



Peculiarities of Emotional Intelligence of Pedagogues and Parents of Children in Private and Public Sector Pre-School Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Background. A child’s personality is formed at an early age. This is the most favorable time to develop a child’s emotional intelligence (EI), which is an important factor for further social, emotional, and cognitive development. Parents and teachers are important actors in a child’s social environment and can have a significant impact on a child’s emotional development and behavior. Adults with high emotional intelligence can teach a child empathy, emotional perception, problem-solving, and other skills, as well as help the child learn to manage their emotions, understand and express feelings, and find appropriate ways to control inappropriate behavior or resolve conflicts. High emotional intelligence also correlates with the ability to understand a child’s behavior better and choose appropriate educational strategies. In Lithuania, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the expression of EI among pre-school children’s parents and teachers, and differences identified between the public and private pre-school education sectors can be useful in further analyzing factors related to education quality. In this context, we aim to analyze the characteristics of EI among parents and teachers of pre-school children, as well as the differences that occur between representatives of private and public education sectors.

Methods. Emotional intelligence was assessed using the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, which consists of 33 statements (Schutte et al., 1998).

Results. It was determined that the overall EI score of the participants was higher than average. After comparing EI indicators of different education sectors, it was determined that private sector educators have statistically significantly higher EI scores than their public sector counterparts. Parents with children in private sector education institutions had the highest EI level, while educators of the public sector education institutions had the lowest. No emotional intelligence differences based on gender were identified.

Conclusions. Educators in the private education sector have higher EI compared to their public sector counterparts. Parents choosing private education sector for their children have the highest EI levels in the entire study population.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, teachers, parents, early education, different types of educational institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of emotions in public discourse has been discussed for a long time, but recently the concept of emotional intelligence has become particularly prominent in the context of early childhood education. Emotional

intelligence is a broad concept that encompasses many different abilities. Scientific research aims to determine or substantiate the influence of emotional intelligence on a person’s academic, professional, and social success. According to Goleman

(2003), emotional intelligence has a greater impact on a person's potential for success than intellectual intelligence. Since the amendments to the education law that came into force in Lithuania in 2017, all students are required to have the opportunity to develop social and emotional competencies, and educators are required to strengthen them at least once every four years by improving their qualifications in the area of social and emotional competency development (Lithuanian Republic Education Law, 2016). A child's personal emotional intelligence is developed in four areas of achievement: self-awareness and self-esteem, initiative and perseverance, emotion perception and expression, self-regulation and self-control. Interpersonal intelligence is developed through relationships with peers and relationships with adults (Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports, 2015). Social and emotional education programs in Lithuania are mostly implemented by non-governmental organizations. The education system plays an important role in developing individuals with a strong foundation of competencies for lifelong learning. Some authors compare pre-school institutions to life laboratories, where children develop social-emotional skills, learn to communicate effectively about their emotions, manage emotional experiences, and react appropriately in various situations. These skills are the foundation for academic success and adaptation (Bailey, Zinsser, Curby, Denham, and Bassett, 2013). The quality of education is strongly influenced by the emotional intelligence of the educators themselves, so it is important for educators to seek professionalism by deepening their knowledge and emotional abilities in this area (Slušnienė and Balčėtienė, 2016). Vaišvidienė and Gedvilienė (2017) as well as emphasize the importance of the child's immediate environment - the collaboration between educators and families - in the development of the child's emotional intelligence.

The ability of parents and teachers to recognize, understand, and appropriately respond to a child's emotions, as it relates to emotional intelligence, can influence the child's emotional security and the formation of their skills in expressing emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is an important factor in a teacher's ability to create a positive and effective learning environment, establish relationships with students, encourage their social and emotional development, and help them achieve good results. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence are more satisfied with their work and motivate children to better structure their learn-

ing, based on child-oriented methods (Dolev and Leshem, 2017). A positive correlation has also been found between teachers' emotional intelligence and self-regulation, as well as classroom management skills (Agbaria, 2021). A teacher's motivation to work is conditionally dependent on their ability to overcome professional challenges. Pre-school teachers work with groups of children that are difficult to control, which makes their work more difficult and affects the factors that cause professional stress (Lambert, Boyle, Fitchett, and McCarthy, 2019). A teacher's awareness of psychological stress related to teaching and work also correlates with emotional intelligence (Cheng, Ma, Li, Cai, and Zhang, 2020). According to Kudriavcevaitė and Lenkauskaitė (2019), teachers identify a lack of certain competencies that are important for developing children's emotional intelligence. While the effectiveness of this process, according to the authors' research, has not been systematically studied and developed, there is a perceived need to expand the subject knowledge of educators. Although the authors' research was based on a small sample size, other researchers also emphasize that pre-school teachers should take advantage of opportunities for professional development, seminars, and other educational materials to develop strategies that focus on developing children's emotional intelligence skills in daily teaching processes. There is also an emphasis on the need to strengthen parents' competencies to help their children in this field (Turkmen and Ulutas, 2018). Parental intelligence, particularly maternal intelligence, is related to the expression of children's emotional intelligence in the long term (Cabello et al., 2021). Low parental emotional intelligence may also be associated with children's inappropriate behavior (Agbaria, 2022).

The parents' choice of an education institution can be influenced by various factors such as social or cultural expectations, family needs, accessibility, financial resources, and the possibility of choosing informal childcare with the help of family members (Dahari & Ya, 2011). The choice of an education institution also depends heavily on the parents' socio-economic status. Family social and economic status, especially when the parents have a higher level of education, can affect their ability to choose an education institution for their children (Jheng, Lin, Chang, & Liao, 2022). However, there is a lack of clear arguments about the greater contribution of any sector in terms of child development (Ghosh & Dey, 2020). Private and public educational institutions are compared in various as-

pects. One major advantage of private institutions is that their presence in the country contributes to positive competition between the private and public sectors (Dag, 2015). Nawaz (2020) found differences between the level of emotional intelligence of teachers in public and private schools, with the latter showing higher emotional intelligence. This is an important factor that can affect the quality of education. In this context, in order to determine whether private preschool education sector teachers have high emotional intelligence and therefore may carry out a more successful educational process, and whether parents' emotional intelligence can be a factor influencing the choice of private or public preschool education institution, we aim to analyze the characteristics of EI among parents and teachers of preschool children, as well as the differences that occur between representatives of private and public education sectors.

METHODS

Sample. The study involved interviewing 100 respondents, private and public preschool educators (public $n=25$, private $n=25$), and parents (public $n=25$, private $n=25$). Among these, there were 20 men and 80 women. The average age of the respondents was: parents - 32.6 ± 9.09 years, educators - 41.27 ± 7.43 .

Research organization. The study was conducted in 2023 in the city of Kaunas. The participants were selected using a convenient sampling method. They were informed that they could stop their participation in the study at any time. In accordance with the principles of anonymity and confidentiality, participants were not asked to provide personal information (such as name, surname, ID, etc.). They were informed that the research data would only be used as aggregated statistical information. After obtaining verbal consent, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire.

Methodology. Participants were given a questionnaire that consisted of a social demographic section (questions about age, gender, and education institution) and a section designed to assess their emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998), which has already been adapted for use in Lithuania in previous studies by other researchers (Malinauskas and Šniras, 2010; Malinauskas, Dumčienė, Sipavičienė, and Malinauskienė, 2018). The scale consists of 33 statements (e.g., "I find it difficult to understand the body

language of others," "I know when to talk about my personal problems with others," etc.) and participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). There are several ways to analyze emotional intelligence data. One way is to calculate a total EI score (Schutte et al., 1998), which can range from 33 to 165. A higher total score indicates a greater level of EI. However, both foreign (Ciarrochi, Chen, and Bajgar, 2001) and national scientific literature (Malinauskas et al., 2018) have also presented calculations of the average scores of individual EI sub-scales components. Therefore, in this study, the total EI score was evaluated, along with the scores of individual scales, specifically: emotional perception (i.e., the ability to understand emotions from verbal and nonverbal communication expressions), emotional regulation (i.e., the ability to use, change, or adapt one's emotions to the current situation to achieve the set goal), management of emotions of others (i.e., the ability to use or change the emotions of other individuals to achieve the set goal), and emotional utilization (i.e., the ability to use emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities such as thinking or problem solving).

The obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the scales are as follows: emotion perception subscale - 0.74, self-emotion regulation subscale - 0.68, regulation of other people's emotions subscale - 0.76, and emotion utilization subscale - 0.71.

Statistical analysis. The research data were processed using the IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 22.0 statistical analysis program. The internal reliability of the questionnaires was assessed by calculating Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test the hypothesis of normal distribution. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate variable means, while non-parametric Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H tests were used to compare means of independent samples.

RESULTS

When exploring the emotional intelligence of the respondents, both the overall EI score and the scores of individual EI scales were determined. The results revealed that the overall EI score of the participants was higher than the average (126.2 ± 11.94 points). Upon further analysis of the EI data, it was found that the respondents were most capable of utilizing their emotions (4.25 ± 0.48 points), while

they rated their emotional perception the lowest (3.39±0.43 points), below management their own emotions (3.93±0.38 points) and management of others' emotions (3.91±0.47 points).

When analyzing the overall EI indicators of the participants (teachers and parents), statistically

significant differences were identified - parents who have kids in private educational institutions demonstrated the highest level of EI (130.4±8.85), while teachers working in state educational institutions had the lowest level (120.6±12.43 points). The statistical indicators are presented in the table 1.

Table 1. Indicators of the subjects' emotional intelligence according to the type of education institution

Emotional intelligence	Subjects/ Type of education institution		N	EI score	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	P
	Educators	private sector	25	127,8±12,53	55,60	9,84	0,02
		public sector	25	120,6±12,43	36,04		
	Parents	private sector	25	130,4±8,85	60,28		
		public sector	25	126±12,03	50,08		

When comparing the overall EI scores separately for teachers and parents from private and public education sectors, it was found that private sector

teachers had a statistically significantly higher EI than public sector teachers (U=201.00; p=0.03) (Table 2).

Table 2. Indicators of emotional intelligence of educators and parents according to the type of education institution

Emotional intelligence	Subjects/ Type of education institution		N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	P
	Educators	private sector	25	29,96	201,00	0,03
		public sector	25	21,04		
	Parents	private sector	25	28,36	241,00	0,16
		public sector	25	22,64		

The data presented in Table 3 indicate that there are no statistically significant differences (p>0.05) in the use of emotions, regulation of own emotions, and regulation of other people's emotions between teachers and parents in the public and private pre-school education sectors. However, statistically significant differences (p=0.01) were found in the

emotional perception scale between teachers working in and parents with children in private and public preschool education institutions - both private sector teachers and parents with children in this sector demonstrate a higher level of emotional intelligence than public sector teachers and parents with children in this sector.

Table 3. Indicators of the subjects' emotional intelligence scales according to the type of education institution

Emotional intelligence scales	Subjects/ Type of education institution		N	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	p
Emotional perception	Educators	private sector	25	57,40	11,40	0,01
		public sector	25	35,32		
	Parents	private sector	25	60,52		
		public sector	25	48,76		
Management of own emotions	Educators	private sector	25	54,66	6,47	0,09
		public sector	25	39,00		
	Parents	private sector	25	58,62		
		public sector	25	49,72		
Management of emotions of others	Educators	private sector	25	52,26	4,22	0,23
		public sector	25	40,38		
	Parents	private sector	25	55,26		
		public sector	25	54,10		
Emotional utilization	Educators	private sector	25	52,66	4,01	0,25
		public sector	25	45,60		
	Parents	private sector	25	58,98		
		public sector	25	44,76		

When analyzing survey data, emotional intelligence differences by gender were compared. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences ($U=787.50$; $p=0.91$) in EI between the surveyed women (126.33 ± 12.03 points)

and men (125.65 ± 11.89 points) (Table 4). The same trend was observed when evaluating the results of EI scales based on gender, where no statistically significant differences were found ($p>0.05$) (Table 5).

Table 4. Indicators of subjects' emotional intelligence according to gender

	Gender	N	EI score	Mean score	Mann Whitney U	p
Emotional intelligence	Women	80	$126,33\pm 12,03$	50,66	787,50	0,91
	Men	20	$125,65\pm 11,89$	49,88		

Table 5. Indicators of subjects' emotional intelligence scales according to gender

Emotional intelligence scales	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	p
Emotional perception	Woman	80	50,70	784,00	0,89
	Man	20	49,70		
Management of own emotions	Woman	80	51,25	740,00	0,60
	Man	20	47,50		
Management of emotions of others	Woman	80	50,94	765,00	0,76
	Man	20	48,75		
Emotional utilization	Woman	80	49,88	750,00	0,66
	Man	20	52,98		

DISCUSSION

Analyzing the results of the study, it became clear that the overall emotional intelligence score of the participants was higher than average. Other authors have found that the emotional intelligence of teachers is of average level, and this raises concerns. A teacher with high emotional intelligence is able to manage not only their own emotions but also the emotions of others, including their students (Javed, Hock, & Asif, 2020). It is believed that emotional intelligence influences the success of interpersonal relationships with colleagues, conflict and stress management strategies, and overall work productivity (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Lopes, Cote, & Salovey, 2006). Parents' emotional intelligence is an important factor that affects children's emotional intelligence, emotion regulation skills, and emotional expression in adulthood, while low parental emotional intelligence may be associated with inappropriate child behavior and inability to express emotions properly (Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Vaišvildienė & Gedvilienė, 2017; Cabello et al., 2021; Agbaria, 2022).

The statistically significant differences that showed that the highest level of EI is exhibited by parents of private educational institutions, and the lowest by teachers working in state educational institutions, suggest possible connections between parents' EI and their choice of educational institution, which should be further examined. There is a lack of studies directly analyzing EI differences between interacting parents and teachers. The EI scores of parents who send their children to state educational institutions were only surpassed by those of state sector teachers. The identified emotional intelligence traits of parents can be linked to various factors, such as the fact that parents who choose private educational institutions for their children are often of a better socio-economic status (Dahari and Ya, 2011), and there is a correlation between socio-economic status and emotional intelligence (Chitra, 2020). The level of adult EI can be influenced by environmental factors, social or even childhood experiences, but it is important for adults to understand the importance of EI and to be aware of their own ability to develop EI skills.

Statistically significant differences have been identified between the emotional intelligence (EI) of private and public sector teachers, which is consistent with the results of other studies that emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence in the education sector and the need for further research in

this area due to significant differences in EI among teachers (Shanthini and Nawaz, 2020; Business Bliss Consultants, 2018). According to the authors, the emotional intelligence level of a teacher can be considered a significant factor when selecting the best teacher for a child. This is a crucial factor in terms of the quality of education. Associations have also been identified between the emotional intelligence of teachers and job satisfaction, which is related to internal motivation to perform well, the quality of education, and other factors (Javed, Hock, and Asif, 2020; Singh and Kumar, 2016). A teacher with high EI will be more productive and demonstrate the ability to manage their own and others' emotions, including those of children, whereas a teacher with low EI may lack interest in their work and express negative emotions (Shanthini and Nawaz, 2020). Therefore, the results of our study also highlight the need for broader research in the education sector.

According to the analysis of individual EI scales, there were no statistically significant differences ($p > 0.05$) in the use of emotions, of own emotions managements, and others' emotion regulation between teachers and parents in the private and public preschool education sectors. However, significant differences ($p = 0.01$) were found in the emotional perception scale, where teachers and parents in private institutions demonstrated higher emotional intelligence levels. It is important to note that the lowest overall EI scores of the participating parents and teachers were identified in this area. Emotional perception is the ability to understand emotions from verbal and nonverbal communication (Schutte et al., 1998). The ability to perceive the emotions of others is an essential part of social life. Without this ability, individuals lack empathy and may make incorrect social decisions or have difficulty interacting appropriately. The ability to perceive emotions is one of the most important components of EI (Joseph and Newman, 2010). There is a lack of related scientific research that analyzes the factors that may influence the differences we identified. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the level of emotional intelligence among adults in the education sector by evaluating individual EI scales with a broader sample.

During the analysis of the survey data, we compared emotional intelligence differences by gender. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the emotional intelligence scores of the surveyed women and men. The same trend is observed when evaluating the re-

sults of the emotional intelligence scales. In other authors' studies, it is possible to find insights that women often have slightly higher emotional intelligence indicators in various areas (Cabello, Sorrel, Fernandez-Pinto, Extremera and Fernandez-Berrocal, 2016; Fernández-Berrocal, Cabello, Castillo, and Extremera, 2012). It would be relevant to further examine the roles of gender and differences in attitudes in the context of children's emotional intelligence education, taking into account that both parents influence their children's development (Sánchez-Núñez, García-Rubio, Fernández-Berrocal, and Latorre, 2020), and there is an increasing number of educators in the preschool education sector.

During the study, a need emerged to analyze in more detail the emotional intelligence characteristics of parents and teachers by including a larger sample size. It is also important to analyze the emotional intelligence development and education process of adults who raise or educate preschool-aged children, particularly in terms of the effectiveness of teachers' emotional intelligence development. It appears relevant to analyze manifestations of professional stagnation in terms of emotional intelligence improvement among teachers in the state preschool education sector.

CONCLUSIONS

Educators in the private education sector have higher EI compared to their public sector counterparts. Parents choosing private education sector for their children have the highest EI levels in the entire study population.

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