



IMPLICATIONS OF A MINDFULNESS-BASED EMOTIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM ON THE WELL-BEING AND SOCIOEMOTIONAL COMPETENCES OF STUDENTS

IMPLICAÇÕES DE UM PROGRAMA DE EDUCAÇÃO EMOCIONAL BASEADO EM MINDFULNESS NO BEM-ESTAR E NAS COMPETÊNCIAS SOCIOEMOCIONAIS DE ESTUDANTES

IMPLICACIONES DE UN PROGRAMA DE EDUCACIÓN EMOCIONAL BASADO EN MINDFULNESS EN EL BIENESTAR Y LAS COMPETENCIAS SOCIOEMOCIONALES DE LOS ESTUDIANTES


ABSTRACT

Objective: This study analyzes the implications of a Mindfulness-based emotional education program (EEP) on the well-being and development of socioemotional competences of students. **Design/methodology/approach:** The program was implemented in the year 2021, within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, and utilized Mindfulness as the foundation for its structure. It was operationalized over eight weeks. Fifty-five undergraduate and postgraduate students participated in a quasi-experimental study. Before initiating the program and upon its completion, an assessment instrument was administered with scales covering mental health, socioemotional competences, and the program's contribution to self-awareness and well-being. **Results:** The findings indicated a significant reduction in levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, an improvement in the perception of satisfaction with health and quality of life, and an increase in the levels of development of five socioemotional competences. It was also possible to identify implications of the program on the psychological well-being of the participants. **Practical implications:** The dissemination of Mindfulness-based emotional education programs can be an alternative to enhance the well-being of students in academic environments.

Keywords: Mindfulness. Emotional Education. Well-being, Socioemotional. Competences, Students.

RESUMO

Objetivo: este estudo analisa as implicações de um programa de educação emocional (PEE) baseado em Mindfulness no bem-estar e no desenvolvimento de competências socioemocionais de estudantes. **Design / metodologia / abordagem:** o programa foi implementado no ano de 2021, no contexto da

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pandemia do Covid-19, e utilizou Mindfulness como base para sua estruturação. A sua operacionalizado ocorreu em oito semanas. Participaram de um estudo quase-experimental 55 estudantes de graduação e pós-graduação. Antes de iniciar o programa e ao final de sua realização, foi aplicado um instrumento de avaliação com escalas envolvendo a saúde mental, as competências socioemocionais e a contribuição do programa no autoconhecimento e bem-estar. **Resultados:** os resultados apontaram redução significativa nos níveis de ansiedade, depressão e estresse, melhoria na percepção da satisfação com a saúde e qualidade de vida e aumento nos níveis de desenvolvimento de cinco competências socioemocionais. Também foi possível identificar implicações do programa no bem-estar psicológico dos participantes. **Implicações práticas:** a disseminação de programas de educação emocional baseados em Mindfulness pode ser uma alternativa para melhorar o bem-estar dos estudantes em ambientes acadêmicos.

Palavras-chave: Mindfulness. Educação Emocional. Bem-estar, Competências Socioemocionais. Estudantes.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Este estudio analiza las implicaciones de un programa de educación emocional (PEE) basado en Mindfulness en el bienestar y el desarrollo de competencias socioemocionales en estudiantes. **Diseño/metodología/enfoque:** El programa se implementó en el año 2021, en el contexto de la pandemia de Covid-19, y utilizó el Mindfulness como base para su estructuración. Se operacionalizó durante ocho semanas. Participaron 55 estudiantes de grado y posgrado en un estudio cuasiexperimental. Antes de iniciar el programa y al finalizarlo, se administró un instrumento de evaluación con escalas que abarcaban la salud mental, las competencias socioemocionales y la contribución del programa en el autoconocimiento y el bienestar. **Resultados:** Los hallazgos indicaron una reducción significativa en los niveles de ansiedad, depresión y estrés, una mejora en la percepción de la satisfacción con la salud y la calidad de vida, y un aumento en los niveles de desarrollo de cinco competencias socioemocionales. También fue posible identificar implicaciones del programa en el bienestar psicológico de los participantes. **Implicaciones prácticas:** La difusión de programas de educación emocional basados en Mindfulness puede ser una alternativa para mejorar el bienestar de los estudiantes en entornos académicos.

Palabras clave: Mindfulness. Educación Emocional. Bienestar. Competencias Socioemocionales. Estudiantes.

INTRODUCTION

The world experienced a major disruptive event, the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused numerous issues related to mental health. During this period, many mindfulness-based practices were widely promoted and gained popularity for their potential in reducing psychological stress and anxiety (Al Ozairi et al., 2023).

University students undergo emotional experiences in the academic environment that require support for mental health, and the use of emotional education programs is an important strategy in the development of socioemotional competences, aiming to help them manage their emotions. Mindfulness-based programs have been used worldwide for the reduction of anxiety, depression, and stress (Bamber & Morpeth, 2019; Dawson et al., 2020; Silva, 2023). Silva (2023) emphasizes that, in response to student demands, there is a growing number of universities offering programs with Mindfulness-based interventions.

The proposal of this article encompasses the use of Mindfulness as a central approach in the development of an EEP, which took place during the Covid-19 pandemic in the year 2021. The author's motivation for choosing this approach stemmed from their experience participating in a Mindfulness training program at a university in Spain.

Mindfulness is understood as the ability to consciously pay attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental way (Kabat-Zinn, 2009). It can also be perceived as a complex cognitive process, referred to as the 'being' mode, contrasting with the 'doing' mode, which is how the mind typically operates (Demarzo and Campayo, 2015).

Studies indicate that Mindfulness practices (Gupta et al., 2021) are effective in managing emotions, balancing stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2009; Mazolla & Rustenhol, 2018), and enhancing collaboration, leading to constructive conflict resolution (Gupta et al., 2021). Mindfulness-based interventions assist in controlling attention,



awareness, non-reactivity, and non-judgmental thinking, often achieved through meditation practices (Bamber & Morpeth, 2019).

Mindfulness practices bring benefits for physical health and contribute to improving subjective and psychological well-being levels. Considering the purpose of this study, which involves the use of a Mindfulness-based EEP and its effects on the well-being of participants, the psychological well-being approach is considered more suitable for understanding the phenomenon. Thus, Mindfulness practices contribute to self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships with others, life purpose, environmental mastery, and personal growth – dimensions of psychological well-being (Siqueira & Padovan, 2008; Machado & Bandeira, 2012).

The aim of this article is to analyze the implications of a Mindfulness-based EEP on the well-being and socioemotional competences development of students. The goal is to enhance self-knowledge and establish strategies for more effective emotion management in personal, academic, and professional life.

The main contributions of the article are as follows: revealing the potential use of Mindfulness in emotional education processes, evaluating the effects of Mindfulness practices on the well-being and socioemotional competences development of students, and presenting a reference framework for the implementation of Mindfulness-based Emotional Education Programs.

LEARNING TO MANAGE EMOTIONS

The context of the workplace in the contemporary world is characterized by pressure, competitiveness, and the need to mobilize a set of technical, strategic, behavioral, social, and emotional competences. This complexity makes the organizational management environment more complex, given that work is permeated by emotional experiences. When these experiences are not well-managed, they can lead to mental and behavioral disorders.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) in this context is crucial for professional performance because it assists individuals in the pursuit of quality of life, health, and well-being. This demands the

necessity for developing and learning to manage it throughout one's life.

Salovey & Mayer (1990) developed a theoretical perspective on emotional intelligence, encompassing four basic skills: perceiving and understanding emotions, using emotions in thoughts, and managing emotions. Goleman (2019) highlights that EI is crucial in the effectiveness of leadership, with its main components involving self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

A professional career can be seen as an emotional occupation, and each individual may experience different emotions based on subjective experiences, influencing behavior with implications for health, well-being, and the work-life relationship. Bar-On (2010) emphasizes that emotional intelligence contributes to emotion management, impacting performance at work, as well as overall well-being and happiness.

Emotional intelligence was defined by Mayer and Salovey (1997) as the ability to perceive, understand, and reflectively regulate emotions, aiming to assist and promote better emotions and thoughts.

How do we learn to manage our emotions? Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a field of study and practice that has grown in the last 20 years (Weissberg et al., 2015) because it offers relevant content for those who want to learn more about research and practice related to SEL. The term social and emotional learning is a conceptual framework that aids in the recognition and management of emotions and the development of the ability to think and feel more competent in performing important activities, which can contribute to academic success and life achievement (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2004).

One of the most well-known social-emotional learning programs is CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning), a guide that aims to implement practices and policies to enhance personal development, promote more satisfying relationships, and foster ethical and productive work (Weissberg et al., 2015). The core social-emotional competences of CASEL are Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Management, and



Responsible Decision-Making (CASEL, 2015).

Conley (2015) emphasizes that the SEL framework can be applied in higher education contexts, as in the professional environment, social and emotional learning stands out as a differential for the generation and dissemination of knowledge, as well as for the development of students' competences.

The development of socioemotional competences (SEC) can assist students in preparing to navigate the dynamics of a competitive and innovative work environment. According to Zins and Elias (2006), SEC and professional performance are interconnected and integrated, and reflecting on this relationship can be crucial for success in a professional career. The development of socioemotional competences involves a set of strategies, as proposed by Conley (2015) and indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Strategies for Socioemotional Competences Development

Strategies	Characterization (how to develop?)
Cognitive-behavioral interventions	Emphasize emotional awareness and self-management skills, such as monitoring and modifying cognition to change how we react to emotional and behavioral changes. Techniques or tools can be employed to enhance social awareness, relationships, and responsible decision-making.
Meditation	Involve a set of meditation techniques aimed at enhancing emotional awareness and self-management.
Mindfulness	Interventions primarily focused on emotional awareness and self-management, but also targeting social awareness and relationship skills through a mind-training process to enhance awareness, acceptance, non-judgment, and compassion.
Relaxation	Interventions primarily focused on emotional awareness and self-management strategies designed to teach students how to relax, including techniques such as breathing exercises or guided imagery.
Social Skills	Interventions primarily aimed at social awareness and relationship skills, with a focus on developing assertiveness, communication, and conflict management.

Source: Compiled from Conley (2015).

In the professional training landscape, students and future professionals encounter various challenges associated with performance pressure, increased demands, new roles, and difficulties in adjusting to this new context. This underscores the significance of socioemotional competences in helping them broaden individual and interpersonal awareness and navigate a terrain filled with emotional experiences (Conley, 2015).

Cavalcante (2023, p. 35-36) emphasizes that studies reveal "individuals with well-developed socioemotional competences and pro-social behaviors approach life more positively concerning themselves" and are more persistent, possess higher self-esteem, and are more committed to others.

From an academic perspective, there has been a growing number of studies utilizing Mindfulness practices as the foundation for the development of emotional education programs. Many studies are still identifying evidence of their effectiveness in students' well-being (Dawson et al, 2020).

Contribution of Mindfulness in the development of Emotional Education Programs

The academic and practical interest in the topic of Mindfulness has grown significantly in recent years. From an academic perspective, a search on Web of Science in December 2023 using the term "Mindfulness" in the title revealed 10,519 published works, including articles and review articles. When refining the search for the last five years (2019 to 2023), the results indicated 7,801 published works, accounting for 74.16% of the total. A search using the terms "Mindfulness" in the title and "health" in all fields revealed 6,601 academic works. This number indicates that 62.73% of publications related to the theme are associated with health.

From a practical standpoint, there is a noticeable increase in the popularity of Mindfulness programs. The most well-known ones include MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction), MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression), and MSC (Mindful Self-Compassion). Many other programs utilize these



protocols as a basis for structuring a set of formal and informal practices aimed at enhancing the well-being of participants. Machado and Bandeira (2012) identified studies linking psychological well-being with emotional intelligence, aligning with the purpose of Mindfulness programs, that aim to improve the development of participants' socio-emotional competences.

Living in harmony with oneself and the world is one of the relevant aspirations for people in the contemporary world (Kabat-Zinn, 2009), involving a process of self-awareness and self-knowledge. Individuals often live on autopilot (Teasdale, Williams, and Segal, 2016) and find it challenging to shift their mental mode to awaken awareness, to observe their reality openly, carefully, intentionally, and non-judgmentally, and to develop an attention centered on what is happening in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2009; Teasdale, Williams, and Segal, 2016). This is Mindfulness. The term can be translated into Portuguese as 'atenção plena' or 'consciência plena' (Demarzo & Campaio, 2015). The definitions of Mindfulness involve several aspects, systematized by Demarzo & Campaio (2015), that are indicated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Aspects associated with the meaning of Mindfulness

Aspects that characterize the meaning of Mindfulness	Description
Ability to be attentive	The individual is not inattentive, drowsy, or lethargic; rather, they are attentive and perfectly centered on what they are experiencing.
In the Present	A person can be aware of the past or the future, but in a state of Mindfulness, they are focused on the present moment.
Intentional	Entering in a state of mindfulness is initially an exercise of will, an intentional act. With practice, the process becomes more natural, and it's possible to remain in this state for a significant part of the time.
With acceptance	One should not judge, criticize, or be dissatisfied with the present experience but rather accept it in a radical way. In this context, acceptance differs from resignation or passivity; the essence is one of openness and non-critical curiosity in the face of each experience.

Source: Based on Demarzo & Campaio (2015).

These aspects characterize Mindfulness as a state of full awareness that can be developed through formal and informal meditation practices. These practices assist individuals in awakening from a 'sleep' characterized by unconscious and automatic behaviors (Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

Mindfulness can be effective in managing emotional tensions and stress, contributing to the development of the capacity to regulate emotions (Mazzola & Rustenhol, 2018). According to Kabat-Zinn (2009, p. 28), Mindfulness is "the art of conscious living... of being in touch with the fullness of our being through a systematic process of self-observation, self-inquiry, and mindful action."

Mazzola & Rustenhol (2018) present five facets of mindfulness that are fundamental to the development of any Mindfulness-based intervention program. These facets include: a) focusing on the action being performed at the moment and dedicating full attention to it, acting in the here and now; b) being able to describe feelings and experiences and communicate one's own feelings to others; c) remaining calm in conflicting situations, not succumbing to impulsive reactions; d) accepting feelings, physical sensations, or ideas without judging or categorizing them; and e) noting sensations and physical signs, feelings, and ideas, discerning their effects on behavior and mood state.

The institutionalization of Mindfulness-based intervention programs can assist individuals in better preparing for adversities in life, contributing for the development of a state of full awareness. In a study conducted with university students, Shutte and Malouff (2011) confirmed the association between mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and subjective well-being. High levels of mindfulness were linked to elevated levels of emotional intelligence, positive affect, life satisfaction, and low levels of negative affect, indicating the benefits of mindfulness for students.

METHODOLOGY

This is a research study of an exploratory and descriptive nature conducted with undergraduate and postgraduate students who



participated of a Mindfulness-based emotional education program (EEP), implemented in the year 2021, and were regularly enrolled in a Federal Public University in Brazil.

The study is characterized as quasi-experimental (Cozby, 2003) because the students underwent a program lasting eight weeks. Their overall levels of mental health (anxiety, depression, and stress), socioemotional competences, and perception of satisfaction with health and quality of life were assessed before the start of the program and at the end of their participation.

The research sample is classified as a non-probabilistic intentional type and included 41 undergraduate students and 14 postgraduate students, totaling 55 participants. The data collection plan was approved by the university's ethics and research committee through registration CAAE 29901420.4.0000.5188.

The data collection instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire with sociodemographic questions (gender, age, marital status), two Likert-type questions for assessing satisfaction with health and quality of life, and the use of two previously validated scales. The justification for using these scales is that the DASS-21 was validated in Brazil, and the Socioemotional Competences Scale was the first scale on the subject developed in the Brazilian context. The scales are described below.

a) **DASS-21 Scale** (Vignola & Tucci, 2014): The scale assesses levels of anxiety, depression, and stress and consists of 21 items. Using an interval scale ranging from 0 to 3, the respondent evaluates how much each statement applied to them over the past week, where 0 = Did not apply at all and 3 = Applied very much or most of the time.

b) **CSE Scale** (Macêdo & Silva, 2020): The scale assesses levels of five socioemotional competences – emotional awareness, emotional regulation, social awareness, emotional self-control, and emotional creativity – and consists of 25 items. Evaluation is conducted using an interval scale ranging from 0 to 5, where 0 = never and 5 = always.

The data analysis process involved descriptive and non-parametric statistics,

utilizing the statistical package SPSS, version 22.0. Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of sociodemographic data, identifying the mean and standard deviation of the variables from the scales used to evaluate the overall mental health and socioemotional competences.

To assess the program's effect on anxiety, depression, and stress levels, as well as the development of socioemotional competences, mean difference tests were conducted. Initially, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests were performed, indicating that the data were not normal. Thus, since the study involves two related samples (students evaluated before starting the program and after eight weeks of participation), the non-parametric test used was the Wilcoxon test.

To assess the effect size (ES), the following formula is employed: $ES = [(mean\ after\ 8\ weeks - mean\ at\ the\ start\ of\ the\ program) / standard\ deviation\ obtained\ at\ the\ start\ of\ the\ program]$. The goal is to classify the magnitude of the effect of participation in EEP. The classification of magnitude follows Cohen's (1988) parameters: ≤ 0.20 (trivial), between 0.21 and 0.50 (small), between 0.51 and 0.80 (moderate), and > 0.80 (large).

In addition to using scales, open-ended questions were included, with one of them assessing the program's contribution to participants' self-knowledge and well-being. The analysis of responses to this question followed Bardin's (2011) content analysis procedures. Initially, all responses were read. They were then grouped into two categories: self-knowledge and well-being. After categorization, the content of the responses was analyzed, grouped by similarity, and their meaning was identified. The results of the analysis are presented in Section 7. Before presenting the research results, the next section provides a characterization of the EEP.

CARACTERIZATION OF THE EMOTIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM (EEP)

The Mindfulness-based EEP aims to assist participants in the pursuit of self-knowledge and strategies to manage their emotions, fostering the development of useful socioemotional



competences in both academic and professional environments, as well as in personal life. The specific objectives of the program are as follows: a) assist in the development of the ability to pay attention and deal with thoughts; b) enhance communication and social interaction skills; c) cultivate self-compassion to broaden emotional and social awareness; d) recognize the role of emotions in self-knowledge and societal relationships; and e) identify levels of satisfaction, overall mental health, and the development of socioemotional competences.

The program's implementation spanned 8 weeks, with each week featuring an online session comprising experiential and interactive practices lasting two hours. Additionally, autonomous activities and practices were conducted, accessible in a Google Classroom, with an anticipated weekly time commitment of two hours. The total program duration is 16 hours.

The program's structure was developed based on theoretical reflections and practical experience. The determination of the theme for each session was established with reference to the programs proposed by Cullen and Brito (2015), Teasdale, Williams, and Segal (2016), Neff and Germer (2019), and Demarzo et al. (2020). Additionally, the practical training experience in Spain undertaken by the author, in the Mindfulness expert course at the University of Valencia Foundation, along with participation in the Mindfulness Self-Compassion protocol training, played a crucial role in defining the themes and activities for the eight weeks of the program. The topics covered in each of the eight weeks are presented below:

- a) Becoming acquainted with the Program
 - b) Awakening Mindfulness
 - c) Recognizing Basic Emotions
 - d) Managing Thoughts with Mindfulness
 - e) Cultivating Self-Compassion
 - f) Communicating and Relating Compassionately
 - g) Compassionate Empathy
 - h) Taking Care of Oneself and the Future
- Throughout all the sessions, in addition to

the suggested practical activities, videos from YouTube, typically from Tim Janis's channel, were used before starting the activities. These videos aimed to welcome participants and guide them in practicing mindfulness by observing the details of nature sounds and the movement of wind in plants and animals. The goal was to help participants connect with the present moment. In all online sessions, music from Brazilian artists was also used, with lyrics related to the theme of the week, along with quotes and poems for participants' reflection.

A playlist was created with over 50 songs by Brazilian artists, featuring lyrics that promote positive feelings and well-being. Additionally, a podcast was developed, including formal meditation practices, poems, and specific episodes related to mindfulness, all recorded by the program coordinator.

At the end of each session, participants were given guidance on activities to be carried out during the week and invited to reflect on their experience using the metaphor of a backpack. Two questions were posed: What do you wish to put in your backpack at this moment in your journey? What do you wish to take out of your backpack at this moment in your journey?

For each class offered, a virtual classroom was set up on the Google platform. In the virtual classroom, video lectures with theoretical-practical reflections based on related books were provided for each week's theme. Additionally, guidance for carrying out weekly practical activities, supplementary information videos, book references, and information on some health support services available at the university and in the city were made accessible.

A recurring practice during the eight weeks of program implementation was the Gratitude Journal. Participants were invited to engage in daily gratitude practice through a journal with the following questions: How do I feel today? What experiences have I lived through, and for what do I wish to express gratitude? To answer the second question, participants were encouraged to express gratitude for three situations/experiences/events that occurred during the day.

A study conducted by researchers at



Indiana University in the United States, published in the journal *NeuroImage* in 2016, on the effects of gratitude on neural activity, revealed that simple reflective writing about gratitude led to significantly greater and enduring neural sensitivity to gratitude in the participants' medial prefrontal cortex three months after the activity (Kini et al., 2016). This practice proved to be highly meaningful for participants in the Mindfulness-based EEP.

The program evaluation took place weekly through a structured evaluation form. The goal of the assessment was to encourage participants to reflect on the practices and assist them in expanding their self-perception of emotions and sensations, a further step in the process of self-knowledge. To support the completion of this form, participants were provided with a journey diary, a table where information about the performed practices is recorded, containing the following questions: How was your experience? How did you feel your body during the practice? What thoughts crossed your mind? Did you identify any emotions during the practice? If yes, describe that emotion.

Additionally, before starting and at the end of the program, participants answered a questionnaire aimed at evaluating satisfaction and overall mental health. This involved identifying levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, as well as levels of socioemotional competences development and the general perception of quality of life. The scales used for assessing overall mental health and socioemotional competence were indicated in the methodology.

The program was implemented in the year 2021, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Two classes were offered for students, with 141 participants, one class for teachers with 38 participants, and one class for public servants working in administrative roles, with 26 participants. The completion rate for all program activities was 35.6%, considering the total number of participants (205). The implementation of the program with various groups demonstrated its suitability for diverse target audiences. Below, the results of the initial evaluation and after eight weeks of the program are presented for a group of 55 undergraduate and graduate students.

PROGRAM RESULTS

The students who participated in the program are mostly women (70.9%), single (65.5%), with an average age of 32 years and a monthly income of up to two minimum wages (54.5%). Table 1 below provides the complete profile of the participants.

Table 1 Sociodemographic variables

Variable	n	%
Gender		
- Female	39	70,9
- Male	15	27,3
- Other	01	1,8
Marital status		
- Single	36	65,5
- Married	14	25,5
- Divorced	02	3,6
- Stable Union	01	1,8
- Widow	02	3,6
Family income		
- Up to 2 MW		
- More than 2 MW and less than 6 MW	30	54,5
- More than 6 MW and less than 10 MW	13	26,7
- More than 10 MW	07	12,7
- More than 10 MW	01	1,8
- Average age	32,04 years	

n = 55 Students; MW = Minimum Wage

Participants were also asked how they rate their health satisfaction and an assessment of their quality of life. The results indicated in Table 2 reveal that there was an increase in health perception of 17.88% in the eight-week period, and the magnitude of the effect size is moderate following the parameters of Cohen (1988). The perception of quality of life also increased by 10.35%, and the effect size was small (0.42). The Wilcoxon test revealed a significant increase in health satisfaction ($Z = -3.547$; $P < 0.001$) and quality of life ($Z = -3.547$; $P < 0.003$).



Table 2 Satisfaction with Health and Quality of Life

Variable	Program Start		After 8 weeks		Result after eight weeks (%)	Effect Size (ES)	Wilcoxon test	
	M	SD	M	SD			Z	Value-P
Satisfaction with Health	3,02	0,83	3,56	0,94	↑17,88	0,65	-3,547	0,000
Quality of Life Assessment	3,38	0,83	3,73	0,71	10,35	0,42	-3,120	0,002

n = 55 students M = media and SD = standard deviation

The assessment of anxiety, depression and stress levels is presented in Table 3. The results achieved regarding students' participation in the program were significant, since there was an improvement in mental health status after eight weeks of participation. Anxiety levels reduced by 31.67%, taking the mean as the analysis parameter. The Wilcoxon test confirms that there are significant differences between anxiety levels at the beginning of the program and after eight weeks ($Z = -3,331$; $P < 0,002$). The level of depression presented the greatest reduction (33.31%) and the test results also indicated a significant difference at the beginning and end of the program ($Z = -3,272$; $P < 0,002$). Regarding stress levels, they had a reduction of 23.01%, with results also significant in relation to the difference of means test ($Z = -3,824$; $P < 0,001$).

When analyzing the effect size, a variation from -0,38 to -0,46 is observed. Despite the magnitude of a small effect size, according to the parameters established by Cohen (1988), the reduction in levels of anxiety, depression and stress achieved is very significant, considering the time of eight weeks. This proves the results of studies, which reveal that the benefits of Mindfulness practices can be achieved in two months (Cullen & Brito, 2015). See below:

Table 3 Levels of Anxiety, Depression and Stress

Variable	Program Start		After 8 weeks		Result after eight weeks (%)	Effect Size (ES)	Wilcoxon test	
	M	SD	M	SD			Z	Value-P
Anxiety	13,2	11,07	9,02	8,17	31,67	-0,38	-3,331	0,001
Depression	13,3	11,32	8,87	8,23	33,31	-0,39	-3,272	0,001
Stress	19,6	9,82	15,09	8,56	23,01	-0,46	-3,824	0,000

n = 55 students M = media and SD = standard deviation

Table 4 presents the results of the assessment of socioemotional competences. An increase in socioemotional competences levels is observed after 8 weeks of participation in the program, which ranged from 14,46% for emotional creativity to 7,35% for emotional self-control.

The effect size of emotional creativity was 0,49, considered small, but very close to the moderate effect ($> 0,51$). The Wilcoxon test confirms that the increase in levels of this socioemotional competence is significant ($Z = -4,131$; $P < 0,001$). Emotional creativity is the ability to use emotions creatively in order to solve problems, manage conflicts creatively and create an opportunity to experience positive emotions (Macêdo & Silva, 2020). The results reveal that the Mindfulness-based EEP increased this students' ability at the end of the program.

Table 4 Assessment of socioemotional competences

Variable	Program Start		After 8 weeks		Result after eight weeks (%)	Effect Size (ES)	Wilcoxon test	
	M	SD	M	SD			Z	Value-P
Emotional awareness	3,48	0,88	3,84	0,77	↑10,34	0,41	-3,245	0,001
Emotional regulation	3,01	0,93	3,39	0,77	12,62	0,41	-3,285	0,001
Social	3,91	1,00	4,21	0,75	↑7,67	0,30	-2,712	0,007
Emotional self-control	3,4	1,02	3,65	0,91	↑7,35	0,25	-2,054	0,040
Emotional creativity	3,32	0,97	3,80	0,84	↑14,46	0,49	-4,131	0,000

n = 55 students M = media and SD = standard deviation

Emotional regulation involves the ability to manage emotions adequately to maintain satisfactory performance in situations of stress and pressure, as well as adapting to changing situations with flexibility (Macêdo & Silva, 2020), showed significant results. This competence is related to stress, which decreased at the end of the program. This confirms that students improved their emotional regulation capacity by 12.62% and that this increase is significant, taking as a reference the Wilcoxon test ($Z = -3,285$; $P < 0,002$) and the effect size (0,42). Lopes & Salovey (2004) emphasize that emotional regulation skills can facilitate attention control, development of intrinsic motivation in the face of challenges,



improving intellectual engagement and study.

Emotional awareness also obtained significant results ($Z = -3,245$; $P < 0,001$), with an increase of 10.34% at the end of the program, with a small (0,41) but significant effect size. Emotional awareness is essential for the fact that it involves the ability to recognize and understand the emotions of oneself and others (Macêdo & Silva, 2020), which favors the development of compassion, empathy and helps in decision-making processes, since that the person acquires more confidence in his/her choices.

The results for social awareness and emotional self-control presented the lowest levels of development, with 7,67% and 7,35% respectively. The Wilcoxon test was also significant, with significance levels below 0,05. The effect size also revealed smaller magnitudes than the other socioemotional competences.

Macêdo and Silva (2020) consider that social awareness is essential in cooperation during teamwork, as well as in increasing levels of responsibility for actions. It also collaborates with the development of empathy and collaboration since it helps to perceive and understand the difficulties of the other. Regarding emotional self-control, it is the ability to keep one's emotions under control, in short time, when experiencing a stressful situation. As the eight-week period is relatively short, this process of self-control probably requires more time to dedicate to Mindfulness practices so that the participant can increase his/her emotional self-control ability.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE EMOTIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (EEP) FOR STUDENTS

The implementation of an EEP can bring various benefits for participants. According to Demarzo and Campayo (2015), the effectiveness of Mindfulness has been proven in the fields of health, education, and business. The results presented in the previous section confirm that participation in the PEE had implications for the self-knowledge and psychological well-being of the students.

The results presented in Figure 3 below characterize the content analysis of responses to an open-ended question in the evaluation

questionnaire provided at the end of the eight weeks of the program for participants. The implications of program participation were categorized into two groups: self-awareness and well-being. Content analysis of the responses identified some meanings, as presented below.

Figure 3. Implications of participating in the Program for self-knowledge and well-being.

Implications for Self-knowledge	Implications for Well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognizing the need to pause and live in the present moment. - Understanding limitations to reduce self-imposed pressure. - Relearn to live and discover new things. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finding a meaning in life. - Improving the way one approaches life. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facing situations to feel better. - Reconnecting with the joyful and hopeful self to experience peace and happiness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher awareness of life experiences increasing more balance and gratitude. - Increase awareness of inner fears and frustrations. - Greater diligence and actions for moments devoted to self-care. - Respecting personal boundaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engaging in relaxation practices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve sleep quality. - Practices to calm oneself during moments of distress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning to breathe to seek calmness and reduce anxiety. - Meditate during anxiety crises. - Taking breaks between activities to reduce stress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensing emotions (both positive and negative) and learning to manage them. - Performing small actions that lead to positive emotions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calming thoughts and emotions to develop patience and tolerance, aiding in interpersonal relationships.

Regarding self-knowledge, an analysis of the meanings reveals that the main implications are related to a change in lifestyle, awakening awareness of fears, limits, and frustrations to find balance and gratitude, as well as the pursuit of self-care. Living in the present moment is one of the objectives of mindfulness practices. Another aspect related to self-knowledge is finding a purpose in life, which can be represented in words such as a sense of direction and meaning.

An analysis of the well-being benefits suggests that the program improved physical and emotional well-being through the practice of relaxation, meditation, and breaks between activities experienced over the eight weeks. This resulted in improved sleep quality, reduced anxiety, stress control, and learning to cultivate positive emotions while managing both positive



and negative emotions. Another well-being benefit is related to thoughts, as the program helps calm them, contributing to the development of patience and tolerance in interpersonal relationships.

These results align with Conley (2015), indicating that an analysis of various mindfulness interventions showed improvement in levels of depression, stress, self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and the development of socio-emotional competences after the intervention. It is evident from the results that students who participated in the program demonstrated an enhancement in psychological well-being.

Considering psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct involving dimensions reflecting characteristics associated with positive psychological functioning (Machado & Bandeira, 2012), it is observed that the results of this study indicate that students' participation in the Mindfulness-based educational emotional program assisted in self-acceptance, particularly when emphasizing that they learned to set boundaries, engage in self-care, and gain greater self-awareness of their emotions.

The program's contribution to participants' reflection on the purpose of life becomes evident, along with personal growth as they become more open to experiencing life by adopting more positive behaviors, such as "facing life to feel better" or "relearning to live and discover new things". The mindfulness practices outlined in the second column of Figure 3 reveal the contributions of the EEP to physical and mental health. These results may have contributed to the reduction in levels of anxiety, depression, and stress indicated in Table 3.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The promotion of mental health and well-being is one of the central pillars of emotional education. Seeking educational sustainability through actions that help students improve their overall physical and mental health contributes to enhancing academic performance, as well as preparing them for the difficulties and challenges of the workplace.

The EEP was implemented in the context

of the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of this study reveal that emotional education can be a pathway to prepare individuals to face significant disruptions they may experience throughout their lives.

The reduction in levels of anxiety, depression, and stress was significant after two months of participation in the EPP, revealing the potential of mindfulness practices for psychological well-being. It also enhanced the development of socio-emotional competences, raising awareness and contributing for emotional regulation and creativity. The program's benefits may be lasting through the continued practice of mindfulness and the pursuit of strategies and actions to manage thoughts and emotions. At the end of the program, it was also possible to identify that, in addition to the improvement in levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, students also recognized implications of experiencing formal and informal mindfulness practices on their self-knowledge and well-being.

Despite the promising results of the study, indicating significant potential contribution of the program to well-being, it is necessary to develop new editions and conduct further analyses, as the results involve students who participated in the first two classes of the program.

As a suggestion for future studies, it is recommended to expand the dissemination of more editions of the EEP to assess whether the results indicated in this study are recurrent. Additionally, it is recommended to promote the program in organizational contexts, especially in work environments characterized by pressure, stress, and high levels of competitiveness.

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