their professional success.

Keywords: social skills, students, profession, groups under risk

Introduction

We live in times of change that cannot be stopped and that cause people to function differently, which can range from very effective to extremely ineffective. In conditions of economic collapse, lower living standards, limited employment opportunities, opportunities for adequate youth development are diminished. Also, the twenty four hour subsistence competition and overwork cause the need to communicate with competent individuals who can provide assistance and support. As such stand out members of the auxiliary professions, who in addition to theoretical readiness and expertise, are required to possess certain personal characteristics and specific skills for working with people. Supporting professions include social workers, psychologists, pedagogues, special educators, educators, experts working with people with disabilities, sociologists, educators and health professionals. In order to be successful in providing professional assistance, these individuals need to possess certain characteristics such as good communication skills, conflict resolution skills, mediation, emotional stability and balance, mental and emotional maturity, good self-control, management ability. own impulses, knowing and accepting one's own needs, desires and attitudes. These individuals also need to have the skills to recognize the situation of others, to care for others, and to be prepared to provide assistance. Among these skills and characteristics, empathy, altruism and assertiveness are the most essential for success in the support profession.

Many times in life people, especially members of the auxiliary professions, whether in the private or professional field, can be exposed to discomfort. In such situations, adequate social behavior and communication with others is necessary. In those moments, a person's legal rights may be compromised, manipulated, labeled, or exploited psychologically and materially. In order to have an equitable relationship in a relationship, it is up to the man to find a way and fight for it. However, he needs to know how to handle it properly, how to govern himself, and how to express it.

Social skills

The most common understanding is that social skills are those skills that we use in interaction with other people on an interpersonal level (Hargie, Saundres, & Dikson, 1994). According to Phillips (Phillips, 1978), a person is socially adept at communicating with others, in a way that fulfills their rights, demands, obligations with others. In addition, this person is prepared to share rights and requirements openly and without limitation.

The following definition defines social skills as specific components of the processes that enable the individual to behave in a way that will be judged as competent. Skills are the skills necessary to trigger behavior that will lead to the achievement of a goal that is part of a given task (Schlundt & McFall, 1985). These definitions highlight the macro elements of social behavior in terms of reciprocity or reciprocity. Skills are skills that can be developed to a greater or lesser degree.

The review of the world literature on the relation of emotional intelligence, as well as the previously stated results of research on these constructs, concludes that the purpose and need for research of this kind in our country is multiple. Although it is a relatively new dimension, the literature on emotional intelligence is extensive and is one of the most explored variables that is attracting the attention of world researchers interested in contributing to greater life satisfaction, psychological adjustment, stress management, and improvement. work performance and the like. In these areas, interest in the contribution of emotional intelligence to daily functioning is currently growing, but research is lacking to empirically examine the contribution of perception, understanding, and regulation of emotions to life satisfaction, psychological well-being, and emotional well-being. self-confidence. We therefore hope that our research will serve as a starting point for further research in this area.

Problem being investigated

The problem in this research is to determine whether students in the support professions have the necessary social skills to work with at-risk children.

Subject of research

The main subject of this research is the social skills students need from support professions to work with children at risk. This research should give a picture of the possible differences between students in terms of gender, year of study, study group.

Respondents

The research was conducted on a sample of 134 respondents, students of assistive guidance.

The final sample of respondents on which the data were processed consisted of 52 male and 82 female respondents. The condition that had to be met for the questionnaires to be processed was the number of omitted responses. If the total number of omitted responses on all scales was less than 6, the questionnaire is eligible for data processing. The omitted item was assigned the mean of the corresponding scale as indefinite. But if one of the tests was completely omitted then the questionnaire was not included in the processing. The age of the respondents ranged from 19 to 25 years.

Instruments

TMMS-30

The inherent meta-mood scale (Trait Meta-Mood Scale; TMMS; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995), which is based on the Salves and Meyer model is a measure of self-esteem that touches on what researchers call Perceived Emotional Intelligence (PEI) or the knowledge that individuals have of their own emotional abilities as opposed to real or mental capacity. It measures three aspects of the thought processes that accompany mood states called meta-mood experiences. These are: Perception (the perceived ability to pay attention to one's own emotional states); Clarity (perceived ability to clearly distinguish feelings) and Emotional Regulation (perceived ability of the individual to regulate one's own emotional states and to "correct" negative moods). It is assumed that these meta-mood dimensions reflect a three-stage functional sequence. Specifically, it is assumed that (1) some degree of attention to emotions is required (2) for a clear understanding of emotions and, consequently, (3) that capacity to regulate negative moods and emotions will not be possible without some degree of emotion. emotional clarity. Evidence of such a proposed functional sequence was discovered using the analytical methodology (Martinez-Poms, 1997; Palmer, Gignac, Bates, & Stough, 2003).

Our research uses a shortened revised three-factor version of 30 items, which, unlike the original 48-item five-factor scale, is more practical and easier to use and interpret the results, free of those items that were low-load in previous research. As the internal consistency of the subscales remained as high in the revised version as in the initial version (perception: $\alpha = 0.86$; clarity: $\alpha = 0.88$; adjustment: $\alpha = 0.82$) it appears that TMMS - 30 is optimal for use in the exploration of perceived emotional intelligence.

The first factor in this scale is the perception of emotions (degree of attention to emotions) and consists of 13 items of which some are positive and some are negatively connotated. Therefore, the most positive item is the item "I pay a lot of attention to how I feel", and the most negative item is "I do not pay much attention to my feelings". The theoretical range of this subscale ranges from 13-65. The second factor is labeled as clarity of emotions since its most positively charged item was "I am usually very clear about my feelings" and the most negative item was "I can't find any sense in my feelings". This dimension consists of 11 items, and the theoretical range ranges from 11-55. The last factor is labeled as mood regulation because the items that burden it primarily relate to trying to "fix" the negative mood in order to maintain pleasant feelings. The highest positive load is on the item "Although I am sometimes sad, I usually have an optimistic view". The most negative item is "Although I sometimes feel happy, I usually have a pessimistic view". The additional items relate to describing active mood-enhancing strategies. This dimension is made up of 6 items and theoretically spans 6-30.

Data were processed using SPSS statistical software version 21 on a sample of 134 respondents. The following variables are included in the processing:

1. Gender of the respondent;
2. The result of the Characteristic Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS) and individual subscales;

The basic statistical indicators for the overall results of the scales and subscales used in this study are presented and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistical analysis of the achieved score of the variables in the whole sample:

	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Theoretical span
EI	181	35,00	139,00	110,12	14,29	30-150
Regulation	181	8,00	30,00	22,94	4,81	6-30
Perception	181	25,00	64,00	47,55	7,78	13-65
Clarity	181	27,00	55,00	40,05	6,36	11-55

As we can see, the measurement of emotional intelligence shows that it is a sample with a relatively high EI (on the average and high score). It also entails high regulation of emotions and differentiation between them, which is confirmed by the achievement of the subscales emotional regulation and emotional clarity of our sample. What is surprising is the high score on the dimension of emotion perception, since I expected this population to nurture a Western functioning trend that requires neglecting emotions in making life-critical decisions and focusing only on cognitive reasoning. Probably the population in this sample is still at a critical age when in contact with their emotions and, given the high score of the other two subscales (emotional regulation and clarity), involves them in decision-making and thinking, which is particularly important in a situation which requires us to make choices and helps us choose what we want, not what is imposed or socially desirable.

Gender differences of the tested variables

To check that the results of male and female respondents differ significantly, a t-test of all variables was conducted. The results are shown in Table 2

Table 2. Arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and t-test results for the tested sex differences of the individual variables.

	N		Male (N=52)		Female (N=82)		T - test		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t	Df	P
EI	110,12	14,29	109,48	11,91	110,53	15,67	-,943)	51	,350
Regulation	22,94	4,81	23,59	4,00	22,52	5,24	,488	51	,627
Pereception	47,55	7,78	44,82	7,80	49,29	7,29	-3,013)	51	,004
Clarity	40,05	6,36	41,02	6,22	39,44	6,41	,195	51	,846

The t-test, also known as a "student" test, is used to compare two sets of quantitative data when the data from the two samples are related in some way. In our study, data in both samples were collected in the same way, under the same conditions, with the same measuring instruments, and we can conclude that this test is ideal for comparing data obtained from male and female populations.

What can be noted from the results in Table 2 is that a statistically significant gender difference can be observed only in the variable perception of emotion ($p = 0.004$; $p < 0.05$).

These results indicate that the female population is emotionally more intelligent than the male population, not only because of the significantly higher score of the dimension of emotion perception, but also because it is carried alongside the male respondents in the dimensions of emotional regulation and clarity. This may have been a hypothesis for a long time, but now with increasing interest in examining emotional intelligence and its contribution to everyday functioning, it has been repeatedly confirmed. The literature on EI is now full of assumptions as to why this is the case, due to the higher achievement of EI measures for female respondents. Such a conclusion is supported by a large body of research on gender differences in emotional aspects, which show, for example, that women are more capable of decoding nonverbal emotional information (Brody & Hall, 2000), have greater emotional understanding (Ciarrochi et al., 2005), are more sensitive to the emotions of others (Hall & Mast, 2008), are more expressive and exhibit greater interpersonal competencies. In addition, we have traditionally accepted that women are more familiar with the emotional world than men and that they may be biologically more prepared to perceive emotions. Baron-Cohen suggests that these differences between men and women may be the result of the "extreme theory of male brain autism" that men tend to systematize, while women tend to empathize and use emotions more

frequently than men. . All of these findings and theoretical explanations can help explain why women achieve higher EI scores, including TMMS.

Although numerous studies confirm that women are emotionally intelligent than men, most of them analyze the relationship between gender and EI only superficially. While some studies have explicit hypotheses about this association, many consider sex as a secondary goal rather than a primary variable that needs to be fully explored. However, these studies indicate that women possess greater emotional abilities, which confirms the need to consider sex as an exponential variable in the mechanisms of emotional functioning. Such a theoretical approach is problematic, as psychologists who deal with gender issues emphasize that sex itself has no exploratory power in the absence of socio-demographic variables such as age or socioeconomic status. In fact, sex always operates in interaction with other variables.

Correlations between examined variables

To find out whether there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and its components, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated.

Table 3 Display of correlation coefficients between the stated variables for the whole sample of respondents.

		EI	Regulation	Pereception	Clarity
EI	r (corr.)	1	,651**	,609**	,700**
	p		,000	,000	,000
Regulation	r (corr.)	,651**	1	,067	,466**
	p	,000		,442	,000
Perception	r (corr.)	,609**	,067	1	,097
	p	,000	,442		,264
Clarity	r (corr.)	,700**	,466**	,097	1
	p	,000	,000	,264	

As can be seen from the correlations given in Table 3, there is a strong correlation between most of the variables tested. What primarily interests me is the relationship between EI and its constructs, which is particularly important in determining the validity and reliability of TMMS. The total score of emotional intelligence in our study was associated with a strong correlation with all three components of emotional intelligence (emotion perception $r = .61$; emotion clarity $r = .70$; emotion regulation $r = .65$; all with $p < 0.001$).

Our assumption that adolescents and young adults with high expectations of their ability to understand and manage emotional experiences maintain more positive emotional states and are more satisfied with their lives.

Significant results of scientific contribution

Our research was designed to examine the association of perceived emotional intelligence.

Another aim was to determine whether there are gender differences in the correlations between the variables studied.

Appropriate self-rating scales were used for data collection for each of the tested variables.

From statistical processing and analysis we have obtained some results that replicate and confirm previous research around the world, as well as new and unexpected results. Examining gender differences confirmed our expectation that female respondents have a more pessimistic view of the world and that they pay more attention to their feelings. We failed to statistically confirm the difference in emotional regulation and ability to differentiate between feelings, although we expected male respondents to be in that category.

By examining the correlations between the individual variables we found that TMMS has a strong intercorrelation between internal scales, that is, the total score of emotional intelligence in our study is associated with a strong correlation with all three components of emotional intelligence (emotion perception $r = .61$; of emotions $r = .70$; emotion regulation $r = .65$; all with $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion

When interpreting the results, it is necessary to pay attention to the limitations of the research. First, the data are collected from a convenient sample of students that is not representative of the population in any of the investigated variables, thus limiting the generalization of the findings. In addition, the measuring instruments used show some deficiencies, one of which is self-assessment. This makes it especially difficult to make statements about one's own feelings, since one is often unaware of how one feels or is reluctant to come up with one. The data collected is based on the respondents' own statements, so that the answers may also be influenced by social desires. In the future, the use of a measuring instrument which in addition to intrapersonal, includes interpersonal dimensions, or the use of an EI capability test, such as MSCEIT, could be considered.

Another disadvantage is the sample size and the unequal distribution of male and female respondents. Namely, research of this kind in the future should be conducted on a sample of more respondents and equal number of male and female respondents for a more reliable comparison of sex differences. One has to take into account the fact that it is a correlational research that does not explain the causal relationship of the variables.

For a more detailed explanation of the variance in life satisfaction, I propose to incorporate the variables of material and marital status in the future, and possibly the

level of education as exploratory variables. In doing so, the data from this research can serve as a basis for further research.

Literature

- [1] Newsome, S., Day A. L. & Catano, V. M. Assessing the Predictive Validity of Emotional Intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences*. 29, 1005-1016. (2000).
- [2] Palmer, B., Gignac, G., Bates, T., & Stough, C.: Examining the structure of the Trait Meta-Mood Scale. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 55, 154-159. (2003).
- [3] Sharabany, R. & Bar-Tal, D. (1981). *Theories of the development of altruism: Review, comparison and integration*. In: International Journal of Behavior Development, No. 4, pp. 32-77
- [4] Shelley L. Brown & Yvonne Stys: A Review of the Emotional Intelligence Literature and Implications for Corrections, Research Branch Correctional Service of Canada, 2004.
- [5] Sillick & Schutte: Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem Mediate Between Perceived Early Parental Love and Adult Happiness, *E-Journal of Applied Psychology*, 38-48, (2006).