

Application Of The Classroom Coexistence Program "Let's Be Friends" For Social Skills In Ecuadorian Adolescents

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Abstract

In adolescence there are a series of physical, psychological and social challenges, this stage is the beginning of adulthood so that coexistence with others helps the constitution of the personality, in this sense the objective was to determine the influence of the classroom coexistence program "Let's be friends" in the improvement of social skills in Ecuadorian adolescents, the results determine that the experimental group presented higher values compared to the control group in the post test situation for social skills, also the p value between groups is $0.009 < 0.05$. The application of the program was effective, so the application of further research oriented to psychological intervention specifically in social skills training, expression of emotions and relationship with adults is discussed.

Key words: *Coexistence; skills; social; adolescents.*

Introduction

Adolescence is a stage whose physical and psychological changes influence the way we interact with the environment, so a deficit of social skills can affect the coexistence between students and with it the appearance of more serious problems such as bullying, school dropout or juvenile delinquency (Da Silva et al., 2022; Romero et al., 2021; Forgiony, 2019). Studies on social skills have found that it plays a fundamental role in promoting positive relationships at school, especially in social and civic competence (Moreno & Jurado, 2022; Urbina et al., 2020; Fuentes et al., 2019); There is also scientific evidence that difficulties in social skills have an impact on self-esteem, self-concept and self-efficacy, which is why it is recommended to investigate the various changes or transformations that occur at this stage (Tacca et al., 2020; Martín et al., 2021; Baytemir, 2019).

The psychology of human development considers adolescence as a stage that lasts nine years and goes from 11 or 12 to 19 to 21 years old (Papalia et al., 2005), they begin to think and relate differently, an identity crisis appears because they undergo great transformations and the interest in being with others who also experience similar transformations appears (Nuns, 2008), as Erikson said, they are on their way to becoming adults, so they need the configuration of who they are, the search for their "self" (Corrales et al. 2017), therefore, adolescents seek and need to feel that they are part of a social group, this provides them

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with affection, sympathy, understanding for autonomy and independence (Ramírez et al., 2020; Pasqualina & Llorens, 2010) avoiding rejection and victimization (Monjas, 2014). Social skills, according to Vygotsky, are skills acquired at home, but strengthened and consolidated at school, friends and society (João, 2010). According to Bandura, if they are not effectively promoted, modeled or reinforced, problems such as lack of assertiveness and difficulty in interacting with the environment tend to appear (Jones et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2016). There is a connection between coexistence and social skills, the first is the result of the interactions or experiences between students and teachers in which it develops at a latent distance, and the second are behaviors that people emit when being with others, they are necessary skills to learn to socialize with others (González & Treviño, 2020; Rosales et al. 2020; Haataja et al., 2015).

Educational intervention through programs is important to improve students' social skills as well as their communication skills, making them more respectful and tolerant in the classroom (Espinosa et al., 2016; Estrada et al., 2020), improving self-control and social approach, which are the basis for good social adaptation and peaceful coexistence in the classroom (Çeviker et al., 2019; Pereira et al., 2018; Garay et al., 2017).

In the literature consulted, the following studies are verified. Salas and Alcaide (2022) applied a program on Emotional Intelligence, in socio-emotional competence and school coexistence, it is a quasi-experimental study with 173 5-year-old students, it was found that after the program the experimental group showed a significant decrease < 0.01 of aggressive behaviors, managing to improve social competence and the ability to express and regulate emotions. González (2020) implemented a program to educate basic social skills and pacify conflicts at school, with 43 people, as a result 86% have a good level or high social skills, while in socio-emotional skills 75% are at a moderate level, finally, in alternative skills to aggression 76% are at a medium level. Vargas (2020) designed and evaluated the usefulness of a pedagogical support program to optimize classroom coexistence, finding deficient and regular levels in school coexistence, in the face of the decrease in social skills, educational sessions or strategies should be applied to improve classroom coexistence. Rosales et al. (2020) determined the effects of the personal development program for the development of social skills of high school students, with which there was a notable improvement of 0.49 points, in communication and in the component, decision-making and management of social relationships.

The research carried out (Salas & Alcaide, 2022; Gonzales, 2020; Vargas, 2020; Rosales et al., 2020) have been oriented to the development of social skills, but do not apply measures based on classroom coexistence. Additionally, no other research has been found in the Ecuadorian context whose subject of study is adolescents, some research has been framed in early childhood and primary education (Valiente & Hernández, 2020; Romero et al; 2018; Vergara et al., 2015). Considering that the Ecuadorian population has experienced a wave of violent acts in recent years, specifically in Manabí there has been an increase in criminal acts committed by adolescents (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2023), so it is advisable to carry out educational intervention studies on good coexistence and communication in the classroom, Considering that the lack of social skills exposes to a greater risk of school dropout, drug use or juvenile delinquency, therefore, it is necessary to seek and at the same time apply strategies according to the needs identified for this reason, the objective was to determine the effectiveness of the application of the classroom coexistence program "Let's be friends" for social skills in Ecuadorian adolescents.

Methodology

It is of the applied type because it seeks to use current scientific theoretical knowledge to improve a problem, in this case it uses the toric basis on how to address social skills through the design and application of a classroom coexistence program. The approach is quantitative because it is oriented to the collection of data that was subsequently processed using statistical techniques.

It has an experimental design, of a quasi-experimental type, since it deliberately sought to modify the study variables (Sánchez et al., 2018). The main interest was to manipulate the dependent variable (DV = social skills) identified as the main need, the treatment is carried out using the independent variable (VI = "Let's Be Friends" classroom coexistence program). According to Sánchez and Reyes (2015), the experimental group (EG) is the group that applies the treatment, it is called the experimental variable or independent variable, while the control group (CG) is the group similar in all aspects to the experimental group, but that is not subjected to the experimental treatment. These groups are already integrated, so the units of analysis are not assigned randomly or by random matching. The population was taken to include 596 students from an Educational Unit in Manabí, 2023, these subjects live near the center of the El Carmen canton. Regarding sociocultural characteristics, Ecuadorian adolescents live in a marginal urban area, characterized by the presence of drug sales, gangs, poverty, in addition to this, they live in dysfunctional homes (Cango & Suarez, 2021). Below is the detail in the table below:

Table 1. Distribution of the study population

Levels	Quantity	Percentage
Initial	65	9.35 %
High school	78	11.22%
Elementary	162	23.3%
Medium sublevel	171	24.6%
Upper sublevel	120	17.26 %
Total (N)	596	100%

This research considered 64 students in the eighth grade as a sample. The control group consisted of 32 students and the experimental group also consisted of 32 students in the eighth year of parallel basic A and B, both groups live in Manabí.

Table 2. Distribution of the study sample

Superior Levels	Quantity	Percentage
Eighth Year A	32	50%
Eighth Year B	32	50%
Sample Total (n)	64	100%

To choose the sample, intentional non-probabilistic sampling was used, which is the procedure that is carried out through convenience and proximity to the subjects or objects that made up the sample, there are no random procedures. According to the characteristics of the population and the problems evidenced, we chose to select this sampling because, being an experimental study, we worked with 64 students who make up two working groups (control group GC=32 and experimental group GE=32).

The social interaction skills questionnaire designed by Inés Monjas (1993) and adapted by Patricia Delgado (2017) in Lima, Peru, has 60 items divided into six dimensions: a) basic skills, b) to make friends, c) conversational, d) emotions and feelings, e) interpersonal problem solving and f) relationship with adults. It has a Likert response scale from 1 to 4. This instrument was validated through Aiken's V obtaining values of 1. In the Ecuadorian context, the questionnaire was submitted to the validity of content through the judgment of experts with a PhD degree who determined that it is valid. Regarding reliability, Delgado (2017) found a Cronbach's alpha $\alpha=0.901$, which is interpreted as an excellent level of reliability. The study applied a pilot test with 31 subjects, finding a Cronbach's alpha $\alpha=0.864$, which shows an excellent value. The validity and reliability of the study corroborated that it has adequate psychometric properties to be applied to Ecuadorian students.

To carry out the research, a request was made to the institution, after obtaining the permit, teachers and parents were contacted to inform them of the objective of the research. The informed assent was delivered to the legal guardians or parents of the students. The two working groups were pretested, and the program sessions were administered, based on the established schedule. After applying the program to the experimental group, the two working groups were given the posttest in order to find differences compared to the pretest. An Excel database was created with the answers and statistical analysis was carried out. For the analysis, the statistical program JAPS v.0.18.0 was used, which is a statistical software, with which Shapiro Wilk's normality test was applied, finding that the distribution of the population does not differ from the normality $p > 0.05$, therefore the parametric statistic t of Student, was chosen for the comparison of means and to establish the level of significance and the contrast of hypotheses.

The classroom coexistence program "Let's be friends" was designed with the aim of improving social skills in adolescents in Manabí, Ecuador 2023. This program consisted of 16 sessions and was aimed at 32 eighth-year students of higher basic education (experimental group), which developed contents on peaceful coexistence in the classroom and school, for which it was necessary to work on various topics such as respect, tolerance, solidarity, empathy, assertiveness through the use of techniques and strategies of cognitive behavioral psychology. such as modeling, chaining, verbal instruction, feedback, role-playing, positive and negative reinforcement. The duration of each session was approximately 45 to 60 minutes, it was applied once a week.

Results

Table 3. Student's t-comparison for social skills between study groups

Situation	Groups	M	OF	T _(GL)	p	d
Pretest	Control (n = 32)	204.656	32.984	-0.175 ⁽⁶²⁾	0.862	
	Experimental (n = 32)	206.156	35.694			
Posttest	Control (n = 32)	206.156	35.694	-2,699 ⁽⁶²⁾	0.009	-0.675
	Experimental (n = 32)	228.781	31.222			

Table 3 showed significant changes in the post-test in the experimental group ($p < 0.05$) while the control group remained at similar levels and the differences between the pre-test and post-test did not denote significant changes ($p > 0.05$). Also, the effect size is -0.675 which is moderate.

Table 4. Social skills levels in the pre-test and post-test

Levels	PRETEST				POSTEST			
	Control group		Experimental group		Control group		Experimental group	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Very low	0		0		0		0	
Low	7	22.0	7	22	7	22.0	2	6
Regular	21	66.0	17	53	20	62.4	15	47
Adequate	4	12.0	8	25	5	15.6	15	47
Total	32	100.0	32	100.0	32	100.0	32	100.0

Table 2 characterizes the levels of social skills before and after the application of the SEAMOS AMIGOS program, where in the control group prior to application, 66% had a

regular level, 22% were at a low level and 12% were at an adequate level. On the other hand, of the experimental group, before the implementation of the program, 53% were at a regular level, 25% at an adequate level and 22% at a low level. After the application of the program, 62.4% of the control group had a regular level, 22% had a low level and 15.6% had an adequate level. In the experimental group, 47% were at a regular level, 47% at an adequate level and 6.2% at a low level.

Table 5. Student's t-Comparison for Social Skills Dimensions

Skills	Situatio n	Groups	M	OF	T (GL)	p	d
Basic Social	Pretest	Control (n = 32)	36.06 3	6.28 3	- 0.042 ₍₆₂₎)	0.967	
		Experimenta l (n = 32)	36.12 5	5.58 7			
	Posttest	Control (n = 32)	35.75 0	6.07 5	- 2,728 ₍₆₂₎)	0.008	- 0.68 2
		Experimenta l (n = 32)	40.06 3	6.56 5			
To make friends	Pretest	Control (n = 32)	33.84 4	6.79 7	- 0.051 ₍₆₂₎)	0.959	
		Experimenta l (n = 32)	33.93 8	7.77 9			
	Posttest	Control (n = 32)	33.93 8	7.77 9	- 2,224 ₍₆₂₎)	0.030	- 0.55 6
		Experimenta l (n = 32)	38.06 3	7.03 9			
Conversational	Pretest	Control (n = 32)	31.65 6	7.26 7	- 0.439 ₍₆₂₎)	0.662	
		Experimenta l (n = 32)	32.43 8	6.96 5			
	Posttest	Control (n = 32)	32.43 8	6.96 5	- 2,791 ₍₆₂₎)	0.007	- 0.69 8
		Experimenta l (n = 32)	37.12 5	6.46 0			
Related to emotions and feelings	Pretest	Control (n = 32)	33.06 3	6.84 4	- 0.382 ₍₆₂₎)	0.704	
		Experimenta l (n = 32)	33.71 9	6.89 2			
	Posttest	Control (n = 32)	33.71 9	6.89 2	- 1,664 ₍₆₂₎)	0.101	- 0.41 6
		Experimenta l (n = 32)	36.46 9	6.31 4			
	Pretest	Control (n = 32)	33.59 4	9.10 5	0.124 ₍₆₂₎)	0.902	

		Experimenta 1 (n = 32)	33.31 3	9.08 9			
Interpersonal Problem Solving	Posttest	Control (n = 32)	33.31 3	9.08 9	- 2,207 ₍₆₂₎	0.031 A	- 2
		Experimenta 1 (n = 32)	37.53 1	5.85 8			
Relationship with adults	Pretest	Control (n = 32)	36.43 8	7.37 4	-0.308 ₍₆₂₎	0.759	
		Experimenta 1 (n = 32)	37.00 0	7.25 1			
	Posttest	Control (n = 32)	37.00 0	7.25 1	- 1,467 ₍₆₂₎	0.147	- 0.36 7
		Experimenta 1 (n = 32)	39.53 1	6.53 0			

Table 5 shows that in the pre-test phase, both groups of studies reported very similar values, and the same is true for the following dimensions: basic social; to make friends; Conversational; related to emotions and feelings; interpersonal problem solving; relationship with adults ($p > .05$); In spite of this, after the application of the "SEAMOS AMIGOS" program, statistically significant differences were observed only in 4 dimensions ($p < 0.05$), that is, the experimental group denoted an increase in the following dimensions: basic social; to make friends; conversational and interpersonal problem-solving skills, unlike the control group, and that this difference is of moderate magnitude due to the effect size ($d > .50$). It can be verified that the dimensions, skills related to emotions and feelings, and relationship skills with adults remain the same in both groups, no differences are observed with an acceptable significance with a $p > 0.05$ and low effect size ($d < .50$).

In the pre-test, the two groups had very similar values with respect to the dimensions ($p > .05$); However, after the application of the "SEAMOS AMIGOS" program, statistically significant differences were observed ($p < .05$), which means that the experimental group denotes an increase in the following dimensions: basic social; to make friends; conversational and interpersonal problem-solving skills, when contrasting with the control group, and that this difference is of moderate magnitude due to the effect size ($D > .50$). In the dimensions, skills related to emotions and feelings, and relationship skills with adults, the results vary and do not support that social skills have improved after the program and the sessions executed.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the application of the classroom coexistence program "Let's be friends" for social skills in Ecuadorian adolescents, according to the inferential results, it was observed that in the posttest situation the experimental group presented higher values in social skills compared to the control group whose average did not change since the application of the pretest. In the post-test results, a Sig. of $0.009 < 0.05$ was obtained, with a Cohen's d of 0.675, which is a moderate effect ($.30 > d < .80$). This is supported by Monjas (2008) that intervention through educational programs is essential for social skills in adolescence, which is a stage that lasts nine years and ranges from 11 or 12 to 19 to 21 years of age (Papalia et al., 2005), because at this stage students begin to think and relate differently. An identity crisis arises that is accompanied by a series of physical and psychological changes. Erikson also agrees that adolescents are on their way to becoming adults so they need the configuration of who they are, the search for their "self" and a function valued by society, at this stage they require support to develop the following of norms and empathic skills, as well as assertive

communication to achieve a better coexistence with others. No directly related antecedents have been found; but the study by Gonzáles (2020) stands out, which determined that a social skills program evidenced a positive and significant influence $p < 0.001$ in the reduction of school conflicts. Another study was by Rosales et al. (2020) who reaffirm that program execution based on personal development topics is effective for skills in adolescence. According to the above, the adolescents in the experimental group showed better skills to socialize, empathize, initiate assertive conversations, demonstrating empathy and sympathy towards their classmates, so it is proven that the strategies applied were effective.

The specific objective of the study was also to characterize the level of social skills, before the application of the "Let's Be Friends" classroom coexistence program, where 66% of the control group had a regular level and 53% of the experimental group was at a regular level. Prior to the application of the program, both groups had a predominance of the regular level with a low trend. These values indicate that more than half had difficulty greeting, introducing themselves, asking for favors, showing inappropriate interactions, presented doubts about how to ask for help, be cooperative, share or interact with others; Regarding conversations, they knew how to initiate conversations, but it was difficult for them to maintain or end them, in problem-solving skills they presented complications when differing in the consequences of their actions and in the dimension of relationship with adults there is a good predisposition of both groups. Studies have shown that students who had deficient levels in school coexistence had an alteration in social skills and in their social responses, therefore, promoting positive interactions will favor their autonomy, self-concept, self-esteem, independence, and social participation (Vargas, 2020; Urbina et al., 2020; Tacca et al., 2020). Therefore, it is interpreted that the students before the program had not learned, which means to relate positively with the environment, so this led them to have difficulty in expressing their opinions, ideas even showing aggressive behaviors which seriously harmed classroom coexistence, this level of social skills was very noticeable both for the control group and the experimental group

As a third specific objective, it was proposed to characterize the level of social skills, after the application of the classroom coexistence program "Let's be friends", at a global level the control group 62% presented a regular level. On the other hand, in the experimental group, after the application of the program, 47% were at an adequate level and another 47% at a regular level, that is, only the experimental group managed to improve their social skills, these changes were later subjected to inferential statistics, finding that the differences are significant ($p < 0.01$). This is related to Monjas (2008; 2014) that social skills are a set of skills that allow us to respond appropriately to stimuli from the environment; It generates greater self-esteem and personal well-being. Vygotsky and Bandura agree that many of the behaviors are learned in sociocultural contexts, that is, in frequent environments where subjects are fed back through cultural mediation, and classroom coexistence could be defined as sociocultural learning that allows students to identify their role in a social context. In other words, after the application of the program, the control group maintains on average their initial scores, suffering some variations specifically in the dimensions of skills related to emotions and feelings, as well as skills in relation to adults, so it is presumed that these changes are due to the momentary perception of the relationships that they build daily on a day-to-day basis.

Finally, the level of social skills in the dimensions was compared, prior to the intervention between the experimental and control groups, according to the results no statistically significant differences were observed ($p > .05$); However, after the application of the classroom coexistence program "Let's be friends" a significant margin of error is realized through Student's t for a tail, with a moderate effect size, as evidenced by Cohen's d ($.30 > d < .80$). The intervention group showed higher values in four dimensions: basic social; to make friends; conversational and interpersonal problem-solving skills, the changes are not significant in dimensions, feelings-related skills, and relationship skills with adults. In this regard, Monjas and Erikson point out that social skills are essential skills, but all

adolescents are different to face changes, some are more willing to show their emotions and thoughts, others find it difficult to demonstrate them, agreeing with Papalia et al. (2005) that adolescents find it difficult to openly express what they feel and think, This is typical of the stage in which they find themselves, in addition to the fact that by nature they can demonstrate conflict with the authority figure, which can generate difficulties with the authority figure.

The results indicate that the 32 students in the experimental group have subsequently undergone the application of the classroom coexistence program "Let's be friends" modification in their social skills, since it was possible to inculcate through psychological techniques such as modeling, chaining, reinforcement and verbal instruction, the cognitive behavioral responses that they must apply in social situations. which translates into learning how to relate to others, this benefits their self-concept, personality, and self-esteem. However, the improvement of social skills of the control group is still pending, and despite the fact that these findings represent a new precedent at the national and regional level, other studies are invited to be able to develop and apply other programs, either with other levels of study of the same institution or other schools in the context of Manabí.

Conclusions

It has been proven that the application of the program, "Let's be friends" demonstrated significant changes in the improvement of social skills in Ecuadorian adolescents, the results determine that the experimental group presented higher values compared to the control group in the post-test situation in social skills.

Among the practical implications, its usefulness to verify the repercussion and contribution of this study for the adolescent stage is highlighted, given the existing lack of similar studies on education in behaviors, habits and thoughts to interact and coexist peacefully in the classroom, therefore, the work of the teachers not only constitutes the development of the intellectual area but also the inclusion of activities, psychological techniques and strategies that form the basis for building a society based on non-violence.

Based on the findings, a call is made for future work to carry out more applied research, to cover identified knowledge gaps, given that there is little interest in the execution of experimental studies in the Ecuadorian context on the problem. Finally, it is considered necessary to carry out other activities whose nature is linked to emotional intelligence and communication skills that facilitate the assertive expression of what is felt and thought in social situations or contexts.

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