

RESEARCH

<http://doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2019.48.1-16>

Received: 07/03/2018 --- Accepted: 18/01/2019 --- Published: 15/03/2019

THE SCHOOL: DEPRESSIVE MOODS IN SCHOLARS

LA ESCUELA: LOS ESTADOS DE ÁNIMO DEPRESIVOS EN LOS EDUCANDOS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the Ecuadorian educational system has had significant changes to achieve quality education, but the emotional part of students has not been researched vehemently. This article aims to analyze the level of depression in primary school and high school students and also to note the influence of depressive states of mind on their learning process; these levels were evaluated using Zung Depression Test, taking a sample of 324 students. It is worth mentioning that the study had a qualitative and quantitative approach, that is, the information acquired was collected through bibliographic research and numerical data. In accordance with the prototype obtained and after the application of the test, it was possible to observe that a considerable number of students have depressive features which influence the correct performance of school activities.

KEY WORDS: educational system - emotional - scholars – depression – moods - learning process.

RESUMEN

En los últimos años el sistema educativo ecuatoriano ha presentado cambios significativos para alcanzar una educación de calidad, pero no se ha indagado con vehemencia la parte emocional de los educandos. En este artículo se pretende

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analizar el nivel de depresión en el que se encuentran los alumnos de escolaridad básica y bachillerato, además señalar la influencia que producen los estados de ánimo depresivos en el proceso de aprendizaje de los mismos; dichos niveles fueron evaluados mediante el Test de Depresión de Zung, tomando una muestra de 324 estudiantes. Es conveniente mencionar que el estudio realizado tuvo un enfoque cualitativo y cuantitativo es decir la información adquirida se recopiló a través de investigaciones bibliográficas y datos numéricos. De acuerdo con el prototipo obtenido y posterior a la aplicación del test se pudo observar que un número considerable de estudiantes presentan rasgos depresivos lo que influye en el correcto desempeño de las actividades escolares.

PALABRAS CLAVE: sistema educativo – emocional – educandos – depresión – estados de ánimo – proceso de aprendizaje.

A ESCOLA: OS ESTADOS DE ÂNIMO DEPRESSIVOS NOS ALUNOS

RESUME

Nos últimos anos o sistema educativo equatoriano tem apresentado mudanças significativas para alcançar uma educação de qualidade, mas não indagaram com veemência a parte emocional dos alunos. Neste artigo pretende-se analisar o nível de depressão nos qual se encontram os alunos de escolaridade básica e bacharelado, ademais assinalar a influência que produzem os estados de animo depressivos no processo de aprendizagem dos mesmos; estes níveis foram avaliados mediante o Teste de Depressão de Zung, com 324 estudantes pesquisados. É conveniente mencionar que o estudo realizado teve um enfoque qualitativo e quantitativo, ou seja, a informação adquirida foi recopilada através de investigações bibliográficas e dados numéricos. De acordo com o protótipo obtido e posterior à aplicação do teste pôde-se observar que um número considerável de estudantes apresenta traços depressivos os quais influem no correto desempenho das atividades escolares.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: sistema educativo – emocional – alunos – depressão – estados de ânimo – processo de aprendizagem.

How to cite the article:

Ruiz López, P. M.; Chérrez Padilla, J. G., and Guzmán Hallo, B. M. (2019). The school: depressive moods in scholars. [La escuela: los estados de ánimo depresivos en los educandos]. Revista de Comunicación de la SEECI, 48, 1-16. doi: <http://doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2019.48.1-16>. Recovered from <http://www.seeci.net/revista/index.php/seeci/article/view/538>

1. INTRODUCTION

States of mind, also known as mood, are part of the affectivity of human beings and, on many occasions, the development of people in society depends on them, in

this case, we have focused on the students and their learning process; the alterations of the states of mind of students will limit their correct development in the academic area which will lead to low school performance.

According to psychoanalysis, states of mind have been defined as: "*Voic states*" characterized by generalized modifications of the impulse discharges, internally or externally provoked without full awareness on the part of the individual, which influence in a "temporary way on the qualities of feelings, thoughts and actions". (Fernández, 2014).

As Thakker (1998) points out, depressive feelings of sadness can be experienced by all people and are part of the normal affective manifestations in the face of grief and loss. However, the way in which depression is understood, interpreted, discussed, communicated and treated varies from one culture to another. Each subject interprets the meaning of depressed mood according to the society in which they develop and, in the same way, the individual is responsible for overcoming these negative steps or remaining in them. (Botto, Acuña, & Jiménez, 2014).

To Jácome (2016), in Ecuador, from 10 to 15 percent of the population has depressive moods (Coello, 2016).

According to González, Donolo, Rinaudo, & Paoloni (2011) and Melchor & López (2012) "performance depends on multiple personal, intellectual, motivational, and social factors, such as classroom climate and discipline". (Ordóñez, González, Montoya, & Schoeps, 2014).

According to the subject of study, it can be mentioned that teachers have the responsibility to create a good climate within the work classroom for the benefit of students by applying the teaching methods and methodologies that they acquire in their academic training and in their professional experience; a very clear way to determine the development of students within the classroom and measure the level of learning is through evaluations that are applied according to the planning proposed by the government of each country.

The family and the school stand as two fundamental contexts in the development of the child (Castro & García, 2016), children, as they have positive links with the environment in which their emotions are developed, will be stable and their development will be normal in their family, school and social environment.

1.1. Depression

Retamal (1999) defines depression as a type of mood alteration, consisting in its reduction with a variable degree of loss of interest or difficulty in experiencing pleasure in usual activities and accompanied by various psychic symptoms such as sadness, alterations in concentration, memory, emotional problems; and physical symptoms such as headaches, back pain, gastrointestinal disorders, decreased libido, anorexia, among others. (Romero, Fernández, Huerta & Barradas, 2015).

Piqueras et al. (2008), mention that, in its clinical form, depression is a mood disorder characterized by a feeling of intense sadness over two months. It occurs for various reasons: events of daily life (related to loss or inability to cope with them, helplessness), chemical changes in the brain, side effect of medications, various physical or medical disorders. The symptoms of depression are not the same in all individuals. Most subjects lose interest in daily activities, feel fatigue or slowness, concentration problems, sleep disorders, feelings of guilt, uselessness or hopelessness, increase in or loss of appetite or weight, decreased sexual desire, suicidal ideation and negative thoughts about oneself. (Beck et al., 1983; Ellis, 1981; 1990)

1.1.1. Depression and family

The relationship between family functioning and depression is complex: multiple biological factors intervene that condition disease and psychosocial mechanisms that condition the recognition and use of tools (resources) by the family to solve the conflict translated into illness in one of its members. (Balcázar, Ramírez, & Rodríguez, 2015).

Each family faces from a different perspective when a family member experiences depression, whether caused by illness, family disintegration, school problems or abuse; It is convenient to know that each family belongs to a different social group and has a different philosophy from the others; some families decide to ask for professional help while others try to overcome the disorder they are going through by themselves.

1.1.2. Depression and school

It is possible to perceive that depressive symptoms, when combined with one another, can interfere in a global way in the life of a child and adolescent, perhaps expressed in the school environment. Considering that some skills such as memory, concentration, attention, among others, are essential for learning. (Borges, 2016).

Low school performance should be considered a main symptom in students for them to suffer from depression and a teacher, when observing these types of abnormalities, should immediately notify the Department of Psychology of the institution and parents to take timely alternative solutions that are necessary.

According to a piece of research carried out on that theme "Formative feedback in the teaching-learning process of preschool students", teachers consider that it is fundamental to take advantage of the mistakes students make in class so that the evaluation is formative. But they clarify that students should not be penalized for these errors since this can affect their motivation and self-esteem. (Osorio & López, 2014).

1.1.3. Depression and society

Depression causes a level of anguish among sufferers that can affect their ability to perform everyday tasks, even the simplest ones. It significantly damages

relationships with family, friends and participation in the workplace, with the consequent economic and social impact. (Morales, 2017).

People who suffer from depression feel vulnerable within society, for this reason, they prefer to remain isolated from the others for fear of being judged; in addition, they have difficulty in performing the activities that they performed normally before having depressive features.

1.2. Learning

From a perspective that integrates different concepts, especially those related to the area of didactics, the following definition proposed by Alonso, Gallego & Honey (1994) could be cited: "learning is the process of acquiring a disposition, relatively durable, to change the perception or behavior as a result of an experience" (García Cué, 2006).

Learning is the knowledge acquired by students through techniques and methodologies applied by teachers through their creativity according to the subject taught; it is essential that the teacher identifies the society with which he / she will work and, based on these premises, carry out the planning that will be developed during the teaching - learning process.

We must be clear that we do not learn what we do not want to learn, we do not learn what does not motivate us and, if something does not motivate, it is because it does not generate positive emotions that drive action in that direction. This is the key to consider emotions as part of learning, for which reason emotional education is constituted, in its own right, in a need that goes beyond the school environment. (García, 2012).

The family provides a vital contribution in the formation of the student and significantly affects their school performance. Accompaniment, financial support, moral support, among others are aspects that are considered necessary to achieve educational goals; and equally disinterest, family violence, the social and economic problems that affect the family diminish the possibilities to improve the academic performance of the student. (Meneses, Morillo, Navia, & Grisales).

1.2.1. Learning styles

To Witkin (1976), learning styles, from a cognitive perspective, are understood as the particular ways in which individuals perceive and process information, how they may or may not account for certain information and under a specific context. (Granados & García, 2016).

Each human being is unique and therefore, in the educational field, everyone has their own learning style that facilitates the acquisition of the knowledge imparted by teachers in the classroom; In addition, each student structures their own methodologies according to the skills each one has.

1.2.2. Methodology of learning

The methodology of learning can be defined as the study of techniques, procedures and resources focused on the improvement and optimization of students' ability to obtain new knowledge and skills. (Casarez, 2009).

The methodology of learning is based on learning as the construction of knowledge through the resolution of the typical reality of the problems of professional training. The results obtained in the theoretical and practical courses have been optimized, since the instructor, with the help of didactic material, presents concepts, transmits information and guides the student in the execution of activities contextualized in everyday situations. (METODOSS, 2017).

Learning is understood as the student's response to the challenge of problematic situations similar to those found in professional practice, which are overcome through analysis, synthesis, judgment, critical thinking and the construction of hypotheses to solve the approach oriented to the problems of skill development.

2. OBJECTIVES

What this piece of research shows is to analyze the level of depression in which the students of the basic and high school levels of education find themselves and to indicate its incidence on their learning process; in addition to establish the levels of academic performance in which the students are in accordance with the scale of qualifications proposed by the Ministry of Education in force since 2014.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Methodological approach

In this piece of research, qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied to obtain significant data that contribute positively to the development of the study variables. Research had a qualitative approach because the information obtained from bibliographic sources and articles was useful to support the topic raised and, this way, clarify the doubts arising at the beginning of it; on the other hand, the quantitative approach of research was obtained through the obtaining of numerical data through the application of a survey directed to the students, which were interpreted statistically.

3.2. Design and sample

For this piece of research, the total number of students of the institution belonging to the basic education and high school levels of the morning and afternoon sessions was taken into account. The population number is 2078 students, the formula was used to calculate the size of the sample since the size of the global population is very large; thus determining a sample of 324 students who were to be evaluated.

3.3. Data collection instrument

We proceeded to apply Zung Depression Test that was designed by W.W.Zung in 1965 with the objective of evaluating the level of depression in patients diagnosed with some depressive disorder. The self-evaluation scale of Zung for depression is a short self-administered survey to assess how depressed a patient is. There are ten questions elaborated in a positive way, and other ten in a negative way. Each question is evaluated on a scale of 1-4 (little time, some time, a good part of the time, and most of the time); the score range is 20-80, where the score 20 - 49 corresponds to a normal range of depression, 50 - 59 slightly depressed, 60 - 69 moderately depressed and 70 or higher severely depressed. To tabulate the results of the test, the EAMD (Scale for Self-Measurement of Depression) index will be applied.

3.4. Study variable

The study variable within this piece of research corresponds to depressive moods which express nuances from moroseness, from languor, from nostalgia, from discouragement, to the most authentic and deepest depression, a state of pathological sadness and moral pain. This dysphoria is accompanied by a feeling of devaluation of oneself, pessimism, fatigue and inhibition. (Thayer, 2001).

3.5. Analysis of data

According to the sample obtained from students corresponding to 324, and after applying the test, it can be observed that a considerable number of students have depressive features; but those that should be treated immediately are those that fall within the scale of "medium-severe depression" and "severe depression".

Table 1. Results of Zung Depression Test.

DIAGNOSIS	INDEX EAMD	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Absent depression	20-35	36	eleven%
Subclinical depression and normal variants	36-51	170	52%
Medium-severe depression	52-67	114	35%
Severe depression	68-100	4	one%
		324	100%

Source: Own elaboration.

After applying Zung Depression Test, real data were obtained about the level of depression that exists within the institution; the statistical results we obtained were: 11% of students do not suffer from depression, 52% suffer from a subclinical depression and normal variants, 35% suffer from medium-severe depression and finally 1% of students go through severe depression.

In addition, the grades of 324 students in the subjects of Language and Literature, Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences corresponding to the first and second part of the first semester corresponding to the 2017-2018 school year were analyzed statistically according to the rating scale proposed by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2016). These results can be seen in the table presented below:

Table 2. Grade scale for the first semester in 2017-2018 school year.

STATISTICS	Scale	Language and Literature		Mathematics		Natural Sciences		Social Sciences	
		No. of students	%	No. of students	%	No. of students	%	No. of students	%
Master the required learning	9 - 10	72	22.22%	44	13.58%	59	18.21%	43	13.27%
They achieve the required learning	7 - 8.99	89	27.47%	72	22.22%	137	42.28%	174	53.70%
Next to achieve the required apprenticeships	4.01 - 6.99	118	36.42%	97	29.94%	105	32.41%	79	24.38%
They do not reach the required learning	≤ 4	Four. Five	13.89%	111	34.26%	2. 3	7.10%	28	8.64%
TOTAL		324	100%	324	100%	324	10 0%	324	100%

Source: Own elaboration.

4. DISCUSSION

In the research we conducted we can see that 11% of students do not suffer from depression, 52% suffer from subclinical depression and normal variants, 35% suffer from medium-severe depression and finally 1% of students go through severe depression; factors that prevent them from developing normally; In addition, it can be mentioned that students who suffer alterations in their mood do not have good school performance because, since they are not being able to concentrate in the classroom, the knowledge imparted by the teacher cannot be grasped by the

students and, as evidence of this process, the grading tables of four subjects are observed, where the academic performance of the students is clearly shown.

In Brazil, Cruvinel (2003) researched the relationship between depressive symptoms and school performance and learning strategies. A total of 169 children from a public school in São Paulo, aged 8 to 15 years, of both sexes were evaluated. The instruments used were the CDI, the Learning Strategies Scale and the grades in Portuguese and Mathematics. The results indicated 3.55% prevalence of depressive symptoms, indicating a low, significant and negative correlation ($r = -.207$; $p = .007$) between depressive symptoms and learning strategies. This way, the data suggest that the greater the presence of depressive symptoms in students, the lesser the use of learning strategies. (Borges, 2016).

Reports on the frequency of depression in adolescents vary widely. In the literature review carried out by Lefkowitz and Tesiny (1980) it is observed that 20% of the child population seems to have the symptoms of depressive problems normally observed in clinical samples. More worrisome are the results reported by Meierhofer (1971) on a longitudinal study with more than 50 children, where he observed that depressive states arose in 25% of the cases. (Pérez, 2001).

In a study carried out in Colombia, the relation between emotional problems and low academic performance in children aged 5 to 12 years was researched, and in the results obtained it was possible to determine that there is a relationship between both variables, finding out that 60 % of the population had emotional problems, that is, more than half of the population, which indicates a significant prevalence. (Bravo, Naissir, Contreras, & Moreno, 2015).

According to authors such as González & García (2007), they propose that cooperative learning refers to an alternative way of organizing the cognitive processes that must be provoked in a teaching-learning process both inside and outside the classroom. That is, their implementation is aimed at overcoming certain "gaps" generated with the exclusive application of traditional group learning techniques, which are interested rather in results than in performance, group rather than individual responsibilities, homogeneous rather than heterogeneous groups, unique leaders instead of shared leadership, etc.

The proposal put forward by González and García is positive and the teachers should take it into account so that the student's school performance improves, since repeatedly applying the same techniques and traditional strategies will cause the class to become boring, causing disinterest in the students.

In addition, it can be mentioned that depressive features appear more frequently in adolescents; due to this, WHO (2014) states that people who are in this period become one of the population sectors with greater propensity and vulnerability to suffer from this mental illness. (Navarro, Moscoso, & Calderón, 2017).

A piece of research conducted in Bogotá-Colombia Given which objective of study was to determine the prevalence and association of depression in victims of bullying, according to the results, a prevalence of depression of 22.5% was obtained. (Benavides, Labachuco, López, & Salazar, 2015).

At the international level, the Ontario study (Offord et al. 1987, cited in Almonte & García 2003), referring to psychiatric epidemiology of children and adolescents and based on a sample of 2,679 children aged 4 to 16 years, it is found out that 18.1% of children have problems, the most frequent being emotional disturbances. (Loubat, Aburto, & Vega, 2008).

In a piece of research conducted in Puerto Rico, the prevalence of mental health disorders among adolescent students is evaluated, and estimates of how many students in the population such prevalence represents. The most prevalent mental health disorders among the students were attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (15.7%) and major depression (13.4%). The prevalence of behavior disorders was significantly higher among males, while females had higher prevalence of major depression and suicidal ideation. (Moscoso, Rodríguez, Reyes, & Colón, 2016).

The environment can generate school stress when there are no adequate conditions and norms that allow a healthy development of socialization that promotes communication of students with their teachers, parents and family, with society and environmental relations. (Martínez & Díaz, 2007).

In Guayaquil City - Ecuador, according to a study, it is mentioned that the average age of adolescents from dysfunctional families who had some form of depression was 14.3 years and the fashion was 16.5 years old. (Morla, Saad, & Saad, 2006).

From the school stress acquired by the students during the class period, other sorts of symptomatology start to be derived and, when they are not treated on time, they can trigger depressive disorders and, depending on the level in which they are found, they should be treated; treatment can range from brief therapies to hospitalization in the most complex cases.

Personal and emotional stability is linked to tolerance to frustration. In general, the student who has a history of emotional instability is less likely to resist the effects of frustration than those who are emotionally stable. Therefore, the student who suffers from anxiety is at high risk of behavioral disorders associated with their emotional instability. (Jadue, 2001).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Consequently, many of the times the depression present in students goes unnoticed in educational institutions; With the study we carried out and through the application of Zung Depression Test, it was shown that there is a high rate of students of basic and high school education who have features of subclinical depression and medium-severe depression, which significantly influences social,

emotional development, resulting in various flaws in the learning process, evidenced in the low academic performance of students. When having depressive symptomatology, they have different ideas in their thinking that cause emotional instability, distraction, preventing the assimilation of new knowledge.

It is essential to take into account the context in which children and young people develop and identify the reason why they are in depressed moods that significantly affect their school, family and social performance; It is essential to be aware of the symptoms and to request help from the professionals in order to manage, in a timely manner and in a better way, the risk situations that may arise.

When analyzing the grades of the main subjects corresponding to the first semester of the 2017-2018 school year, it was possible to determine, according to the scale proposed by MINEDUC, that a high percentage of students "do not achieve the required learning" or are "close to achieving the required learning", which may imply that students, at the end of the school year, must take supplementary exams.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers must apply teaching methods that allow them to know the maximum potential of their students, such as Montessori and Singapore methods according to the group they are working with; also, maintain a continuous evaluation and, when observing that school performance and development are not appropriate, immediately dialogue with the student and, if necessary, ask for the help of the psychology department of the institution so that other alternatives are taken to help improve the learner's school performance and lifestyle.

Create a support program for students as well as for parents and teachers within the educational institution that encourages learners to strengthen their self-esteem, to believe in themselves and to know how to handle the difficulties faced today; as well as providing the necessary confidence for students to go to the student counseling department and request help when the situation requires it.

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