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ORIGINAL PAPER

Do the Behaviors of Early Childhood Education Teachers Promote Children's Progressive Autonomy? The Role of Interpersonal Emotional Regulation and its Consequences for Teachers' Occupational Well-Being

Gabriela Etchebehere[1] · Antonio Crego[2] · David Martínez-Iñigo[3]

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Abstract

Despite its centrality within the Convention on the Rights of the Child, teachers' behaviors promoting progressive autonomy, the psychological processes involved in their implementation and their consequences for teachers' well-being has been neglected. Two studies assess early childhood teachers' promoting progressive autonomy behaviors and their relationship with their strategies to regulate children's emotions and their own job well-being. Overall, results support the presence of a virtuous circle where teachers use of strategies improving children's emotions is associated to higher levels of progressive autonomy promotion and job well-being which in turn has been related to willingness to use affect improvement strategies.

Keywords Childhood rights · Progressive autonomy · Interpersonal affect regulation · Job well-being · Emotional exhaustion · Psychosomatic symptoms

Résumé

Malgré la pertinence de l'autonomie progressive dans la Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant en tant que précurseur de l'exercice d'autres droits, l'analyse des comportements des enseignants qui favorisent cette autonomie a été négligée, de même que les processus psychologiques impliqués dans sa mise en oeuvre et son application. En dépit de la pertinence de l'autonomie progressive dans le cadre de la Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant en tant que précurseur de l'exercice d'autres droits, l'analyse des comportements des enseignants qui favorisent cette autonomie a été négligée, de même que les processus psychologiques impliqués dans sa

✉ David Martínez-Iñigo
david.martinez@urjc.es

[1] Institute of Psychology, Education and Human Development, Republic of Uruguay University, Montevideo, Uruguay

[2] Pschology Department, Pontificia of Salamanca University, Salamanca, Spain

[3] Department of Psychology, Rey Juan Carlos University, Madrid, Spain

mise en oeuvre et son application. L'analyse des comportements des enseignants qui favorisent cette autonomie a été négligée, de même que les processus psychologiques impliqués dans sa mise en oeuvre et ses conséquences sur le bien-être des enseignants. conséquences sur le bien-être des enseignants. Deux études évaluent les comportements favorisant l'autonomie des enseignants de la petite enfance ainsi que les processus psychologiques impliqués et leurs conséquences sur le bien-être des enseignants.

Resumen

A pesar relevancia de la autonomía progresiva dentro de la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño, como precursora del ejercicio de otros derechos, el análisis de los comportamientos de los profesores que promueven dicha autonomía ha sido descuidado, así como los procesos psicológicos implicados en su implementación y sus consecuencias para el bienestar de los profesores. Dos estudios evalúan los comportamientos de las maestras de primera infancia que promueven la autonomía progresiva, su relación con las estrategias de las maestras para regular las emociones de los niños/as y con su propio bienestar laboral. En su conjunto los resultados apoyan la presencia de círculos virtuosos en los que la utilización de estrategias para mejorar el afecto de los niños/as conduce a una mayor promoción de la autonomía progresiva, lo que a su vez deriva en un mayor nivel de bienestar laboral.

Introduction

Early childhood education teachers have been identified as essential agents in the development of Children's Rights, recommending their training and systematic education on the subject (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2007).

According to the United Nations Organization (1989) through its Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the relationship between adults and children must act as an enhancer of their capacities as a person, facilitating a progressive development of their personal autonomy, social and legal.

Schools are among the educational contexts and early childhood education teachers among the main actors that international organizations point to as key to the development of children's rights, especially in the first years of schooling (CRC, 2007; Quennerstedt, 2020; UNICEF, 2005, 2009; UNESCO, 2010, 2016). Oztürk and Doganay (2017) consider that it is necessary to develop research that allows determining to what extent the promotion of children's rights occurs in school-based environments. The child's ability to reach increasing degrees of autonomy constitutes a cornerstone without which the possibilities of a full exercise of their rights are reduced. Despite the relevance of the above, Topsakal and Sadıkoglu (2017) point to the decline in quality of research on children's rights, with a predominating level of descriptive analysis and a small number of studies that seek an explanatory analysis of the process of promoting the rights. In line with the approach of these authors, the scientific literature reflects an absence of measurement instruments that permits to quantify the degree in which early childhood education teachers implement the role

of guarantor and analyze the relationship both, with those variables that promote them and with the main consequences derived from its implementation (Etchebehere, 2012; Carbonell, 2013; Gutiérrez et al., 2011; Zapata et al., 2012). In the case of the progressive autonomy, the absence of this type of instrument seriously limits the possibility of determining to what extent the Progressive Autonomy Promotion Behaviors (PAPB) are part of the teachers' skills, the identification of those factors that promote them, as well as their consequences for both children and teachers. The psycho-social processes involved in the promotion of progressive autonomy and the consequences of this role demand on teachers' well-being has been insufficiently explored.

In their recent meta-synthesis on studies on the promotion of children's rights in primary schools, Hareket and Kartal (2021) conclude that it is necessary to expand the number of actions implemented by teachers to promote children's rights, including progressive autonomy. In this, having quantitative information on what behaviors teachers perform in their activity in the classroom and in what sense constitutes a necessary contribution to monitor said expansion.

Regarding the studies in the sociocultural environment in which this work is framed, although there are some studies that address progressive autonomy (Esteban et al., 2022; Ochoa, 2019), their evaluation is not based on the use of a specific scale, but in qualitative techniques (focus group, interviews). Another important limitation is the absence of studies with samples of children in early childhood, focusing more on the adolescent population.

In this line, Ochoa (2019) analyzes the progressive autonomy in a sample of Argentine adolescents, relieving the coexistence agreements through interviews and surveys. The results show that adolescent participation in the design of the guidelines of their school life and the ways in which their intervention is managed is far from what is foreseen in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Ochoa, 2019). For their part, Esteban et al. (2022) analyze the gap in the civic experience of young people in formal education spaces and their life in the civic environment. The results show that the lack of spaces for substantive participation in their immediate environment and the low recognition of their agency to express their opinions diminish their participatory interest or spirit of solidarity. As they grow in age, and although they grow in maturity, their interest in contributing ideas, having initiatives, formulating proposals and proposing solutions decreases. This is related to the fact that the educational system not necessarily spontaneously promote participation.

Finally, Esteban (2022) points out that, although the agency of children in the exercise of their rights has been studied from a sociological perspective, its study from the point of view of educational contexts is still scarce. The author suggests a change of perspective in which school contexts are defined as the main promoters of children's rights. This implies the formation of inclusive educational environments that incorporate children in decision-making on those aspects that affect them according to their progressive autonomy.

After the review of the scientific literature carried out and to the best of the authors' knowledge there are no precedents of studies that address the evaluation, through a self-reported measure, of teachers' behaviors to promote children's progressive autonomy in their daily interaction in the classroom. Some studies have

evaluated these behaviors, but in pre-school teachers, using observation techniques and only in relation to participation opportunities, without including other aspects of progressive autonomy (Koran & Avci, 2017).

This study intends to overcome this situation through the development of an evaluation instrument for PAPB in early childhood education teachers and explore its relationship with teachers' strategies to regulate children's emotions and their job well-being. The availability of this kind measurement instrument is a prerequisite to the evaluation of interventions to develop teachers' PAPB as a final goal.

Additionally the paper aims to supply information of other teacher behaviors related to the PAPB that better explain the development of children's progressive autonomy. Since the exercise of progressive autonomy requires an emotionally safe environment in which the child can develop and test their competencies, the relationship of the PAPBs to the teacher interpersonal emotion regulation competencies was identified as relevant variable. Previous research has consistently shown that interpersonal regulation of others emotions is related to the quality of the relationship between different actors and the mutual trust. (Niven et al., 2007, 2012). In particular, the use of affect improving strategies promotes the quality of the relationship and the trust on the person performing these strategies. On the contrary, affect worsening affect strategies empoverish the quality of the relationship and erode trust.

Finally, the paper explores the impact that PAPBs may have on teachers' well-being. PAPBs place an additional demand on the teachers that could be related to their wellbeing. Research on job demands, especially those associated with self-regulation processes, as is the case of PAPBs and emotions regulations strategies, may impair the employees' well-being (Baumeister et al., 1998).

The choice of PA is justified by its precursory and facilitating role in the exercise of other rights, such exercise being unlikely if the child lacks autonomy (Etchebehere, 2012; Giorgi, 2012; Lansdown, 2005a). From the applied point of view, the PA constitutes a reference in the development of practical guides for the educational action of teachers and a relevant indicator for the evaluation of educational quality and educational policies to promote children's comprehensive development. (Etchebehere, 2012; Giorgi, 2012).

Definition of PA Promotion

To develop a definition of PA, the available evidence from evolutionary psychology was first incorporated. Second, official reports on PA promotion were reviewed. Lastly, the results of a previous qualitative study analyzing the early childhood education teachers' role of guarantor of the PA were taken into consideration (Etchebehere, 2012).

From an evolutionary perspective, the ability to act on the environment and actively participate in different environments are identified as indicators of the exercise of PA (Chockler, 2020; Espinoza & Ochaitía, 2004; Lansdown, 2005a, 2005b). The presence of an adult bond that supports the process is considered decisive in the initial phase of PA development (Carbonell, 2013; Duacastella, 2006; Engle, 2007). Likewise, the creation of a safe environment in which to autonomously face daily

challenges and tasks is key (Chockler, 2020; Carbonell, 2013; Cerutti et al., 2014; Garaño & Irsatortza, 2013). In this sense, it is understood that the behaviors that promote PA create an enabling environment in which the child can explore their potentialities and develop their own criteria when facing the demands of their environment, eliminating those factors that inhibit what is described above. (Carbonell, 2013; Garaño & Irsatortza, 2013; Lansdown, 2005a, 2005b; Santos Pais, 2005; UCC/CCEPI, 2014).

Regarding the definition of PA collected in the Committee for Childs' Rights reports, three components are identified. The first, of an *evolutionary* nature, would include those behaviors related to the recognition of the child's competences and potentialities for the exercise of their rights. The second focuses on the creation of a *participatory* environment, where the child can put their skills to the test, exercising their rights through them. Finally, an element of *protection* against threats to the exercise of their powers and rights is collected (Lansdown, 2005b).

The previous dimensions, evolutionary and legal, were compared with the results of Etchebehere (2012). In their thematic analysis of four focus groups, sixteen categories were established for PA promotion behaviors.

Based on the above, the behaviors promoting PA were defined as *the set of behaviors of the teachers aimed at promoting behaviors in the child related to the progressive development of their autonomy, as well as the elimination of threats for said exercise*, (Etchebehere, 2012; Chockler, 2020; Espinoza, & Ochaitía, 2004; Lansdown, 2005a; Rinaldi, 2001; Santos, 2005; UNICEF, 2005).

Regarding the operational definition for the development of the items, four factors were hypothesized in the PA (H1):

Promotion. Behaviors that stimulate participation in decision-making, responsibility for the execution of tasks and the reduction of dependence on adults for their execution (Chockler, 2020; Espinoza, & Ochaitía, 2004; Rinaldi, 2001).

Inhibition. Behaviors that do not adjust to the times necessary for the child to self-regulate their behavior, making PA difficult (Lansdown, 2005a).

Threat protection. Behaviors in situations of violation of the rights of the child (eg, abuse), which motivate and support the child to face these situations, increasing their awareness of being a subject of rights and their opportunities to exercise them (Etchebehere, 2012).

Family involvement. Behaviors aimed at involving the family in the child's education processes, especially when negligence in care is detected.

In addition to validating the scale, the study aims to estimate the nomological network of PAPB. Regarding the interpersonal processes that promote PA, the teacher's strategies to regulate the child's affect were considered. Empirical evidence shows that these strategies condition the affective experience of the target, affecting their satisfaction, their trust, the quality of the relationship and the probability that they will repeat certain behaviors (Holman et al., 2009; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987; Martinez-Iñigo et al., 2013, 2015).

In the case of teachers, PAPB are expected to be positively related to those affect regulation strategies that generate the necessary climate for the child to exercise PA, improve the quality of the bond perceived by the child, and their willingness to repeat behaviors related to the exercise of the PA. Previous research shows that

positive emotions are related to the child's motivation to explore and engage in behaviors not yet consolidated (Gracia et al., 2006; Yin et al., 2016).

H2a The teacher's regulation strategies aimed at improving the child's affection are positively related to PAPBs.

On the contrary, the use of strategies aimed at worsening the child's affection (for example, recriminating their behavior) can act as inhibitors of exploration and practice behaviors in the exercise of PA.

H2b The teacher's regulation strategies aimed at worsening the child's affection are negatively related to the PAPBs.

Finally, within the nomological network of PAPB, its consequences for occupational well-being were explored. The promotion of PA has been related to the creation of contexts of constructive interaction with the child. This requires a psychological effort and, therefore, the consumption of limited self-regulation resources that could lead to the deterioration of the teacher's well-being (Martinez-Iñigo et al., 2013; Baumeister et al., 1998). Along with these negative effects, the contexts of constructive interaction and the positive climate that they imply, increase the probability that the teacher will receive positive feedback from the child. According to the Resource Conservation model, interpersonal relationships and positive feedback are one of the main sources of resource recovery and restoration of work well-being (Hobfoll, 1989). Drawing on this model, PAPBs are expected to be negatively related to the deterioration of occupational well-being, measured as emotional exhaustion and the presence of psychosomatic symptoms.

H3 PAPBs are negatively related to emotional exhaustion.

H4 PAPBs are negatively related to the presence of psychosomatic symptoms.

Study 1: Validation of the PAPBs Scale

Procedure

As a first step, the scale items were formulated based on the operational definition (De Vellis, 1991; Blanco et al., 2003). To do this, we had the collaboration of a group of five early childhood education teachers who reviewed the wording and syntax of the 43 initial items. Face and construct validity were subsequently assessed by thirteen specialists in early childhood care and education.

Once the changes suggested by the experts had been made, a first version of the scale consisting of 20 items was obtained. This version was applied to a sample of

100 early childhood education teachers using a snowball technique. The participants completed the scale individually at their workplace under the supervision of the researcher. Previously, they were given the information sheet and the informed consent for their voluntary participation was collected. The project was evaluated and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of the Republic. In turn, it had the endorsement of the Initial and Primary Education Council to which the educational institutions where the teachers work belong. In no case personal data was requested, all information being anonymous.

Participants

The study sample ($N = 100$) was made up of early childhood education teachers in the city of Montevideo who attended children aged 3, 4 and 5 years. 2% were between 20 and 25 years old; 13% between 26 and 30; 30% between 31 and 35 years; 15% between 36 and 40; 21% between 41 and 45; 8% between 51 and 55; 3% between 56 and 60.

Data Analysis

To estimate the psychometric properties, the item-test correlation indices and the internal consistency indices were calculated for the scale items, eliminating those that presented a total item correlation of less than 0.30 or whose elimination improved internal consistency.

Once the items were eliminated, the same procedure was repeated until a set of items with an item-test correlation greater than 0.30 was obtained. Based on these items, a principal components analysis was performed, applying an oblique rotation to facilitate the interpretation of the factors that were not expected to be independent. SPSS version 23 was used for the analyses.

Study 1 Results

Once the items that did not meet the consistency criteria were eliminated, a second version of the scale was obtained, consisting of nine items with item-test correlations ranging from 0.34 to 0.74. The internal consistency of the scale was 0.86. The graphic exploration of the scores on each item shows a distribution with negative asymmetry, although there was enough variability in the responses that covered the entire range of responses from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

With the items selected from the levels of reliability, we proceeded to explore the structure of the construct. For this, a principal component analysis was performed. Contrary to what was expected (H1), the factorial matrix for the non-rotated solution reflects two main components ($\lambda \geq 1$) that jointly explained 60.82% of the variance, 49% corresponding to the first factor and 11.82% to the second.

In order to facilitate the interpretation of the extracted factors, an oblique rotation was carried out (Conway & Huffcutt, 2003), since the factors were not

Table 1 Rotated component matrix

	Component 1	Component 2
Item 1. Faced with situations of excessive overprotection by families, I encourage the child to demonstrate their rights and defend their rights	**0.72**	0.19
Item 2. I often tell boys and girls that: "you are a person who can decide, you can think, you can speak"	**0.68**	0.11
Item 3. When a problem comes up, I give the opportunity to the boy or girl to talk about it and be heard, recognized and contained by the group	**0.79**	0.10
Item 4. Faced with extreme situations of abuse or other forms of violence, I offer the child tools to deal with the situation (reassure him that it is wrong, that he is not guilty, etc.…)	**0.73**	0.16
Item 5. Faced with extreme situations of abuse or other forms of violence, I encourage the child to be able to seek help by verbalizing what is happening to them	**0.88**	0.00
Item 6. When a child comes, for example, with an earache and parents didn't take them to the doctor, I suggest to the family, that he should be assisted	**0.81**	0.04
Item 7. When a family never comes to the parent's activities, I call them and insist on their participation	**0.63**	− 0.33
Item 8. After a few months of class, when a very restless child leaves things lying around, I tell them that he must do it and that they will not be able to join the group until they complies with it	0.13	**0.77**
Item 9. I give the little boys and girls responsibilities such as going to take something to another teacher or the list to the principal's office	0.08	**0.73**

Oblimin rotation ($N = 100$)

Table 2 Component Matrix ($N = 100$)

Item	Component
Item 1	0.80
Item 2	0.72
Item 3	0.82
Item 4	0.78
Item 5	0.88
Item 6	0.82
Item7	0.48

expected to be totally independent (see Table 1). The results again reflect a structure of two factors, improving the percentage of total associated variance (65.7%) and those related to both factors (53% and 12.7% respectively). The level of internal consistency of the total scale was 0.86. However, the internal consistency value for the subscale composed of the items of the second factor was clearly below the acceptable level (alpha = 0.45). On the contrary, the level of internal consistency for the items of the first factor was highly satisfactory (alpha = 0.89). Taking into account these levels of internal consistency and the percentage of variance associated with each factor, it was decided to retain only the items of the first factor (See Table 2). Although this decision may impair the content validity of the scale, it offers a more parsimonious factorial structure, while maintaining the percentage of explained variance at satisfactory levels (Comrey & Lee, 1992).

Study 1 Discussion

After the analyzes carried out, a unifactorial scale was obtained, more parsimonious structures than hypothesized and with a smaller number of items. The extracted factor focuses on behaviors aimed at reducing the impact of situations that threaten or violate PA, and on those that reflect the role of the teacher as a guarantor of children's rights, through their involvement in the empowerment of the children stimulating them in their abilities.

Study 2: PAPB's, Teachers' Regulation of Children Affect, and Job Well-Being

Before testing the hypothesis on the PAPBs relationship with interpersonal emotion regulation and job well-being, additional evidence on the construct validity of the refined scale in study 1, was provided through confirmatory factor.

Participants

For the selection of the sample, all kindergartens in the city of Montevideo and its metropolitan area were taken. The total population was made up of 511 teachers distributed in 62 centers. Participation in the study was voluntary and informed consent was obtained. Of the 62 kindergartens, 54 agreed to participate in the study, which represents 87.1% of the total.

A total of 329 teachers completed the questionnaire, which represents 64.4% of the population. Only two were men. 0.3% were between 20 and 25 years old; 8.5% between 26 and 30; 26.1% between 31 and 35; 26.1% between 36 and 40; 16.1% between 41 and 45 and 10.6% between 46 and 50.

Regarding seniority, 11.2% were between 1 and 5 years old; 24.6% between 6 and 10 years; 34.7% between 11 and 15 years old; 12.2% between 16 and 20 years old; 7.9% between 21 and 25, and 4.0% between 26 and 30 years.

Procedure

The participants completed a questionnaire that included, in addition to the scale derived from study 1, measures referring to the variables that were expected to form part of the PAPB nomological network. Data collection was carried out at the beginning of the school year in Uruguay. The questionnaire was filled out individually at the workplace under the supervision of members of the research team. As in study 1, they were previously given the information sheet and the informed consent was collected as provided by the ethics committee of the Faculty of Psychology. All information was collected anonymously.

Instruments

PAPBs scale. The final 7-item scale developed in study 1 was used. The internal consistency index of the scale was 0.86.

Interpersonal Affect Regulation Scale. It was assessed using the *Emotion Regulation of Others Scale* (EROS; Niven et al., 2011). The content was adjusted to the teacher–child relationship. The scale consists of twelve items, six measure strategies aimed at improving the mood of others (sample item, *I have praised a child's abilities to make them feel better*) and the rest strategies aimed at worsening the mood (sample item, *I reprimanded a child in the class for their behavior to make them feel worse*). Participants were asked to indicate on a response scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all, 5 = A lot) how often they had used each of the strategies during the last two weeks. The internal consistency index of the improvement subscale was 0.64. For the worsening subscale it was 0.78,

Emotional exhaustion. It was evaluated with 5 items of the subscale of emotional exhaustion factor in the Spanish version (Seisdedos, 1997) of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1996). Participants were asked to indicate on a scale of 0 to 7 (0 = Never, 7 = Always) how often they had experienced the sensations

described by each item (sample item, "How often does your job make you feel emotionally exhausted"). The internal consistency of the scale was 0.89.

Scale of symptoms associated with work. The Self-Report Scale of Somatic Symptoms (Schat, Kelloway, & Desmarais, 2005) was used. The scale measures the frequency of somatic symptoms with 14 items linked to 4 dimensions: gastrointestinal; headaches; sleep disturbances; and persistence of respiratory diseases. The participants indicate on a scale from 1 to 7 the frequency of the symptoms or the days of persistence of the disease. Internal consistency was 0.89.

Data Analysis

The structure of the scale in study 1 was contrasted by confirmatory factor analysis, using the AMOS 23 program (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA).

Bi-variate correlations were computed to test the hypothesis on the relationships between PAPBS, teacher regulation of children's affect and job well-being.

Study 2 Results

To determine the quality of the structure found in Study 1, the absolute and incremental fit indices were estimated. After performing the CFA for the 7-item scale and applying the fit improvement indices that would suggest allowing covariance between the error terms between items 3 and 4, the results show excellent levels of goodness of fit ($\chi 2\ (8) = 11.336$, $p = 0.18$, RMSEA = 0.03, SRMR = 0.03 CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98) (see Fig. 1). The internal consistency index for the scale was 0.70.

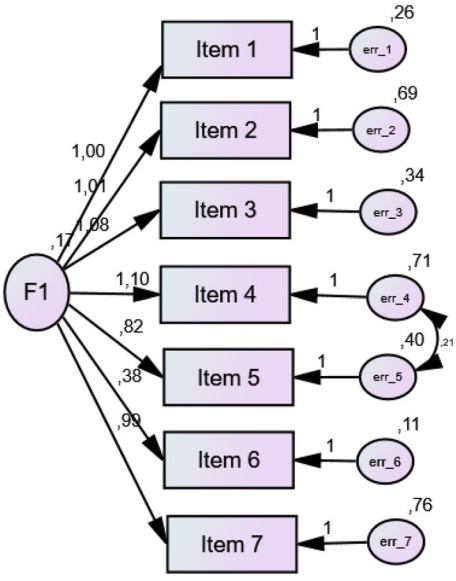


Fig. 1 Scale factor and final scale items

Regarding the teacher strategies to regulate children's' emotions, in the case of affect improvement, the correlation was significant and positive ($r=0.38$, $p<0.01$). This result confirms H2a. However, in the case of teachers' strategies aimed at worsening the child's affection, the correlation was negative, as expected, but not significant ($r=-0.08$, $p=$n.s.), which disconfirms H2b.

Finally, the hypotheses (H3 and 4) related to the relationship between PAPBs and the teacher's well-being were confirmed, being correlations with the level of emotional exhaustion and with the frequency of negative and significant psychosomatic symptoms negative and significant as expected ($r=-0.14$, $p<0.01$ and $r=-0.14$, $p<0.001$), respectively).

Discussion Study 2

The results of study 2 confirm the uni-factorial structure of the scale and acceptable levels of internal consistency. Likewise, the hypothesis on the relationship between the teachers' strategies to improve children's affect and the PAPBs was confirmed. The expected relationship with affect worsening strategies was not confirmed. As for the teachers' well-being, despite the effort that may be involved in the PAPBs performance, the relationship with the level of emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms was negative. This points to the convenience of promoting PAPBs, not only from the point of view of guaranteeing children's rights, but also from the promotion and care of the well-being of teachers at work (Martinez-Iñigo et al., 2013).

General Discussion

The study offers a reliable and valid scale for the evaluation of behaviors promoting PA in early childhood education teachers and some valuable findings on other psychological process involved in their implementation and their consequences for teachers' well-being.

The final scale includes a single factor. A careful analysis of the items that make up this factor shows that these refer to behaviors of the teacher clearly and explicitly aimed at dealing with serious and/or explicit situations of violation of the rights of the child This structure reduces the dimensions proposed from the review of the legal texts, the previous literature and the qualitative study on PA in the same population of our study (Etchebehere, 2012).

According to the results of the study, it does not seem that the behaviors that promote the autonomy of the child by the teachers include those dimensions related to more everyday situations that, without being extreme, promote the exercise of PA by the children and girls. These results are related to those found by Hareket & Karta (2021) in a recent meta synthesis of research on children's rights in primary schools. According to the authors, teachers should expand their actions to promote children's rights, especially the right to participate, including those behaviors involved in daily activities in the classroom. The authors suggest that it is necessary to broaden the vision that teachers have on the promotion

of children's rights, including their incorporation into their daily activities in the classroom, beyond addressing situations of extreme threat to children's rights. As indicated in different reports and studies, there are difficulties in the practical implementation of the principles of the Convention, in transforming the attitudes and behavior of the adults responsible for guaranteeing the exercise by children of all their rights (Etchebehere, 2012; Kinkead-Clark et al., 2019; UNICEF, 2005, 2009). It is therefore necessary to continue analyzing the connection between legal definitions and the attitudes of the actors who implement them.

Another possible explanation for this reduction would be the highly instrumental and concrete nature of the behaviors described in other dimensions (for example, putting on a coat, putting things in order, choosing the order of tasks). This specificity might mean that the underlying motivation for the behavior's implementation does not necessarily correspond to the intention of promoting the child's PA. For example, a teacher committed to promoting PA may ask the child to put on her coat to reduce their dependence on the environment for the development of their daily life, while a teacher scarcely aware of their role as guarantor can encourage such behavior as a way to reduce their workload. In this sense, the writing of the items could be improved by including in them not only the behavior to execute, but also the motivation. For example, "*When I want a boy or girl to increase their autonomy*, *I encourage them to put on their coat*." In this way, it is possible that the items can be retained in the PAPBs, reflecting actions that promote PA in daily and more frequent situations, without being limited to serious situations or violations of this right.

The fact that the scale focused on situations of clear violation of children's rights may have reduced the scores' variability, given that in serious situations (for example, a child who does not receive the medical care he or she needs and suffers) it is likely that most of the population of teachers will react. It is plausible that the inclusion of minor or more daily actions marks greater differences between the teachers more aware of the role of guarantee and its implication for the daily interaction with the child, including the regulation of their emotions, and those teachers less committed with the PA of children. However, it cannot be ruled out that teachers link their role as guarantors of children's rights, including PA, to their actions in serious situations of rights violations, and not so much to their promotion in everyday situations. Research on the promotion of participation with samples in other cultural contexts (Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland) reflect that teachers implement practices that encourage child participation through the ways in which they respond to and extend child-initiated sequences of learning (Church & Baterman, 2019; Fröden & Tellgren, 2020). It seems, then, that in other contexts the vision of the behaviors involved in the promotion of rights by teachers includes components of daily activity, beyond situations of extreme threat to children's rights. Confirm the presence of a narrower perception among Uruguayan teachers, has clear applied consequences for the training of teachers as promoters of AP.

Regarding the relationship between PAPBs and other variables, the results offer some promising insights for understanding the psycho-social processes involved in their development and their consequences for the main actors in their achievement. Our findings show the relevance of interpersonal affect improving strategies

for PAPBs. The literature on this type of strategies shows their impact on the quality of interpersonal relationships. The results of the study are compatible with this literature and with the research on the importance of teacher–child bonding for the creation of enabling environments for the child. However, contrary to expected, the study did not find a significant relationship between PAPBs and worsening affect strategies. This result may be due to the low frequency of PAPBs use (Mean = 1.12) and scores' low variability (dt = 0.68). This could explain why the size effect was not large enough for the relationship to be significant in the sample used. It is also possible that some of the specific characteristics of the use of this type of strategy in the relationship between an adult and children explain this absence of a relationship. The studies carried out on this type of strategy have focused on adult-adult relationships. For this reason, it would be advisable to carry out qualitative studies that would allow an in-depth analysis of the meaning that the use of this type of strategy has for teachers. It is possible that in relationships with an adult this type of strategy pursues different objectives, not necessarily positive. In the case of the relationship with a child, the teacher's motives may be positive, including avoiding a danger for the child, motivating a positive change in their behavior, making them aware of the need for change, among others.

Finally, the study sheds some light on the consequences of PAPBs for teachers' well-being. Although these types of behaviors place additional demands on teachers, their relationship with job well-being is positive. Although further studies should confirm the reasons for this seemingly paradoxical relationship, several plausible explanations can be advanced. The positive relationship with the interpersonal affect improving strategies points to the relevance of the quality of the teacher–child relationship. As mentioned above, these strategies have a positive impact on the quality of the relationship and increase the likelihood that the relationship will be rewarding for the teacher who implements them. Studies in other contexts reflect that affect improving strategies increase the likelihood that the implementing agent receives positive feedback from the person to whom the strategy is directed (Martínez-Iñigo et al., 2013). This feedback together with the improvement of the quality and trust in the relationship (Niven et al., 2012) would explain why a demand, initially costly from a psychological point of view, can derive in a beneficial relationship for the teacher's well-being in the long term.

The relationship found between PAPB and teacher well-being seriously challenges the belief that the creation of positive and nurturing environments involves additional effort that jeopardizes teacher well-being. It provides an additional justification for the implementation of initiatives that promote such environments.

Our results confirm the convenience of incorporating competences for the regulation of children's emotions based on their improvement in the training of early childhood teachers. Although future studies should deepen the causal relationships between the constructs analyzed, the findings are compatible with the presence of a *virtuous circle* in which the use of affect improving strategies are associated at the same time with the teacher's progressive autonomy-promoting behaviors and well-being. In turn, previous research has shown the reduction in the level of emotional exhaustion is related to the availability of resources to implement affect enhancement strategies again, starting the cycle anew.

Table 3 Bivariate correlations between the PAPB scale and the variables included in the nomological network ($N = 329$)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Affect improvement	–				
2. Affect worsen	− 0.01	–			
3. Emotional exhaustion	− 0.18**	0.22**	–		
4. Psychosomatic symptoms	− 0.14**	− 0.08	0.08	–	
5. PAPB	0.38**	− 0.08	− 0.14**	− 0.14*	–

*$p < 0.01$ **$p < 0.001$

Although as a whole it contributes to advancing knowledge about the psychological factors involved in promoting children's rights, the study has some limitations. First, the use of self-reporting can introduce the common variance of the method as a source of error. However, the non-confirmation of some of the hypotheses about the correlations and the confirmatory factor analyzes do not point to an important presence of this bias.

It is important to note that, although acceptable, the consistency index of the scale could be improved. The reformulation of items described above can help to resolve this issue. It would also be convenient to apply the scale to other samples to determine the stability of this index (Table 3).

Although, the hypotheses on the PAPB's relationships with other variables were based on previous empirical evidence, any interpretation on the directionality of the relationship must be cautious. Future longitudinal studies should supple stronger evidence on the casual links between the variables analyzed.

Finally, like any study conducted in a single country, it raises doubts about the possibility of generalizing the conclusions to other cultural contexts. Future studies should check the degree of in-variance when comparing different populations.

Conclusions

The availability of a measurement instrument with its estimated psychometric properties constitutes the first step for the study of PAPB. Future studies should explore other variables that promote the development of PAPB, as well as those that inhibit it. The translation of an initially legal construct into measurable psychological terms is a relevant contribution from the discipline in multiple ways. Among others, it should be noted that it allows the diagnosis of the development of children's rights and offers an element to evaluate the public policies implemented for their promotion. Likewise, it makes possible an analysis of the factors that encourage the promotion of PA, as an enabling right of others, in one of the most important groups, the teachers of initial education. Finally, it allows determining what relationship it maintains with the well-being of the actors that compose this group.

In summary, the results of this study constitute a contribution to the promotion of PA in initial education, an area in which difficulties and lack of speed have been

pointed out in relation to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2005, 2009).

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethics Approval The study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of the Republic, Uruguay.

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