

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring the influence of parenting competences on children's emotional regulation and its relationship with classroom learning: A qualitative research study

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ABSTRACT

Emotional regulation is closely connected to classroom learning, so the influence of the family on the child's emotional regulation capacities is an important factor to consider. The objective of this study was to obtain working knowledge of the skills and cognition possessed by a group of parents in relation to their parental competences linked to emotional regulation of their children, and identify the strengths, weaknesses, and potentials of these parental competences. The research was carried out through a qualitative methodological design, based on the knowledge, skills, and practices that parents have on the emotional regulation of their children, considering that these practices are key to classroom learning and therefore to academic performance. As a methodological strategy of the investigation, the case study will be used, with a sample of a group of 28 fathers and mothers, with infant-age children (0–12 years) obtained through a network of parents and an Infant School in Madrid (Spain). Through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, the knowledge, skills, and practices that these parents carry out in the emotional regulation of their children were discovered. Concluding that it is necessary to reinforce some parental skills for improve the emotional regulation of their children, through courses, seminars, and family educational workshops, to put them into practice in a positive way, since this will influence learning (through motivation, communication, self-esteem, etc.).

Keywords: emotional support; emotional regulation; emotional intelligence; learning; parental competences; bonding capacities

1. Introduction

Emotional regulation is a complex skill, which needs to be trained, learned, and practiced. Such training should be done from an early age so that it develops in a positive way^[1,2]. In order to achieve training and positive reinforcement in emotional regulation skills, there must be a secure attachment between the child and their caregivers^[2,3], cause quality of the bond between parents and their children is relevant for optimal cognitive, emotional and behavioural development.

When parental/maternal-child relationships are warm, and include affection, positive communication, supervision, and optimal involvement with children, positive emotional regulation skills will be fostered, reinforcing social skills, empathy, self-esteem, and self-control^[4–9].

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1.1. Emotional regulation's studies and theories in childhood

Emotional regulation in childhood is a topic of interest for many researchers, psychologists, and scientists within the field of developmental and educational psychology. Some studies contribute to the understanding of the impact of emotional regulation in children and how it develops. This section shows some theories and studies from prominent authors, who are very influential in the study of emotional regulation in childhood.

Gottman^[10-12] proposes a theory of emotional regulation related to childhood. He relates the thoughts and feelings that fathers and mothers have about emotions with the level of competence of their children in relationships with their peers, school contexts and other items related to its development. In his theory he reflects on parents who work with emotions vs. those who dismiss emotions and makes a classification of the different emotional styles related to raising children. His core research is about how meta-emotions fuel or impede your children's well-being and development, with an emphasis on understanding and regulating their own emotions. This effective emotional regulation in children will depend on the "emotional coaching" transmitted by their parents, which will help children understand and know how to label their own negative affect and will also contribute to the development of optimism and the sense of control in their emotions.

Another important contribution to the regulation of emotions in childhood is provided by Eisenberg et al.^[5] and Mak et al.^[13], who relates emotional regulation to social competence and learning. It states that there is a bidirectional relationship between the social and emotional competence of parents and their children, therefore, that children whose parents carry out positive socialization practices will develop a greater capacity for involvement in positive exchanges with their peers in their social competence and that the negative emotionality of parents and the negative reaction to the expression of their emotions will be associated with low social competence and negative emotionality in their children.

The studies of Izard^[14,15] highlight the multiple social functions that characterize emotions, for example, emotions facilitate social interaction, allow, and nourish the communication of affective states, can regulate, and control the behaviour of others, in addition to supporting the prosocial behaviour. For example, she points out that happiness can improve social competence and, conversely, anger can hinder such competence.

Thompson's studies^[16], analyses the influence that the early regulation of emotions has on children and its long-term importance, giving great importance to the intervention strategies of fathers and mothers in the emotional regulation of their children.

Parental competences involve a set of knowledge, skills, and practices, which are involved in complex learning processes, related to upbringing and mainly by the attachment history, in addition to considering the context in which they are being developed^[17-20]. There are studies that associate the security of attachment and processes influencing the development of emotion regulation in young children^[17,21,22]. In these studies, are explain several ways in which emotional regulation is influenced by the effectiveness of the attachment bond. These studies have concluded that influence of emotional regulation parenting competences is strongly related with parents-child attachment^[17,21,22]. These studies have found the importance of parents-child secure attachment so that their children can understand emotions.

1.2. The role of parents in the development of emotion regulation

Parental competences can be defined as the set of knowledge, skills and practices that will allow parents to successfully raise their children and in turn promote their development in all areas, social, emotional, and cognitive^[23,24].

Four areas of parental competence can be recognized: bonding, formative, reflective and protective. And each of them is made up of several interrelated components (**Table 1**)^[24].

Table 1. Parental competences and its components^[25].

Parental competence	Components of parental competences
BONDING	1.1 Observation and sensitive knowledge
	1.2 Sensitive interpretation (mentalization + empathy)
	1.3 Stress regulation
	1.4 Emotional warmth
	1.5 Involvement
TRAINING	2.1 Organization of the experience
	2.2 Development of progressive autonomy
	2.3 Mediation of learning
	2.4 Positive discipline
	2.5 Socialization
PROTECTIVE	3.1 Security guarantees (physical, emotional, and psychosexual)
	3.2 Construction of well-treated contexts
	3.3 Provision of day-to-day care
	3.4 Organization of daily life
	3.5 Connection to support networks
REFLECTIVE	4.1 Construction of life project
	4.2 Anticipation of relevant scenarios
	4.3 Monitoring influences and meta-parenthood
	4.4 Historicization of parenthood
	4.5 Self-care parental

Parental competences involve a set of knowledge, skills, and practices, which are involved in complex learning processes, related to upbringing and mainly by the attachment history, in addition to considering the context in which they are being developed^[18,26]. There are studies that associate the security of attachment and processes influencing the development of emotion regulation in young children^[17].

For positive parenting exercise, parents must promote skills in their children, both social, physical and emotional so that development in their systemic environment (both in their microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem)^[27] is optimal and positive^[28].

All these parental competences and their components are going to be related to the knowledge, skills, and practices that parents have for raising their children, being the one that has the greatest influence on emotional regulation skills, parental bonding competences^[25,29].

Parental bonding competences are defined as the set of knowledge, skills and daily parenting practices that favour the psychological and emotional connection with the child, regulate their stress and suffering, organize their mental life, and protect their mental health, promoting a secure attachment style and adequate socio-emotional development throughout the life course^[24].

Parental bonding competences closely link to attachment, and has 5 components (**Table 1**), which are related with capacities of emotional regulation in the children. These components, in turn, will be related to a series of basic capacities in parenting^[30], such as: positive and sensitive communication^[31]; empathy^[7,32]; attachment capacity^[33,34] with a safe and emotionally warm family environment^[35]; control: setting rules and limits^[15]; meta-emotion or emotional modelling: parents who express and regulate their own emotions in positive ways can train and reinforce these types of skills in their children^[10,11]; emotional validation: help

children recognize and know how to validate emotions to help regulate them in a positive way^[10]; resilience capacity: “defined as the capacity of a person to adapt successfully to challenges that threaten the function, survival, or future development of that person”^[31].

Another variable to consider is the types of parenting styles that are also related to social skills and the socialization of children with their peers^[30]. For optimal and positive emotional regulation, the democratic parenting style is the most indicated^[34,36,37], since it is the one that is associated with a good emotional balance, capacity for positive self-esteem and self-regulation^[38], understanding of other people’s points of view, better acceptance by peers, minimal tendency to develop antisocial behaviours, and good moral and social maturity^[39]. According to Goleman^[40], “helping children improve their self-awareness and confidence, control their emotions and disruptive impulses, and increase their empathy not only results in better behaviour, but also in measurable academic performance”. Therefore, the skills and practices that parents have for the regulation of emotions are very important as part of their parental competences.

It is important that fathers and mothers have skills in their bonding parental competences in the dimensions of emotions and feelings, since knowledge of feelings will condition the relationships between people and will imply having skills both to learn and to correctly identify emotions, feelings and their indicators, such as tone of voice, gestural expression, etc., as well as having the ability to know how to name them appropriately^[10].

To reinforce these skills, different tactics can be used to help children recognize and identify their emotions. For example, analysing gestures and faces (in photographs, drawings, videos, etc.), or asking them to draw those expressions of emotion. Another technique could be to identify and look for those emotions in videos or photographs. There are many other ways to work on emotions, but the purpose of reinforcing these skills in children by their parents, or even their educators, is to be able to expand their skills and abilities in the recognition of expressions. emotions to be able to enrich their emotional language so that they can apply it to different situations^[10].

1.3. Influence of emotion regulation on learning in children

There is an intimate connection between emotional regulation and learning in children. It is a fairly important area of research that explores how children’s ability to manage emotions affects cognitive development and in the school context.

There are studies that attribute a significant relationship between the regulation of emotions, learning as a fundamental life skill that can facilitate learning and improve educational outcomes^[5,19,38,41,42]. For example, McCaslin and Hickey focused on the study of the relationship of emotional regulation with cognitive development and learning in the educational context, emphasizing the importance of emotional regulation in the motivation of students in the classroom^[38]. Pekrun and Yeager et al.^[43,44] states that emotions related to self-regulation and motivation will influence learning and therefore academic results. Cole’s research^[45] is based on the emotional processes that are related to children’s learning and social development. She relates how emotional regulation skills are related to cognitive outcomes in the school context and to children’s social competencies. Greenberg et al.^[46] highlights the importance of teaching emotional regulation skills in the school context to improve learning, student well-being and behaviour.

2. Materials and methods

This section will show the methodological design used in the research, with the objectives and hypothesis and the instruments used for said analysis, the research participants and the analysis of the data carried out.

2.1. Research design and instrument

The design of this research was carried out through a qualitative methodological study, cause this research attempts to describe processes in order to understand the meanings given by the participants, which is why quantitative methodology will not be used, since this methodology would aim to quantify and generalize. Using a multiple case study as a strategy^[47–50] under the interpretive paradigm^[51], carried out through a comprehensive manner, considering that parental skills for the emotional regulation of their children will be understood through various approaches and perspectives, integrating a considerable number of variables from the point of view of knowledge, skills, and parenting practices. It is recommended to carry out a multiple (or collective) case study, for an investigation into characteristics, functions, observations, etc., associated with groups (such as families, fathers, and mothers, etc.), to be able, in this way, study the characteristics that you want to investigate about that group^[49,52–54].

The research question of this work is: How are the knowledge, skills and practices that fathers and mothers of this investigation have in the emotional regulation of their children?

The objective of the study was to obtain working knowledge of the skills and cognition possessed by a group of parents in relation to their parental competences linked to emotional regulation of their children, and identify the strengths, weaknesses, and potentials of these parental competences.

A series of hypotheses will be carried out that will be integrated into the development of the study, in the discussions and in the conclusions:

H1: Parents under study have knowledge about their parental competences in the emotional regulation of their children.

H2: Parents under study have skills to perform their parental competences in the emotional regulation of their children.

H3: Parents under study put into practice the knowledge and skills of their parental skills in the emotional regulation of their children.

H4: There are differences between the beliefs that the parents under study have about the knowledge of their competences for the emotional regulation of their children and how they put these competences into practice.

For this purpose, different information collection techniques have been used: a semi-structured interview^[55] with parents, questionnaires, and observations. The interview was constructed ad hoc based on the E2P Positive Parenting Scale^[24] considering the age of the children. This scale is validated by expert judges and with high levels of validity and reliability in the Spanish and Latin American population^[25]. Being semi-structured, the interview is sequenced in such a way that all topics are studied taking into account the objectives and the research question and open questions, for when the researcher considers delving into a specific topic with the interviewed subjects, either because the person to be investigated has not yet responded in a sufficiently relaxed manner or has not opened up clearly to the researcher^[55].

The questionnaires were applied following this same scale, considering that there are 3 types of questionnaires, one for parents with children from 0 to 3 years old, another from 3 to 6 years old and another from 6 to 12 years old. Thanks to the questionnaires and observations in the field, a methodological triangulation was possible (consisting of combining various methods of data collection and analysis to get closer to the reality investigated).

The setting for the interview was an infant school, and in the case of parents from the parents' network, it was carried out in their own homes. The interview was recorded in its entirety with a tape recorder. This

recording was made with the verbal and written consent of each participant. Each research participant had to fill out an information document with a confidentiality commitment (in which they were informed about the objectives of the research, the confidentiality of the published data, etc.). They also filled out an authorization to give their consent to be recorded for this research. They were told that the duration of the interview was stipulated at thirty minutes (during the research some interviews lasted up to an hour). They were also told that they could abandon the investigation, if they wished, during the data collection phase. To involve the participants in their self-reflection in their answers, we tried to facilitate it by introducing the questions in a simple way: in what way?

The questionnaires were passed one month after the interview to each participant of the sample in the same place where the interviews took place.

The observation strategy in this research has been the annotation in a field notebook and the interpretation of the themes taking into account the context of the circumstances^[53]. The observations were very descriptive, and on some occasions interpretive, to capture the essence of what was being observed^[29,56]. This form of observation is the most used in case studies to document an incident or event, to explain the culture or some aspect of it. Thus, having a basis to be able to subsequently interpret the data obtained from the interview. Likewise, observations that are noted spontaneously and randomly are important and can be carried out in the context of research at any time^[29,52].

With observation, the aim was to increase understanding in each phase of the research. With the notes written down, the investigation was followed up to better understand the cases. In this research, observation was carried out during the interview phase with the participants (before and after the interviews). Each interaction with the participants was a great opportunity to observe and thus collect data. Observations in the field were recorded, trying to compose a complete image of the research scenario, the participants' gestures and doubts were recorded, as well as other characteristics that occurred during the interview. Also, the interactions between family members, and perceptions during the interview, such as rejections, fears, illusions, etc. Likewise, during the transcription of the interviews, adding observations helped the subjective interpretation of some of the questions asked during the interviews^[55,56].

The principles and variables that have been considered when preparing the interview will focus on the research categories, which are knowledge, skills and practices, these principles and variables are as follows:

- a. Communication.
- b. Control (setting rules and limits).
- c. Positive reinforcement with verbal recognition.
- d. Empathy.
- e. Emotional validation.
- f. Free time, leisure, and games.

The questionnaire is one of the most used tools in quantitative research, although it can also be used in qualitative research: "the records of interview observations are the basis of qualitative research and essential in case studies, but other instruments can be used, such as questionnaires"^[56]. These instruments will serve to measure the convergence between the records collected in the interviews, created with the same Positive Parenting Scale, and what the interviewed subjects answered in those questionnaires. That is, it is an additional validity tool, which, qualitatively, helps us ensure the reliability, reliability, validity, as well as the quality of the interview^[29,47,48,51,52,55]. The questionnaires will also serve as a tool to carry out a methodological triangulation between the data collected in the interview and the answers to the questionnaire.

2.2. Participants

A total of 28 fathers and mothers participated in the sample, coming from a network of parents and an Infant School in Madrid. The requirements that these fathers and mothers had to meet is to have children of infant age (between 0 and 12 years). This study began with 9 cases, and in order to consolidate the saturation process, more cases were added during the data analysis, specifically 6 more cases, that is, a total of 15 cases. Each case consists of a parental unit (father and mother, or mother only in the case of single-parent families, so it has worked with 15 families in total). More cases could have been selected, but during the data analysis it was concluded that the number was sufficient and more should not be added, so the information collection process was stopped, since the saturation point was reached. where adding more cases did not find new data, and the information was redundant^[57].

This study has been carried out with families that are not at risk of social exclusion since research on parenting skills is focused on families at risk of social exclusion and based on family educational workshops with activities to improve skills focused on this type of family. There is a lack of research on parental competences in emotional regulation in families that are not at risk of poverty or social exclusion^[23,24,25,58–61].

To select the sample in the research study, the following criteria were followed:

- That the participants had an interest in participating in the research.
- Give informed consent to authorize the researcher to use all the information collected, respecting anonymity in the research.
- Be fathers and mothers with children from 0 to 12 years old. (Belonging to any type of family, taking into account family diversity, with any occupation and educational level).

The constructed interview has been developed mainly considering the E2P Positive Parenting Scale^[24], which considers the four parental competences that fathers and mothers must have: bonding, protective, formative, and reflective parental competences, and its components (as shown in **Table 1**).

Finally, the distribution of the sample participants with codes, age of the children, and sample collection is shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Distribution of the sample participants.

Codes	Father/mother with the age of the children:	Parent's network/infant school
[M1_4yr]; [F1_4yr]	Father and mother with 1 children: 4-year-old children.	Parent's network
[M2_18mth]; [F2_18mth]	Father and mother with 1 children: 18-month-old children.	Infant school
[M3_2,5yr]; [F3_2,5yr]	Father and mother with 1 children: 2,5-year-old children.	Infant school
[M4_16mth]; [F4_16mth]	Father and mother with 1 children: 16-month-year-old.	Infant school
[M5_4&7yr]; [F5_4&7yr]	Father and mother with 2 children: a 4-year-old and a 7-year-old children.	Parent's network
[M6_2,5yr]; [F6_2,5yr]	Father and mother with 1 children: 2,5-year-old children.	Infant school
[M7_9mth]; [F7_9mth]	Father and mother with 1 children: 9-month-year-old.	Infant school
[M8_18mth]; [F8_18mth]	Father and mother with 1 children: 18-month-old children.	Infant school
[M9_9mth]; [F9_9mth]	Father and mother with 1 children: 9-month-year-old.	Infant school
[M10_6mth]; [F10_6mth]	Father and mother with 1 children: 6-month-year-old.	Infant school
[M11_4yr]	Mother with 1 children: 4-year-old children. (single parent family).	Parent's network
[M5_12&12yr]; [F5_12&12yr]	Father and mother with 2 children: 12-years old (twin brothers)	Parent's network

Table 2. (Continued).

Codes	Father/mother with the age of the children:	Parent's network/infant school
[M13_1&2,5yr]; [F13_1&2,5yr]	Father and mother with 2 children: a 1-year-old and a 2,5-year-old children	Infant school
[M14_10mth&4yr]; [F14_10mth&4yr]	Mother with 2 children: a 10-month-old and a 4-year-old children (single parent family).	Parent's network
[M15_5&6yr]	Mother with 2 children: a 5-year-old and a 6-year-old children (single parent family).	Parent's network

2.3. Data gathering and analysis.

Once the information (interviews, audio recordings, questionnaires, observations) of the parents has been collected, it will proceed to be processed a Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS)^[48]. The qualitative analysis of the data was performed with the CADQAS ATLAS.ti 23 for Windows, creating a hermeneutic unit.

To obtain the categories and subcategories of the study, a coding process based on the grounded theory of Strauss and Corbin was followed^[62]. Grounded theory is a flexible methodology that can be applied in a variety of ways in a case study, whether to develop new theories, refine existing theories, or better understand the specifics of a particular case, which is the case being used in this investigation. Grounded theory is used in this investigation as a tool for obtain the central codes of the investigation as explain: With the quotations obtained after the transcriptions of the interviews, a first open coding was carried out, where it has been obtained 579 codes through quotes, questionnaires, and observations. The obtained codes were then related to each other, simplifying into 32 new codes through axial coding as shown in **Figure 1**. Through this simplification, the research subcategories were obtained^[48,62]. And finally, the central categories of the investigation are elaborated, through the selective coding provided by the central codes of the investigation^[48,62], which are: communication, control (setting rules and limits), positive reinforcement, empathy, emotional validation, time-shared, leisure and games. The analysis units of this study are knowledge, skills, and practises about the emotional regulation parental competences.

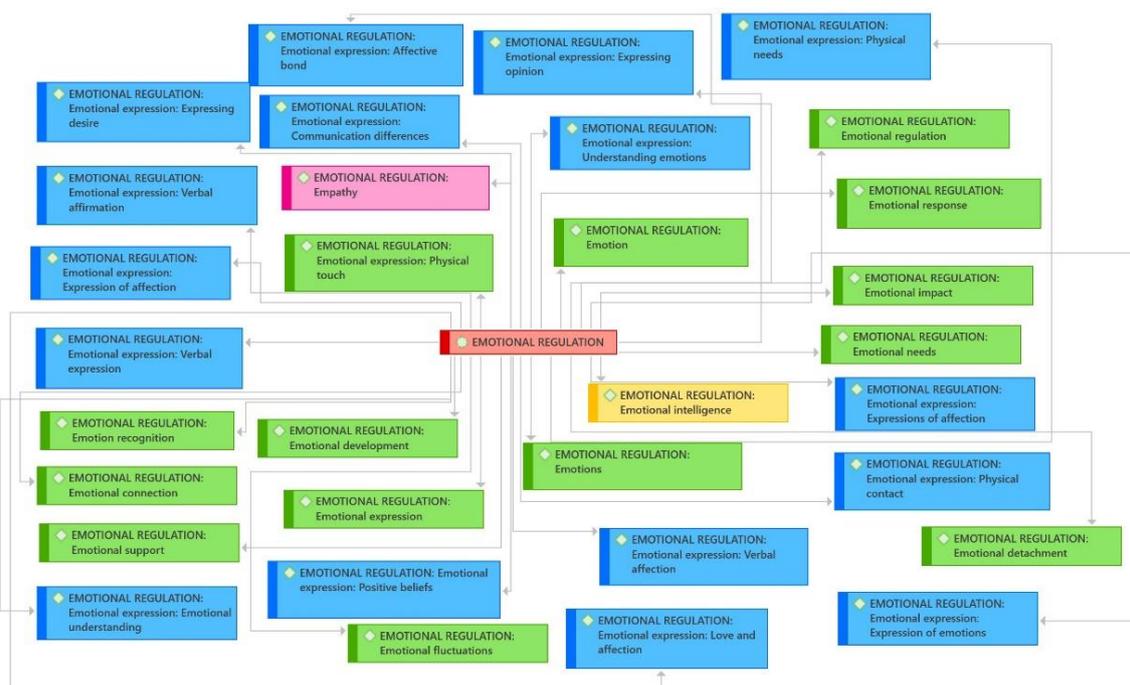


Figure 1. Emotional regulation axial coding.

Once all the information is ordered, all the concepts and ideas are collected, and in this way the final report will be obtained with the results and their discussions and finally the conclusions.

3. Results

The presentation of the results obtained in this study will follow a logical hierarchy, through the different central categories obtained. These central categories respond to the main objective of the study, the analysis of the parental competences linked to emotional regulation of the children.

3.1. Communication

Most fathers and mothers talk to their children from the time they are in the uterus, they maintain communication with the fetus as it develops in the uterus: they sing to it, they talk to it, they massage the abdomen, they caress the abdomen when they kick, etc.^[6]. When it is born, the process of direct communication with the newborn begins, through gestures, looks, caresses, etc. As the baby develops, the reciprocal interaction with her parents begins, through crying, babbling, etc. Communication with children must be warm, it can be verbal or non-verbal. Parents can communicate with their children through smiles, hugs, caresses, etc. The interaction should be reciprocal, not one-way. Parents should encourage children to communicate with them, gesturing or speaking, so that they can listen and be able to respond. For this to happen, fathers and mothers must do it from emotions, affection, and reflection. For communication, parents can use tools such as games, caresses, and kisses, to promote warmth communication with their children.

Parents in the sample are asked about their knowledge, skills, and practises of communicating with their children. They are first asked what they talk about with their children and what topics their children are interested in.

I try to put comments on what we're doing at that moment so that he identifies those actions, or at some point I can talk to him about something future that we're going to do so that he tries to understand that we're going to do something different tomorrow or from now on, and those are basically the things I can talk to him about. Food and play, little else..., or at some point a video, photos... [F7_9mth]

It must also be taken into account that one of the basic pillars of parental skills that fathers and mothers should have is emotional communication, in order to help children know how to identify and understand their emotions, asking them how they feel at that moment, if they are happy, sad, ...^[36]. This emotional communication is also present in some of the research interventions:

You always ask them, what did you do at school today, what did you like the most, what did you like the least, what would you like to do tomorrow, a bit about how they feel, what they have done, if they are happy, if they are a little sadder, because they are sadder that day, a little from day to day. [M5_4&7yr]

3.2. Control (setting rules and limits)

In the interview, the parents of the sample were asked a series of questions, for the study of the three units of analysis of the research: knowledge (Do you know different ways to set rules for your child?); skills and practices (Give me examples of rules you have set for your child. What do you do when they break the rules? And when do they meet them?) about setting rules and limits.

The establishment of rules and limits is an issue that parents in the sample with children between 0 and 2 years old are not so concerned about, since they perceive the rules as routines they carry out with their children^[23]:

He is very small, let's say, that we don't have rules as such to correct his behaviour, because the

opportunity has not yet been given, what we do try is to follow a routine so that he understands what some rules are. Let him know that if we are now in the bathtub we have to be in the bathtub, if we are eating, we have to eat and not play, but things like that, but they are still very basic things. (F7_9mth)

From the age of 2, children can begin to assume a series of very simple rules, like do this and don't do this, and stick with routines. If the rules are not met, one can reason with the children through inductive discipline. Reasoning why that is wrong and the consequences^[4,10].

In this way, the internalization of the rules can be favoured so that they can be understood as useful without having an origin in the authority of the parents but “the child is only capable of incorporating those rules that are within the reach of his understanding”^[63]. Therefore, parents must know strategies to establish these rules and limits in a didactic way, such as through stories and examples^[10]:

Well, use the stories and the examples, there are many times that a rule is not understood as such, but you try to give it examples, play with symbols, play with the stories so that it can try to understand it. [F3_2,5yr]

Another way to explain a rule can be through the Universal Design of Learning, explaining to your child in different ways or points of view what that rule is and why he must comply with it:

Insisting, when there are alternative ways of telling it so that he finds out. (M2_18mth)

This type of training and emotional reinforcement in the form of teaching rules and setting limits is more effective than using authoritarian skills^[10].

3.3. Positive reinforcement with verbal recognition

Positive reinforcement with verbal recognition promotes positive self-esteem in children, produces feelings of self-satisfaction when some goods behaviours are recognized^[20,64] and can be a useful tool for recognizing and validating children's emotions, helping them develop greater emotional awareness^[10].

In the interview with the parents, they were asked how they recognize an achievement or good behaviour:

Well, with affection, and with closeness and contact, giving her kisses and hugs, telling her, acknowledging it, trying to make her feel that what she has done is recognized because it is well done, even with language expressing how well she has done it made. [F3-2yr]

Another type of gratification considered as positive reinforcement when they do something well is giving gifts to the children (toys, candies, etc.), although this type of reinforcement should not be abused as recognition of achievements or for the sake of compliance with any rule. It's a tendency that some fathers and mothers have (if you pass everything, if you get good ratings in school..., I'm going to gift you that thing), this type of recognition of achievements, carried out from when the children are very young, can give rise to more serious problems when the children reach adolescence^[65].

Telling him many times that it is great, that what they have done is very good, that I am very happy, my eldest son does sometimes ask for some more material reward. [M5_4&7yr]

When children get used to receiving material rewards as positive reinforcement, they can get used to such reinforcement, and if it is not given, it could generate frustration, sadness, anger and a sense of dependency and a need for that tangible reinforcement for having achieved that. achievement. These actions will have negative consequences when it comes to training the emotional regulation of children^[65].

3.4. Empathy

It is important to note that children's emotional education and empathy skills have a lot of advantages.

Gottman et al.^[11], in their research, state that, parents' awareness of their own emotions and this type of emotional education was related to less anxiety, fewer behavioural problems and a lower frequency of tantrums in their children, greater social competence and better academic performance^[11].

Some parents in the sample understand affection as a form of empathy:

Affection is putting yourself in someone else's place and trying to understand them. [F2_18mth]

In the intervention, parents were asked if they manage to put themselves in the place of their children:

Yeah. Many times, although it is true that my son is very capricious. I put myself in the place where I want to play all the time, but not at half past ten at night. (M1_4yr)

I try to put myself in his place, I don't know if I always succeed. Sometimes she is tired, and she is irritable and maybe I am also for the same reason. [M11_4a]

Almost always yes, but when they make us very angry, not so much. [M13_1&2yr]

These last two interventions don't imply a weakness in the skills and practices in the empathy of these mothers with their children. Sometimes, when the demands of the children are not met (for example, because they want to watch television instead of going to bed, showing irritability due they are tired), they can become generate behavioural conflicts that lead to tantrums. In these cases, fathers and mothers can recognize the emotions of their children and identify the causes of their irritability or anger, but once the decision is made firm, they must learn to tolerate their frustration, so even if they normally have empathy with their children, they will not use it as a tool to give in to all their demands.

3.5. Emotional validation

It is essential that not only positive emotions are valued, but also that parents know how to value negative emotions, since:

Parents who emotionally educate or train their children are characterized by showing a very high awareness of their own affective states and those of the people with whom they relate. They see all emotions as useful, and they value children's negative emotions as an excellent opportunity to become intimate with them, to help them identify their feelings and manage them"^[32].

Parents must accept their children's emotions, they can talk with their children about their affective states, and they can help them to solve problems. Then, children will have greater skills to regulate their emotions, they will have more confidence and more empathetic^[24].

Parents in the study were asked if they recognize their children's emotions and if they help their children in recognizing and naming their own emotions:

Yes. In addition, we read an article a month or two months ago about how important it is to have knowledge, to know how to put words to emotions in order to express them without having to get frustrated by it, without having to not understand it, and we have a fantastic book that It is "the monster of colours", which I think is helping him a lot to know when he feels anger, when he feels joy, when he feels sadness and in this way help him understand it". [F2_18mth]

Yeah. In fact, it is what we are working on the most this month, not only to help him identify them, but also to identify them, we do it with colours and with the verbalization of emotions". [M2_18mth]

Yeah. Yes, that has always been important to my wife and me. Since he was little, always trying to say when he felt something, telling him when he was angry, sad, happy, well, tell him, and ask him many times. And she already recognizes a lot of emotions... he likes to make faces like I'm scared, I'm sad, I'm

happy". (Father1_4a)

It is important that parents have some skills in their parenting competences related to helping identify emotions and name them. Knowing feelings and emotions is going to be a condition of interpersonal relationships and is going to imply having skills to learn and identify emotions and feelings and their indicators, such as the expression of the gesture, the tone of the voice, as well as having the ability to know how to name them. To reinforce and train these skills, there are different techniques with the aim of helping children recognize and identify their emotions: analysing faces and gestures (drawings, videos, photographs, etc.), asking them to draw expressions of emotions in a paper, that look for emotions in figures or videos, etc.^[66].

3.6. Time shared, leisure, and games

Another important variable to consider in parental competences dedicated to the emotional regulation of children, are the skills that parents have in the free time they spend with their children, leisure, and games. Within the time shared with the children, there are other variables that require parental involvement. Among them are sharing other playful spaces with the children, so that different areas of development are stimulated. Within these playful spaces, fathers and mothers can acquire a series of skills and put them into practice to share time with their children singing, dancing, playing, or watching television^[29].

Regarding parental skills related to free time, leisure and play, several questions were asked of the parents in the sample: Do you usually sing and dance with your child? What do you usually play with your child? Do you laugh together at funny things?

There are fathers and mothers who encourage their children to like music, because they like to listen to music, sing those songs and dance to them. These skills and practices of fathers and mothers will be a useful tool to promote positive emotions^[67]:

Yes. I listen to a lot of music, I put on music videos that are good, in the afternoons I put on the music, I put on music videos and the 3 of us dance a lot, really". (M15_5&6yr)

It is important that fathers and mothers have plasticity in their abilities and practices related to the game in order to stimulate and interact with their children through different types of games depending on their evolutionary cycle^[68].

The playful spaces (playing, dancing, etc.) in the time shared with the parents are a great tool for training emotional regulation, are catalysts of positive emotions, parents can play at recognizing emotions and naming them, they can tell stories with moral, they can watch animated stories, listen, sing, and dance with music, etc., as a tool to train emotional regulation and empathy.

With my son in the park, we play ball and, in the sandbox, we go for walks in the countryside and on bikes and sometimes we skate. At home we paint and read, we play hide and seek, we make rhymes, we write memories. With my daughter in the park, we played in the sandbox, slide, swing. At home to cars, constructions, kitchens, painting, reading, hide and seek. [M14_10mth&4yr]

Parents in the sample were asked if they laughed with their children at funny things:

Yes, and the not funny ones too, you have to find a funny point in everything. [Mother5_4&7yr]

A sense of humour and laughter are mechanisms that can help children regulate their emotions, improve their emotional well-being and reduce stress^[69].

There is an intimate relationship between laughter and play. The game stimulates laughter as a emotional reward of the pleasure it provides^[70]. And playing games with children, in addition to being a catalyst for positive emotions, is also considered a very useful learning tool that can be extrapolated to learning at school^[42].

4. Discussion

After the qualitative analysis, considering the units of analysis of the study, strengths, potentialities, and weaknesses of the parental competences that parents of the sample have on the emotional regulation of their children. Considering the categories presented in the results section and the hypotheses under study, it can be stated that:

H1: Most of the parents under study have knowledge about their parental competences in the emotional regulation of their children. Therefore, they show strength and potential in their knowledge about emotional regulation in children. In addition, they have a predisposition to learn more about raising their children. But some of the parents under study doubt their knowledge in several of the categories, for example, some of these parents don't know how to anticipate their children's tantrums. Some parents also don't know how to choose television content appropriate to their age.

It is observed that parents sample of this study have empathy with their children, but it is important to respond to the emotional demands of the children by integrating reflective parental competences (even if parents are tired or stressed, they should not ignore some important emotional demands for the child) and protective parental competences (since children must be protected, not only from possible accidents that could cause physical damage, but also need protection from emotional damage, for example help your son to regulate his emotions cause is sad because his friends don't want to play with him)^[29].

H2: Most of the parents under study have skills to perform their parental competences in the emotional regulation of their children. Therefore, they show strength and potential in their skills about emotional regulation in children. On the other hand, in the case of several parents, there is weakness in some variables of the communication categories, such as solving communication problems with their children. These parents sometimes give in to their children's non-altruistic requests to avoid anger and tantrums. This type of action can be detrimental to positive emotion regulation skills, since there is a risk that it will be more difficult for children to abide by the rules since they can internalize this behaviour and make it their own. This can seriously affect learning in the classroom and in the relationship with their peers and their environment in the future. Therefore, it is very important to reinforce and train the skills in assertive communication, active listening, and empathy, in addition to training in altruistic behaviours to alleviate this type of communication problems with children^[65].

H3: It is confirmed that the parents in the study put into practice the knowledge and skills of their parenting skills in the emotional regulation of their children, therefore, they show strength and potential in their practises about emotional regulation in children. Although some parents showed that knowledge and skills in some of the categories are not the most accurate to help regulate emotions of their children (The weaknesses in some knowledge and skills shown in Hypotheses 1 and 2 can be extrapolated in this Hypothesis 3).

H4: There are some differences between the beliefs that some of the parents under study have about the knowledge of their competences for the emotional regulation of their children and how they put these competences into practice. For example, although there are some parents who show they have knowledge and skills about positive reinforcement through verbal recognition, on many occasions, when recognizing an achievement (e.g., in academic plane, good ratings in school), they usually reward them by buying them a gift as a positive reinforcement. This is also carried out by some parents when negotiating a rule or action that the child does not want to abide by.

Therefore, it is advisable for all parents to train and reinforce the acquisition of certain skills at various levels of their parental competences for the emotional regulation of their children. This can be carried out

through courses, seminars or workshops for reinforcement and skills training in the components of these competences where weakness or lack is shown, for example: in workshops on managing emotions, positive reinforcement and recognition of achievements, positive and assertive communication; active listening; self-reflection in the face of stress and anxiety, transmission of values; empathy, establishment of rules and limits, games, inductive discipline, etc.

5. Conclusion

Memory, attention, and learning are basic cognitive concepts to understand how to improve learning and teaching; but before any of these cognitive elements are put into action, they have to pass through the filter of any person's emotional experience. Therefore, helping families and children to better understand the mechanisms that influence the development of emotion regulation and learning to use appropriate strategies could generate a very positive experience, which will influence the well-being of the family, and a series of tools will be provided in children that will be enhanced in educational environments^[16,42,71].

One of the conclusions of this research is that these parents under study show potential in knowledge, skills, and practices of their parental competences for the emotional regulation of their children. These potentialities are discovered by their predisposition to acquire new knowledge and their interest in developing or reinforcing their skills through their training (in courses, seminars, workshops, family networks, etc.), to put them into practice.

Another conclusion that can be deduced after the analysis of the data is that the skills in parenting competences related to emotional regulation that each member of the study sample has and the way in which they put them into practice are different, although in many of them common features are shown.

After analysing all the data and theoretical contributions, considering all the variables involved in the study, it is discovered that parental competences related to emotional regulation, which parents must have from the moment their children are born, are closely linked to the components of parenting skills related to the bond.

Therefore, to train these skills and to be able to carry out a positive training in the emotional regulation skills of the children, several circumstances must be given: the first thing, and most important and essential, is that there must be a secure attachment^[42]. In addition, they must display the rest of parental skills, such as the existence of warm and positive communication, optimal parental involvement. Parents must have adequate emotional intelligence, that is, have skills in self-regulation, management, and recognition of their own emotions and those of others, as well as empathy skills. Know how to harness emotions productively^[67].

It is innovative to integrate parental competences with their respective components, within parental capacities for emotional regulation of the children; we have found no study in the literature reviewed^[2,22–25,58–60,71] which mentions any research into this approach.

Finally, it can be concluded that parenting is not easy, since you must know how to integrate many skills and practices, many of them complex for parents, during the life cycle of their children, from born. This will imply that there is an organization, some support in the couple and some rules, so that it is easier to be able to exercise that role from attachment, emotions, affection, empathy, warm and positive communication, and most importantly, from unconditional love to children.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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