Emotional intelligence in relation to aggressiveness. A critical investigation from psychology to education

Inteligencia emocional en relación con la agresividad. Una investigación crítica desde la psicología a la educación

Inteligência emocional em relação à agressividade. Uma investigação crítica da psicologia à educação

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Abstract

Aggression is one of the most significant problems among young adults; however, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a predictive factor. Based on this, we investigated the relationship between EI and aggression, exploring gender differences in both variables. The research was conducted with a sample of 218 young adult participants, aged between 18 and 25: 59 men and 159 women. The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire and the Trait MetaMood Scale were the two key instruments used. The results of the study confirmed the hypotheses, corroborating that higher levels of EI are associated with a greater tendency to reduce aggressive behaviors. It was also determined that men exhibited higher levels of aggression with lower levels of EI compared to women. In conclusion, it can be seen that an increase in emotional intelligence (EI) levels is linked to a reduction in aggressive behaviors, and that these tend to be generally higher in males, while emotional competencies are usually higher in females. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to create and implement future emotional training programs to try to reduce aggression in the young adult population.

Keywords: Aggression, social behavior, education, diagnosis, gender, emotional intelligence, psychology, educational psychology, social psychology.

Resumen

La agresividad es considerada actualmente como uno de los problemas de mayor relevancia en la población adulta-joven; no obstante, se ha determinado que la Inteligencia Emocional (IE) puede ser considerada como un factor previsor de la misma. En base a ello, investigamos la relación existente

entre la IE y la agresividad, explorando las diferencias de género en ambas variables. La investigación se realizó a través de una muestra de 218 participantes jóvenes adultos/as, con edades comprendidas entre los 18 y los 25 años: 59 hombres y 159 mujeres. Se emplearon dos instrumentos fundamentales: Cuestionario de Agresión Buss-Perry y "Trait MetaMood Scale." Los resultados obtenidos en el estudio confirmaron las hipótesis formuladas, corroborando que, a mayores niveles de IE, más tienden a reducirse los comportamientos agresivos. Igualmente, se determinó que eran los hombres quienes manifestaban niveles más altos de agresividad, con menores niveles de IE en comparación con las mujeres. En conclusión, se puede apreciar que un incremento de los niveles de IE se vincula con la reducción de conductas agresivas, así como estas tienden a ser a nivel general mayores en varones, mientras que las competencias emocionales suelen tener mayores niveles en mujeres. Por tanto, sería interesante crear, e implementar, futuros programas de entrenamiento emocional para tratar de disminuir la agresividad en la población adulta-joven.
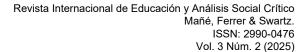
Palabras clave: Agresividad, comportamiento social, educación, diagnóstico, género, inteligencia emocional, psicología, psicología de la educación, psicología social.

Resumo

A agressividade é atualmente considerada um dos problemas mais significativos entre os jovens adultos; no entanto, a Inteligência Emocional (IE) tem sido identificada como um fator preditivo. Com base nisto, investigámos a relação entre a IE e a agressividade, explorando as diferenças de género em ambas as variáveis. O inquérito foi realizado junto de uma amostra de 218 jovens adultos, com idades compreendidas entre os 18 e os 25 anos: 59 homens e 159 mulheres. Foram utilizados dois instrumentos principais: o Questionário de Agressão de Buss-Perry e a Escala de Metahumor Traço. Os resultados do estudo confirmaram as hipóteses, corroborando que níveis mais elevados de IE estão associados a uma maior tendência para a redução de comportamentos agressivos. Verificou-se também que os homens apresentaram níveis mais elevados de agressividade com níveis mais baixos de IE em comparação com as mulheres. Em conclusão, observa-se que um aumento dos níveis de inteligência emocional (IE) está relacionado com uma redução dos comportamentos agressivos, e que estes comportamentos tendem a ser geralmente mais frequentes nos homens, enquanto as competências emocionais são geralmente mais elevadas nas mulheres. Assim sendo, seria interessante criar e implementar futuros programas de treino emocional para tentar reduzir a agressividade na população de jovens adultos.

Palavras-chave: Agressão, comportamento social, educação, diagnóstico, género, inteligência emocional, psicologia, psicologia da educação, psicologia social.

Introduction

Aggressiveness can be understood as one of the problems with the greatest prevalence in contemporary society (Corderos, 2022), defined as the tendency to engage in violent behaviors across different situations, including attacking, showing disrespect, offending, or provoking with intent (Carrasco & González, 2006). More specifically, Buss and Perry (1992) conceptualize aggressiveness as a form of social dysfunction that generates confrontations, conflicts, and grievances within a group of individuals; children, in particular, tend to associate it with the use of physical force to attack, control, or dominate others.

Linked to emotional and cognitive impairments (Sánchez, 2018), aggressiveness may be associated with maladjustment in social interactions, leading to problems related to substance abuse, difficulties in decision-making, and the presence of negative emotions. Consequently, it may adversely affect the quality of life of individuals who exhibit such behaviors, particularly within the young adult population in contemporary contexts (Silva-Fernández & Pabón-Poches, 2023).

Multiple factors influence aggressiveness and generate significant differences in its manifestation, with sex being a particularly relevant variable. Rosser et al. (2018) indicate that men tend to externalize aggression, whereas women are more likely to internalize it, resulting in higher levels of self-blame. Likewise, numerous studies report that males generally exhibit more aggressive behavior than females (Sánchez, 2018; Socastro-Gómez & Jiménez-Perianes, 2019; Villarejo et al., 2020), highlighting higher levels of anger and hostility among women, and greater physical and verbal aggression among men (Silva-Fernández & Pabón-Poches, 2023).

Nevertheless, the increase in aggressiveness among young adults has led to the emergence of multiple studies seeking to link it with risk factors such as negative affect, negative urgency within impulsivity, and reward sensitivity, as well as with protective factors such as empathy and Emotional Intelligence (EI) (Gómez-Leal et al., 2022). EI has also been considered a protective factor against aggressiveness -aimed at reducing and preventing such behaviors- by other authors, including García-Sancho et al. (2014), Cerezo et al. (2016), and Gutiérrez-Cobo et al. (2017). Therefore, it is of great importance to understand what it means to be "emotionally intelligent."

The study of EI began to develop approximately in the 1980s, following the proposal of the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983; Sternberg & Detterman, 1986), which laid the foundations for a new approach to understanding intelligence.

From this point onward, the conceptualization of EI has been highly diverse. One of the most widely known perspectives among the general population is that of Goleman (1995), who argues that this form of intelligence should be understood as the capacity to recognize one's own and others' feelings, to motivate oneself, and to manage emotions effectively in interpersonal relationships, thereby leading to success.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) propose that emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive, appraise, and express emotions accurately; the ability to access and/or generate feelings that facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions in ways that promote emotional and intellectual growth. Within this model, four dimensions constitute EI (Fernández-Berrocal & Cabello, 2021; Mayer et al., 2016):
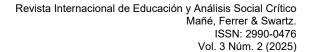
- Emotional perception and expression**:** The capacity to identify emotions in oneself and others, as well as to generate an appropriate expression of those emotions.

- Emotional facilitation: Refers to the ability to be aware of the link between emotions and thoughts, and of the influence emotions exert on information processing. This dimension indicates that emotions can guide attention toward the most relevant information and facilitate judgment formation and the analysis of personal or interpersonal problems.

- Emotional understanding: Encompasses the capacity to comprehend emotional knowledge and information, achieving an understanding of one's own emotions and those of others. This is accomplished by understanding the relationships among different emotions, between emotions and context, and by interpreting their meaning.

- Emotional regulation: Considered a skill responsible for regulating emotions. This involves addressing the range of feelings one experiences, reflecting upon them, and selecting them according to their usefulness, with the aim of increasing positive emotions and moderating negative ones.

From my perspective, the use of models prior to the one currently employed is ineffective, as they focus more on describing competencies than on the precise operationalization of EI. Such approaches lack the accuracy, methodological structure, and applicability suggested by the latter model.

Consistent emotional management is associated with multiple benefits for quality of life, given its relationship with both physical and psychological health (Montero et al., 2022).

Ruiz et al. (2012) show that EI can enhance individuals' social quality of life, as learning the emotional skills encompassed by EI enables the development of higher-quality relationships. Adolescents who demonstrate better mastery of EI dimensions exhibit higher levels of solidarity and satisfaction in their relationships. A large number of physical disorders and problems are linked to difficulties in emotional regulation; therefore, EI training can be considered a tool for protecting overall health, as it not only promotes better mental health but also provides physical benefits.

The benefits of EI may also be effective for individuals with intellectual functional diversity, as research suggests a clear correlation between quality of life and EI (Gavín-Chocano & Molero, 2019). This is

because being emotionally intelligent can help alleviate difficulties these individuals experience in understanding their own emotions and those of others.

Effective management of EI reduces the risk of suicidal tendencies and ideation (Fernández-Berrocal & Cabello, 2021; Ruiz et al., 2012), which constitutes the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 29 in Spain, and accounts for thousands of victims annually (Fernández-Berrocal & Cabello, 2021; Oyanadel et al., 2021). Improvements associated with higher EI levels are also observed in internalizing disorders, as emotional regulation provides greater clarity during crises and mitigates mental health disorders (Montenegro, 2020; Sun et al., 2021).

Emotional abilities influence several mental processes, such as motivation, satisfaction, self-esteem, emotional regulation, concentration, effort, and stress management (Montero et al., 2022; Puertas-Molero et al., 2020). EI also reduces levels of negative emotions and promotes positive affect (Antuña-Clambor et al., 2023). A relationship has been identified between EI and psychopathological disorders: low levels of emotional competence are associated with a wide range of disorders, including personality disorders, eating disorders, social anxiety, somatization, and addictions. Consequently, low EI is particularly associated with a higher likelihood of depression and anxiety (Antuña-Clambor et al., 2023). EI is therefore considered a protective factor against stress, as individuals' responses become more adaptive (Aguilar et al., 2024).

The interrelationship between academic and emotional development is very close. Students who are emotionally intelligent tend to achieve more satisfactory academic outcomes, and recent evidence suggests that EI may be a more significant predictor than intelligence quotient (Campuzano-Ocampo et al., 2024).

Similarly, promoting EI within the educational context can improve school coexistence. Specifically, Gómez-Ortiz, Romera, and Ortega-Ruiz (2017) indicate that low levels of EI are linked to higher rates of school bullying, primarily due to deficiencies in emotional regulation. Thus, fostering EI development is associated with a reduction in harmful behaviors among classroom agents.

The implementation of programs focused on EI, aimed at training and enhancing it, can yield substantial benefits. One notable example is the RULER program (Nathanson et al., 2016), considered one of the most comprehensive approaches (Extremera et al., 2019), as it seeks to enhance EI across the entire educational community.

Regarding gender differences in Emotional Intelligence, Joseph and Newman (2010) concluded, in a meta-analysis on EI, that women tend to score higher than men across EI dimensions.

However, Fernández-Berrocal et al. (2004) found no significant differences between men and women in three of the core dimensions assessed by the TMMS-24 -clarity, attention, and repair-in a sample of

university students, although they did find a positive correlation between clarity and repair, and a negative correlation with attention.

Subsequently, Castillo et al. (2013), through the implementation of an EI program, not only confirmed that EI reduces aggressive behaviors in adolescents but also found, when considering gender, significant improvements in empathy among males—a skill negatively related to aggressiveness. This may be associated with the fact that, as previously noted, male adolescents tend to exhibit higher levels of aggression, which can be reduced from initially low levels of EI, whereas females tend to show the opposite pattern (Jabbarov et al., 2023). Nevertheless, other authors, such as Galdón et al. (2021), reported results indicating higher levels of emotional clarity and emotional repair among females.

As noted previously, EI is closely linked to aggressiveness, such that emotionally intelligent individuals tend to exhibit better emotional understanding and regulation, leading to decreased aggressive behaviors and increased adaptive responses (Cerezo et al., 2016).

The growing prevalence of aggressive conduct (Martínez-Monteagudo, 2019) has led to numerous experimental studies and literature reviews examining the correlation between aggressiveness and EI, consistently confirming the association between the two constructs.

Vega et al. (2022), through a meta-analysis, concluded that EI serves as a protective factor against aggressive behavior in adolescents. Specifically, adolescents with higher EI demonstrate lower levels of aggressiveness. Inglés et al. (2014) observed that adolescents with high levels of physical–verbal aggression, hostility, or anger exhibit lower EI.

Inadequate emotional management influences the relationship between negative thoughts and aversive behaviors, giving rise to aggressive conduct. Developing emotional competencies can help mitigate this issue (León et al., 2020), as adolescents with stronger emotional understanding, management, and regulation skills channel aggression constructively, refraining from using violence as a means of coping with frustration (Yudes et al., 2019).

Overall, EI is linked to aggressiveness across populations, including young adults. Quantitative studies (with no qualitative findings reported) indicate that increasing EI helps reduce aggressive behaviors (Larraz et al., 2020). Gómez-Leal et al. (2022) therefore suggest that future prevention programs should include emotional skills training, especially during adolescence and emerging adulthood, since individuals with higher emotional management capacities are better equipped to mitigate aggressive behavior (Jabbarov et al., 2023).

This evidence leads to the following research question:

"What is the relationship between EI and aggressiveness (including its four components) in young adults, and how do gender differences manifest in these variables?"

Although several studies support the link between EI and reduced aggressiveness (Cerezo et al., 2016), most focus on adolescents, leaving unclear how this relationship operates in young adults, a group showing increasing rates of aggressive behaviors (Martínez-Monteagudo, 2019). This gap makes it difficult to determine precisely how emotional competencies relate to the distinct components of aggressiveness within this age group.

Furthermore, although sex differences have been reported in both aggressiveness and EI (Rosser et al., 2018; Extremera et al., 2019), findings remain inconsistent, and questions persist regarding how such differences manifest specifically in young adulthood and how the interaction among gender, EI, and aggressiveness shapes behavioral and emotional patterns.

Methodology

Following the information provided in the previous introductory section, the objectives to be addressed in this research can be summarized as follows:

- To analyze the relationship between EI and aggressiveness.
- To explore gender differences in aggressiveness.
- To explore gender differences in EI.

Accordingly, the hypotheses addressed in this study are:

- It is expected that an increase in EI will be associated with a decrease in aggressiveness.
- It is hypothesized that men will show higher levels of aggressiveness.
- It is anticipated that women will show higher levels of EI.

In current scientific training within disciplines such as psychology and education, quantitative approaches have acquired a central position as the predominant methodological framework. This predominance is not arbitrary; rather, it responds to the need to generate comparable, replicable data that are amenable to systematic analysis, enabling the identification of patterns, the estimation of relationships between variables, and the formulation of generalizable inferences. In this sense, quantification constitutes an essential tool for the empirical study of complex phenomena, provided that it is employed with clarity and technical rigor.

Nevertheless, the adoption of a quantitative approach is not exempt from epistemological considerations. Procedures such as construct operationalization, the design of standardized instruments, or the application of statistical techniques entail theoretical decisions that shape the nature of the results obtained. Far from representing a methodological deficiency, recognizing these decisions allows for a clearer understanding of the scope and limitations of the data.

Furthermore, aspects such as the cultural sensitivity of scales, the reduction of broad constructs to numerical indicators, or the dependence on underlying statistical structures must be understood as integral components of the research process rather than methodological flaws.

In this study, a quantitative approach is employed in response to the need to examine with precision the relationships between EI and aggressiveness through statistical procedures. The use of techniques such as Student's *t*-test, Pearson correlations, and multiple regression is justified by their capacity to provide objective and verifiable estimates aligned with the research questions. From this perspective, the methods used are not only consistent with the study's objectives but also permit the presentation of clear, replicable, and methodologically coherent results.

Thus, the stance adopted acknowledges the legitimacy of the quantitative framework by situating it within a reflective understanding of its logic and underlying assumptions. Recognizing the abstract nature of numerical data and the implications of translating psychological phenomena into operational measures constitutes a necessary exercise to avoid oversimplified interpretations and to ensure a more nuanced and responsible reading of the findings.

Consequently, this study is fully situated within the quantitative paradigm, maintaining a critical reflection compatible with its practice and oriented toward strengthening methodological coherence and transparency.

The sample of this study consists of 218 young adult participants, who were voluntarily recruited through the University of Málaga (Spain). No participants dropped out or required exclusion during the research process; therefore, the sample remains complete.

Participants' ages range from 18 to 25 years (M = 21.1, SD = 1.94). Of the total, 27.1% (59 participants) are men, whereas 72.9% (159 participants) are women.

This developmental stage was selected because it represents a critical period in which both aggressiveness and EI experience significant variations associated with socioemotional development and stress management. Additionally, there is a notable gap in the Spanish university population regarding studies examining the relationship between these two variables, which further justifies the relevance of focusing on this group.

All participants signed informed consent, ensuring the confidentiality of the collected data.

Data for this research were collected across two sessions, with an approximate duration of 100 minutes. The design followed a standardized protocol to guarantee replicability and minimize bias derived from the administration context.

During Session 1, the online platform LimeSurvey (http://limesurvey.org) was used and distributed to participants via email, in order to complete the aggressiveness questionnaires. Uniform instructions

emphasized answering honestly, and anonymity was guaranteed, to reduce potential social desirability effects. The online format ensured homogeneous, unsupervised administration, minimizing contextual variability.

Session 2 took place in person at the University of Málaga. In this session, a trained psychology professional administered the TMMS (Trait Meta-Mood Scale). The administrator limited their role to distributing the booklet and addressing technical questions, without supervising the content of participants' responses, in order to reduce social pressure and preserve procedural neutrality. The session was conducted in a controlled group format, ensuring equivalent conditions for all participants.

This procedure allows for experimental conditions to be replicated and maintains methodological consistency.

The instruments used in this methodology include:

• Buss–Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ; Buss & Perry, 1992):

This questionnaire assesses aggressive behaviors through a self-report scale and consists of four subscales comprising 29 items: physical aggression (9 items), hostility (8 items), anger (7 items), and verbal aggression (5 items).

A total score is calculated based on the average of the subscale scores, as well as individual scores for each. The questionnaire uses a Likert scale ranging from 1 ("very uncharacteristic of me") to 5 ("very characteristic of me"), with clear instructions for each statement. The Spanish adaptation of the BPAQ (Andreu-Rodríguez et al., 2002) was used due to its strong reliability (α = .88 for the total score; physical aggression α = .86, verbal aggression α = .68, anger α = .77, hostility α = .72).

Although this instrument is robust, its self-report nature may be influenced by social desirability bias, underreporting of aggressive behavior, and cultural differences in item interpretation. To mitigate these biases, anonymity was ensured, standardized instructions emphasized sincerity, and an unsupervised online administration environment was used to minimize perceived social pressure.

It is also acknowledged that the Spanish version was developed using broader and more heterogeneous samples; therefore, its validity may vary according to sociocultural characteristics specific to young university populations.

• Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS; Salovey et al., 1995):

This instrument evaluates three aspects of emotional competence:

- Emotional Attention: refers to the degree of awareness an individual has of their own emotional states, including recognition and understanding of personal feelings.

- Emotional Clarity: defined as the ability to identify, differentiate, and understand the evolution of emotions and their integration into reasoning processes.

- Emotional Repair: understood as the ability to regulate and manage emotional states, both positive and negative.

The TMMS uses a Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The abbreviated and validated Spanish version of the TMMS was used (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2004). In this study, Cronbach's alpha demonstrated excellent reliability across the three dimensions: .90 for Emotional Attention, .92 for Emotional Clarity, and .90 for Emotional Repair.

As with any self-report measure, scores may be influenced by self-perception bias, self-enhancement tendencies, and cultural differences in emotional expression, which may affect score interpretation. To reduce these biases, instructions emphasized the importance of honest self-assessment and data confidentiality.

First, a descriptive analysis of the variables was conducted. Subsequently, gender differences in the study variables were examined using an independent samples *t*-test.

Second, Pearson correlations were calculated to examine the relationships between total aggressiveness and its four subdimensions (physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility), and between the TMMS and its three subscales (emotional attention, emotional repair, and emotional clarity). This analysis allowed for the identification of significant correlations between EI and aggressiveness, as well as between the subscales and their respective indicators.

Next, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify which TMMS components best predict the different dimensions of aggression. Only variables that were significant in the correlational analysis were included as predictors in the regression models. Total aggression and the four aggressiveness dimensions served as dependent variables, resulting in five regression models. The three TMMS subscales were used as predictor variables, excluding the total EI score, as this is derived from the mean of the subdimensions.

Table 1

General Descriptive Statistics.

Descriptive Statistics.

	N	Mean	SD
TMMS_attention	218	3.46	0.855

TMMS_clarity	218	3.19	0.898
TMMS_repair	218	3.16	0.818
ASQ_physical	218	1.88	0.671
ASQ_verbal	218	2.94	0.740
ASQ_hostile	218	2.69	0.737
ASQ_anger	218	2.66	0.813
ASQ	218	2.54	0.564

Table 2

Gender Differences in the Study Variables Using the Independent Samples t-Test and Group Descriptive Statistics.

	Group	N	Mean	SD	Statistics	p	Effect Size
TMMS_atenttion	Women	159	3.56	0.795	2.913	0.004	0.4440
	Men	59	3.19	0.955			
TMMS_clarity	Women	159	3.11	0.870	-2.039	0.043	-
	Men	59	3.39	0.947			0.3109
TMMS_repair	Women	159	3.17	0.782	0.511	0.610	0.0779
	Men	59	3.11	0.914			
ASQ_physical	Women	159	1.82	0.669	-2.129	0.034	-
	Men	59	2.04	0.657			0.3245
ASQ_verbal	Women	159	2.86	0.711	-2.693	0.008	-
	Men	59	3.16	0.776			0.4106
ASQ_hostile	Women	159	2.69	0.749	-0.301	0.764	-
	Men	59	2.72	0.711			0.0458
ASQ_ira	Women	159	2.70	0.814	1.083	0.280	0.1651
	Men	59	2.56	0.809			
ASQ	Women	159	2.51	0.572	-1.206	0.229	-
	Men	59	2.62	0.538			0.1838

In Table 2, a descriptive group analysis is presented, showing the differences between both sexes with respect to the aggressiveness variables and the EI dimensions from the TMMS.

Overall, it can be observed that women exhibit higher scores in the TMMS-related dimensions; however, in the case of the clarity dimension, the pattern is reversed (M $_{Men}$ = 3.39; M $_{Women}$ = 3.11). Among these dimensions, attention stands out as the one with the highest values (M $_{Men}$ = 3.19; M $_{Women}$ = 3.56).

Conversely, regarding aggressiveness, men report higher levels across most dimensions, particularly in verbal aggression, which shows the highest values (M $_{Men}$ = 3.16; M $_{Women}$ = 2.86), followed by hostility (M $_{Men}$ = 2.72; M $_{Women}$ = 2.69), total aggressiveness (M $_{Men}$ = 2.62; M $_{Women}$ = 2.51), and physical aggression (M $_{Men}$ = 2.04; M $_{Women}$ = 1.82). However, the female group scored higher on the anger dimension (M $_{Men}$ = 2.56; M $_{Women}$ = 2.70).

Consequently, an independent samples test was conducted to compare the evaluations between genders. Among the dimensions previously described, four showed statistically significant differences: attention (p = .004), clarity (p = .043), physical aggression (p = .034), and verbal aggression (p = .008).

Although these differences reached statistical significance, the effect sizes ranged between 0.31 and 0.44, indicating that the magnitude of the differences is small to moderate. This suggests that, while sex does exert an influence, additional factors also contribute to the variability observed in aggressiveness and EI.

Table 3.

Pearson Correlations Between Aggressiveness and TMMS Across Their Dimensions.

Pearson Correlations								
	TMMS_atenttion	TMMS_clarity	TMMS_repair	ASQ_physical	ASQ_verbal	ASQ_hostile	ASQ_anger	ASQ
TMMS_atenttion	—							
TMMS_clarity	0.107	—						
TMMS_repair	0.035	0.444***	—					
ASQ_physical	-0.116	-0.114	-0.197**	—				
ASQ_verbal	-0.016	0.015	-0.195**	0.429***	—			

ASQ_hostile	0.212**	-0.410***	-0.475***	0.336***	0.311***	—		
ASQ_anger	0.216**	-0.161*	-0.228***	0.540***	0.508***	0.492***	—	
ASQ	0.108	-0.221**	-0.360***	0.742***	0.740***	0.706***	0.848***	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

In Table 3, the correlation matrix between the aggressiveness dimensions and the TMMS components can be observed. The results indicate that the aggressiveness dimensions are highly significantly correlated with one another, suggesting that an increase in one dimension is likely to be accompanied by increases in the others. The strongest correlation appears between total aggressiveness and anger (r = .848), followed by total aggressiveness and physical aggression (r = .742), and total aggressiveness and verbal aggression (r = .740).

Regarding the TMMS variables, it is noteworthy that clarity and repair show a highly significant correlation (r = .444), indicating that an increase in one of these dimensions would likely correspond to an increase in the other.

Additionally, a significant relationship was found between attention and both hostility (r = .212) and anger (r = .216). Likewise, a highly significant inverse correlation was identified between clarity and hostility (r = -.410), as well as between clarity and total aggressiveness (r = -.221), and, to a lesser extent, between clarity and anger (r = -.161).

For the repair dimension, several highly significant inverse correlations were observed: with physical aggression (r = -.197), verbal aggression (r = -.195), hostility (r = -.475), anger (r = -.228), and total aggressiveness (r = -.360). All of these associations show an inverse pattern.

Taken together, these findings indicate that increases in TMMS variables are significantly associated with decreases in aggressiveness-related variables. The strongest negative association is found between repair and hostility (r = -.475), followed by clarity and hostility (r = -.410).

These correlations reflect associations ranging from moderate to strong. Specifically, the negative correlation between clarity and hostility (r = -.410) suggests that a greater capacity to understand one's own emotions is associated with reduced hostile behaviors—an observation with practical implications for interventions centered on enhancing emotional intelligence.

Table 4.
Regression Analysis.

	R^2	F	β
Total Agression			
<u>Model 1</u>	.125	32.67	
Repair			-,360 (***)
Physical Agression			
<u>Model 1</u>	.016	4,531	
Sex			-,143(*)
<u>Model 2</u>	.049	8,398	
Sex			-,137 (*)
Repair			-,192 (**)
Verbal Agression			
<u>Model 1</u>	.028	7,253	
Sex			-,180 (**)
<u>Model 2</u>	.059	7,846	
Sex			-,174 (**)
Repair			-,189 (**)
Hostility			
<u>Model 1</u>	.222	63,012	
Repair			-,475 (***)

Model 2	.272	15,659	
Repair			-,483 (***)
Atenttion	.330	19,700	,229 (***)
Model 3			
Repair			-,362 (***)
Atenttion			,255 (***)
Clarity			-,277 (***)
Anger			
Model 1	.048	11,882	
Repair			-, 228 (***)
Model 2	.094	12,059	
Repair			-, 236 (***)
Atenttion			,225 (***)

In Table 4, the regression results between the EI variables and aggressiveness are presented. First, regarding total aggressiveness, an inverse relationship with the repair dimension is observed, such that an increase in repair predicts a decrease in total aggressiveness (β = -.360).

Next, for physical aggression, the results indicate that men exhibit higher levels, and, similar to the previous dimension, increases in repair are associated with reductions in physical aggression (β = -.192).

Regarding verbal aggression, the findings confirm that levels are higher among men, and a decrease in this dimension is associated with higher scores in repair (β = -.189).

The hostility dimension presents a more diverse set of relationships. Higher levels of repair (β = -.475) and clarity (β = -.277) are associated with lower levels of hostility. However, the attention dimension shows a direct relationship with hostility, indicating that greater attention to one's emotional states is associated with higher hostility (β = .229).

Finally, anger is predicted by two variables: repair, with which it shows an inverse relationship (β = -.228), and attention, which shows a direct relationship (β = .225). Thus, increases in repair are associated with decreases in anger, whereas higher attention levels correspond to increased anger scores.

The model for total aggressiveness explains 12.5% of the variance (R^2 = .125), indicating that emotional repair is a relevant predictor, although additional factors not included in the model also contribute to aggressive behavior. Similarly, the models for physical and verbal aggression show low to moderate R^2 values, suggesting that EI partially influences these behaviors.

In conclusion, although gender differences and significant correlations are observed, some effect sizes are moderate, indicating substantial individual variability.

Discussion

The findings of this research make it possible to identify significant relationships between EI and aggressiveness in young adults. Specifically, emotional repair and emotional clarity predict reductions in total, physical, and verbal aggressiveness, as well as in anger and hostility, whereas emotional attention correlates positively with hostility and anger. These results partially confirm the first hypothesis, as increases in EI are associated with decreases in aggressiveness; however, the direct association between attention and certain aggressive dimensions introduces notable nuances that merit further analysis.

Larraz et al. (2020) observed that improvements in emotional understanding and regulation are linked to decreases in aggressive behaviors among adolescents. In conclusion, and in line with Cerezo et al. (2016) in university populations, increasing EI in individuals appears to facilitate reductions in aggressive conduct.

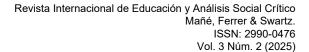Regarding the second hypothesis, the results reveal gender differences. Men exhibit higher levels of physical and verbal aggressiveness, whereas women score higher in EI, particularly in attention and repair. Nonetheless, discrepancies with previous studies—such as those related to hostility and anger—suggest that the relationship between gender, EI, and aggressiveness is not uniform and may be influenced by contextual factors.

Sánchez de la Flor (2018), Socrasto and Jiménez (2019), and Villarejo et al. (2020) similarly report that men tend to display more aggressive behavior than women, which is consistent with the descriptive and independent sample analyses obtained in this research. However, in comparison with the study by Silva-Fernández and Pabón-Poches (2023), our results are only partially concordant. While both studies agree that men show higher physical and verbal aggressiveness, our findings indicate that men also exhibit higher levels of hostility—contradicting those authors, who reported that women scored higher in anger and hostility.

Finally, the third hypothesis is also supported: overall, women obtained higher EI scores than men, consistent with Joseph and Newman (2010), who argue that women tend to be more emotionally intelligent than men.

In connection with our specific results, the clarity dimension was found to be lower in women than in men. Although Fernández-Berrocal et al. (1999) reported similar findings for this variable, Galdón et al. (2021) present evidence contrary to this pattern. Conversely, the two remaining dimensions -Attention and Repair- were higher in women, with Attention showing an even more pronounced difference. In this case, Rodríguez et al. (2019) corroborate findings similar to those of our study, indicating that women tend to exhibit higher emotional attention but lower emotional repair compared to men.

It is also worth highlighting the contrast with Fernández-Berrocal et al. (2004), whose results indicated no significant gender differences in the three core EI dimensions. The present study challenges this conclusion, showing clear differences between men and women.

Although the findings are largely consistent with previous research, it is necessary to recognize that the correlational design and reliance on self-report instruments limit the ability to infer causality. Additionally, the sample's homogeneity and geographical concentration restrict the generalizability of the results. The variability observed suggests that additional personal and contextual factors—such as digital exposure—may influence levels of aggressiveness and EI.

Indeed, although the literature indicates that interaction with digital environments may affect emotional expression and regulation (Aniento & Poveda, 2025; Piccerillo & Digennaro, 2024), and authors such as Álvarez et al. (2025) highlight links between aggressiveness and social media use, it is important to note that this study did not directly assess social media use or exposure to hostile online content. Therefore, any inference regarding this influence remains speculative and not grounded in the data collected. However, integrating this perspective allows for contextualization of the findings and the formulation of hypotheses for future research, such as whether youths with stronger repair and clarity competencies may show greater resilience to digital risk factors, whereas high emotional attention without regulatory strategies may increase vulnerability to online frustration and, consequently, to negative behaviors.

The practical implications highlight the need to develop emotional education programs—such as RULER, INTEMO, or INTEMO+ (Castillo et al., 2017), which may contribute to the reduction of aggressive behaviors. These programs could also be adapted to digital contexts to promote self-regulation and empathy skills among young adults, and could be implemented in secondary education settings and universities to maximize their benefits. However, it is essential to consider that the effectiveness of these interventions may depend on population diversity, digital exposure, and individual variability in emotional development.

Authors such as Gómez-Leal et al. (2022) and Castillo et al. (2013) similarly suggest that future clinical interventions and aggression-prevention programs should focus on the training of emotional skills to achieve reductions in aggressive behavior, supporting the proposal set forth in this study.

In reference to the limitations of the present research, several opportunities arise for future studies, including expanding the sample to additional cities and regions to obtain greater demographic diversity. It would also be necessary to increase male participation to address certain constraints encountered during data collection.

Moreover, future studies should consider contextual variables -such as social media use, exposure to violent content, or digital social pressure- that may influence the relationship under examination.

Finally, longitudinal research would be of particular interest to assess potential changes over time in individuals who participate in intervention programs, examining the evolution of aggressiveness and EI, as well as gender differences.

In conclusion, this study provides insight into the relationships between EI and aggressiveness, showing that increases in EI are associated with decreases in aggressive behaviors—physical, verbal, hostile, and anger-related. It also demonstrates that men display higher overall aggressiveness compared to women, and that men tend to show lower EI levels than women. Possible future research could address everything currently being investigated using mixed and qualitative research methodologies.

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