



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE: THE IMPACT OF TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ABILITIES ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Sabina Valente¹ y Abílio Afonso Lourenço²

¹ University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro;

Research Center in Education and Psychology, University of Évora

² University of Minho

Abstract

Several studies show the relationship between emotional intelligence abilities and conflict management. However, there is a lack of research that relates these constructs in teachers. To bridge this knowledge gap, and since much more needs to be learned about how teacher's emotional intelligence abilities are related to classroom interpersonal relationships this study aimed to investigate how teacher's emotional intelligence abilities influence the selection and use of conflict management strategies in the classroom. The study sample comprised 848 teachers (5th to 12th grades) from Portuguese schools. Teachers were evaluated through questionnaires that assessed the perception of emotional intelligence abilities and of the strategies used to manage classroom conflicts. Results showed that teachers who scored high in emotional intelligence abilities (perceive, understand, express, and manage emotions) use mainly integrative strategies to manage conflicts more frequently than other strategies. The findings suggested that the teacher's emotional intelligence abilities are a promoter of choosing the most appropriate strategies for constructively classroom conflict management. In conclusion, these results highlight the interactive role of the teacher's emotional intelligence abilities in managing conflict. These novel findings suggest the need for implementing intervention programs to promote teachers' emotional intelligence abilities as a valuable means of managing conflict in the classroom.

Keywords: emotional intelligence abilities, conflict management strategies, teacher, teacher-student relationship, classroom

Correspondence.

Sabina Valente

sabinavalente@gmail.com

Research Center in Education and Psychology, University of Évora (CIEP-UE),
Colégio Pedro da Fonseca, Apartado 94, 7002-554 Évora, Portugal.

The classroom brings together different ways of being, thinking, and living, thus becoming a space for the representation of social differences, and a place where different conflicts occur on a daily basis. In this sense, conflict management strategies are essential to maintain a positive classroom environment, but little is known about the personal variables associated with the use of these strategies by teachers (Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006).

Emotions affect teacher-student relationships (Meyer & Turner, 2007), and when teachers tend to have more emotional intelligence (EI), conflicts in the classroom are more likely to be resolved successfully (Valente & Lourenço, 2020a). EI is the set of operations that processes and empowers emotions and involves abstract thinking and problem-solving. (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Besides, emotional abilities are a predictor of good job performance (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016). For this reason, EI has received increasing consideration in the educational field. However, there is a lack of research linking teachers' EI and the strategies used for conflict management in the classroom (Valente & Lourenço, 2020a). Also, Hopkins and Yonker (2015) emphasize the relationship between EI and conflict management strategies and indicate the lack of studies that include these variables in teacher-student relationships.

Distinct studies, in other work contexts, show a positive relationship between EI abilities and conflict management strategies (Godse & Thingujam, 2010; Jordan & Troth; 2004; Villamediana et al., 2015). However, no studies were found that relate these variables to the teacher-student relationship. In this sense, much more needs to be learned about how teachers' EI is related to interpersonal relationships in a classroom conflict. Therefore, this study was the purpose to examine how teachers' EI abilities influence classroom conflict management strategies. And contribute to the research of the relationship between these variables, so significant for classroom interpersonal relationships.

Conflicts in the classroom and teachers' emotional intelligence

Conflicts are present in any form of interpersonal relationship (Rahim, 2002). Thus, it is part of the school relationships, and it is necessary to learn to live with him, considering it as an opportunity for change and learning (Cascón, 2000). Conflict remains latent in the classroom, a result of the class interests' diversity, and if teachers' do not create a good environment, acting positively concerning communication to managing the conflict constructively, will see the conflicts exponentially increase (Espelage & Lopes, 2013). Teacher-student conflict is an increasingly common school problem (Göksoy & Argon, 2016), and if they are not constructively managed, they will prevent students from achieving their learning goals and aims.

According to Darling and Walker (2001), interpersonal conflicts arise in the workplace at all levels since of different "goals, expectations, values, proposed courses of action and suggestions about how to handle a situation" (p. 230). In this sense, the main sources for classroom conflict, in the teacher-student relationship, are academic disinterest, and the lack of student study habits, which induces negative attitudes in the classroom (Pérez-de-Guzmán et al., 2011). The authors refer that most conflicts reveal a disturbing and undisciplined character, being recurrent in the classroom. Regardless of the conflict type present, conflicts build-up, become more complicated, trigger negative feelings, and negatively affecting teacher performance and decrease the educational process quality. Thus, the teacher's abilities that influence conflict resolution in the classroom should receive more attention from research.

Following Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model, EI is defined as the ability to perceive, appraise, and express emotion accurately; the ability to access and generate feelings when they facilitate cognition; the ability to understand affect-laden information and make use of emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote growth and well-being (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). It should be noted that Mayer and Salovey's conceptualization continues to be the most widely used and accepted definition (Cartwright & Pappas, 2008).

This model presents four hierarchically connected abilities: (a) Perceiving and expressing emotion, indicating one's ability to identify one's emotions, the emotions of others, and to express emotions and emotional needs accurately to others; (b) Using emotion to facilitate thought, that reflects the ability to use emotions to awaken attention to specific important changes or events and to facilitate cognitive activities; (c) Understanding emotions, involves cognitive processing of emotions and refers to the ability to distinguish emotions, as well as understand complex feelings; and (d) Managing emotions, refers to the ability to regulate one's own and other's emotions successfully. Such ability would imply the ability to maintain, change and attend to emotional responses, positive or negative, to a given situation. Each ability contributes to the development of others and is ordered from the simplest to the most complex habitie depending on the required psychological processes (Mayer et al., 2016). So, the ability of perception is the most basic process and emotional management the most advanced and complex process (Mayer et al., 2016). Thus, EI is the set of abilities that explain how people perceive, assimilate, understand and manage emotions (Mayer et al., 2000).

Emotional processes are evident in the classroom, where interpersonal relationships can generate a beneficial development, as well as the wear and suffering of the teacher and students. The role of teachers' EI is of great significance, for it contains a lot of verbal and non-verbal abilities that empower the teacher to articulate, identify, understand, and evaluate his own and students' feelings.

EI make positive effects on work performance and interpersonal relationships (Asrar-ul-Haqa et al., 2017). Different studies show that teachers' EI influence the good relationship with students (Gill & Sankulkar, 2017), provides a more stable and healthy in the classroom (Maamari & Majdalani, 2019), a higher professional performance (Yin, 2015), develop more resilient strategies to deal with setbacks and adversities that may arise in the educational context (Mérida-López et al., 2019), improve effectiveness to teach (Valente et al., 2020b), and promotes better classroom management (Valente et al., 2020a). Therefore, the development of teachers' EI abilities increasingly represents a crucial component for the improvement of their interpersonal and professional relationships.

Managing conflict with emotional intelligence

Interpersonal conflicts can be highly emotional experiences, often characterized by intense feelings and reactions. In this sense, emotions play a fundamental role in conflict management and also in the choice of different strategies for conflict resolution (Chan et al., 2014). That way, EI amplifies the tendencies of individuals to select specific conflict management strategies (Côté et al., 2011). Furthermore, a high emotional quotient is related to high success in problem solving (Almost et al., 2016).

Whoever negotiates a conflict must be able to assess their emotions and feelings coherently. Likewise, one must know how to perceive and also understand the emotional state of others, this perception is considered a preventive measure of conflicts (Mueller & Curhan, 2006). So, teachers must be able to assess emotions and feelings, which emerge before, during, and after the conflict situation with students. Although emotions have different effects in conflict situations, excessive expression of emotions or inappropriate displays can reduce the ability to conflict management (Hopkins & Yonker, 2015).

Teachers' perceptions of conflicts indicate that they focus mainly on the negative aspects of conflicts (Manesis et al., 2019). It should be noted that the methods most used in the school when dealing with conflicting student behaviors include warning, disapproval, and in some cases, suspension of the student. Methodologies that provoke negative feelings and, subsequently, originate new undesirable behaviors, being applied without taking into account the personal needs, problems, and expectations of the students (Shahmohammadi, 2014). As indicated by Torrecilla et al. (2016) if the teacher is not an effective conflict manager, they will project this lack of ability, which will result in negative learning for students.

Thus, conflict management refers to specific behavior patterns that are implemented in conflict situations. Following this approach, Rahim and Bonoma (1979) estab-

lished five conflict management strategies using two dimensions: concern for oneself and concern for others. The different articulations of these two dimensions gave rise to five strategies for conflict management: avoiding, dominating, obliging, integrating, and compromising. These five strategies for conflict management, correspond to the attitudes presented to face the conflicts (Rahim, 2002). For this author, a strategy is considered appropriate if its use leads to effective conflict resolution.

The avoiding strategy is characterized when the parties involved in the conflict show a low level of concern for the interests of others and a low level of concern for oneself. Characterized by a low degree of assertiveness and a low degree of cooperation, where neither their interests nor those of their opponents are satisfied (Rahim, 2002). The teacher who uses this strategy may, in some situations, represent a way of delaying the resolution of conflicts for a later occasion, while in others, it allows the escape of a situation perceived as undesirable. By using this strategy, the teacher aims to avoid disagreement with the student. As such, their tactics are to physically and psychologically abandon conflicts, deny the existence of conflict, change or avoid certain topics, and use non-committal statements (Valente & Lourenço, 2020a). In turn, the strategy of dominating reflects the attempt to satisfy the interests of one without taking into account the interests of the other person. It is characterized by high assertiveness and lack of cooperation, in which the acquisition of objectives is seen with supremacy over the interests of the other party. Furthermore, it is considered an aggressive strategy (Rahim, 2002). Using this strategy to handle conflict in the classroom, the purpose is to find a satisfactory agreement for the teacher. Thus, the teacher resorts to the use of his power, with verbal dominance and perseverance, and denies responsibility to the detriment of the student involved in the conflict (Valente & Lourenço, 2020a).

Obliging strategy tends to be adopted by those who try to minimize differences and emphasize common ground to satisfy the other party's concerns. It represents a conflict management strategy where cooperation is high and assertiveness is low (Rahim, 2002). Thus, the main objective of the teacher when applying this strategy is to give in to the wishes of the students. This uses complacency in behavior, passively agreeing with the students' decisions, making concessive statements and denying or not expressing their own needs, presenting a position of accommodation and submission in the presence of conflict in the classroom (Valente & Lourenço, 2020a). People who use the strategy of integrating handle conflicts directly and cooperatively, seeking to resolve them in collaboration with the other, it is a strategy connected to problem-solving. The use of this implies openness, exchange of information, search for alternatives, and analysis of differences to reach an effective solution for all those involved in the conflict. It is a useful strategy to effectively deal with complex problems (Rahim, 2002). When teachers use this strategy, their main objective is to find satisfactory solutions for themselves and the student. Thus, faced with the conflict in the

classroom, the teacher proposes alternatives, applies open lines of communication, makes statements that support the student, makes concessions, accepts responsibility, maximizes the similarities, and minimizes the differences between the student and the self (Valente & Lourenço, 2020a).

Finally, the strategy of compromising represents the attempt to satisfy, moderately and partially, the interests of all those involved in the conflict, and shares points in common with the other four strategies. It is an intermediate strategy of assertiveness and cooperation, and that implies a commitment in the search for an acceptable intermediate position for all those involved in the conflict (Rahim, 2002). Thus, by using this strategy, the teacher's purpose is an intermediate solution for conflict management, knows how to reduce differences with the student, suggests an exchange of proposals, and provides a quick solution to the classroom conflict (Valente & Lourenço, 2020a).

The conflict consequences depend on the management skills of the people who experience it. Effective conflict management strategies minimize the negative impacts of conflict and enhance the positive ones, helping to improve interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction in the classroom (Valente & Lourenço, 2020a). These authors show a relationship between teacher's EI and conflict management, with results that indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between teacher's EI and integration and engagement strategies. Thus, the teacher's EI allows the management of constructive conflict in the classroom (Aliasgari & Farzadnia, 2012).

Studies in other work contexts show that EI abilities influence the selection and use of conflict management strategies having: (a) a positive relationship between perceiving and understand emotions, and the strategies of integrating, and compromising; and a negative relationship with the strategies of avoiding, dominating, and obliging (Godse & Thingujam, 2010; Villamediana et al., 2015); (b) a positive relationship between expressing and classifying emotions and the strategies of integrating, and compromising; and a negative relationship with strategies of avoiding, dominating, and obliging (Godse & Thingujam, 2010; Jordan & Troth, 2004); and (c) a positive relationship between the ability for managing and regulating emotions and the strategies of integrating and compromising; and a negative relationship with avoiding, dominating, and obliging strategies (Godse & Thingujam, 2010; Jordan & Troth, 2004; Villamediana et al., 2015).

Purpose of the present study

As previously mentioned, there is a lack of studies that relate teachers' EI abilities and conflict management strategies used in the classroom. To bridge this knowledge gap, this

study aimed to investigate how the teacher's EI abilities influence the selection and use of conflict management strategies in the classroom.

Based on the literature, the following hypotheses were designed: H1) a positive influence is expected between the ability to perceive and understand emotions, and the integrating strategy; H2) a positive influence is expected between the ability to perceive and understand emotions, and the strategy of compromising; H3) a negative influence is expected between the ability to perceive and understand emotions, and the strategy of obliging; H4) a negative influence is expected between the ability to perceive and understand emotions, and the strategy of dominating; H5) a negative influence is expected between the ability to perceive and understand emotions, and the strategy of avoiding; H6) a positive influence is expected between the ability to express and classify emotions, and the integrating strategy; H7) a positive influence is expected between the ability to express and classify emotions, and the strategy of compromising; H8) a negative influence is expected between the ability to ability to express and classify emotions, and the strategy of avoiding; H9) a negative influence is expected between the ability to express and classify emotions, and the strategy of obliging; H10) a negative influence is expected between the ability to express and classify emotions, and the strategy of dominating; H11) a positive influence is expected between the ability to manage and regulate emotions, and the integrating strategy; H12) a positive influence is expected between the ability to manage and regulate emotions, and the compromising strategy; H13) a negative influence is expected between the ability to manage and regulate emotions and the strategy of avoiding; H14) a negative influence is expected between the ability to manage and regulate emotions and the strategy of obliging; and H15) a negative influence is expected between the ability to manage and regulate emotions, and the strategy of dominating.

Method

Sample

The sampling process was non-probabilistic, for convenience, and teachers were recruited non-randomly from Portuguese public schools. Of all the 1000 questionnaires were distributed, 93.5% of the teachers agreed to participate in the research, and only 6.5% did not participate due to a lack of availability. A total of 935 questionnaires were collected, but due to incomplete data, 81 surveys were removed. Thus, the final sample comprised 848 teachers (5th to 12th grades). Of these, 67.1% are females. Regarding teaching experience, 7.9% had less than 10 years, 28.4% between 10-20 years, 41.9% between 21-30 years, and 21.8% more than 30 years.

Instruments

Emotional Skills and Competence Questionnaire for Teachers (ESCQ-T; Valente & Lourenço, 2020b) is a 6-point Likert scale

ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*always*) with 45 items to measure teachers EI, distributed among three subscales: (a) perceive and understand emotions, 15 items (e.g., When I see how a student feels, I usually know what has happened to him); (b) express and classify emotions, 14 items (e.g., I am able to express my emotions well); and (c) manage and regulate emotions, 16 items (e.g., I can stay in a good mood even if something unpleasant happens in the classroom).

Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II - Portuguese Version in School Context (ROCI-II-PViSC; Valente et al., 2017) is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*) with 28 items to measure teachers' approach to conflict management, distributed among five subscales: (a) integrating, 7 items (e.g., In a difficulty working with a student, I try to analyze the situation with him to find a solution acceptable to both); (b) obliging, 6 items (e.g., Faced with a work problem, I usually try to meet the needs of my student); (c) dominating, 5 items (e.g., In a problematic situation with a student, I usually stand firm to seek to impose my point of view); (d) avoiding, 6 items (e.g., I try not to disagree with students); and (d) compromising, 4 items (e.g., In face of work problems I try to reach agreements with my students).

Design

This study received approval from the General Directorate of Education from the Ministry of Education (0512400001/MIME), researchers' institution's ethics committee, school directors, and teachers' participants. All measures were collected by the researchers who clearly explained to teachers the study purpose. The conventional ethical and deontological procedures were followed, especially regarding data confidentiality. Teachers were also asked to indicate their gender and years of working experience in data collection, for sample characterization. The instruments were completed in the school, applied by the researchers, in groups of 20-25 teachers. Filling out the instruments took between 15

and 20 minutes.

Data analysis included descriptive analysis procedures (mean, standard deviation, asymmetry, and kurtosis), internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), covariance structure (estimated values not standardized, standardized estimated values, estimated errors, and significance level), Pearson's correlation, and the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM; Lowe et al., 2007), using SPSS/AMOS 25 (Arbuckle, 2012). In data statistical treatment, all cases with missing values were eliminated and the maximum likelihood estimation method was used in the AMOS. It was the option to keep the outliers moderate since the sample descriptive statistics were still adequate. Modification indices were not considered to not make the model more complex. The global adjustment quality of the factorial model was performed according to the indexes and reference values described in Marôco (2018), namely: χ^2 , $\chi^2/g.l.$, GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, RMSEA and respective 90% confidence interval (90% CI).

Results

To the ESCQ-T scale, adequacy values were found for the index Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of 0.90, as well as for Bartlett's sphericity test ($\chi^2_{(990)} = 17194.488$; $p < .001$), with an explained variance of 39.6%. As for Cronbach alphas, the following values were found: perceive and understand emotions (0.86), express and classify emotions (0.86), and manage and regulate emotions (0.91). Regarding the ROCI-II-PViSC scale, the value for the index KMO was 0.86, and Bartlett's sphericity test values of ($\chi^2_{(378)} = 8252.620$; $p < .001$), being the explained variance of 56.3%. As for Cronbach alphas, the following values were found: integrating (0.86), obliging (0.80), dominating (0.81), avoiding (0.81), and compromising (0.84).

The study descriptive statistic is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Sample

Variable	Min.	Max.	Media	SD	Asymmetry	Kurtosis
PUE	15	90	66.85	11.421	-.594	1.889
ECE	14	84	61.94	15.095	-1.331	1.952
MRE	16	96	70.36	17.336	-1.256	1.865
Avoiding	6	30	19.29	5.888	-.351	-.424
Dominating	5	25	15.36	4.942	.106	-.556
Compromising	4	20	15.73	2.992	-1.076	1.900
Obliging	6	30	20.67	6.808	-.655	-.312
Integrating	7	35	28.40	6.566	-1.527	1.877

Note. SD = standard deviation; PUE = perceive and understand emotions; ECE = express and classify emotions; MRE = manage and regulate emotions.

Table 1 shows that in the EI construct, the ability with the highest average is managing and regulating emotions (M = 70.36), followed by perceiving and understanding emotions (M = 66.85), and finally expressing and classifying emotions (M = 61.94). In conflict management, the strategy that shows the highest average value is integration (M = 28.40), followed by obliging (M = 20.67), avoiding (M = 19.29), compromising (M = 15.73), and finally the dominating strategy (M = 15.36).

Figure 1 specifies the hypothesized model for the 848 teachers. The overall goodness of fit are very robust [$\chi^2 = 12.174; p = .274; \chi^2/df = 1.217; GFI = .996; AGFI = .987; CFI = .994; TLI = .984; RMSEA = .016 (LO/.000 - HI/.042)$], confirming that SEM represents the relations among the existing variables in our empirical matrix. The Hoelter index values were also adjusted [CN = 1.274 (.05) and 1.615 (.01)].

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From the analysis of Figure 1 and Table 2, it can be determined that most of the hypotheses have been confirmed and are statistically significant, although most of the values obtained are low.

Figura 1

Resultados del Modelado de Ecuaciones Estructurales de la Investigación

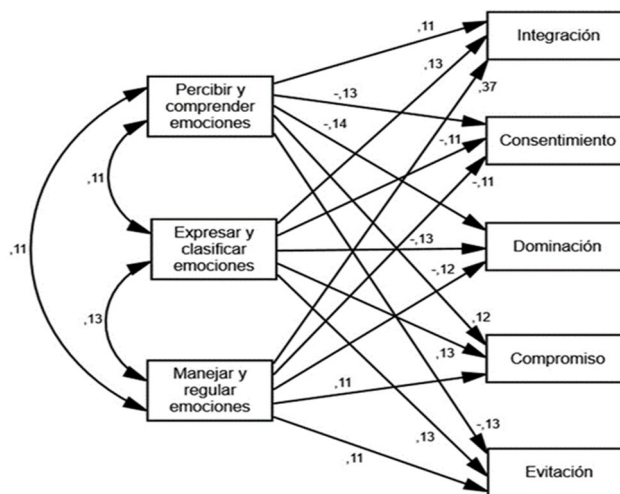


Table 2

Covariance Structure Hypothesized

Variables	EVnS	SEV	EE	p
PUE → Avoiding	-.069	-.134	.018	***
PUE → Dominating	-.059	-.137	.015	***
PUE → Compromising	.032	.123	.009	***
PUE → Obliging	-.080	-.133	.020	***
PUE → Integrating	.062	.108	.018	***
ECE → Avoiding	.052	.133	.013	***
ECE → Dominating	-.041	-.126	.011	***
ECE → Compromising	.025	.128	.007	***
ECE → Obliging	-.050	-.110	.015	.001
ECE → Integrating	.056	.128	.014	***
MRE → Avoiding	.037	.108	.012	.001
MRE → Dominating	-.034	-.118	.010	***
MRE → Compromising	.020	.115	.006	***
MRE → Obliging	-.042	-.106	.013	.002
MRE → Integrating	.142	.374	.012	***

Note. EVnS = estimated values no standardized; SEV = standardized estimated values;

EE = estimated errors; p = significance level; *** = .000; PUE = perceive and understand emotions; ECE = express and classify emotions; MRE = manage and regulate emotions.

Results showed that teachers who tend to have greater ability to perceive and understand emotions use more strategies of integrating ($\beta = 0.108$; $p < .001$) and compromising ($\beta = 0.123$; $p < .001$), and less strategies of obliging ($\beta = -0.133$; $p < .001$), dominating ($\beta = -0.137$; $p < .001$) and avoiding ($\beta = -0.134$; $p < .001$), to manage conflicts during class. For teachers who tend to have a greater ability to express and classify emotions, results showed that they use more strategies of integrating ($\beta = 0.128$; $p < .001$), compromising ($\beta = 0.128$; $p < .001$), and avoiding ($\beta = 0.133$; $p < .001$), and less strategies of obliging ($\beta = -0.110$; $p < .01$) and dominating ($\beta = -0.126$; $p < .001$), when they manage conflicts in the classroom. Finally, re-

sults showed that teachers who tend to have a greater ability to manage and regulate emotions use more strategies of integrating ($\beta = 0.374$; $p < .001$), compromising ($\beta = 0.115$; $p < .001$) and avoiding ($\beta = 0.108$; $p < .01$), and less strategies of obliging ($\beta = -0.106$; $p < .01$) and dominating ($\beta = -0.118$; $p < .001$), in classroom conflict situations.

Concerning multiple square correlations, results also indicated that EI abilities (perceive and understand emotions; express and classify emotions; manage and regulate) directly explain each of the five conflict management strategies, in approximately: 19% integrating ($\eta^2 = .192$); 6% dominating ($\eta^2 = .060$); 6% compromising ($\eta^2 = .055$); 5% obliging ($\eta^2 = .051$); and 4% avoiding ($\eta^2 = .044$).

Table 3

Pearson Correlations Matrix

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
PUE (1)	1.00							
ECE (2)	.114**	1.00						
MRE (3)	.105**	.130**	1.00					
Avoiding (4)	-.107**	.132**	.111**	1.00				
Dominating (5)	-.164**	-.157**	-.149**	.049	1.00			
Compromising (6)	.150**	.157**	.145**	.013	-.122**	1.00		
Obliging (7)	-.157**	-.139**	-.134**	.044	.077*	-.039	1.00	
Integrating (8)	.162**	.189**	.402**	.069*	-.090**	.090**	-.068*	1.00

Note. PUE = perceive and understand emotions; ECE = express and classify emotions; MRE = manage and regulate emotions; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Regarding Pearson correlations, Table 3, it appears that variables included in the model are associated with each other and are statistically significant, although the values found can be considered low. Associations ranged from very weak ($r < .200$) and moderated ($.400 < r < .699$) which indicates some cohesion between variables under study. There is a moderate, positive, and statistically significant association between the ability to manage and regulate emotions and the strategy of integrating ($r = .402$; $p < .01$). However, the only associations that are not statistically signif-

icant are found between the strategy of avoiding with: the domination strategy ($r = .049$; $p = n.s.$), the compromising strategy ($r = .013$; $p = n.s.$), and the obliging strategy ($r = .044$; $p = n.s.$). It should be noted that all IE abilities are associated with all conflict management strategies.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate how the teacher's EI abilities influence the selection and use of conflict management strategies in the classroom. Previous studies have proven this relationship in other work contexts. However, the current study is the first to explore these constructs in teachers.

Regarding H1, the results show a positive influence between the ability to perceive and understand emotions and the strategy of integrating. Also, Godse and Thingujam (2010) found a positive and significant correlation between the understanding of emotions and this strategy. Therefore, teachers who tend to have a greater ability to perceive and understand both their emotions and those of the students select and apply more integration strategies to manage conflicts. The use of this strategy implies openness and exchange of information, being the ideal strategy to face complex problems in the classroom.

The results also indicate a positive relationship between the ability to perceive and understand emotions and the strategy of compromising, as in the study by Villamediana et al. (2015), testing H2. When using this strategy to manage conflicts, the teacher's purpose is an intermediate solution for conflict management, that is, he knows how to reduce differences with the student, suggests an exchange of proposals, and provides a quick solution to conflict resolution. Consequently, strategies of integrating and compromising lead to productive results in the classroom, achieving responsible solutions for conflict resolution (Valente & Lourenço, 2020a). Thus, the results obtained indicate that the teacher who tends to have more ability to perceive and understand emotions easily perceives the emotional state of the students and when faced with a conflict, changes the classroom activity, having the sensitivity to guide a more conflictive student (e.g., communicating with him in a more emotional way). In a conflict situation with a student, it is important to estimate the emotional state before any interaction as a preventive measure of the conflict, that is, if the teacher understands that the negative emotional state of the student can provide support and thus resolve the conflict constructively.

Based on the hypothesis that there is a negative influence between the ability to perceive and understand emotions and the strategy of obliging (H3), the results show that teachers who tend to have greater emotional perception and understanding select less this strategy, testing H3. When the teacher uses this strategy, he gives in to the students' wishes and shows an accommodating behavior in the face of the conflict, that is, he passively agrees with the students' decisions and denies or not expresses their needs (Valente & Lourenço, 2020a). Regarding H4, the results show a negative influence between the ability to perceive and understand emotions and the strategy of dominating, confirming H4. Thus, teachers who tend to have greater emotional percep-

tion resort less to the domination strategy. This shows that a good emotional perception of the teacher about the student's emotions allows him to make less use of this aggressive strategy to resolve a conflict. When a teacher uses this strategy, he reveals a lack of cooperation and ignores the interests of students when managing conflicts in the classroom.

The results also support H5, which shows a negative influence between the ability to perceive and understand emotions and the avoiding strategy. This means that teachers who tend to have a greater ability to perceive and understand emotions select and apply less this strategy to manage conflicts. In this way, the results show that teachers who tend to have greater emotional perception and understanding select and apply fewer obliging, dominating, and avoiding strategies to manage conflicts in the classroom. These results can be explained since teachers who have a greater ability to perceive and understand emotional, can identify the underlying causes of each emotion and thus understand the respective consequences in terms of behavior. By understanding your own emotions, it is easier to understand students' emotions, allowing them to interact with them more appropriately and effectively in conflict situations, using fewer of these strategies. In this way, the teacher's ability to perceive and understand emotions stimulates a positive attitude and to be more sensitive to the resolution of conflicts with the student.

In line with studies in other work contexts (Godse & Thingujam, 2010; Villamediana et al., 2015), results indicate that teachers who tend to have greater ability to perceive and understand emotions use more integrating and compromising strategies, and fewer strategies of obliging, dominating, and avoiding to manage conflicts in the classroom. Confirming that the teacher's ability to perceive and understand emotions influence the selection and use of conflict management strategies in the classroom.

Regarding the ability to express and classify emotions, the study hypotheses refer to a positive influence between emotional expression and classification and the strategies of integrating (H6) and of compromising (H7), and negative with the avoiding strategies (H8), obliging (H9) and dominating (H10). Based on the results, the relationship between the variables considered is confirmed, except for H8. Thus, this study results indicate that teachers who tend to have greater ability to express and classify emotions select and apply more strategies of integrating, compromising, and avoiding; and fewer strategies of obliging and dominating to management the conflict in class. These findings are in line with prior research (Godse & Thingujam, 2010; Jordan & Troth, 2004; Villamediana et al., 2015). Results suggest that teachers with greater ability to express and classify emotions know how to express their emotions correctly and recognize the emotional expression of stu-

dents, thus adapting their behavior, before and during the conflict in the classroom, and solving it more easily (e.g., when teachers perceive discouragement, anger or sadness on the students' faces).

Regarding teachers' ability to manage and regulate emotions, according to the hypotheses and based on the results, the relationship between the variables under consideration is confirmed. Results indicate that teachers who tend to have greater ability to manage and regulate emotions select and apply more strategies of integrating (H11), compromising (H12), and avoiding (H13); and fewer strategies of obliging (H14) and dominating (H15) to resolve a classroom conflict. Previous studies in other work contexts support these results (Godse & Thingujam, 2010; Jordan & Troth, 2004; Villamediana et al., 2015), except the relationship found with the strategies of avoiding (H13).

Teacher emotional management refers to the ability to reflexively regulate emotions in oneself and students and implies the ability to be open to the information contained in emotions and their use to make decisions and thus select the most appropriate strategies to manage a conflict. In this way, achieving adequate management of the classroom conflict, emotionally oriented towards what is intended to be achieved. It should be noted that all the hypotheses of the study were confirmed except for H8 and H13. The results indicate that teachers who tend to have a greater ability to express, classify, manage and regulate emotions select and apply more strategies of integrating and compromising, but also the avoiding strategy for conflict management in the classroom. These results can be explained for being a useful strategy when the problem is not important, or when more time is needed to collect information about the conflict (e.g., postponing conflict resolution for the class end, resolving the same only in the presence of the student involved in the conflict). It should be noted that the advantages of using this strategy are saving time, in situations of minor problems, and the fact that it can prevent the conflict escalation (Rahim, 2002), since it implies evasion, postponing it to a more appropriate moment (e.g., when class ends). It should be noted that all conflict management strategies should be used as long as they lead to conflict resolution in the classroom.

The results also indicate that teachers predominantly use integrating strategies to classroom management conflict, followed by obliging, avoiding, compromising, and finally dominating strategies. That is, they use most integrating strategy, and less the dominating strategy for conflict management in the classroom. These results are partially similar to those obtained by Villamediana et al. (2015) who also report integration as the predominant

strategy, but with different results in the other strategies.

Study limitations and implications

Though the results of this study are promising, they must be interpreted in light of some limitations. First, no researches were found that relates teachers' EI abilities and conflict management strategies. The current study was the first to explore these constructs in school teachers, and the results may be different in other countries with different school systems and cultural contexts. Therefore, it would be advisable for future lines of research to use cross-cultural design to replicate the present study. Second, all data used in this study were self-reported, implying a bias of social desirability. Another limitation was those study teachers were mostly women, limiting the variability of the sample. However, this reveals the reality of schools in Portugal, where women teachers exist in a much higher percentage than men (PORDATA, 2019). Finally, future studies should include other personal and organizational variables that can influence the choice of conflict management strategies.

Regarding practical implications, results from the present study demonstrate the need to acknowledge and promote teachers' emotional abilities in the workday. Teachers, as conflict negotiators, must be able to assess and manage emotions and feelings, which emerge before, during, and after the conflict situation. So, it is essential to support teachers, by providing knowledge about emotional processes, and training their emotional abilities and regulation techniques. In this context, it is essential to assume that the teachers' initial training must include the development of emotional abilities, due to the importance of their professional performance, respectively, due to the influence they have on the selection and use of strategies for conflict management in the classroom. Therefore, given this study results, it is suggested that emotional education intervention programs should be introduced in initial and continuing teachers' training, so they can constructively manage the classroom conflict.

Conclusion

In conclusion, results show the influence of teacher's EI abilities on the selection and use of strategies to manage classroom conflicts. Teachers who have more abilities to perceive, express and manage emotions will have more appropriate resources for conflict resolution in the classroom, since they use more cooperative strategies (integrating and compromising) to manage classroom conflict, in the teacher-student relationship. Therefore, the de-

velopment of teachers' EI abilities is an essential condition for conflict management in the classroom. These new findings suggest the need to implement intervention programs to promote teachers' EI abilities as a valuable means of managing conflict in the classroom. This conclusion leads us specifically to the defense of educational politics and pedagogical practices that develop the teachers' emotional abilities in their academic training.

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