


Title:

Giving voice to educational professionals of primary and secondary school students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: a qualitative study


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Abstract

Students with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) are growing in number and affecting school functioning on many levels, resulting in the need to employ many personal and institutional educational resources. A brief review of this issue is provided, the findings revealing a lack of research that gives a voice to the different actors in the school community. The aim of this study was to examine the emotions, expectations and thoughts of these professionals in order to improve the multiservice intervention provided. Four online focus groups were conducted: FG1 nine experts from the Educational Resource Centre for Developmental and Behavioural Disorders, FG2 seven school psychologists, FG3 eight primary school teachers and FG4 seven secondary school teachers. A qualitative inductive thematic analysis was undertaken, revealing three major themes: the emotions of the teachers (i.e. the blocking emotions of fear, insecurity or sadness); the teacher-student relationship (i.e. the importance of creating a bond); and the family-teacher relationship (i.e. the difficulties and challenges). Our findings suggest that most of the participants emphasized the importance of creating spaces to enable personal and networked reflection with the wider educational community in order to be able to think about, mentally prepare for and address these complex children appropriately.

Keywords:

behaviour regulation difficulties; teacher-student relationship; socio-educational network; focus group; psychopedagogical teams; primary school; secondary school

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in the classroom have grown significantly in recent years (Rabadán et al. 2012)ⁱ. Angulo et al. (2008) stated that the causes of this increase are due to the various social and cultural changes that have occurred in recent decades. Other authors place a greater emphasis on parenting practices (Hipwell et al., 2008; Pajer et al. 2008), the characteristics of the parents (Neece et al., 2012; Amrock et al., 2014; Vallotton et al., 2016; Gulenc et al., 2018; Flour et al., 2019) or those of the children or adolescents themselves (Fairchild et al. 2019).

Some research has investigated the emergence of such behavioural regulation difficulties during school age and adolescence and their relationship with these children's attachment experiences with their mothers, as well as with the relationship established with their school or high-school teachers (O'Connor, et. al. 2012). In respect of this, the Minnesota longitudinal study appears to support an association between the type of attachment that has been established with the mother in early childhood and the later emergence of externalizing behaviours such as impulsivity and aggression and internalizing behaviours such as depression or social inhibition (Sroufe et al., 2005). In a recent study, Balart, Sadurní and Pérez-Burriel (2021) conclude that a large number of the students referred to intensive educational services due to EBD in Catalonia (Spain) hail from adverse social and cultural backgrounds. These authors detected a significant presence of risk indicators for maltreatment, abuse or lack of protection, including the following: parental neglect, lack of parental control, inadequate educational guidelines, presence of family economic and organizational difficulties within the household, and a history of violence or sexual abuse.

Attachment theory has also been used to study the relevance of having a protective and secure framework provided by parents' love and affection when it comes to children's and adolescents' development (Bowlby, 1969). Since Ainsworth's research (1978, 1979), abundant literature has been produced on the parental skills of sensitivity and emotional regulation necessary for the child to develop a secure attachment. According to Geddes (2006), this secure internal model allows the child to face the world and properly adapt to the school environment. It also provides the

necessary motivation for learning based on self-confidence and trust in the teacher as a helpful and reachable figure. In contrast, children who have developed an internal model of insecure attachment, whether avoidant or ambivalent, display severe difficulties when it comes to placing their trust in others, either because their parents may seem inaccessible or rejecting in the first case, or because they can only offer intermittent and unpredictable protection and affection in the second, all of which may very well lead to conflicts in peer social interactions and the teacher-pupil relationship at school (O'Connor, et.al. 2012).

Although the teacher-student relationship has not been as thoroughly studied as that of the mother/father-child, there is enough evidence to suggest that children also look to teachers as a source of safety and protection (Cozzolino, 2013; Geddes, 2006; Pianta, 1999). From the point of view of attachment theory, children who can make use of the teacher as a secure anchor will be able to develop a positive view of the social environment at school, this also promoting their social development and peer network (O'Connor, et al., 2014). In addition, some research suggests that a teacher-student relationship model characterized by conflict and the absence of affective closeness and synchrony leads to externalized or internalized behavioural problems (Henricsson & Rydell, 2004). Hamre & Pianta (2006) concluded that the type of relationship students build with their teacher is essential to their academic success and helps them feel more competent and more connected with their peers.

Further research also suggests that the role the teacher adopts towards the student at school and the type of relationship that is established between them can mitigate the effect of insecure attachment developed with the parents at home and have a positive impact on the child's academic achievements (O'Connor & Mc. Carteny, 2007). Bolea & Gallardo (2012) highlighted the importance that children might find in orientation, guidance, emotional stability and a feeling of trust and approval from teachers and educators or other significant adult people. For this reason, they propose the creation of a space and time within the educational institution so that the teacher may be able to promote a framework for understanding disruptive behaviours and create a

favourable environment where BCR students can also be recognized as children in need of assistance.

The role of socio-educational networks in attention provided to EBD students

The educational response to BCR students must, according to Balart (2018), adopt a broad, firm and consensual approach capable of supporting the entire intervention process. Networking is understood as a stable means of collaboration for addressing common socio-educational objectives, as well as formulating and implementing programmes that develop their own structure of coordination and action at a community level (Agranoff & McGuire 2001).

Saumell et al. (2011) stressed that the objectives of the socio-educational network must distinguish between three different levels: a) general intervention, which would include all the students at the school. On this level, a school climate that favours positive coexistence among all school users must be achieved, with predictable, coherent rules that generate a positive environment (Horner & Sugai, 2008); b) the second level, which corresponds to the programming of educational strategies and teaching interventions within the classroom aimed at maintaining appropriate student behaviours within the group or class; and finally, c) individual interventions consisting in providing a concrete educational response to a specific student.

For Rabadán et al. (2011), educational intervention aimed at children with behaviour problems in the classroom must be based on three basic axes: 1) the student's academic performance; 2) their personal development and social integration within the class; and 3) controlling maladjusted behaviours. The teacher will have to achieve these objectives by promoting cooperative activities that allow the development of interpersonal skills and helping the student to develop self-control and anger management techniques.

As can be gleaned from the above, there is no single unanimous path to consider. Despite the fact that a solid line of research exists noting the importance of the teacher-student relationship and the role of the socio-educational network in assisting BCR students, there is still a lack of research that investigates and gives a voice to the different actors of the school community. It would also

be of interest to determine the emotions that children whose behaviours can alter the classroom atmosphere arouse among teachers, pedagogues, school counsellors, psychologists and other special services professionals, and to obtain knowledge of how they perceive the possible educational alternatives and how to help and redirect these children and their families. This is the overall aim of the present research paper.

Research objectives

The purpose of this research is to analyse the perception that primary and secondary school teachers, as well as various professionals in the socio-educational network, have of the types of educational attention required by children with regulation and impulse control difficulties. Their aim is to analyse the emotions that dealing with these children arouse in them and the expectations they have about the type of relationship that should exist between the teacher and the student and between the teacher and their family. The ultimate goal is to obtain knowledge that allows teachers' interventions to be redirected and maintained when they have BCR students in their classrooms.

Methodology

Data collection

The focus groups were conducted in June 2021, led by the first (IB) and second (MP-B) authors. The participants were chosen by means of intentional sampling of professionals with a high level of training and experience in the subject under study. The groups were carried out online with Google Meet. They were recorded and literally transcribed using the Sonix Editor program. To lead the group, the authors made a script with different questions to encourage dialogue built from the original theoretical framework.

Participants

Four groups made up of very diverse groups of professionals were formed to obtain information regarding the phenomenon in an exploratory way.

GIVING VOICE PROFESSIONALS SCHOOL OF EBD STUDENTS

Table 1 Profile of focus groups

GROUP	PARTICIPANTS
Focus group 1	FG1 - Nine experts in educational intervention with EBD students : Educational Resource Centre for Developmental and Behavioural Disorders (CRETDIC). CRETDIC is an advisory support service for teaching and educational services that promotes the inclusion, participation and learning of students with developmental and behavioural disorders. The duration of the session was 1 hour 32 mins.
Focus group 2	FG2 - Seven female school psychologists from teams that provide advice for both primary and secondary schools, focusing on attending to students with learning support needs. This team is the one that requests interventions from CRETDIC. FG2 consisted of two female team directors and professionals with different degrees of work experience and attention provided for the students under study. The duration of the session was 1 hour 38 mins.
Focus group 3	FG3 - Eight female primary school teachers, three of them school principals and two teachers whose work involves providing support for students with intensive learning support needs in regular classrooms via, what is known as Intensive Support for Inclusive Education (SIEI). This resource is intended for students with special learning needs associated with severe mental disorders who need comprehensive and intensive support on a temporary basis, two other participants work in the Integrated Support Classrooms (AIS). The other participant was a female special education teacher from a regular school. The duration of the focus group was 1 hour 40 mins.
Focus group 4	FG4 - Seven secondary school teachers, one of them a school principal, a head of studies, four educational counsellors and an AIS teacher, also specializing in Educational Counselling. The duration of the focus group was 1 hour 37 mins.

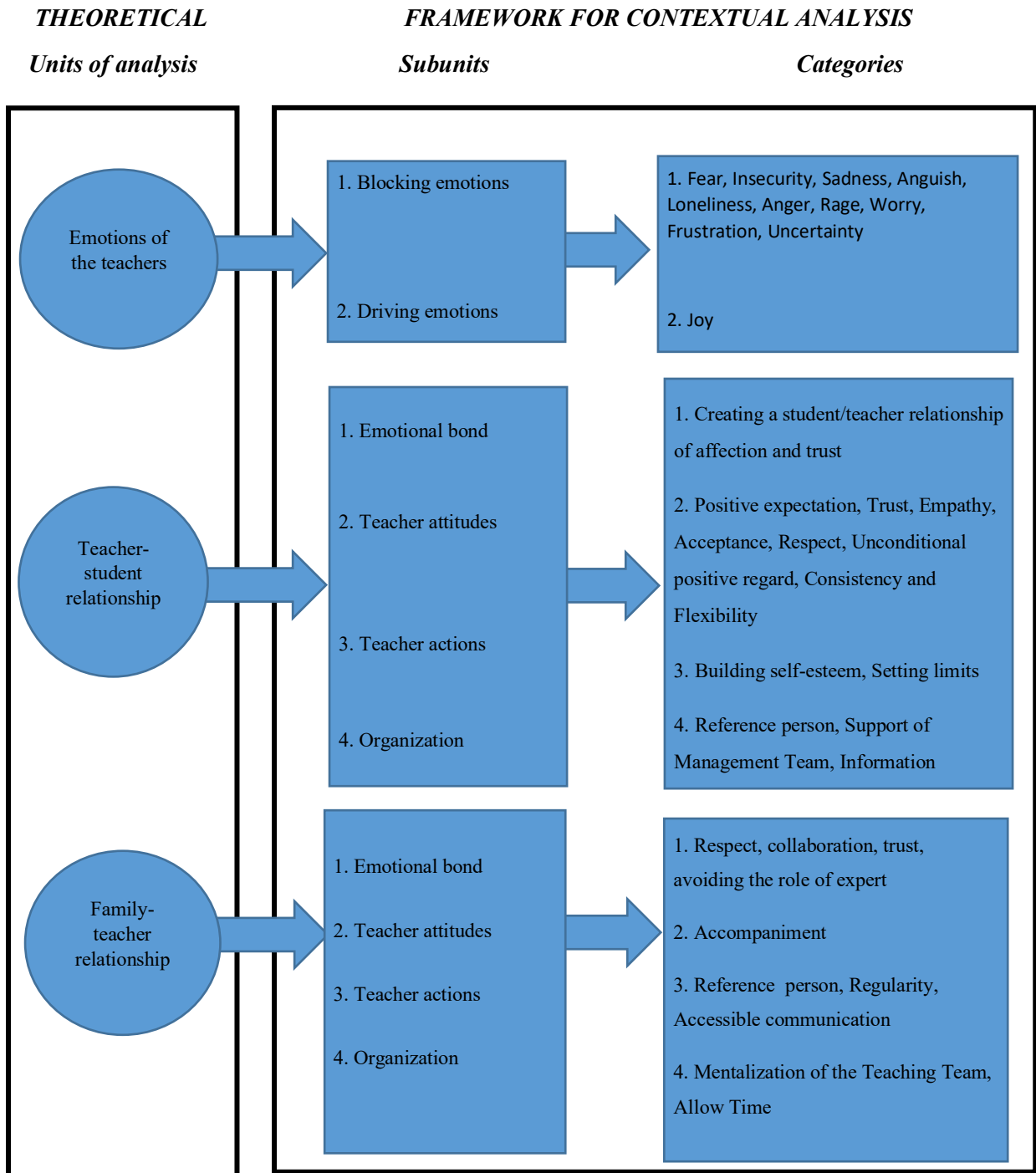
Design and methodology

The transcripts were analysed following an inductive thematic analysis. The Atlas ti. program was used to analyse the text by creating groupings of citations on coinciding topics and initial codes for the different categories. The first author validated the relevance of each quote within the assigned topic. This relevance was refined through discussion with the other authors to verify that these groupings were accurate and valid representations of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Chiovitti & Piran, 2003). In a second analysis, a word count was performed within each group in order to help verify the consistency of the analysis system and observe similarities and differences between the different focus groups. Finally, as themes and their relationships with one another were developed, the authors referred back to the literature to consider how emerging conceptualizations were or were not supported by existing theory.

Results

Following analysis of the different focus groups, the results were organized around three thematic axes: teachers' emotions; the teacher-student relationship; and the teacher-family relationship, as shown in ***Chart 1***. The results obtained for each of these axes are presented in this section.

Chart 1: Units, Sub-units and Categories



Teachers' emotions

Blocking Emotions:

Generally speaking, all groups agreed that teachers **feel frightened when** they become aware of the fact that they will have a BCR student in their classrooms, "*triggered by uncertainty and not knowing what to do*". Moreover, in relation to school reports between teachers, they expressed some caution about spreading fear among the community, such as in this case: "*We should be more vigilant about the information that is given in school reports and avoid, for instance: 'Oh my God! Just you wait and see! God help you!'* Such comments lead to fear setting in."

They also highlighted different types of fear:

- Fear of getting it wrong, **insecurity**; in this case, they question their own ability to provide an adequate response. These students can arouse doubts in teachers about their own self-competence, no matter how experienced their background is, "*fear is that feeling that makes your image of your own prestige and professional competence falter*", "*fear of not being able to have the necessary tools to address the attention they require*". In other cases, there is a lack of prior experience and training "*professionals who are not used to dealing with this type of student. Poor prior knowledge or insufficient training make them feel uncertain and fearful*".
- Secondary school teachers fear that the student with behaviour regulation difficulties will cause them to lose authority in front of the other students: "*You are facing a group of students and you cannot lose control of the class. How do I manage it?*"
- Fear of the child him or herself, "*We feel the fear of being attacked, the fear of aggression; therefore, it is a real physical fear*". The secondary school teachers emphasized this difference in the primary and secondary stages, "*in primary education, the realization that the implemented techniques do not lead to the expected results may*

GIVING VOICE PROFESSIONALS SCHOOL OF EBD STUDENTS

very well lead to more anxiety and frustration, whereas in secondary education the fear of a now grown-up student takes over”.

- *"The fear that something terrifying might happen, that a student might assault a classmate, that he or she might harm someone or him-herself."*

In some teachers, this feeling of fear *"turns into deep **sadness**, there are some teachers who end up taking sick leave, who end up feeling sad or even guilty when they realize that they can't make any progress", "I'm not joking when I say that there are many professionals who just take sick leave. I mean there's discomfort, a lot of discomfort”.* Secondary education teachers also state *"feeling worn out and tired by the situation; these students eventually take a toll on you."*

Anxiety is also very present among teachers and manifests itself emotionally in a wide variety of ways. Sometimes **anguish** is linked to the fact of feeling alone, insecure: *"this feeling of **loneliness**, of being alone in the face of a major difficulty."*

Anger and **rage** against the child, against the system, against the school administrators, against the guidance professionals etc. were also mentioned. Sometimes the feeling of **frustration** is augmented because they have tried and failed to get the expected results.

The secondary education group added **the feeling of rejection** towards the student *"the first feeling was that of a deep rejection; now it is different, but at first I didn't understand anything, I just felt rejection when I realized that he was hurting others with his actions"*.

These feelings can be accompanied by concern *"towards the rest of the group. How will this behaviour affect the rest of the class?", "How will I implement the necessary actions that have to be taken with this child? How will I help them integrate into the class?"*

Another comment worth highlighting is *"**uncertainty** over what will happen. There are days when things have worked very well and everyone feels this positive reinforcement. And there are others when it's difficult to know what has happened and it all blows apart in a way and with such an intensity that it causes many confronted feelings". "It creates ambivalent emotions for*

teachers, while some seem to develop certain feelings of protection towards the student, others show a great lack of empathy towards this same student and sometimes even tell you that this student should not be there”.

Driving Emotions:

The participants emphasized that a transformation process begins when networking can be established: *“depending on the degree of support that teachers get, there’s a process of transforming this anguish into a concern or interest in overcoming it and becoming better positioned with regard to this problem, of investigating and turning it into a challenge”.* Starting an intervention by understanding the child's discomfort and where that behaviour comes from, in order to place oneself somewhere else *"moving from the feeling that their behaviour is challenging us, to knowing that such challenge is not intended to be personal”.* In this second instance, *“laughter and other positive elements may appear”.*

Other teachers expressed feelings of **joy** from the very beginning: *“As far as my emotions are concerned, what I feel is happiness and I’m eager to see what will happen, to see what will come from a more joyful outlook", "joy and drive to help these young people get ahead are also there”.*

The Teacher/Student Relationship

The teacher/student relationship is thought to contribute to the success of the intervention:

Establishing the teacher/student bond

Participants clearly prioritized the importance of **creating a student/teacher relationship comprised of affection and trust (expressed as a bond)** in order to achieve some kind of progress. This bond *“does not need to be something ‘innate’ it can be learned”;* *“we all carry a burden of relationships, a baggage of how we establish bonds, and so do the students. If we have students from environments that haven’t favoured the creation of such bonds, uprooted students, we will have to enter this space, because they will not be able to do it alone”.* With such students, this process and reflection are often needed to be able to establish a strategy that facilitates this

connection, although at the beginning there might be no reciprocity. "A *specific know-how on how to bond must be established.*" In this respect, "*we can act more proactively, be crystal clear with them, anticipate most of the issues, speaking directly with them and getting them involved*"; "*We must generate times, spaces, positions and attitudes.*"

Teacher attitudes:

Positive expectations and trust on the part of the adult, "*expectations, which are associated with values beyond professional skills, based on a real interest in education, because we believe that education and bonding change us*". "*It makes it easier for there to be a person truly convinced that this relationship can be transforming, that it can create the conditions for the student to improve*". For their part, students understand the authenticity in these expectations "*because in this relationship there is something that the students grasp, true interest*", "*these students, who find establishing bonds so difficult, have a kind of highly effective detector for distinguishing between true and false connections*".

The teacher being able to establish a connection in which the adult can perceive the suffering of the BCR student. "*Having a certain **empathic capacity** that will allow them to see the boy or girl who has difficulty with regulation as someone who is suffering*".

Acceptance and respect: Validating the student's emotions, paying attention to them, allowing them some space, thus "*we're creating an environment of safety and trust*", "*the children must know that they are not being judged by the adult, but that the adult is really someone who embraces them as best he or she can*".

Unconditional positive regard, the feelings of esteem towards the child remain, they are stable, regardless of behaviours that may be reproved, "*Loving a child is about what and how we say something, about being sensitive for the sake of sensitiveness itself, about real feelings. It's not just pretending that you love him/her, even if he/she might be capable of disrupting a lesson or threatening you or calling you names, but showing and letting them know that you still love them. Whatever happens, I'll love you anyway.*"

Coherence and Flexibility *"sometimes the rigidity that we have also causes there to be things that hinder the relationship with the bond and we also have to break with these aspects and understand why we have this rigidity".*

The teacher's actions:

Fostering self-esteem *"often these children display very negative self-esteem and self-concept, therefore they also need someone who really believes in them. Having expectations and discovering their abilities and letting them know this".*

Setting achievable limits and commitments *"establishing limits and commitments goes hand in hand with this affective bond, respect and love; boundaries that, as an adult, you have clearly established and that you'll have to accurately negotiate with the child so that he or she knows exactly what is being asked of him or her".*

Organization of resources and supports

Generating the conditions that will allow **the homeroom teacher to be one binding them together** with the intention that *"this teacher may interpret, experience and accompany this student from another perspective that begins with this awareness of his or her suffering, adversities, discomfort"*. Gradually other people of reference will be incorporated to promote autonomy, *"we will create the conditions for this boy or girl to expand this bond that he or she has been able to build with the main person of reference."*

The secondary school teachers emphasized that, as compulsory schooling progresses, students go from spending many hours with the same homeroom teacher in primary school to less time with the homeroom teacher and the incorporation of many different professionals: *"This works against these boys and girls, who are getting older, and as they grow, so do their problems; I think it should be the other way around, the older they get, the more hours with their homeroom teachers"*.

Receive backing from the school administrators *“I would summarize what they need in a very simple sentence: we are here with you and for you. And that means "we are", not "I am", which also implies that there is in fact a school management team backing this process, that they understand that this child is also part of the school community, that they promote meeting spaces for teachers so that they are able to articulate what is helping them and what is not. And any prevention strategy that can be organized and planned”.*

Reorienting information transfer among teachers: *“More often than not, we make mistakes when transferring the information, which should be done without directly labelling or prejudging them; we should focus mainly on giving tips on how to act with the student, on transferring strategies and not just problems”.*

Creating a follow-up team and ensuring the student's care does not fall on a single person, *“It’s a shared responsibility”.*

Counting on the advice of professionals *“It’s difficult to bond with students we don’t know how to approach. We need some advice, because it’s not that you don’t want to establish a bond, but sometimes you just don’t know how to do it. And when you’ve been rejected, you too tend to reject. I mean that you have to be very stable and solid to be able to continue trying to get close to the student, even if they don’t want you to”.*

Promoting teacher stability *“One issue that makes it all even more difficult is the instability of the teaching teams in schools. Quite often we notice, especially in secondary education, that when there’s a good homeroom teacher who has bonded with the student, the following year, due to the school’s dynamics, they lose this person of reference and that means another loss for them, another grieving process”.*

The importance of dialogue with the entire class *“the processes of bonding with these students may generate conflicting positions among their classmates; that is, when certain types of mechanisms are established to connect with these children, the other students also raise some*

concerns, such as why this type of intervention is only done with certain students and not with all of them. There's a certain feeling and perception of injustice".

Family/School relationship

The teacher/family bond

As with the previous point, the importance of the teacher's **bond** with the family was prioritized by all groups, *"the child's improvement at school has been partly due to the bond established between the school and the family"*. The teachers stated that parents who have difficulties bonding are quite often the ones requiring further interventions in addition to the usual ones. It is worth highlighting how important it is that teachers get to know the families well and the type of relationship they have established with their own children to better understand the relationships that the child, in turn, establishes at school. *"We've established a certain link between the work of accompanying the student and the work of accompanying the family; in the professionals' view, a different approach should be taken in relation to these families, and a genuine interest taken in them"*. Once this bond of trust has been established between family and school, a new form of collaboration is established that always has a positive impact on the student: *"Then, the family listens to you differently because they are already more receptive, more open to new ideas."* *"The worst case scenario is when the family is absent."*

Teachers' attitudes:

Respect: *"You end up saying, this mother is doing her best and we know that she's not helping her son, but right now she also needs help as a mother."*

Collaboration and Complicity *"I think that the family should feel part of their children's educational process and be aware that we're all working in the same direction."*

GIVING VOICE PROFESSIONALS SCHOOL OF EBD STUDENTS

Trust: *“If you lose their trust, it's over! There'll be no way to get it back, or if there is, it will be very difficult! We keep saying it, trust is like lighting a match, if it goes out... You can't light it again, it's over!”*

Do not position yourself as an expert, avoid the role where you appear to be “teaching the parents”, and value what they already know about their children. If parents feel judged, questioned or challenged, the relationship will break. *“They might think they're being told that they're unworthy parents. That's very hard to accept!”*

Teachers' actions:

Welcoming and Accompanying, *“At some point, all families must be accompanied so that they can elaborate, so that they can somehow understand the situation of child's discomfort”.* In the same vein, it is worth mentioning the loneliness felt by these families, even if they are in contact with many professionals from different fields (health, education, social services, etc...).

Organization of resources and support:

Establishing a **reference person** that remains stable within the school environment *“At times I may be more likely to establish a bond with a family, sometimes my partner the counsellor may bond better with another one.”* Decide very carefully who that reference person should be and always use the support of counselling services to accompany him or her.

Regularity when holding meetings, and maintaining accessible and flexible **spaces for communication.** *“These families are not looking forward to the day of the meeting. We're talking about families that are constantly experiencing difficult situations at home. You should open the door for them, be close so that there's a dialogue and clarity”.* In order for adequate communication to be established, the professional should be able to express him or herself in a way which is accessible to the characteristics and needs of the interlocutor. It is always about being able to expand the communication channels, the parent communication agenda may be insufficient and other forms of contact may be added.

Mentally preparing the teaching team providing attention for the child: *"I think it's very important to also mentally prepare the teachers and the monitoring team about what emotions families may feel when considering having another baby while at the same time experiencing the difficulty of already having a child with behaviour regulation difficulties."*

Giving them time: Adapting to the family's current situation. *"Dealing with a family that has already had a diagnosis or has been undergoing a year or two of treatment is nothing like dealing with one that, out of the blue, is being told that their child is not like the others".*

Discussion

The research carried out in the present study via the analysis of contributions from focus groups has allowed us to ascertain participants' perceptions regarding the emotions, competences, resources, strategies and needs that they experience when faced with the challenge of dealing with EBD children

As far as emotions are concerned, the study participants highlighted fear, insecurity, sadness and helplessness, anguish and feelings of loneliness, anger and rage, frustration and uncertainty from working with these children. Faced with such negative feelings, which could hinder and block their work as teachers, they have proposed the need for networking within the school community. Feeling heard by colleagues, administrators and educational psychologist advisers is perceived as a way of transforming those negative emotions into feelings of hope, optimism and joy. In this regard, and in accordance with proposals made by other researchers (Rosenthal & Jacobson 1968, Davis 2010, Bolea & Gallardo 2012), a network is perceived as a support that should help teachers reframe these blocking emotions and turn them into others that promote and enable the interventions with these students from a positive standpoint.

Our study also shows that the teacher's ability to create a relationship of affection and trust with the student is perceived by the participants in this research as the cornerstone on which to base any possibility of advancement with these children. This relationship is perceived as a "bond",

and the teacher as an attachment figure. To use Bowlby's terminology, the teacher could be seen as a subsidiary attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969). Prior research has linked the difficulties of behaviour regulation of school-age children with exposure to risk factors and even abuse (Abramovaite et al., 2015; Finzi-Dottan et al., 2014; Dixon et al., 2009; Maniglio, 2005; Balart, Sadurní and Pérez-Burriel, 2020). In the same vein, although students who already have securely based attachments can see the teacher from a perspective of help and availability, our research results show that, as other authors also maintain, it is necessary to enable teaching spaces and strategies that promote this type of relationship in children with insecure attachment representations (Geddes, 2006). According to the participants in this research, recognizing the difficulty that these children have in building a relationship of trust and how to accept that it will be no easy and automatic process, that there will be “advances and setbacks”, and that it will be necessary to “build and rebuild”, constitutes the first necessary step for teachers in this regard.

The construction of this matrix of affection and trust between the teacher and the student with regulation difficulties requires certain teaching skills that are valued by the participants in our research. The authenticity of the teacher and their capacity for empathy and listening skills, making the student feel accepted, understood and validated rather than judged and rejected are considered competences that promote and foster a secure-based relationship and can help the student to regulate his or her externalizing emotions and behaviours. These considerations are consistent with that stated by EE O'Connor et al. (2014), who found a relationship between secure attachment relationships that favour proximity and avoid conflict and a decrease in externalizing conducts and emotional deregulation.

Having a stable homeroom teacher throughout the schooling period, and monitoring team to support them, is another of the points that generated strong consensus among the focus groups. In line with attachment theory, to construct relationships of trust and security emphasis is placed on the importance of there being continuity for reference figures (Rutter, 2008). Even more so if we take into account that, as some research suggests, school-age children's care and protection experiences from both parents and teachers have a larger influence on their behaviour than that

of the early relationship the child has with his/her mother (Schuengel, 2012). Very recent research indicates that adolescents who remember having had a good relationship with their teacher at the age of ten are less involved in conflictive behaviour and criminal offences (Obsuth, et al. 2021).

Participants noted that the homeroom teacher's responsibility in providing this continuity and offering themselves as protection must, however, be shared by the school's educational plan and other professionals. In respect of this, the idea of receiving advice from professions that, in their expert eyes, can help solve problems or find other perspectives that facilitate change was also highly-valued. Our analysis of the debate also highlighted that, according to participants, one of these perspectives should focus on the teacher promoting sensitive and non-coercive limits, as well as the integration of children with behaviour problems within the affective matrix of the peer group and class cohesion. This is also consistent with the interesting contributions made by Doll (1996), who recommended that the teacher should work to improve the peer relationships of children with conflictive behaviours rather than implementing sanctions that might isolate them, such as being expelled.

Finally, this article highlights an issue which is not yet widely addressed in the literature: the need for the teacher to foster a relationship of trust not only with the student but also with their families. Among other topics, the non-systematic review article by Petrucci et al. (2016) deals with investigations that have examined the effects of the school context as a moderator in children and adolescents in situations of family and individual vulnerability. However, few studies refer to the importance of establishing relationships of trust and closeness with the families of children with behaviour problems. In this research, the results obtained in relation to families point to the need for the teacher to establish a constructive dialogue and a relationship of trust with them, avoiding playing the role of an expert and being capable of welcoming and accompanying them in their efforts to help these children.

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ⁱ The DSM-V includes different disorders presenting different levels of severity of impulse and behaviour control (APA, 2013) among children and adolescents, among which we can find the Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD); Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED) and Conduct and Antisocial Personality Disorders, among others.