



Colegio de Estudios
Superiores de Administración

From Emotion to Performance

The impact of the Use of Emotions, Regulation of Emotions, and the Toleration of Uncomfortable

Feelings on Organizational Operational Effectiveness

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1. Background and Context

Today's organizations operate in an environment characterized by globalization and digitalization, phenomena that have transformed the way of producing, competing and managing talent. These dynamics have made operational effectiveness, understood as the ability to use resources and processes efficiently, increasingly important and dependent not only on technological tools but also on how people adapt and respond to changing environments. More than 85% of companies recognize that technology adoption and digitalization are the main forces of change, increasing the need for flexible employees who are able to maintain productivity even under pressure. (Forum, 2023).

Hence, recent studies show how emotional intelligence (EI) has established itself as a fundamental resource for increasing productivity and organizational adaptability (Shah & Sah, 2024), capabilities that are essential for sustaining operational effectiveness in contexts of constant change. In today's environment, EI goes beyond mastery of technical tasks: it is a strategic driver for employees to manage their emotions, tolerate uncomfortable emotions, and use them as a source of motivation.

In the case of Colombia, this analysis takes on special relevance. The business landscape is made up of 93.7% micro-enterprises and 4.4% small businesses, which means that almost all organizations are MSMEs with limited resources to deal with volatile environments (Productiva, 2024). This business structure makes talent management and emotional skills even more important, as human capital is the main source of competitive advantage in organizations with scarce

resources. In addition, Colombia ranks 61st among 133 economies in the Global Innovation Index 2024, with strengths in innovation outcomes but lagging critical inputs such as human capital and technology absorption capabilities (Organization, 2024). These conditions highlight the urgent need to strengthen the emotional dimension of organizational management so that individual competencies translate into operational effectiveness.

2. Problem Statement

Despite advances in understanding emotional intelligence (EI) as a key factor in organizational performance, there remains a significant gap in how it is studied and applied within companies. Most research has focused on analyzing EI in a general way, without delving into specific dimensions such as Use of Emotions (UOE), Regulation of Emotions (ROE), or Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF), which could offer a more detailed explanation of how emotional competencies affect operational effectiveness. This lack of precision limits the ability of organizations to translate the emotional development of their employees into tangible advantages in efficiency and competitiveness. In fact, recent studies emphasize that treating EI as a unidimensional construct may overlook the unique contributions of its individual dimensions, since each of them is differently related to job satisfaction and facets of performance (Schlägel & Lang, 2022).

The dimensions mentioned above offer different contributions. Use of Emotions promotes creativity and strategic decision-making (Ivcevic et al., 2007). Regulation of Emotions allows motivation and performance to be sustained even in stressful situations (Gross, 1998). Tolerant of Uncomfortable Feelings enhances resilience, helping teams cope with uncertainty and change

without compromising their performance (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Together, these competencies constitute an essential pillar for ensuring the sustainability of individual and collective performance over time (Cherniss, 2010).

In addition to this, many organizations face a practical problem. They make significant investments in technologies, processes, or technical training programs, but fail to achieve the expected results in productivity and competitiveness. One of the causes is that the emotional component of management continues to be underestimated, which limits the ability of employees to sustain and take full advantage of these investments. As highlighted by Wellable (2025), “emotional intelligence in the workplace is often underestimated but plays a critical role in organizational success.” (Wellable., 2025)

In the case of Colombia, this challenge is amplified because, although there is consensus on the importance of strengthening human capital, business and public policy strategies have tended to focus on technical and digital training, leaving the development of emotional skills behind.(Forum, 2023). Up to 60% of Colombian organizations, seek to strengthen AI and Big Data intellect, rather than focusing on socio-emotional competencies. While curiosity, long life learning, resilience and flexibility are acknowledged, their influence remain much less significant compared to technical and digital skills. This misalignment creates a gap: workers are prepared to operate with new tools, but not necessarily to manage the emotions and tensions that arise in changing environments, reducing the potential impact on operational effectiveness (Forum, 2023).

Research Question: What impact do the dimensions of emotional intelligence—specifically, the use of emotions (UOE), emotion regulation (ER), and tolerance of uncomfortable feelings (TUF)—have on operational effectiveness in Colombian organizations?

3. Research Objectives

The general objective is to determine the impact of the Use of Emotions (UOE), Regulation of Emotions (ROE) and Toleration of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF) on organizational operational effectiveness in Colombia.

Specific objectives:

- To analyze how UOE influences creativity and strategic decision-making processes that support operational effectiveness.
- To evaluate the effect of ROE on sustaining employee motivation and performance under pressure in Colombian organizations.
- To examine the role of TUF in strengthening resilience and adaptability to uncertainty and change within organizational settings.
- To assess the overall relationship between emotional intelligence dimensions and operational effectiveness in Colombian organizations.
- To provide evidence-based recommendations for integrating EI dimensions into organizational strategies to enhance competitiveness and sustainability.

4. Relevance and Significance

As mentioned before, scientific literature highlights the importance of understanding emotional intelligence through its specific dimensions rather than as a single construct, which makes this

study relevant at the theoretical level. On a practical level, the research is significant because it provides Colombian organizations with insights into how strengthening emotional competencies can enhance operational effectiveness, resilience, and competitiveness in dynamic environments.

5. Scope and Structure of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing the impact of three specific dimensions of emotional intelligence: Use of Emotions (UOE), Regulation of Emotions (ROE), and Toleration of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF), on organizational operational effectiveness in Colombia. The scope is limited to the organizational context of Colombian companies, with particular emphasis on the challenges faced by micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The study is structured as follows: the first section presents the theoretical background and literature review; the second outlines the research objectives and hypotheses; the third details the methodological design; the fourth presents the results and analysis; and the final section discusses the findings, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

6. Literature Review

To analyze the emotional impact on employee's effectiveness and performance within organizations, four variables have been identified as key factors that allow for a comprehensive understanding of this relationship of impact: Operational Effectiveness, Use of Emotions, Regulation of Emotions and Toleration of Uncomfortable Feelings. These dimensions were chosen for their ability to demonstrate the effects of change on both organizational outcomes and employee behaviors. Their joint analysis makes it possible to provide an integral framework of understanding why emotional intelligence is determinant for achieving favorable results.

6.1 Operational Effectiveness

Operational Effectiveness (OE) refers to an organization's ability to perform its core activities better than its rivals perform them. It includes the group of practices and methods that enable a company to make better use of its inputs to be more competitive in its environment. In other words, is the way in which they use their resources to maximize results. For example, improving a product by reducing its effects or even developing a new one in an agile and advanced way. (Porter, 1996) Although OE includes efficiency, it is a broader concept. OE is focused on improving functional performance through four key activities: manage and control performance, measure and improve processes, standardize, and automate processes, and drive further improvements based on progress. (Shoniwa, 2016)

From a broader perspective, operational efficiency is also the ability to achieve expected operational objectives, which improves a company's ability to adapt to a dynamic environment and ensure its survival in the market. (Arimie Biebele & Kenneth C., 2021). This is directly related to the successful expansion of an organization: improving and increasing its market share without compromising the quality of the product or service it provides to consumers. There are different ways to achieve operational effectiveness within a company, given that operational effectiveness considers five dimensions:

- A) *Cost* refers to the reduction of inefficiency and waste during production through improved processes that seek to facilitate the achievement of objectives. (Tegethoff I et al., 2023; Tegethoff et al., 2023)

- B) *Quality* seeks to satisfy the different needs of customers, including product features and attributes, consumer satisfaction, and cost-benefit considerations (including price). “The main concept of quality can be described as giving the customer what they want and what they need” (Tegethoff I et al., 2023; Tegethoff et al., 2023)
- C) *Agility* combines speed, which is the ability to respond as quickly as possible to consumer needs, with flexibility, which is the ability to adapt to rapid change. Agility can therefore be defined as a multidimensional aspect that includes the ability to recognize opportunities and take advantage of them through adaptation and innovation. (Tegethoff I et al., 2023; Tegethoff et al., 2023)
- D) *Reliability* is one of the main principles in customer satisfaction. This concept focuses on ensuring that products or services deliver the functionality they promise. It includes both product reliability: customer perception of performance, and process reliability: compliance with organizational standards. (Tegethoff I et al., 2023; Tegethoff et al., 2023)

However, it is essential to differentiate between operational efficiency and strategy. Strategy focuses on differentiating the way processes are executed, while operational efficiency consists of improving the activities that everyone can do. Therefore, although operational efficiency is a key competitive advantage for standing out in the market, it is not sufficient on its own and must be complemented by a clear and sustainable strategy. (Porter, 1996)

The hypotheses regarding the relationship of this variable are established under the definitions of the other variables to be analyzed.

6.2 Use of Emotions

Use of Emotions (UOE) is one of the four dimensions proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997) to evaluate emotional intelligence, these dimensions “determine the creation of emotional ties between different parties and allow individuals to establish good relationships with others.”(Santa et al., 2022). This particular dimension, UOE, involves the capacity to control one’s own emotions to improve both individual and collective performance. Within this framework, a positive mood is a stimulus for creativity and imagination. Likewise, a negative state of mind invites negative and meaningless information processing.(Santa et al., 2022). One of the primary goals of employing emotions positively is to direct them to productive outcomes, which includes promoting learning orientation. Emotional intelligence influences how people operate and, therefore, learning processes are also directly impacted, either positively or negatively, depending on how individuals use their emotions.

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) is a self-report instrument designed to measure emotional intelligence (EI) developed by Chi-Sum Wong and Kenneth S. Law. (Wong & Law, 2002)This model is based on the four-dimension model proposed by Mayer and Salovey mentioned above. The dimension of UOE represents a key skill within EI through which individuals can transform their processes and obtain more effective results. Those who master their emotions and channel them toward positive interpretation and management, will be able to increase their performance, creativity and strengthen their learning capabilities. Once emotions are properly oriented into productive results, the UOE, in addition to reinforcing individual motivation, fosters group motivation. (Wong & Law, 2002)

- H1. Employees' use of emotions positively impacts operational effectiveness within organizations.
- H2. Employees' use of emotions positively impacts their distress tolerance.

6.3 Regulation of emotions

As UOE, regulation of emotions (ROE) is one of the other three dimensions proposed by Mayer and Salovey that allow for a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence. ROE refers to an individual's capacity to manage, control and regulate one's own emotions, "It is the ability of emotional control, which enables the individual to recover from psychological distress, unexpected results, or changes in circumstances, generating flexibility and widening the panorama of problem-solving processes." (Santa et al., 2022). This ability is crucial for psychological resilience and effective problem-solving. ROE is also considered as a key ability that contributes positively, or negatively, to people's performance.

Regulation of emotions is one of the fundamental dimensions of emotional intelligence, as it allows people to find a balance between feeling and reaction. Through emotion regulation, people can face adversity and challenges with greater flexibility and willingness to adapt to possible unexpected changes. Through ROE, people can find emotional stability, which makes them more competitive in a modern and changing environment. Those who know how to adapt tend to be more diligent and, therefore, more effective. (Wong & Law, 2002)

- H3. Employee's regulation of emotions positively impacts operational effectiveness.

6.4 Toleration of Uncomfortable Feelings

Although this study refers to the construct as Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF), the concept is conceptually equivalent to what the psychological literature defines as Distress Tolerance (DT). Accordingly, throughout this research the term TUF will continue to be used, while it will be examined from the theoretical and empirical perspective associated with Distress Tolerance in the psychological literature, thereby ensuring conceptual consistency across the study.

TUF is a psychological concept defined as an individual's ability to experience and endure negative emotional states and/or other states of discomfort.(Dezhkam et al., 2023). Conceptually, the variable has been approached from two different angles: “distress tolerance has been referred to as (a) the perceived capacity to withstand negative emotional and/or other aversive states (e.g., physical discomfort) and (b) the behavioral act of withstanding distressing internal states elicited by some type of stressor.”(Zvolensky et al., 2019).

The perceived ability to manage uncomfortable feelings can be divided into five key concepts of experiential distress:

- A) Tolerance of Uncertainty, “is defined as individual differences in the tendency to react emotionally, cognitively, or behaviorally to uncertain situations.”(Zvolensky et al., 2019).
- B) Tolerance of ambiguity, “reflects individual differences in perceived tolerance of complicated, foreign, and/or vague situations or stimuli.”(Zvolensky et al., 2019).
- C) Tolerance of frustration, “reflects individual differences in the perceived capacity to withstand aggravation (e.g., thwarted life goals).”(Zvolensky et al., 2019).

D) Tolerance of negative emotional states, “reflects individual differences in the perceived capacity to withstand internal distress.”(Zvolensky et al., 2019).

E) Tolerance of physical sensations, “reflects individual differences in the perceived capacity to withstand uncomfortable physical sensations.”(Zvolensky et al., 2019).

Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings is considered as a protective factor for resilience, as it facilitates psychological balance and control over emotional states.(Dezhkam et al., 2023). Resilience increases flexibility, coping skills, and adaptability in individuals.(Dezhkam et al., 2023). In this sense, having the ability to tolerate uncomfortable feelings allows people, like UOE and ROE, to have an advantage over others, as they can regulate their emotions and find a balance that benefits both their behavior and the group.

H4. Employee’s TUF positively impacts operational effectiveness.

H5. Employee’s TUF positively impacts their regulation of emotions.

7. Hypotheses graphic

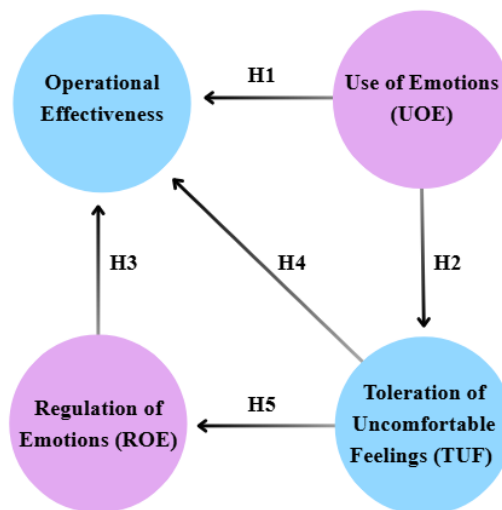


Figure 1: Hypotheses Graphic

Note. Own elaboration

8. Methodology

The chosen methodology for this study is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), as it supplies a rigorous and comprehensive statistical approach to understanding the relationships between the observed list of variables. SEM was selected because it allows to evaluate both indirect and direct effects, which is key for analyzing compound relationships, such as the one between operational effectiveness and emotional intelligence, through the specifications of UOE, ROE and TUF: “structural equation modeling (SEM) is a statistical approach that enables a set of relationships between independent variables (IVs), either continuous or discrete, and dependent variables (DVs), either continuous or discrete, to be examined. Both IVs and DVs can be either factors or measured variables.”(ULLMAN & BENTLER, 2013). This technique allows for comprehensive and simultaneous hypothesis testing, while also identifying and reducing measurement errors in the analysis.(Hair et al., 2017).

In this study, SEM will be conducted through a specialized software, either AMOS or SmartPLS in two main stages: first, via the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) will validate the measurement model to guarantee reliability and validity of the constructs; secondly, the structural model will be estimated to test the hypothesized relationships between variables. This methodology will make it possible to determine whether the proposed hypotheses are supported, which will ensure solid and well-substantiated conclusions.(Bryne, 2010).

In order to support the proposed analysis framework, data will be collected through random surveys administered to participants from different areas of performance. The instrument will be divided into three main sections designed to measure the variables of emotional intelligence,

compassion, and operational effectiveness. To measure EI, the WLEIS (Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale) will be used, considering that “the primary purpose of the WLEIS is to provide a concise and reliable measure of individual differences in emotional intelligence, specifically designed for use in organizational settings.” (Looti, M, 2025) . Meanwhile the SOCS (Sussex-Oxford Compassion Scale) will be used to assess compassion, keeping in mind that it was made “based on the theoretically and empirically supported definition of compassion as comprising five dimensions: recognizing suffering, understanding the universality of suffering, feeling for the person suffering, tolerating uncomfortable feelings, and motivation to act to alleviate sufferin” (Gu, et al., 2020) Operational effectiveness, on the other hand, will be measured using a scale developed and provided by Thomas Tegettoff and Ricardo Santa. It is important to emphasize that participants will answer the questionnaire based on their own personal criteria and perceptions, selecting for each question the option with which they most strongly identify. Additionally, all responded will be quantified using a Likert type scale, allowing participants’ perceptions to be transformed into numerical data that facilitate statistical analysis and the appropriate construction of the corresponding models.

9. Sample Characteristics

The study sample consisted of 233 respondents from Colombian organizations across more than 30 industries. The three more represented sectors were Technology (18.9%), Banking and Services (16.3%), and Food and Beverages (13.7%), ensuring that findings are not limited to a single sector.

In terms of company size, 56.2% of respondents worked in organizations with more than 251 employees, and 58.8% classified their company as large. This reflects the structure of the formal

business sector in Colombia, where large companies tend to have more structured human resource practices.

Regarding professional background, the sample was predominantly composed of Business Administration professionals (43.8%), followed by Engineering (18.9%) and Marketing (7.3%), with the remaining 30% representing a wide variety of fields. In terms of area of responsibility, respondents were distributed across Administration (30%), Project Management (15.5%), and Strategic Direction (13.3%), among other functional areas; ensuring exposure to organizational performance from multiple perspectives.

Finally, 47.6% of respondents were under 25 years old, and 20.2% were between 25 and 34, reflecting a predominantly young professional sample. This should be considered when interpreting findings related to emotional maturity and organizational experience.

10. Analysis Method #1: Correlation

The first analysis conducted in this study consisted of a correlation analysis between the variables associated with the dimensions of emotional intelligence (SEA, OEA, UOE, ROE), compassion (RS, UUS, FPS, TUF, MAAS), and operational effectiveness. Given that the objective of the study is to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between these variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient was employed as the most appropriate statistical method. This method was selected as it is a fundamental statistical tool for examining the relationship between quantitative variables, allowing for the assessment of both, the strength and direction of the association between them.

Correlation refers to the statistical relationship between two variables, indicating how changes in one are associated with changes in the other: “correlation is a measure of a monotonic association between 2 variables. A monotonic relationship between 2 variables is a one in which either (1) as the value of 1 variable increases, so does the value of the other variable; or (2) as the value of 1 variable increases, the other variable value decreases. In correlated data, therefore, the change in the magnitude of 1 variable is associated with a change in the magnitude of another variable, either in the same or in the opposite direction. In other words, higher values of 1 variable tend to be associated with either higher (positive correlation) or lower (negative correlation) values of the other variable, and vice versa”. (Schober et al., 2018).

Correlation coefficients are interpreted based on their magnitude and direction: “A correlation coefficient of zero indicates that no linear relationship exists between two continuous variables, and a correlation coefficient of -1 or +1 indicates a perfect linear relationship. The strength of a relationship can be anywhere between -1 and +1. The stronger the correlation, the closer the correlation coefficient comes to ± 1 . If the coefficient is a positive number, the variables are directly related (i.e., as the value of one variable goes up, the value of the other also tends to do so). If, on the other hand, the coefficient is a negative number, the variables are inversely related (i.e., as the value of one variable goes up, the value of the other tends to go down)”. (Mukaka et al., 2012).

Table 1. Example of a Conventional Approach to Interpreting a Correlation Coefficient

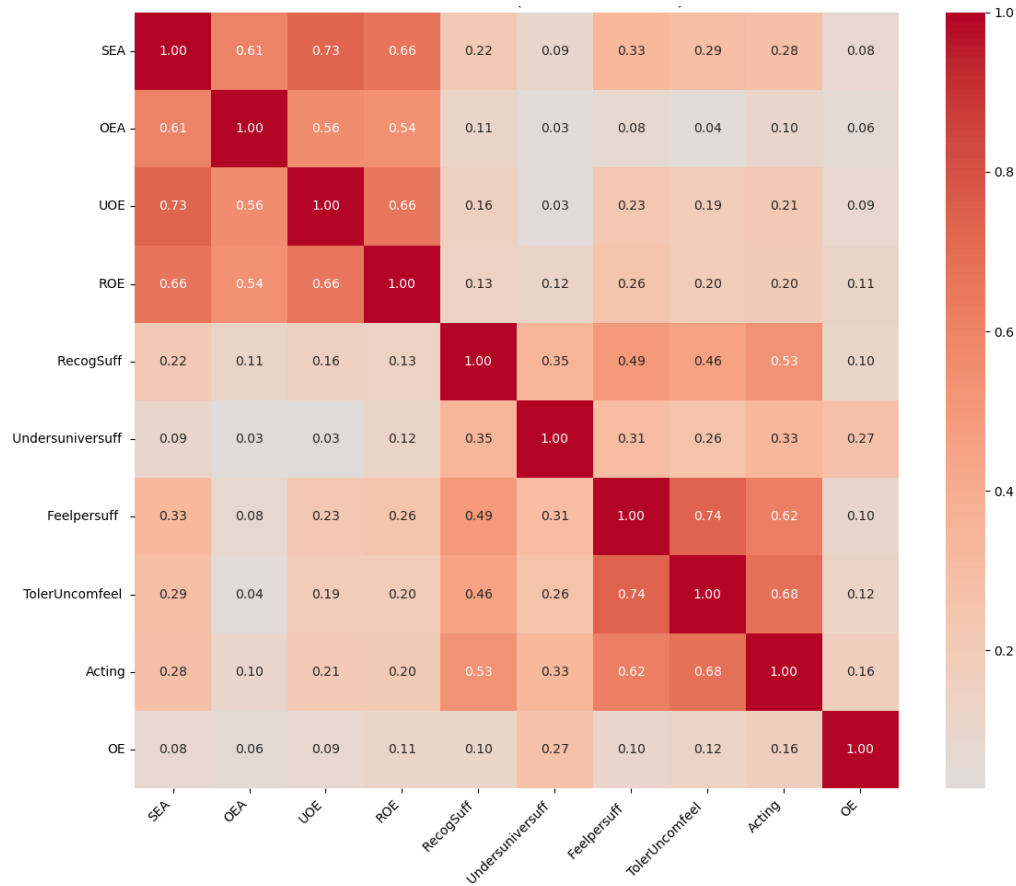
Table 1: Example of a Conventional Approach to Interpreting a Correlation Coefficient

Absolute Magnitude of a Conventional Approach to Interpreting a Correlation Coefficient	Interpretation
0.00 – 0.10	Negligible correlation
0.11 – 0.39	Weak correlation
0.40 – 0.69	Moderate correlation
0.70 – 0.89	Strong correlation
0.90 – 1.00	Very strong correlation

Note. Adapted from Schober et al. (2018)

The results are presented in the following table, along with their corresponding analysis.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis



Note. Own elaboration

As an initial step in the analysis, the examination of correlations between the studied variables and OE – as shown in the last column of the matrix – reveals that the associations are particularly weak. Specifically, the dimensions of emotional intelligence show very low correlations with operational effectiveness, as the results were: SEA ($r = 0.08$), OEA ($r = 0.06$), UOE ($r = 0.09$) and ROE ($r = 0.11$). This indicates an absence of relevant linear relationships between these emotional capacities and operational performance in the analyzed sample ($n = 233$). Similarly, most dimensions of compassion also show no significant associations with OE, including Recognizing Suffering, RS ($r = 0.10$), Feeling for the person suffering, FPS ($r = 0.10$), and Tolerating Uncomfortable Feelings, TUF ($r = 0.12$), all of which reflect weak relationships. However, two

exceptions are identified among the compassion variables: Understanding the universality of Suffering, UUS ($r = 0.27$) and Acting or being motivated to act to alleviate suffering, MAAS ($r = 0.16$), which both show positive correlations. Based on these results, it can be stated that, although certain specific aspects of compassion – especially those related to understanding suffering and action – may have an emerging relationship with OE, in general terms, there is no evidence of a strong link between the evaluated dimensions and effective performance within an organization. Therefore, in the general sense, these results suggest that operational effectiveness may be influenced by other factors not included in the model, or that the relationship with emotional intelligence and compassion is indirect.

Although the findings suggest the absence of strong direct relationships between the studied variables and OE, the analysis reveals significant associations within the data. In particular, the dimensions of emotional intelligence and compassion show strong positive correlations with one another, indicating that the variables within each construct are well aligned. The correlations observed between the dimensions of emotional intelligence – located in the upper left section of the matrix – show strong positive relationships, indicating a high level of internal consistency within the EI concept. In particular, the strong associations between SEA and UOE ($r = 0.73$), SEA and ROE ($r = 0.66$), and UOE and ROE ($r = 0.66$) stand out, suggesting that the ability to perceive one's own emotions, use them effectively, and regulate them are closely and positively interrelated. Additionally, the correlation between SEA and OEA ($r = 0.61$) reinforces the idea that the perception of emotions in oneself and in others is part of an integrated system of emotional skills. In this sense, the obtained results support the internal validity of the instrument used (WLEIS), demonstrating that the assessed dimensions share a common basis and are consistently related to one another within the analyzed context.

A similar pattern is observed in the dimensions of compassion, situated between the variables RS and MAAS, show moderate-to-strong positive correlations. In particular, a very strong correlation is observed between TUF and FPS ($r = 0.74$), as well as strong relationships between MAAS and TUF ($r = 0.68$) and between MAAS and FPS ($r = 0.62$), suggesting a close connection within the ability to empathize with others, tolerate the discomfort associated with others' suffering, and act accordingly. Likewise, moderate correlations are identified between RS and MAAS ($r = 0.53$), RS and FPS ($r = 0.49$), and RS and TUF ($r = 0.46$), indicating that the recognition of suffering is highly linked to the emotional and behavioral typical responses of the concept of compassion. Nevertheless, the dimension UUS, shows weak correlations with the other analyzed dimensions, with MAAS ($r = 0.33$) and FPS ($r = 0.31$), which could suggest that understanding suffering, constitutes a partially distinct component within the construct, although it shows relation amongst the other dimensions. Collectively, these findings support the view of compassion as a multidimensional process that integrates cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components, which interact in an independent and congruent manner.

Finally, an analysis was conducted of the relationship between the dimensions of emotional intelligence and the dimensions of compassion to determine whether these two concepts exhibit a linear behavioral correlation. However, the results of the study indicate that the dimensions of these two constructs show a weak correlation. The SEA dimension shows the most consistent relationships with compassion variables, mainly with FPS ($r = 0.33$), TUF ($r = 0.29$) and MAAS ($r = 0.28$), indicating that the ability of recognizing and understanding one's own emotions is linked to the emotional response to others' suffering. Likewise, UOE and ROE show weak correlations with FPS ($r = 0.23$ and $r = 0.26$ respectively), meaning that the use and regulation of emotions are also related to compassionate behaviors. Despite that, the OEA dimension, shows a negligible

correlation with most of the compassion variables, which could suggest that the perception of emotions in others isn't necessarily converted into compassionate responses within the analyzed context. Therefore, these results imply that, although emotional intelligence and compassion are conceptually related, the magnitude of their empirical associations is moderate, reinforcing the idea that not only they are distinct, but complementary constructs that may interact depending on other contextual or individual factor that weren't considered in the present study.

Based on the general analysis of the correlation matrix, this section presents a specific approach focused on the theoretical model proposed in the study. We analyze the relationships between the dimensions of emotional intelligence selected in the model (Use of Emotions (UOE) and Regulation of Emotions (ROE)), the dimension of compassion Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF), and the variable of Operational Effectiveness. The objective is to identify the type and strength of the correlations among these variables, in order to assess the extent to which the empirical results support the relationships proposed in the hypotheses and allow for an interpretation consistent with the research's conceptual model.

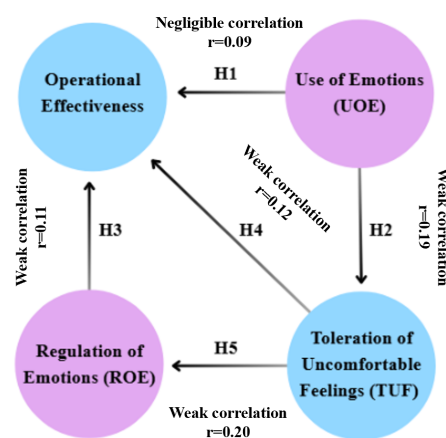


Figure 2: Hypotheses Graphic and Relationships

Note. Own elaboration

H1. Relationship between Use of Emotions (UOE) and Operational Effectiveness (EO)

The results show a negligible positive correlation between the Use of Emotions (UOE) dimension and Operational Effectiveness (EO) ($r=0.09$). This suggests that although there is a positive relationship between the two variables, its magnitude is very low. Therefore, the ability to use emotions in a strategic way does not appear to be strongly associated with operational effectiveness within the analyzed sample.

H2. Relationship between Use of Emotions (UOE) and Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF)

There is a weak positive correlation between Use of Emotions (UOE) and Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF) ($r=0.19$). This result indicates that a greater ability to use emotions could be associated, to some extent, with a greater willingness to tolerate uncomfortable feelings, although the relationship found is not strong.

H3. Relationship between Regulation of Emotions (ROE) and Operational Effectiveness (EO)

The results show a weak positive correlation between Regulation of Emotions (ROE) and Operational Effectiveness (EO) ($r=0.11$). This indicates that the ability to regulate emotions may contribute to a limited extent to the maintenance of organizational performance and functioning, although its association within this sample is very weak.

H4. Relationship between Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF) and Operational Effectiveness (EO)

A weak positive correlation was found between Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF) and Operational Effectiveness (EO) ($r=0.12$). This finding suggests that the ability to tolerate uncomfortable feelings may be associated with better organizational functioning, although the strength of the observed relationship is very limited.

H5. Relationship between Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF) and Regulation of Emotions (ROE)

Finally, a weak positive correlation is observed between Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings (TUF) and Regulation of Emotions (ROE) ($r=0.20$). This was the strongest relationship within the proposed model, suggesting that the ability to tolerate emotional discomfort is associated, to some extent with the ability to regulate emotions adaptively.

Overall, the results of the proposed model show that all the relationships exhibit positive associations, although of low magnitude. This evidences that the selected dimensions of emotional intelligence and tolerance of uncomfortable feelings do maintain links with operational effectiveness, but these relationships are not strong within the analyzed sample ($n=233$). The strongest, but still weak relationship observed is the one between TUF and ROE, which reinforces the conceptual proximity between these two dimensions in the model.

11. Analysis Method #2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 3. Statistical Estimated Parameters for CFA

Table 3: Statistical Parameters for CFA

Model 1			Model 2		
<i>Estimate (Std.Err.)</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Estimate (Std.Err.)</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>p</i>

Factor Loadings**Emotional Intelligence**

SEA	0.74(0.05)***	0.55	.000	0.74(0.05)***	0.55	.000
OEA	0.71(0.06)***	0.50	.000	0.71(0.06)***	0.50	.000
UOE	0.67(0.05)***	0.45	.000	0.67(0.05)***	0.45	.000
ROE	0.63(0.06)***	0.40	.000	0.63(0.06)***	0.40	.000

Compassion

RS	0.80(0.04)***	0.64	.000	0.80(0.04)***	0.64	.000
US	0.77(0.05)***	0.59	.000	0.77(0.05)***	0.59	.000
FS	0.75(0.05)***	0.56	.000	0.75(0.05)***	0.56	.000
TU	0.70(0.06)***	0.49	.000	0.70(0.06)***	0.49	.000
AS	0.72(0.05)***	0.52	.000	0.72(0.05)***	0.52	.000

Structural Path

OE ← Capability	0.41(0.07)***	.000	0.56(0.06)***	.000
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Fit Indices

$\chi^2(df)$	1866.60(35)	.000	1254.32(33)	.000
RMSEA	0.112		0.089	
SRMR	0.062		0.051	
CFI	0.81		0.90	
TLI	0.76		0.87	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Note. Own elaboration

The correlation analysis presented above revealed that, while there are positive associations between the dimensions of emotional intelligence, tolerance for uncomfortable feelings, and operational effectiveness, these relationships are mostly weak and of low magnitude. This result

suggests that the relationship between these variables is neither direct nor linear, which raises the need to explore more complex structures that allow us to understand how these dimensions are organized at a deeper level. In this regard, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the validity of the proposed measurement model and determine whether the empirical data fit the proposed theoretical structure.

To this end, two alternative models were estimated, representing different ways of conceptualizing the relationship between the variables. The first model assumes a unidimensional structure, in which all indicators of both, emotional intelligence and compassion, load onto a single latent factor, implying that both dimensions are considered part of the same homogeneous construct. In contrast, the second model proposes a second-order hierarchical structure, in which emotional intelligence (represented by SEA, OEA, UOE and ROE) and compassion (represented by RS, US, FS, TU, and AS) are conceptualized as distinct but interrelated first-order factors that converge into a higher-order construct called Human Capability. This construct seeks to capture individual's integrated capacity to manage emotional and relational dynamics within organizational contexts.

A comparison of the two models, based on overall fit indices, reveals substantial differences in their explanatory power. The unidimensional model exhibits poor fit, with a significant chi-square statistic ($\chi^2(35) = 1866.60$, $p < .001$) and values for RMSEA (0.112), CFI (0.81), and TLI (0.76) that fall outside acceptable ranges, indicating that this configuration fails to adequately represent the data structure. In contrast, the second-order hierarchical model shows a considerable improvement in the fit indices ($\chi^2(33) = 1254.32$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = 0.089; CFI = 0.90; TLI = 0.87), suggesting that a multidimensional and integrated structure is more consistent with the empirical evidence.

At the measurement level, the factor loadings obtained for all indicators are positive, statistically significant, and of acceptable magnitude. In the case of emotional intelligence, the loadings range from 0.63 to 0.74, while for the construct of compassion, they range from 0.70 to 0.80. These values indicate that the indicators adequately represent their respective latent constructs. Likewise, the coefficients of determination (R^2), which range approximately between 0.40 and 0.64, show that a considerable proportion of the variance in the indicators is explained by the underlying factors, which provides evidence of convergent validity and supports the internal consistency of the model.

Beyond the validity of the individual dimensions, one of the central contributions of the analysis lies in the evaluation of the second-order construct Human Capability. The results suggest that emotional intelligence and compassion, although conceptually distinct, are highly interrelated and can be understood as components of a broader capacity that integrates emotional and relational skills. This interpretation overcomes the fragmented view of the constructs and offers a systematic perspective on human functioning in organizational contexts.

In line with the above, the model also allows for an analysis of the relationships between this integrated capability and operational effectiveness. The results show that Human Capability exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on operational effectiveness ($\beta = 0.56$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of this capability are associated with better organizational performance. This finding is particularly relevant when contrasted with the correlation analysis, in which the direct relationships between individual dimensions and operational effectiveness were weak. Taken together, these results suggest that the impact of emotional competencies does not manifest in isolation but emerges through their integration into a more complex structure.

However, it is important to recognize that, despite the improvement observed in the hierarchical model, some fit indices (such as the RMSEA and the TLI) suggest that there is still room to refine the model specification. Additionally, the presence of warnings related to the non-positive-definite covariance matrix suggests possible issues of multicollinearity or overlap among indicators, which could reflect a high degree of conceptual proximity among the dimensions analyzed. While these aspects do not invalidate the results, they do point to the need to continue refining the measurement structure in future research.

12. Analysis Method #3: Structural Equation Modeling

Table 4: Statistical Parameters for SEM Structural Models

RecogSuff	1.000+	0.36	-	1.000+	0.44	-
UnderSuff	0.45 (0.09)***	0.14	.000	0.47 (0.08)***	0.19	.000
FeelSuff	1.84 (0.20)***	0.70	.000	1.52 (0.17)***	0.58	.000
TolerUnc	2.00 (0.21)***	0.73	.000	-	-	-
ActAllev	1.63 (0.18)***	0.62	.000	1.50 (0.16)***	0.65	.000
Structural Paths						
Compassion ← Emotional Intelligence	0.17 (0.04)***	0.11	.000	0.19 (0.04)***	0.12	.000
Operational Effectiveness ← Compassion	0.19 (0.08)*	0.03	.018	0.18 (0.08)*	0.04	.026
Operational Effectiveness ← Emotional Intelligence	-	-	-	0.02 (0.04)	0.04	.578
Fit Indices						
$\chi^2(df)$	64.17(34)**		.001	40.17(25)*		.028
RMSEA	0.06			0.05		
SRMR	0.06			0.05		
CFI	0.97			0.98		
TLI	0.96			0.97		

+Fixed parameter

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Note. Own elaboration

Based on the previous analyses, the correlation results revealed weak direct relationships (most of which were not statistically significant) between the dimensions of emotional intelligence, tolerance for uncomfortable feelings, and operational effectiveness. Similarly, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated that a better understanding of the variables is achieved by considering them as part of a multidimensional and hierarchical structure, rather than considering them as isolated constructs. In this context, a structural equation model (SEM) was conducted to analyze

the nature of these relationships in greater detail, which made it possible to simultaneously estimate both the direct and indirect effects that these relationships have on each other within the proposed theoretical model.

The use of this model is particularly suitable for this research as it allows assessing complex relationships between latent variables, while controlling for measurement error to analyze mediating effects. Accordingly, two alternative structural models were estimated to examine the relationships between emotional intelligence (EI), compassion (including all its dimensions), and operational effectiveness (OE). The first model presents a direct relationship between EI and OE, with the assumption that emotional skills independently influence operational effectiveness. On the other hand, the second model introduces compassion as an intermediate and mediating variable, suggesting that the effect of emotional intelligence on operational effectiveness occurs indirectly through emotional and relational mechanisms.

Model Comparison and Fit

A comparison of the two models, based on the goodness-of-fit indices, reveals some significant differences in their capacity to explain the data. Model 1 exhibits an acceptable but moderate fit ($\chi^2 (34) = 64.17$, $p < .01$; RMSEA = 0.06; CFI = 0.97; TLI = 0.96), indicating that, although the model is statistically reasonable, it does not fully capture the complexity of the relationships among the analyzed variables. On the other hand, Model 2 shows a substantial improvement in the fit indices ($\chi^2 (25) = 40.17$, $p < .05$; RMSEA = 0.05; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.97), indicating lower approximation errors and better comparative indices. These results suggest that including compassion as a mediating variable provides a more accurate and coherent representation of the

data. This improvement supports the idea, previously identified in the CFA, that emotional and relational dimensions operate as part of an integrated system, rather than through isolated direct effects.

Structural Relationships

The structural relationships estimated in Model 2 allow us to deepen our understanding of the dynamics among the constructs analyzed, revealing consistent patterns in the relationships between emotional intelligence, compassion, and operational effectiveness. First, the relationship between emotional intelligence and compassion is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < .001$), indicating that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to develop greater levels of compassion, including the ability to tolerate uncomfortable emotions and respond adaptively to their own and others' distress. This result is consistent with the theoretical framework, which proposes that emotional intelligence is a foundational capacity for managing emotional and social processes.

Secondly, the relationship between compassion and operational effectiveness is also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < .05$), suggesting that the abilities associated with compassion, such as tolerating discomfort, empathizing with others, and engaging in prosocial behaviors, contribute positively to organizational performance. This implies that employees who are able to adequately manage emotionally demanding situations and respond constructively to adversity contribute more effectively to the organization's timely functioning.

Finally, the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and operational effectiveness ceases to be significant once compassion is included in the model ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = .578$), indicating that emotional intelligence does not have a direct impact on operational effectiveness, but rather that its influence is mediated by intermediate variables.

Mediation Effect

The SEM results reveal a clear mediating effect, in which Compassion acts as the mechanism through which Emotional Intelligence influences Operational Effectiveness. The disappearance of the direct effect in Model 2 suggests the presence of full mediation, implying that the impact of emotional intelligence is transmitted entirely through processes associated with compassion. This finding allows for a reinterpretation of the correlation analysis results, where the direct relationships between the variables were weak. Rather than reflecting the absence of a relationship, these results indicate the existence of a more complex indirect structure, which can only be captured through multivariate models such as SEM.

Overall, the SEM analysis provides a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships under examination, demonstrating that the relationship between emotional intelligence and operational effectiveness is indirect and mediated by compassion, particularly by tolerance for uncomfortable feelings. These results are consistent with previous analyses: while correlation analysis showed weak relationships and CFA revealed an integrated structure, SEM reveals that the explanatory mechanism lies in the interaction between emotional and relational capacities.

In this sense, it supports a systemic view of organizational functioning, where emotional intelligence drives compassion, which, in turn, translates into behaviors that promote operational effectiveness.

13. Discussion

The findings from this research provide a comprehensive framework for rethinking the relationship between emotional intelligence and operational effectiveness in organizational contexts. Although the research question sought to determine the direct impact of specific dimensions of emotional intelligence (Use of Emotions, Regulation of Emotions, and Tolerance of Uncomfortable Feelings) on operational effectiveness, the empirical findings suggest that this relationship cannot be adequately understood through a linear and direct approach. On the contrary, the evidence points toward a more complex, integrated, and mediated structure, in which emotional and relational capacities operate as part of a broader system of human functioning.

At a first level of analysis, the correlation results revealed predominantly weak and low-magnitude relationships between the individual dimensions of emotional intelligence, the variables associated with compassion, and operational effectiveness. These results, at first glance, might seem to contradict existing literature that positions emotional intelligence as a key factor in organizational performance. However, rather than indicating the absence of a relationship, these findings suggest that the influence of emotional competencies does not manifest directly in organizational outcomes, but rather operates through more complex mechanisms that are not captured by simple bivariate analyses.

This interpretation is reinforced by the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which demonstrated that the variables analyzed are more appropriately represented within a multidimensional and hierarchical structure than as isolated constructs. In particular, the better fit of the second-order model indicates that emotional intelligence and compassion, although conceptually distinct, exhibit a high degree of interrelation and can be understood as components of a broader construct called Human Capability. This finding is particularly relevant, as it challenges the tendency in the literature to analyze emotional intelligence independently, without considering its interaction with relational and prosocial dimensions.

Based on these results, structural equation modeling (SEM) allows for a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms linking emotional intelligence to operational effectiveness. The findings show that emotional intelligence does not have a significant direct effect on operational effectiveness when analyzed in isolation. Instead, its influence occurs directly through compassion, which acts as a mediating variable. This implies that skills such as empathy, the ability to tolerate uncomfortable feelings, and the willingness to respond prosocially are the mechanisms through which emotional intelligence translates into organizational outcomes.

This mediating effect constitutes one of the central contributions of the research. It suggests that emotional intelligence functions primarily as a foundational capacity that enables the development of adaptive and relational behaviors, rather than as a direct determinant of performance. In other words, an individual may possess high levels of emotional perception and regulation, but if these capabilities do not translate into relational responses (such as the ability to understand others,

tolerate discomfort, and act constructively in the face of adverse situations) their impact on operational effectiveness will be limited.

From a theoretical perspective, these results contribute to literature by proposing a shift from a fragmented, individual view of emotional intelligence toward a systemic and integrative approach. While traditional models emphasize the importance of perceiving, utilizing, and regulating emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Wong & Law, 2002), the findings of this study suggest that these dimensions acquire practical relevance only when they are articulated with broader relational processes. In this sense, compassion, and particularly tolerance for uncomfortable feelings, emerges as a key mechanism for operationalizing emotional competencies within organizations.

This interpretation is also consistent with the literature on emotional regulation (Gross, 1988) and psychological resilience (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013), which highlight the importance of the ability to adapt to uncertainty and stress. Tolerance for Uncomfortable Feelings, in particular, appears to play a fundamental role by enabling individuals to maintain their performance under pressure, adapt to change, and respond effectively to emotionally demanding situations. However, this study expands this perspective by demonstrating that these capabilities not only affect individual well-being but also influence organizational outcomes when integrated into relational dynamics.

A particularly relevant aspect is the explanation of why the initial correlations between emotional intelligence dimensions and operational effectiveness were weak. Far from representing a weakness of the model, these results highlight the limitations of bivariate analyses in capturing complex relationships. The use of SEM allows us to identify that the influence of emotional

intelligence is not direct but mediated, which reinforces the need to use multivariate approaches to understand organizational phenomena of complex nature.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this research have significant implications for organizational management, particularly in the Colombian context. As noted in the contextual framework, many organizations prioritize the development of technical and technological skills, relegating socio-emotional competencies to the background. However, the results suggest that the development of emotional intelligence alone is not sufficient to improve operational effectiveness. These capabilities must translate into relational and adaptive behaviors such as empathy, tolerance for discomfort, and the ability to act in the face of adversity.

In this regard, organizations should orient their strategies toward the development of integrated human capabilities, rather than the isolated strengthening of individual competencies. This implies promoting environments that facilitate emotional management, adaptation to change, and constructive interaction among organizational members. This recommendation is particularly relevant for PYMEs in Colombia, where human capital constitutes one of the main sources of competitive advantage.

Despite the study's contributions, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. First. The use of self-report instruments may introduce biases in the measurement of emotional and relational variables. Second, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish definitive casual relationships. Additionally, some CFA fit indices suggest that the model could be refined, and the

presence of potential multicollinearity issues indicates a high degree of conceptual proximity among certain dimensions.

Future research could address these limitations by using longitudinal designs, incorporating multiple data sources, and including additional variables such as leadership, organizational culture, or employee engagement. Likewise, it would be relevant to evaluate the model's applicability across different sectors and company sizes to validate its consistency in various organizational contexts.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that the relationship between emotional intelligence and operational effectiveness is not direct but is mediated and embedded within a broader system of human capabilities. Emotional Intelligence, while necessary, is not sufficient on its own; its impact depends on its integration with relational capabilities that enable individuals to adapt, interact, and sustain performance in complex organizational environments. This perspective offers a deeper understanding of organizational performance and highlights the importance of addressing human capabilities and an interconnected system, rather than a set of isolated competencies skills.

Annexes

Appendix A — Data Collection Instrument. *Available at:*

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSecxOIFT7-AR6qV9bseUvh4_YMgCz0rSYgshvdszsqzdGDM9w/viewform?usp=header]

Appendix 1: Data Collection Instrument

Appendix B — Raw Survey Data Available at: [\[Base de Datos Encuesta Tesis\]](#)

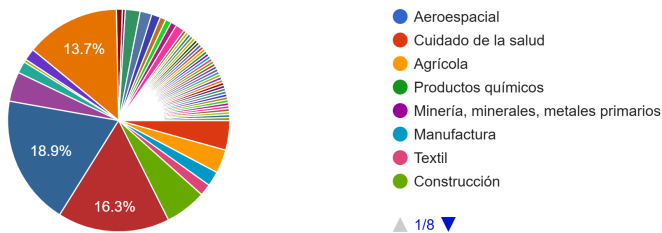
Appendix 2: Raw Survey Data

Appendix C - Survey Results and Descriptive Statistics

Appendix 3: Survey Results and Descriptive Statistics

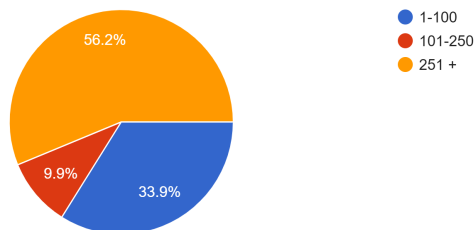
Cuál de las siguientes clasificaciones de la industria describe mejor el negocio donde trabaja (seleccione una)

233 respuestas



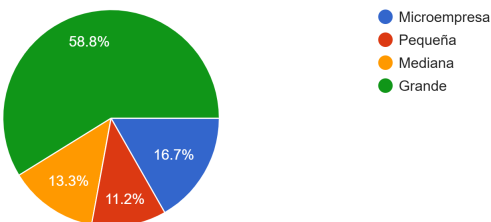
Número total de empleados actuales de tiempo completo y parcial

233 respuestas



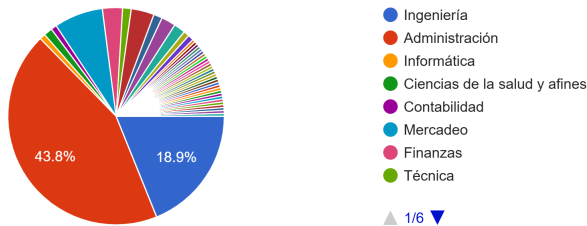
Clasificación de la empresa

233 respuestas



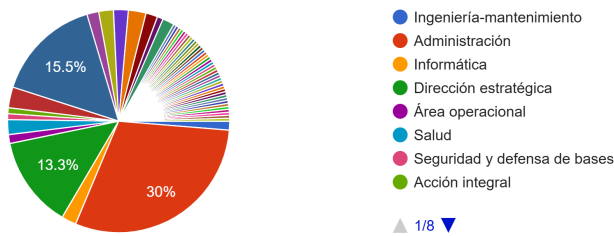
Formación profesional del encuestado

233 respuestas



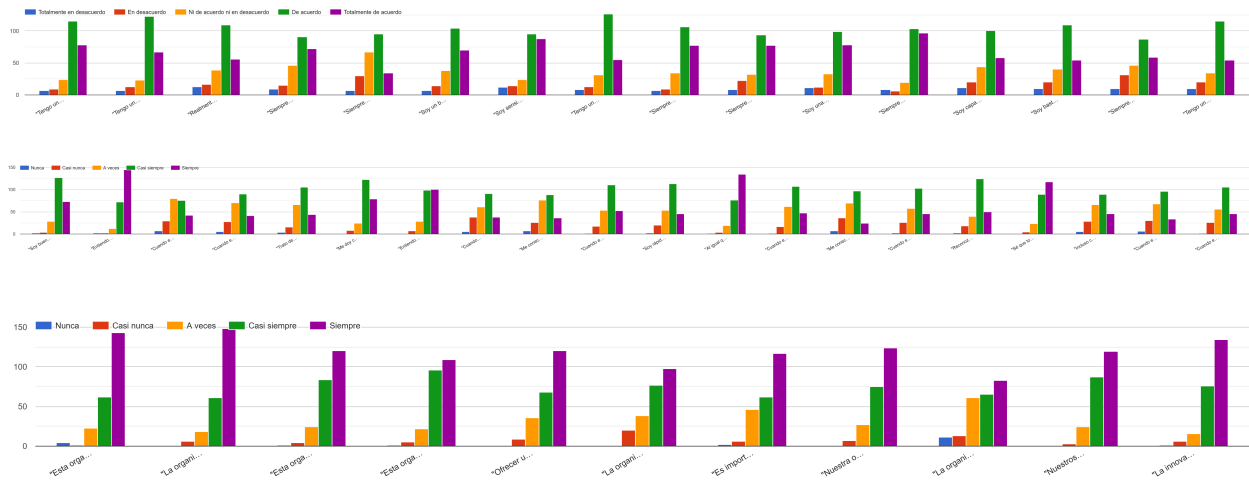
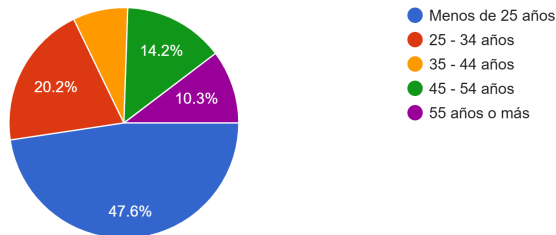
Su área de responsabilidad

233 respuestas



Rango de edad

233 respuestas



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