The influence of emotional intelligence on internships in higher Education

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Abstract. Internships are temporary jobs that provide real-time work and experience for students. They are well appreciated not only by students, but also by academics and companies. Despite the importance and growth of internship programmes in higher education, little is known about the influence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on them. We attempt to address this gap relating the effect of EI on internships, employability and satisfaction with these internships. A questionnaire was designed for this purpose, and it was sent online to students from two Spanish universities. For this, a structural equation model was applied to a sample of 240 students. Our results indicate that EI directly influences doing university students' internships. The results also enable us to state that EI has an indirect influence on the improvement of employability and the students' level of satisfaction with the internships. These findings can assist universities, academics, faculties and host companies for the improvement of the design of internship programmes in higher education.
Keywords: emotional intelligence; internship; employability; satisfaction; higher education.

[es] La influencia de la inteligencia emocional en las prácticas de educación superior

Resumen. Las prácticas consisten en trabajos temporales que brindan experiencia en tiempo real a los estudiantes. Estas prácticas son especialmente valoradas no solo por los estudiantes, sino también por el profesorado y las empresas. A pesar de la importancia y el crecimiento de los programas de prácticas profesionales en la educación superior, no se ha estudiado suficientemente la influencia de la Inteligencia Emocional (IE) en estos programas. Este estudio pretende abordar esta carencia por medio del análisis de la relación del efecto de la IE con en el periodo de prácticas, la empleabilidad y la satisfacción de los estudiantes. Para este propósito se diseñó un cuestionario que fue enviado de modo online a estudiantes de dos universidades españolas. Para ello, se aplicó un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales a una muestra de 240 estudiantes. Los resultados indican que la IE influye directamente en las prácticas de los estudiantes universitarios. Los resultados también nos permiten afirmar que la IE tiene una influencia indirecta en la mejora de la empleabilidad y en el nivel de satisfacción de los estudiantes con las prácticas. Estos hallazgos pueden ayudar a universidades, profesorado, facultades y a las empresas anfitrionas a mejorar el diseño de los programas de prácticas en la educación superior.
Palabras clave: inteligencia emocional; prácticas; empleabilidad; satisfacción; educación superior.

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Cómo citar: Ramírez-Hurtado, J. M.; González-Zamora, M.ª M., Vázquez-Cano, E. (2022). The influence of emotional intelligence on internships in higher Education. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, *33*(2), 289-300.

1. Introduction

One of the main goals of higher education institutions is to prepare students for the development of competences and qualities for employment (Chen et al., 2018; Franco et al., 2019). A path to arrive at this is through internships and many educational institutions make great efforts to develop them. Indeed, in a lot of countries internships have become an integral part of educational programmes. Internships are well valued by students, academics and

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companies, due mainly to their trying to connect the learning of classes with the labour market (Binder et al., 2015). Another very important aspect in the design of internship programmes is the students' level of satisfaction with them. Internships provide real work experiences. The improvement of labour skills allows students to be more satisfied with their internships (Yang et al., 2016). The students' satisfaction with internships also helps to predict trends about post-graduates' careers (Chen et al., 2018).

In spite of this, there is a paucity of literature about the role which emotional expressions play in doing internships (Liu et al., 2011). In this line, considering the importance of EI in higher education, there is a paucity of works which have studied the influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on university students' internships. Indeed, some authors have made known the scant knowledge existing about the performance of emotional competences in university students. The goal of this study is to assess the influence of EI on the development of internships. At the same time, it tries to evaluate the impact of internships on the improvement of employability and the satisfaction of the student.

2. Internships and Emotional Intelligence

The internships which higher education institutions carry out are important for students for various reasons. On the one hand, they enable the students to become familiar with a work atmosphere (Ruhanen et al., 2013). On the other hand, they allow students to obtain valuable information about the market, which can help them to make appropriate decisions in their working career orientation and to discover market opportunities (Wang et al., 2014). From the firm perspective, internships permit companies to identify candidates who have at the same time a learning capacity and professional competences (Finch et al., 2013). This is why the business sector is aware of both the advantages of effective internships and that employability qualities fail if the sector's requirements are not known (Yang et al., 2015). However, in spite of one of the known benefits of internships for students being employability, much more research is needed to find out the contribution of internships to employability (O'Connor & Bodicoat, 2015). In this sense, internships enable students to obtain work experience, connecting this with the learning obtained in classes (Stansbie et al., 2016). Through internships students can acquire the real qualities and experiences which are vital to ensure a competitive and appropriate working career (Moghaddam, 2013). Indeed, the results in a study of Gault et al. (2000) indicated that students with internship experience have more work opportunities in the market than those who lack this experience.

From the business point of view, the literature highlights two positive aspects for organisations to receive students in internships. On the one hand, internships are a powerful, reliable and low costs recruitment tool for firms. Many firms use internships to examine the potential employees before contracting them. Actually, employees who began as interns are more loyal to the organisation and have a lower contracting cost than a normal selection process (Verney et al., 2009). Also, interns' salaries tend to be lower than those of permanent employees and, moreover, interns do not generally generate costs such as health or retirement insurance (Divine et al., 2007).

Interns are mostly young, dynamic and willing to learn, giving the organisation the energy and dynamism that it needs (Degravel, 2011). According to Degravel (2011), internships can contribute to a multilevel diagnosis of the organisation and of the strategy, can suggest solutions for improvement, begin implementation and facilitate management change. In doing internships, students have to apply the knowledge and skills learnt in the classroom, as well as face situations of interaction with other people. However, emotions and feelings that do not tend to be part of the conventional teaching-learning process emerge in this process; these elements are related with the students' Emotional Intelligence (EI). EI is a concept, introduced by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990, and later broadened by Goleman (1995), including the social sphere. Goleman (1995) defines EI as "the ability to recognize our own feelings and those of others, to motivate ourselves and to appropriately handle relations". EI is therefore related with skills, attitudes, abilities and competences which determine people's behaviours, their reactions, mental states, etc. According to Goleman (1995), EI includes a series of abilities which can be categorised into five domains: a) Self-awareness, which is the knowledge of one's own emotions; b) Self-regulation, which is the capacity that people have to appropriately handle emotions; c) Self-motivation, which is the capacity to motivate oneself to reach a goal; d) Empathy, which is the capacity of recognising the emotions of others; and e) Social skills, which is the capacity to establish relations.

The majority of jobs do not only demand knowledge and specific technical competences but also require readiness and a handling of certain social and emotional competences which permit workers to develop particular capacities to work in a team, to self-motivate in the face of difficulties, to resolve interpersonal conflicts and to tolerate high stress levels (Repetto & Pérez-González, 2007). Therefore, the putting into practice of socio-emotional competences which facilitate and optimise both joint work and the quality of relations is nowadays vital. Salovey and Mayer (1990) were the first to use the concept of EI to try and explain why some people are emotionally more competent than others. These authors defined EI as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor and understand one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions". Later, Goleman (1995) discovered numerous correlations between EI and other social capacities and skills, so the concept was broadened to introduce the social component. We all have two minds, one which thinks logically and rationally (rational mind) and another which provides us with a kind of more impulsive and powerful

knowledge, though this is at times illogical (emotional mind). The actions and decisions of people depend on both one type of mind and on the other (Goleman 1995).

The model which has been used in this work is Goleman's (1995). In his work, Goleman drew the conclusion that there exists a series of key emotional competences which can be grouped into five categories: (1) Knowledge of one's own emotions (self-awareness). (2) Capacity to handle emotions (self-regulation). (3) Capacity to motivate oneself (self-motivation). (4) Recognition of others' emotions (empathy) and (5) Handling relations (social skills). In the firm area one has to take into account the emotions of the workers, as these can improve the employees' productivity and satisfaction due to their often being able to have a negative effect. EI therefore helps to motivate us, to control our impulses, to prevent and resolve conflicts, and to regulate our moods, so it is very interesting in the labour area, not forgetting the role that emotions play in leadership.

2.1. Relationship between internship, satisfaction and employability

In the new EHEA, one of the main challenges of universities is that of facilitating students' access to this market and improving their employability (Ferreras-Garcia et al., 2020). Thus, in the university framework, competences are the fundamental axis of employability. These competences are not limited to the mere possession of a series of knowledge or specific skills for a profession but are understood as a combination of knowledge, skills, capacities, attitudes and other personal characteristics (Bayerlein et al., 2021; Maura & Tirados, 2008). In this sense, EI has been related in the literature with employability (Pinto & Pereira, 2019). The current situation of globalisation has brought about important changes in the work market which have generated the need to configure new university profiles that respond to the demands of this market. As a consequence of this, as well as their specific technical aptitudes for a job, employers seek students with a capacity to learn, listen and communicate, to work in a team, to adapt to changes or to motivate themselves to attain an aim (Del Val, 2013); that is to say, skills associated with EI levels.

Likewise, works exist in the literature which have shown the influence of students' internships on the improvement of their level employability (Bolli et al., 2021). Indeed, there are studies which indicate that the students who do internships receive job offers more rapidly than those students who do not (Divine et al., 2007). Other works show that an advantage of having done an internship is that the students create a set of real expectations to work in the business world (Knouse and Fontenot, 2008), this being important knowledge for them.

To increase the satisfaction of internship students does not only provide a valuable experience for them, it also gives terrific publicity for the firms (D'Abate et al., 2009). The literature has shown that satisfaction with an internship requires the integration of distinct parts which participate in the process, such as the higher education institution, the firm and the student. Addressing what has been commented, previous studies which are centred on analysing and evaluating the predictors of satisfaction of students with curricular internships coincide in indicating that this satisfaction is affected by the experience of the students with these internships and the benefits received (Gupta et al., 2010).

Internships provide students with the opportunity of obtaining knowledge about careers in a sector, identifying preferences related with jobs and focusing on their work career (Maertz et al., 2014; Urquía-Grande & Pérez Estébanez, 2020). The literature shows that there is empirical evidence concerning the relation between the improvement of students' employability and satisfaction with internships. Chen et al. (2018) consider that satisfaction with an internship is related with the student's preparation to access the job market. Fang et al. (2004) have also noted that students who have done an internship receive more job offers than those who have not done one. All this means that the students feel a greater satisfaction with doing an internship. Nonetheless, in spite of their being a generalised agreement in the literature about the positive effect which the improvement of employability has on students' satisfaction with internships, surprisingly there exist some studies which indicate that this relation is not significant, as is the case of the study of Gupta et al. (2010).

In summary, the aim of this study is to analyze the influence of EI on the development of internships. Specifically, this study tries to examine the relationships among EI, internships, employability and satisfaction.

3. Method

This research is approached through the implementation of a structural model which was proposed after doing an exploratory analysis of the data. The data were analysed with SPSS and AMOS. Based on these comments, this work means to study EI's indirect effect on the improvement of students' employability levels. The following hypothesis are therefore proposed:

H1. Emotional intelligence positively influences doing university students' internships.
H2. Internships positively influence the improvement of university students' employability.
H3. Doing internships influences the satisfaction that university students feel with themselves.
H4: The internships' improvement of employability influences students' satisfaction with them.

The subject population is made up of students who belong to two universities in Seville (Spain) (University of Sevilla y University of de Pablo de Olavide) and who did internships between the academic years 2015-2016 and 2018-2019. The students belonged to the Faculties of Business Studies, where internships are very important given the very nature of the studies done there. The students of these Faculties have to do internships in the last course of each degree. They are approximately 300 hours long, which means being in the collaborating entity between three and four months. A questionnaire was designed with socio-demographic and other items related to EI, internships, employability and satisfaction. The items were measured with a 7-point Likert scale (1 indicating "totally disagree" and 7 "totally agree"). The scales had been tested and validated in previous studies. In the block of EI appeared items which refer to the five categories established by Goleman (1995) for the study of EI: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy and social skills. These items were adapted from Goleman (1995, 2001). The following block grouped together aspects referring to the students doing internships. The items of this block were obtained from Moghaddam (2013) and Zhang (2012). The items of the block about the improvement of employability were adapted from the studies of D'Abate et al. (2009), Gupta et al. (2010) and Hergert (2009). Finally, the block of satisfaction with the internship was adapted from Gupta et al. (2010). Table 1 shows the description of the observable variables which define each latent construct. The questionnaire was sent by email to the students who had done an internship during the last four academic courses and was sent during June and July 2019. A reminder email was sent several times in order to get higher response rate. A total of 2147 questionnaires were sent. 240 valid questionnaires were returned: a response rate of 11.2%.

Table 1. Latent variables and their observable indicators

Latent variables	Indicators
Emotional intelligence	EI1. When I note that I'm sagging, I tend to take a brief rest to increase my energy
	EI2. I'm able to identify and recognise my mood changes and errors
	EI3. I generally feel prepared to control my impulses and my emotions in any situation
	EI4. I quickly recover after a setback
	EI5. I easily find the positive side of any situation
	EI6. When I'm discouraged, inner dialogue helps me to recuperate my confidence
	EI7. I help my colleagues to feel better in situations which are unfavourable for them
	EI8. I recognise others' emotions and feelings
	EI9. I generally seek the collaboration of other colleagues when working
	EI10. I've got the skill to create relations and bond understanding with other people
Doing internships	INT1. Internships give the opportunity to develop professional knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired during the career
	INT2. Internships serve to supplement and broaden academic learning
	INT3. Internships get students closer to real professional scenarios
	INT4. Internships facilitate the development of good work habits
	INT5. Internships enable increasing self-confidence
	INT6. Internships enable developing a greater sense of responsibility
Improvement of employability	EMP1. Internships are an instrument which facilitates employment
	EMP2. An internship is ideal to develop a long-term professional career
	EMP3. Internships enable getting to know people who will be a good network of contracts for the development of my professional career
	EMP4. Internships enable increasing knowledge of the work market and possible professional prospects
	EMP5. Internships enable getting more employment offers and more quickly than not doing an internship
Satisfaction with internships	SAT1. I'm satisfied with the experience obtained to begin a working career
	SAT2. I'm satisfied with the variety of tasks that I did in my internship
	SAT3. I'm satisfied with the type of work that I did in my internship
	SAT4. I'm satisfied with the autonomy that I had in my internship to carry out tasks
	SAT5. Generally speaking, I'm satisfied with the internship

4. Results

The sample was configurated by men (44.2%) and women (55.8%). The distribution of responses among the last four academic courses was 21.7%, 20.4%, 18.7% and 39.2%, respectively. For most of the respondents this was their first work experience (65.8%). 51.2% of the students were not at that moment working and 48.8% were. The reliability of the scales was analysed via the Cronbach Alpha statistic and KMO (0.908). Having analysed the rotated component matrix, it was opted for removing item EI1 of the emotional intelligence construct. Four latent variables have been defined in this model along with their indicators. The proposed structural model appears in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Specification of the structural equations model in this study
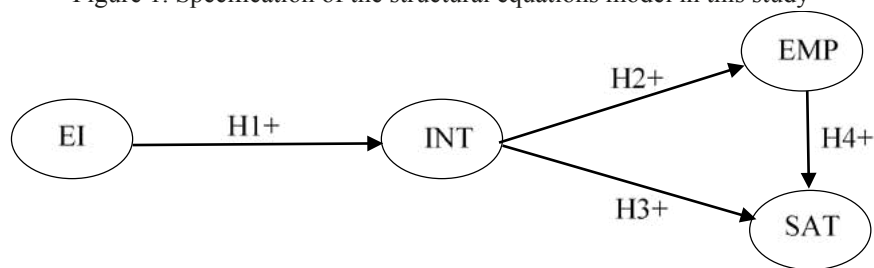
EI = Emotional Intelligence
INT = Internship
EMP = Employability
SAT = Satisfaction

The multivariate normality of the data had been previously checked for the estimation of the model's parameters. The results indicated that the variables did not fulfil the property of multivariate normality. It was opted for eliminating two variables whose critical ratios of asymmetry and kurtosis were very high; specifically, variables EI7 and EI8. In spite of all this and given that the size of the sample was 240 observations, it was opted for using the maximum likelihood estimation as this method can facilitate the convergence of the estimations even in the absence of multivariate normality (Lévy et al., 2006). Having carried out the maximum likelihood estimation method, it was also opted for eliminating the relation existing between the employability variable and the satisfaction variable, given that it did not turn out to be significant. It was opted as well for eliminating the observable variable EI10 due to its standardised factor loading being very low. Once the model had been re-specified, the procedure was carried out again.

To evaluate the model we have separately assessed the measurement model and the structural model. The reliability of the items was measured checking that the standardised factor loadings were over 0.5 (Chau, 1997). Table 2 shows the standardised estimations of the observable variables, Cronbach's α coefficient, the composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE). We note that all the standardised coefficients are above 0.5, except that corresponding to the variable EI9. However, for technical reasons it has been preferred not to eliminate this observable variable, as it importantly reflects the social skills of the individuals.

Table 2. Standardised estimations for observable indicators, Cronbach's α values,
convergent validity, and reliability assessment

Factors	λ	Cronbach's α values	CR (Composite Realiability)	AVE
Emotional intelligence		0.865	0.820	0.406
EI2	0.508			
EI3	0.688			
EI4	0.757			
EI5	0.788			
EI6	0.693			
EI9	0.368			
EI11	0.547			
Internship development		0.953	0.951	0.765
INT1	0.833			
INT2	0.900			
INT3	0.909			
INT4	0.872			
INT5	0.861			
INT6	0.869			
Improving Emploement		0.933	0.930	0.727
EMP1	0.826			
EMP2	0.823			
EMP3	0.901			
EMP4	0.868			
EMP5	0.842			
Satisfaction		0.958	0.957	0.816
SAT1	0.934			
SAT2	0.948			
SAT3	0.956			
SAT4	0.750			
SAT5	0.913			

Source: own elaboration. CR=composite reliability. AVE=average variance extracted

We see in Table 2 that all the values of the CR index are above 0.7, so the reliability of the constructs is verified. The convergent validity and the discriminant validity have been measured. The convergent validity has been checked via the average variance extracted (AVE). Values above 0.5 confirm that there is convergent validity (Byrne, 1994). The discriminant validity is the degree via which a measurement does not strongly correlate with other measurements which are supposed to differ between each other. For this reason, the matrix of correlations between the constructs has been calculated and it has been checked that the correlations are less than the square root of the AVE. The data can be seen in Table 3. We note that all the correlations between constructs are less than the corresponding values of the AVE for each construct, so we can corroborate that the factors are measuring different concepts.

Table 3. Discriminant validity of measures

	EI	**INT**	**EMP**	**SAT**
EI	**0.637**			
INT	0.334	**0.874**		
EMP	0.252	0.756	**0.853**	
SAT	0.182	0.545	0.412	**0.903**

Source: own elaboration. The bold numbers of the diagonal are the square roots of the AVE. Off-diagonal elements are correlations between constructs.

On the other hand, the evaluation of the structural model has been analysed checking the value of the squared correlation for each endogenous construct and verifying that the factor loadings between constructs are significant. Table 4 shows the estimations of the model's parameters, the standard error, the critical proportion and the standardised estimations of the parameters. The modification indices were taken into consideration for the improvement of the model fit. In the first three rows we see the factor loadings between constructs. We check that these loadings are significant as the critical proportion is over two. We also corroborate this through the associated p-value, which shows that the loadings between constructs are significant at a confidence level of 99.9%. The values of the coefficient of the squared correlation are also high, so we the validity of the structural model is verified.

Table 4. Parameter estimates

			Estimate	**S.E.**	**C.R.**	**Standardised estimate**	**P**
INT	<---	EI	0.533	0.118	4.533	0.334	***
EMP	<---	INT	0.717	0.063	11.375	0.756	***
SAT	<---	INT	0.660	0.076	8.635	0.545	***
EI2	<---	EI	0.619	0.087	7.102	0.508	***
EI3	<---	EI	0.888	0.095	9.388	0.688	***
EI4	<---	EI	1.004	0.099	10.189	0.757	***
EI5	<---	EI	1.175	0.113	10.432	0.788	***
EI6	<---	EI	1			0.693	
EI9	<---	EI	0.512	0.102	5.006	0.368	***
EI11	<---	EI	0.748	0.099	7.579	0.547	***
INT1	<---	INT	1			0.833	
INT2	<---	INT	1.056	0.042	25.315	0.900	***
INT3	<---	INT	0988	0.054	18.307	0.909	***
INT4	<---	INT	0.923	0.054	17.077	0.872	***
INT5	<---	INT	0.950	0.057	16.651	0.861	***
INT6	<---	INT	0.905	0.054	16.859	0.869	***
EMP1	<---	EMP	1			0.826	
EMP2	<---	EMP	1.008	0,051	19.579	0.823	***
EMP3	<---	EMP	1.048	0.060	17.374	0.901	***
EMP4	<---	EMP	0.981	0.060	16.413	0.868	***
EMP5	<---	EMP	1.075	0.069	15.667	0.842	***
SAT1	<---	SAT	1			0.934	
SAT2	<---	SAT	1.049	0.036	29.543	0.948	***
SAT3	<---	SAT	1.027	0.034	30.5	0.956	***
SAT4	<---	SAT	0.766	0.049	15.745	0.750	***
SAT5	<---	SAT	0.976	0.038	25.63	0.913	***

Source: own elaboration. S.E. = Standard Error. C.R. = Critical Ratio. P = p-value

In Table 4, we also see that all the factor loadings are significant. From these results we observe the estimated structural model in Figure 2.

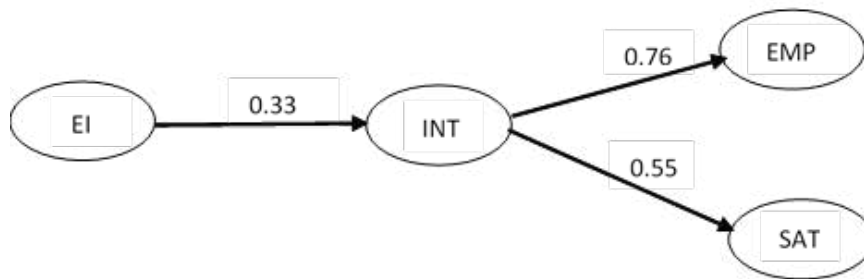Figure 2. Standardised coefficients of the relationships

Table 5 shows the variance of each observable variable which is explained by the construct (R2), which is understood as the measurement's reliability. This variance is obtained as the squared multiple correlations of the observable variables. Values less than 0.1, although they are significant, contribute very little information. For example, the variable Satisfaction explains 83.3% of the variability of the variable SAT5, so the percentage of variability not explained by this variable is 16.7%. We see that the variables which contribute most information are EI5 for EI, INT3 for doing internships, EMP3 for the improvement of employability and SAT3 for satisfaction with internships.

Table 5. Explained variance of endogenous variables

		Estimate		Estimate
INT		0.111	EMP1	0.683
SAT		0.297	EMP2	0.677
EMP		0.572	EMP3	0.811
EI2		0.259	EMP4	0.753
EI3		0.473	EMP5	0.709
EI4		0.573	SAT1	0.872
EI5		0.621	SAT2	0.900
EI6		0.481	SAT3	0.914
EI9		0.136	SAT4	0.562
EI11		0.300	SAT5	0.833
INT1		0.693		
INT2		0.810		
INT3		0.826		
INT4		0.761		
INT5		0.742		
INT6		0.756		

In relation with the estimated model's goodness of fit, a series of measurements has been obtained which are shown in Table 6. This type of measurements refers to the absolute fit, the incremental fit and the model's parsimony.

Table 6. Fit indices for the structural equations model

χ2	χ²/df	RMSEA	NFI	NNFI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	PNFI
429.217 (220 df) p-value=0.000	1.951	0.063	0.917	0.951	0.957	0.866	0.832	0.797

The χ2 statistic indicates if the discrepancy between the matrix of the original data and the reproduced matrix is significant or not. In this case, the p-value indicates the rejection of this hypothesis. However, it is important to highlight that the value of the χ2 statistic is very much influenced by the sample size, the model's complexity and by the violation of the supposition of multivariate normality. For this reason, AMOS uses other global fit measurements. Some authors consider the χ2/df quotient as a global fit measurement of the model (Byrne, 1994). According to these authors, values under two are indicators of a good fit of the data. In our case, the χ2/df quotient gives a result of 1.951,

which indicates a good fit of the data. The rest of the measurements have values within the limits, which means a good fit of the data. The confidence interval for RMSEA was (0.054, 0.072). The results obtained support the first three hypotheses but not the fourth (Table 7).

Table 7. Results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	H1: Emotional Intelligence → Internship	Supported
H2	H2: Internship → Employment	Supported
H3	H3: Internship → Satisfaction	Supported
H4	H4: Employment → Satisfaction	Not supported

5. Discussion

In spite of academic intelligence not being enough to get success in life (Goleman, 2000), the majority of educational systems continue prioritising its development over EI. This work contributes to the scant literature existing about the influence of EI on university students' internships. Although EI has been widely studied in the university field (Keefer et al., 2012), there are very few works about the influence of EI on an element which has taken on great importance in recent years in educational institutions: internships. The literature has confirmed that EI has influenced the achievements of university students (Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2010). These achievements are related with a series of dimensions such as self-awareness, the handling of emotions, empathy, social relations, etc., which are found to be associated with EI (Hergert, 2009). In this sense different studies have shown that students who do different subjects have different levels of EI (D'Abate et al., 2009). Even students of diverse scientific branches show different levels of EI (Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2010). Also, EI differs between graduates and students (Clark et al., 2003). However, very few studies have been done concerning EI in students' internships.

From the results attained in this work it can be stated that students' EI positively and directly influences doing university students' internships. In turn, these results indicate that doing students' internships positively and directly influences the improvement of employability and the students' level of satisfaction with the internships, as it has been posed in other studies (Moghaddam, 2013). The first three hypotheses proposed in this work are therefore accepted.

The results also enable us to state that EI has an indirect influence on the improvement of employability (Vázquez-Cano et al., 2019). This relation is moderated through the variable doing internships; the same occurs between EI and satisfaction with internships. Going deeper into the results attained in this study, the EI in the students who do internships is more influenced by personal competences, such as self-motivation and self-control, than by social competences. This may be due to the little experience of the students in the labour market. In this market, people have many contacts and this lack of experience may bring about a lower impact on social competences. It also has to be borne in mind that university students' internships tend to be a period of not very extensive development, which makes the relations with the other workers not be long-lasting.

On the other hand, in the case of doing internships, what students most value is that the internships allow them to get close to real professional scenarios. However, what they least value is that internships permit them to develop the knowledge that they have acquired during their career. This again somewhat corroborates the gap which exists between the universities' training profiles and the firms' needs. It is therefore necessary for there to be a greater connection between universities and the labour market to reduce this gap. The results of this work also show that an improvement in the students' employability does not significantly influence their satisfaction with the internship. This result is different from that achieved in many other works in the literature, but it is in line with that of Gupta et al. (2010). The reason for this result may be that satisfaction is not a unidimensional concept, rather it is made up of various factors. This result permits it to be stated that to improve the opportunities of the work market is not a synonym of satisfaction with an internship. Continuing with Gupta et al. (2010), this result may also be due to future employment not being an overriding concern for the students. The acquiring of skills is more important for them than obtaining a future job. Thus, to improve the attraction of internships it is necessary for educational institutions to ensure that students have experiences to compete in the work market. EI directly influences internships and indirectly influences the improvement of employability and satisfaction with internships. This means that those students who are emotionally more intelligent will have greater possibilities of success in the labour market and will feel more satisfied with doing an internship. These results are in line with that obtained by Goleman (2001), who pointed out that EI is a predictor of the success of university students. In this case, our study has centred on internships, unlike other studies which have been based on specific subjects and in which the EI levels were different according to the subjects studied.

Emotional competences are not innate, rather they are learnt throughout life and must be trained for their greater development (Domínguez, 2018). This is why it is important to implement EI development programmes not only at the university level but also at all the educational levels.

In the case of internships, the student plays the role of a worker in the firm. The same as any other worker, in the job there is a series of techniques which can be learnt and improved to reinforce the working life of the workers and

thus increase their performance and productivity (Ayuso, 2016). Likewise, EI enables workers to be more effective when resolving conflicts. This has meant that many firms have recently begun to give more importance to EI as many people do not consider a salary increase to be the sole motivation, there also being other aspects of importance for them, such as a pleasant atmosphere, flexible working hours, family reconciliation, etc. It is therefore very important for firms to implement EI development programmes as this is going to enable workers to handle their own and other people's emotions with a view to generating positive results.

In this work, it is also concluded that EI indirectly influences the improvement of students' employability. This result corroborates that attained by Clark et al. (2003), who consider that graduate students with greater levels of EI will be more sought by firms and will be more at the ready to develop work in which communication, motivation and teamwork are required. In this sense, firms' selection processes should not be based uniquely on intellectual aspects but ought to also include procedures for identifying those individuals who are emotionally more intelligent.

6. Conclusion

This research shows the importance of internships which enable students to connect the learning of classes with a work environment, to develop practical experiences, to obtain more familiarity with the work market, to achieve opportunities to establish contacts with other people and entrepreneurs of the sector and to help to clarify career expectations (Chen et al., 2018). The Bologna Agreement about the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) underscores a series of aspects of students, such as teamwork, their adaptation to a changing environment, their skills and capacities to speak in public, write and present reports, the promotion of creativity, the development of leadership, etc. Many of these aspects have to do with the concept of EI.

EI must be taken into consideration by educational institutions and managers. It must be part of the student training process due to its influence on their behaviour.

Like any other work, this study has its limitations. The data of this work comes from students of Business Studies Faculties in which internships tend to be compulsory due to the very nature of the studies taught in these faculties. This compulsory character may make the results different from those which could have been obtained with other students whose internships were not compulsory. It would be interesting to apply this study to students from other faculties. Other limitation is related to the sample size. Although it is enough for this purpose, a larger sample size would be suitable in order to generalize the findings. This work has specified a model to measure the effect of EI on university students' internships. Given that EI directly influences doing internships and indirectly influences the improvement of employability and the satisfaction of students, it would be very interesting for institutions or educational centres to implement emotional development programmes to teach the competences that many firms are currently seeking. This would enable students to have greater success in the future, as they would have more capacity to adapt their knowledge to different tasks. To this effect, it is paramount for teachers to have a solid base for them to explain how the training of the handling of skills increases EI. To sum up, this work contributes importantly to the development of knowledge about EI in educational systems, highlighting the need to set up EI training programmes both in university centres and in firms due to the influence that EI has on university students' internships

7. References

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