

## Socio-emotional Competencies in Organizations and at Work: concepts and instruments in Brazilian and international studies

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### Abstract

Organizations have shown an interest in socio-emotional competencies due to the current knowledge that they are as important as technical competencies for the best personal and professional development. However, there is no consensus in the literature regarding the conceptual definition of these competencies. Accordingly, this narrative review aimed at characterizing the concept of socio-emotional competencies and the instruments used in Brazilian and international studies in the context of organizations and work. The Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar and *Biblioteca Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações* databases were consulted, resulting in 26 articles composing the sample. The results show that there is a myriad of concepts about socio-emotional competencies, and that the instruments used evaluate mainly emotional intelligence, personality and other more consolidated constructs in the literature. The impacts of the multiple possibilities of conceptualizing and measuring socio-emotional competences are discussed.

*Keywords:* socio-emotional competencies; organizations; work.

### Competências Socioemocionais nas Organizações e no Trabalho: Conceitos e Instrumentos em Estudos Brasileiros e Internacionais

#### Resumo

As organizações têm demonstrado interesse nas competências socioemocionais devido ao conhecimento atual de que são tão importantes quanto as competências técnicas para o melhor desenvolvimento pessoal e profissional. No entanto, não há consenso na literatura sobre a definição conceitual dessas competências. Nesse sentido, esta revisão narrativa teve como objetivo caracterizar o conceito de competências socioemocionais e os instrumentos utilizados nos estudos brasileiros e internacionais no contexto das organizações e trabalho. Foram consultadas as bases de dados Scopus, *Web of Science*, *Google Scholar* e *Biblioteca Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações*, resultando em 26 artigos compondo a amostra. Os resultados indicam uma miríade de conceitos sobre competências socioemocionais e que os instrumentos utilizados avaliam principalmente inteligência emocional, personalidade e outros construtos mais consolidados na literatura. Os impactos das múltiplas possibilidades de conceituar e mensurar competências socioemocionais são discutidos.

*Palavras-chave:* competências socioemocionais, organizações, trabalho

### Competencias socioemocionales en las Organizaciones y en el Trabajo: conceptos e instrumentos en estudios brasileños e internacionales

#### Resumen

Las organizaciones han mostrado interés en las habilidades socioemocionales debido al conocimiento actual de que son tan importantes como las habilidades técnicas para un mejor desarrollo personal y profesional. Sin embargo, no hay consenso en la literatura sobre la definición conceptual de estas competencias. En consecuencia, esta revisión narrativa tuvo como objetivo caracterizar el concepto de competencias socioemocionales y los instrumentos utilizados en los estudios brasileños e internacionales en el contexto de las organizaciones y del trabajo. Se consultaron las bases Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar y Biblioteca Digital Brasileña de Tesis y Disertaciones, lo que resultó en 26 artículos que componen la muestra. Los resultados indican una gran cantidad de conceptos sobre las competencias socioemocionales y que los instrumentos empleados evalúan principalmente la inteligencia emocional, la personalidad y otros constructos más consolidados en la literatura. Se discuten los impactos de las múltiples posibilidades de conceptualizar y medir las competencias socioemocionales.

*Palabras clave:* competencias socioemocionales; organizaciones; trabajo.

### Introduction

The discussion about competencies for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, also known as socio-emotional competencies,

has grown in both the academic context and within society in general. Such competencies, also called “soft skills”, (i.e.), are related to personal motivation, team work, interpersonal communication and managing

emotions (OECD, 2015). Socio-emotional competencies are considered to be as important as cognitive skills for personal and professional development and for worldwide social and economic progress (Acosta & Muller, 2018; Puerta et al., 2016; Santos & Primi, 2014; Santos et al., 2018).

Although socio-emotional competencies are fomenting extensive interest, commonly in the fields of economics, education and psychology, scientific publications usually do not clearly define what they are. When definitions are mentioned, they are accompanied by a list of relational and emotional aspects without the adoption of objective models or criteria, probably because the construct is not consolidated in the literature - complexity that may also reflect on the measurement decision of the researchers (Marin et al., 2017). Accordingly, this article aims at describing the concepts and characterizing the instruments used to assess socio-emotional competencies in Brazilian and international studies with adults in the context of organizations and work.

#### *Conceptual aspects of socio-emotional competencies*

The notion of what it means to be competent is highly inserted in the educational, professional and work contexts. Students seek for relevant competencies for their professional development, career and labor market insertion, and organizations evaluate whether the candidate has relevant competencies to improve work performance (Gondim et al., 2014). In general, in the work context, the concept of competence is divided into two main dimensions - technical and socio-emotional competencies, also called hard and soft skills (Almlund et al., 2011). The socio-emotional competencies agenda was strongly driven by the economics field due to concerns about social and economic progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century - highlighting the works financed and organized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD (2015) and the World Bank (Cunningham et al., 2016; Guerra et al., 2014).

However, socio-emotional competencies have been neglected by economists for many decades (Heckman & Kautz, 2012), partly because elements such as perseverance, conscientiousness, self-control, trust in others, were seen to be difficult to measure by conventional models of cognitive performance assessment (Kautz et al., 2014), or because there were no universal models available (Zhou, 2017), or because of using self-reporting measures as data collection, as this method

is considered more susceptible to socially desirable response biases compared to other-reports assessment or mixed measures (Connelly & Ones, 2010; Oh et al., 2011; Kyllonen, 2016). Nevertheless, psychological measurements, especially those related to personality, have provided evidences of psychological aspects predicting positive outcomes (Almlund et al., 2011; Heckman & Kautz, 2012).

In Brazil, in 2014, the OECD, the Ministry of Education, the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research “Anísio Teixeira” and the Ayrton Senna Institute promoted a meeting to discuss the development of cognitive, social and emotional skills to face the challenges of social progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (OECD, 2015). In Latin America, based on a World Bank initiative, the book “Minds and Behaviors at Work: Boosting Socioemotional Skills for Latin America’s Workforce” (Cunningham et al., 2016), indicated the economics field interest on socio-emotional competencies, as well as in building a research and interventions agenda in Latin American countries within the context of organizations and work.

Defining precisely socio-emotional competencies has been a challenging task, since the concepts and criteria used to describe them in the scientific literature have changed over time and diverge across different fields of study (Goodman et al., 2015). In the economics literature socio-emotional competencies is often used interchangeably with terms such as “behavioral skills”, “life skills”, “non-cognitive skills”, “people skills”, “key competences”, “key skills”, “core skills”, “transversal competencies”, “generic competencies”, “soft skills” (Acosta & Muller, 2018; Cinque, 2016), “emotional intelligence” and “character skills” (Goodman et al., 2015). Semantically, however, these concepts have important differences: while non-cognitive skills refer to a range of behaviors, skills and traits not directly related to intelligence, the terms soft skills or life skills are broader and include cognitive and technical skills, such as reading, writing and the ability for logical analysis (Acosta & Muller, 2018).

Gondim et al. (2014) defined socio-emotional competencies as an integration of knowledges and actions about oneself and about others, sustained from awareness, expression, regulation and handling of emotions, with the intention of increasing subjective, psychological and relational well-being. Emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, emotional creativity and social skills are part of what is meant by socio-emotional competencies (Gondim et al., 2014).

The OECD (2015) defined socio-emotional competencies as an individual capacity that manifests itself through consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors in relation to goal setting (perseverance, self-control and focus on goals), working with others (sociability, respect and care) and managing emotions (self-esteem, optimism and self-confidence). Acosta and Muller (2018) defined socio-emotional competencies as a set of personality traits, behaviors, attitudes, thoughts, and feelings (such as self-confidence, perseverance and emotional stability) that increase the probability to people effectively experience interpersonal and social situations. Finally, Goodman et al. (2015) defined socio-emotional competencies as skills related to the person's beliefs about themselves, to how they deal with people and how they motivate their own behaviors.

Regarding the dimensions related to socio-emotional competencies, there is a myriad of models available. One of the main difficulties in establishing universally accepted indicators for socio-emotional competencies is about concerns of culture and context (Zhou, 2017), that is, something valued in one culture may be less valued in another (Miyamoto et al., 2015). Because of cultural/contextual factors, Big Five personality traits have been commonly used to understand socio-emotional characteristics (Ambiel et al., 2015; Santos & Primi, 2014; Santos et al., 2018; Zhou, 2017), considering the acceptance of the model at a cross-cultural level and the relationship between socio-emotional competencies and personality traits (Gensowski, 2018; Nikic et al., 2014).

The Big Five perspective, although scientifically well accepted, is not unanimous. Vale (2009) investigated socioemotional education programs and organized them into five categories, based on past studies: (i) emotional self-awareness; (ii) management of emotions; (iii) productive control of emotions; (iv) empathy; and (v) management of relationships. In turn, the Social and Emotional Learning - SEL model, proposed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning - CASEL group (2012), includes as dimensions of socio-emotional competencies: i) self-awareness; ii) self-management (regulating behaviors, thoughts and emotions); iii) social awareness (appropriate identification of resources and social support); iv) relationship/social skills; and v) responsible decision-making (constructive, responsible and ethical choices that promote the well-being of self and others). In a longitudinal study by Goodman et al. (2015), the dimensions were: i) self-perception and self-awareness;

ii) motivation; iii) self-control and self-regulation; iv) social skills; and v) resilience and coping. In Macedo's thesis (2018), the dimensions proposed were: i) emotional awareness; ii) emotional balance; iii) teamwork; iv) self-control; and v) emotional creativity. Finally, Mikulic et al. (2015) constructed and validated a scale to assess socio-emotional competencies in adults with the following dimensions: assertiveness, self-efficacy, autonomy, emotional awareness, expressive communication, empathy, optimism, emotional regulation and prosocial behavior.

With regard to the period of the life cycle, childhood and adolescence have been considered propitious for investment in the development of socio-emotional competencies, as the construction of personality is more malleable in these stages of life (Acosta & Muller, 2018; Almlund et al., 2011; Guerra et al., 2014; OECD, 2015; Santos & Primi, 2014). In adults, the efficacy of socio-emotional competencies training programs can vary due to the type of program, if the program is exclusive to develop socio-emotional competencies, sociodemographic variables, measures, population, qualification/expertise of the facilitator of the intervention and whether the program was carried out on a smaller or bigger scale (Kautz et al., 2014; Puerta et al., 2016; Van Berkhout & Malouff, 2016).

Finally, in a recent investigation (Santos et al., 2018) of Brazilian and international scientific production related to socio-emotional competencies, from 2011 to 2015, 67 articles were found (17 of which were Brazilian), only 8.0% of them related to organizational settings, although higher frequencies of studies in the fields of developmental psychology (international= 62.0% and Brazilian= 25.0%) and educational (international=28.0% and Brazilian= 76.0%), supporting the assertion that socio-emotional competencies studies focus on childhood and adolescence (international= 78.9% and Brazilian= 68.0%). In view of the discussion held and the scarce production on socio-emotional competencies in adults within organizations and work contexts, this narrative literature review aimed at characterizing the concept of socio-emotional competencies and the instruments used in Brazilian and international articles with adults in the context of organizations and work.

## Method

A systematic investigation was carried out in the literature on socio-emotional competencies in

Brazilian and international databases: i) *Biblioteca Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações* - BDTD; ii) Google Scholar; iii) Scopus - Elsevier; and iv) Web of Science. We chose the BDTD database because it retrieves thesis and dissertations developed in Brazil, since some of them have not been published yet in scientific journals; Google Scholar for performing extensive searches in the databases; and Scopus and Web of Science for maintaining a wide collection of high-quality scientific articles. The searches corresponded to published documents until 2018, with no previous time limit, because published studies on socio-emotional competencies - in these terms - with adults in the context of organizations and work are still incipient in the literature. The search was not restricted to journals of specific fields, providing the possibility of evaluating multidisciplinary research.

We applied descriptors in Portuguese for BDTD and Google Scholar, and in English for Scopus and Web of Science. The descriptors used for searching in the BDTD were “*competências socioemocionais*” and “*habilidades socioemocionais*”, in all fields. The insertion of the term “skills” occurred due to the common use of this term to refer to the same concept of socio-emotional competencies (Cinque, 2016). For example, in Santos and Primi (2014), “*competências socioemocionais*” appears 67 times, while “*habilidades socioemocionais*” appears six times in the body of the text. We opted then for the use of both terms. In Google Scholar, the terms “*competências socioemocionais*”, “*competências socio-emocionais*”, “*habilidades socioemocionais*” and “*habilidades socio-emocionais*” were used in any field, followed by the search restrictions “-crianças” (children) and “-adolescentes” (adolescents), with the “patents and citations” options disabled. We opted for using the hyphenation of “*socioemocionais*” due to the spelling reform in Brazilian Portuguese of 2009 that changed the way words were written when the prefix ended in a vowel joined to the second element by a different vowel. The same strategy was not adopted in the BDTD, because we found no results with hyphenation that fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Due to the fact that Google Scholar performs very broad searches and to get fewer results, we decided to restrict the appearance of the terms “children” and “adolescents”, considering that the majority of studies on socio-emotional competencies are carried out with these age groups in educational context.

In the Scopus and Web of Science databases, the terms “socio-emotional competenc\*” and “socio-emotional skills” were used in title, summary or keywords

fields. The term “competenc\*” was used in order to include both “competencies” and “competences”. Specifically, in the search for “socio-emotional skills”, the Boolean operator “and not” was used in the title, abstract or keywords to restrict the words “children” and “adolescents”, aiming at optimizing the search for adult populations.

In Google Scholar, 84 results were found with the term “*habilidades socioemocionais*” and 87 with “*habilidades socio-emocionais*”; 125 results with “*competências socioemocionais*” and 44 with “*competências socio-emocionais*”; in the BDTD, 13 results were found for “*habilidades socioemocionais*” and 22 results for “*competências socioemocionais*”; in the Scopus database, 27 results were found for “Socio-emotional skills” and 66 results for “socio-emotional competenc\*”; finally, in the Web of Science database, 28 results were found for “socio-emotional skills” and 58 results for “Socio-emotional competenc\*”, totaling 554 documents.

The titles and abstracts of the documents found were read in order to verify whether they fulfilled the inclusion criteria, namely: i) studies with an adult population; ii) studies in the context of organizations and work, including college population and other contexts of professional training; iii) empirical studies; iv) availability of full text; and v) studies published in Portuguese, English or Spanish. At the end of this first screening, 491 results that did not fulfill the criteria adopted were excluded, being applied in the order mentioned above: 296 studies were with children and/or adolescents; 112 studies were performed outside the context of organizations and work; 74 were theoretical studies or texts; and eight studies did not have full text available. 22 duplicated studies were also excluded, such as the thesis by Berlingeri (2018) that was found in both Google Scholar and the BDTD searches. After reading the remaining 42 documents entirely, 16 of them did not refer to socio-emotional competencies as a construct in the text, being only cited in a generic way in the title, abstract or keywords. Thus, 26 documents composed the final sample. Figure 1 summarizes the search in the databases.

The following categories were adopted in two independent analysis: Name of the document; authors; year of publication; type of material (article, thesis or dissertation); journal field or concentration of the graduate program; concept of socio-emotional competencies described in the material; type of study (qualitative, quantitative, mixed) and instruments used to assess socio-emotional aspects.

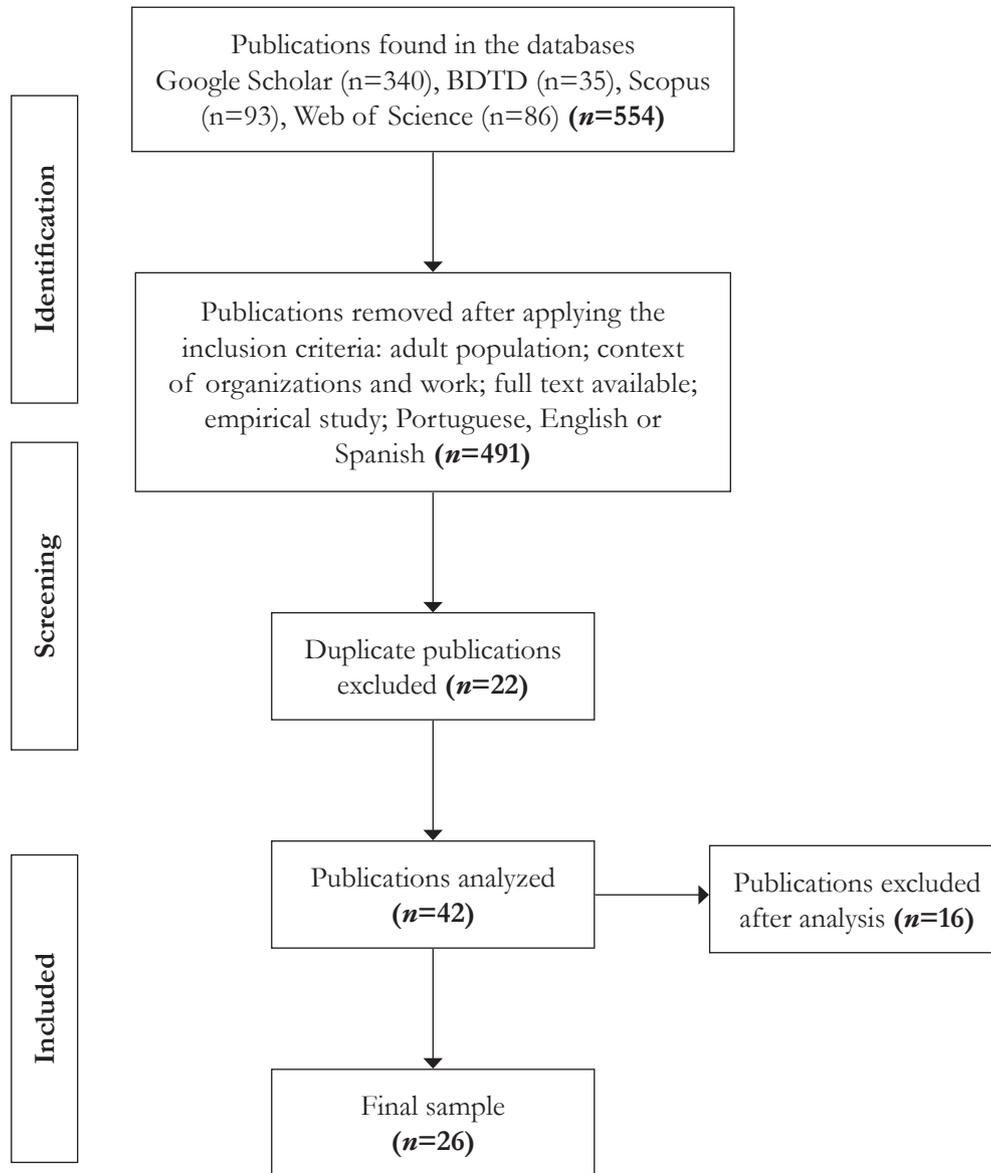


Figure 1. General search, identification, screening and inclusion procedures.

## Results

The results show that from 26 documents used in the study seven were thesis and 19 scientific articles, published from 2001 to 2018. Higher education/graduate ( $n=7$ ), education ( $n=4$ ), educational psychology ( $n=2$ ) and economy ( $n=2$ ) were the most frequent journals main fields, while Science and Mathematics ( $n=2$ ) and Psychology ( $n=2$ ) were the most frequent graduate programs. Undergraduate students ( $n=8$ ), followed by teachers ( $n=4$ ) and workers in general ( $n=4$ ) were the most frequent participants. Bibliometric data from the retrieved studies are shown in Table 1.

*Conceptual results:* The concepts of socio-emotional competencies were categorized into four aspects: i) studies in which the authors did not conceptualize socio-emotional competencies or the concept was not explicit ( $n = 8$ ); ii) studies in which the authors conceptualized it as a synonym for emotional intelligence ( $n = 4$ ); iii) studies in which the authors conceptualized education or socio-emotional learning ( $n = 3$ ); and iv) studies in which the authors conceptualize socio-emotional competencies explicitly ( $n = 11$ ). The specific studies in which the authors did not conceptualize socio-emotional competencies explicitly in the text are Biggio and Cortese (2013), Calero et al. (2017), Casado

Table 1.  
*Bibliometric data*

Authors	Type	Method	Journal/program	Participants
Morand (2001)	Article	Quantitative	Business and Psychology	Graduates
Vivas et al (2010)	Article	Qualitative	Education	Undergraduates
Kubota et al (2011)	Article	Quantitative	Pharmaceutical Education	Undergraduates/ postgraduates
Pertegal-Felices (2011)	Article	Quantitative	Education	Undergraduates/ teachers
Biggio and Cortese (2013)	Article	Qualitative	Health	Workers
Elias (2013)	Thesis	Quantitative	Educational Psychology	Teachers
Seymour (2013)	Article	Qualitative	Higher Education	Undergraduates
Ibarraran et al. (2014)	Article	Quantitative	Economy	Youth
Lappalainen (2014)	Article	Quantitative	Engineering Education	Workers
Nikic et al (2014)	Article	Quantitative	Management	Workers
Pereira (2015)	Thesis	Quantitative	Psychology	Undergraduates/ military instructors
Ramalhinho (2015)	Thesis	Mixed	Tourism	Workers
Casado, et al. (2016)	Article	Mixed	Higher education	Undergraduates/ teachers
Estrada et al. (2016)	Article	Quantitative	Higher Education	Undergraduates
Natarén and González (2016)	Article	Mixed	Communication	Teachers
Calero et al. (2017)	Article	Quantitative	Economy	Youth
Castillo-Gualda (2017)	Article	Quantitative	Educational Psychology	Teachers
Lima (2017)	Thesis	Qualitative	Health	Undergraduates
Llorent-Vaquero et al. (2017)	Article	Quantitative	Education	Teachers
Palomera et al (2017)	Article	Quantitative	Education	Undergraduates
Paranhos (2017)	Thesis	Qualitative	Science and Mathematics	Undergraduates
Andrade (2018)	Thesis	Qualitative	Science and Mathematics	Undergraduates
Berlinger (2018)	Thesis	Quantitative	Economy	Workers
Expósito et al. (2018)	Article	Quantitative	Nurse/Education	Undergraduates
Pohlmann and Carvalho (2018)	Article	Qualitative	Health	Technical students
Rogers-Shaw and Carr-Chellman (2018)	Article	Qualitative	Higher Education	Graduates

et al. (2016), Kubota et al. (2011), Lappalainen (2014), Natarén and González (2016), Nikić et al. (2014), and Pohlmann and Carvalho (2018). All studies analyzed in this review are marked with an asterisk (\*) and can be easily accessed in the references.

The group of documents in which the authors conceptualize socio-emotional competencies as emotional intelligence consists of four articles (Castillo-Gualda et al., 2017; Estrada et al., 2016; Morand, 2001; Pertegal-Felices et al., 2011). The smaller group composed by three studies did not conceptualize socio-emotional competencies, but “socioemotional learning”

(Elias, 2013; Palomera, et al., 2017; Rogers-Shaw & Carr-Chellmann, 2018). An example of this definition, Rogers-Chaw and Carr-Chellmann (2018) used Elias (2006, p. 235) to conceptualize socioemotional learning “[...] capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others [...]”.

Finally, a larger group of documents ( $n = 11$ ) explicitly conceptualized socio-emotional competencies/skills (Table 2). The analysis also considered as synonymous the use of both “competencies” and “skills”, mainly because in literature the use of the word

“skills” is more common than “competencies” and its variants.

*Measures results:* In relation to the measures of socio-emotional variables, 23 different instruments were found. Other instruments that did not have the purpose of evaluating any socio-emotional variable - from the authors' perspective - were not object of the investigation, such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale

- SWLS scale (Diener et al., 1985), used in the study of Nikic et al. (2014). There was one case (Expósito et al., 2018) in which Utrecht Work Engagement Scale - UWES-S (Schaufeli & Baker, 2003) was used to measure a socio-emotional variable, however, in another study (Castillo-Gualda et al., 2017), this scale was used to assess work engagement as an independent variable in relation to socio-emotional competencies.

Table 2.

*Documents in which the concept of socio-emotional competencies was explicit*

Document	Definition
Berlingeri, 2018, p. 21	“[...] malleable and sensitive skills to experience and interact with other people[...]”.
Andrade, 2018, p. 30	“a reflexive ability to deal with emotions and enhance unique characteristics of the self in relationships with others” (translated from Paranhos et al., 2016).
Expósito, et al, 2018, p. 122	“[...] necessary skills that enable individuals to recognize and manage their emotions, thereby successfully coping with conflict” (citation from McCloughen & Foster, 2017).
Llorent-Vaquero, Fadden, & Llorent-Bedmar, 2018, p. 128	“[...] ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions and know how to relate positively with others”.
Lima, 2017, p. 17	“A set of individual behaviors and feelings with a kind of constant pattern or tendency to respond in a certain way in specific contexts and everyday situations, such as when managing one’s own emotions or trying to achieve a goal”
Paranhos, 2017, p. 31	“a reflexive ability to deal with emotions and enhance unique characteristics of the self in relationships with others”
Pereira, 2015, p. 12	“psychic mechanisms that facilitate the management of emotions, the establishment of healthy relationships and the use of positive behaviors to the detriment of negative attitudes, either towards others or towards oneself”
Ramalhinho, 2015, p. 40	“These are the emotional skills that allow individuals to control their emotions (ability to manage their emotions), in order to obtain good emotional balance [...]” “[...] social competencies refer to the aptitude and ease of relationships with others, the ability to integrate and work as a team, the ability to manage and resolve conflicts, the spirit of mutual help, interpersonal understanding [...], cooperation and collaboration with others, empathy, adapting and being receptive to change [...]” (author uses a translation to Portuguese from Lopes & Suleman, 2000).
Ibarraran, et al, 2014, p. 20	“socio-emotional or non-cognitive skills (also known as personality traits or life skills) are related to behaviors and attitudes, and are also referred to as to “soft skills”.
Seymour, 2013, p. 5.	“[...] the ability to deal with conflict, release group tension, support and encourage others, communication and group cohesion” (citation from Wheelan, 2005).
Vivas, Chacón, & Chacón, 2010, p. 138.	“[...] the ability to [...] manage situations that involve interpersonal relationships and the regulation of the emotions”.

When considering the second situation, the instrument was not used for the analysis. Only one instrument (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test) is a performance measure, while the others are self-report measures. All instruments found in the studies, the name of the authors, the constructs the measures assess and their dimensions are shown in Table 3.

### Discussion

This study aimed at characterizing the concepts of socio-emotional competencies and the instruments used to evaluate them in Brazilian and international studies, with adult population, in the context of organizations and work. The results show that less than half (42%) of the studies conceptualized socio-emotional competencies/skills explicitly, 31% did not explicitly conceptualize socio-emotional competencies, 15% conceptualized them as emotional intelligence and 11% conceptualized them as socio-emotional learning. Despite the myriad of concepts from the most diverse fields, the management of emotions (regulation, control, recognition) and the ability to deal with people (deal with conflict, establish healthy and positive relationships with others) are elements that repeatedly appear in some of these concepts, as also seen in Gondim et al. (2014) and OECD (2015). Considering the definition of socio-emotional competencies proposed by Gondim et al. (2014) in the context of work, six (Andrade, 2018; Llorent-Vaquero et al., 2018; Paranhos, 2017; Pereira, 2015; Ramalhinho, 2015; Vivas et al., 2010) of the eleven documents that explicitly conceptualize socio-emotional competencies have similar definitions of this concept if compared to the definition from Gondim et al. (2014). In other studies, however, these socio-emotional elements appeared in a less specific way, sometimes referring to experiences, behaviors, attitudes and skills that would be supposedly malleable, sometimes relating them to other concepts in a generic way (such as soft skills, personality traits, non-cognitive skills), or being related to the concepts of emotional intelligence and socio-emotional learning/development (Marin et al., 2017). Therefore, it was not possible to reach a consensus or find a clear trend regarding what the socio-emotional competencies are in the studies investigated.

The large variety of concepts, the divergences or the absence of concepts regarding what socio-emotional competencies or skills are may become an adversity to be faced by researchers in order to stimulate

scientific advances in the field. In this sense, because socio-emotional competencies definition has changed over time and diverge across scientific fields (Goodman et al., 2015), the construct seems to be not well established in the literature yet (Santos et al., 2018). There has been an increasing worldwide interest in relation to socio-emotional competencies because of their association to labor market outcomes (Zhou, 2017), however, the lack of clear perspectives on what socio-emotional skills are can negatively affect socio-emotional development programs to adults (Guerra et al., 2014).

Regarding the instruments, those that assess emotional intelligence were most frequently used in the studies as well as the instruments linked to personality assessment. Although personality traits are commonly defined as a fundamental construct for assessing socio-emotional competencies (Ambiel et al., 2015; Gensowski, 2018; Nikic et al., 2014; Primi et al., 2016; Santos & Primi, 2014; Santos et al., 2018; Zhou, 2017), personality measures were used as much as those of emotional intelligence in this review - only four out of 23 instruments were linked to personality. A possible explanation for this frequency is that personality can be seen as less flexible for changes and development in adults than in children or adolescents (Acosta & Muller, 2018; Almlund et al., 2011; OECD, 2015; Santos & Primi, 2014). The use of emotional intelligence measures and other elements related to socio-emotional competencies (such as self-evaluation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and empathy) may be related to the interpretation that in adults they are seen as more malleable to develop. The use of these instruments may also be related to the unavailability of validated measures that assess socio-emotional competencies in adults in the work context, or to decision of the researchers to use more consolidated constructs with clearer constitutive and operational definitions. These results are similar to the studies from Marin et al. (2017) and Martins and Wechsler (2020), in which most of the instruments found in their reviews did not measure the construct of socio-emotional competences but related constructs. It is important to mention that, for Gondim et al. (2014), emotional intelligence is *part* of socio-emotional competencies – that is, not this concept itself.

Only one instrument (Social and Personal Competencies Scale - CPS) was found to assess socio-emotional competencies as a construct and three instruments (Work Personality Scale, Utrech Work Engagement Scale and Health Professionals Communication Skills Scale) are explicitly organizational or

Table 3.

*Instruments used in the studies to assess socio-emotional elements*

Instrument	Construct and Dimensions
Trait Meta-Mood Scale-24 Estrada et al. (2016); Pertegal-Felices et al. (2011)	(Emotional Intelligence) Attention to feelings; clarity of feelings; mood repair.
Emotional skills and competence questionnaire - short version Nikic et al. (2014)	(Emotional Intelligence) Perceive and understand emotions; Express and label emotions; Manage and regulate emotions.
Emotional Quotient Inventory: Shortform Pertegal-Felices et al. (2011)	(Emotional Intelligence) Intrapersonal intelligence; interpersonal intelligence; adaptation; stress management; general mood.
Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test Castillo-Gualda et al. (2017)	(Emotional Intelligence) Emotional perception; emotional facilitation; emotional comprehension; emotional regulation.
NEO Five Factor Inventory Pertegal-Felices et al. (2011); Palomera et al. (2017)	(Personality) Neuroticism; Extraversion; Openness to Experience; Agreeableness; Conscientiousness.
Social and Emotional (or Noncognitive) Nationwide Assessment SENNA Berlingeri (2018)	(Personality) Openness to experience; Self-management.
ZKPQ Personality Questionnaire Nikic et al. (2014)	(Personality) Activity; Aggression-hostility; Impulsive sensation seeking; Neuroticism and anxiety; Sociability
Work Personality Inventory Lappalainen (2014)	(Personality) Focusing; competition; leadership; inspiration; sociability; empathy; reliance; orientation; perception; thinking; decision-making; ambiguity-change; optimism, self-reflection.
The Rosenberg Scale Ibarraran et al. (2014); Palomera et al. (2017)	(Self-esteem) One-dimensional
Social and Personal Competencies Scale Calero et al. (2017); Ibarraran et al. (2014);	(Socio-emotional competencies) Leadership; Behavior in situation of conflict; Self-esteem; Abilities to relate with others; Orderliness; Empathy and communication skills.
Utrecht Work Engagement Scale Expósito et al. (2018)	(Work Engagement) Vigor; dedication; absorption.
Core Self-Evaluation Scale Berlingeri (2018)	(Self-evaluation) One-dimensional
Grit scale Calero, et al. (2017)	(Grit) Consistency of interests; perseverance of effort; ambition.
Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Palomera et al. (2017)	(Empathy) Perspective Taking; fantasy; emphatic concern; personal distress.
Health Professionals Communication Skills Scale Expósito et al. (2018)	(Communication Skills) Empathy; informative communication; respect; assertive social behavior.
Self-efficacy Questionnaire - adapted from General Self-efficacy Scale Expósito et al. (2018)	(Self-efficacy) One-dimensional
Motivation to Succeed Questionnaire Expósito et al. (2018)	(Motivation) One-dimensional

(Continued)

Table 3.

*Instruments used in the studies to assess socio-emotional elements* (Continuation)

Instrument	Construct and Dimensions
The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Palomera et al. (2017)	(Positive and Negative Affect) Positive affect; negative affect.
Autoinformes de Actitudes y Valores en las Interacciones Sociales Palomera et al. (2017).	(Assertiveness) Hetero-assertiveness (subscale).
Personal Report of Confidence as Speaker Palomera et al. (2017)	(Anxiety and Confidence) Assurance when speaking in public; fear of speaking in public.
State-Trait Anxiety Inventory Expósito et al. (2018)	(Anxiety) Trait anxiety; State anxiety.
Coping with Stress Questionnaire Expósito et al. (2018)	(Coping) Problem solving focus; negative autofocus coping; positive reappraisal; overt emotional expression; avoidance coping; social support seeking; religious coping.
Humor Styles Questionnaire Nikic et al. (2014)	(Humor Styles) Affiliative humor; self-enhancing humor; aggressive humor; self-defeating humor.

work-related measures. They would be more specific to evaluation (e.g., research, interventions) at work contexts than other general measures. Other instruments, such as Grit Scale (Duckworth et al., 2007) or The Core Self-Evaluation Scale (Judge et al., 2003) do not specify a particular life domain for assessment (e.g., organizations, schools, family), but the development and validation of these measures are related to organizational and work domains (e.g., The Core and Self-Evaluation Scale correlated to job satisfaction and job performance at its validation process [Judge et al., 2003]). Likewise, academic-related measures (e.g., Motivation to Succeed Questionnaire) would be useful to college, vocational programs and other professional training contexts – including in organizations settings -, considering that in an increasingly complex world of work and in a lifelong learning perspective, educational and work domains (and measures) can often overlap in terms of tasks (such as performance, communication or team-working skills). In Brazil, although the lack of knowledge about how the socio-emotional mechanisms work and the scarcity of instruments (Marin et al., 2017; Zhou, 2017), recent studies found validity evidences of measures to assess socio-emotional competencies in specific groups of workers, such as government employees (Macedo, 2018) and project managers (Batista, 2018). Such initiatives may contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the process of measuring the construct in organizations and at work.

The present review also showed differences in socio-emotional competencies measures in specific fields. While in economics the main interest is on the impact in terms of employability, education attainment and reduction of risky behaviors, in health field aspects such as assertive communication between professionals and patients and better self-control, empathy and work engagement were considered as important. These results are congruent with the premise that one of the difficulties to define socio-emotional competencies is related to contextual and cultural differences (Miyamoto et al., 2015; Zhou, 2017). There is evidence regarding the difficulty on replicating interventions in different groups (Puerta et al., 2016), which implies considering that universal programs may be less effective than those constructed and adapted to a given reality.

This review also highlighted that undergraduate samples are the most frequent in research on socio-emotional competencies in the context of work, which can be explained by the greater availability and convenience to participate and the fact that undergraduate students, mostly young adults, are in a period of professional training that may be more interested in developing socio-emotional competencies, in reason of being in transition to the labor market. Research and interventions in organizations with older workers may be less frequent due to this specific life cycle, as well as being related to the financial cost of intervention programs to employers or to personal availability of the

workers to develop relational and emotional aspects. In addition, most measures are self-reported, which may weaken the quality of the measures, as seen in Connelly and Ones (2010), Oh et al. (2011) and Kyllonen (2016).

This study has some limitations, namely, a limited number of samples, despite no time restriction prior to 2018. In addition, synonymous concepts of social-emotional competencies, such as soft skills, transversal competencies or emotional intelligence, may have decreased the retrieval of other studies, and the use of search restrictors in may have had hidden potential documents, considering that studies that could meet inclusion criteria may have used such restrictive words in a generic way in the text. Also, it is necessary to investigate socio-emotional skills at work without specifying the organizational context, in order to expand the evidence found in the present study. Although we have inserted studies in the context of professional training, the restricted descriptors we adopted may have excluded studies in the context of Vocational Psychology or Career Counseling, for example. We did not find published studies on socio-emotional competencies in the field of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, which could contribute to the advance of the construct both at a conceptual and assessment level. One hypothesis for this absence may have been the use of only four databases for searching, which may have excluded other relevant documents on socio-emotional competencies in Industrial and Organizational Psychology fields. The use of “skills” and “competencies” as synonyms in searching criteria and analysis, although justified in relation to the common use of both terms as synonyms, may have enlarged the same divergences and contradictions highlighted in this article and may corroborate possible semantic differences. Accordingly, the results cannot be generalized and must be cautiously interpreted.

Our society has seen significant modifications in the world of work, such as the impact of technology on the labor market, constant economic crisis, migratory processes, the increasing complexity of the tasks/occupations and the tendency for structural reforms in the scope of social welfare and labor relations (Ribeiro et al., 2019). Then, it becomes increasingly important to develop socio-emotional competencies to deal with these challenges in a complex, multicultural and unstable world. The changing perspective from careers within organizations to protean/borderless careers could make the responsibility to develop socio-emotional aspects shift toward the individuals and the educational and

professional training institutions. Several aspects support the plausibility of this assertion: the high cost that organizations would spend on programs in which effectiveness is not yet known; the desire of the individual in being more socially and emotionally competent and the replicability in different aspects of their lives; recruitment and selection processes requiring professionals that already have good levels of socio-emotional skills, among others.

Suggestions for future investigation include comparing socio-emotional elements in studies that use different terminologies as synonyms, in order to verify whether the authors are measuring the same phenomenon or related phenomena (e.g., socio-emotional competencies and emotional intelligence or soft skills). We suggest that Industrial and Organizational Psychology as a scientific field could contribute regarding emotions and interpersonal relationships in organizations at the theoretical, methodological and at intervention levels. Finally, psychometric studies concerning the social and emotional assessment in organizations and work are also recommended, in addition to longitudinal, experimental and quasi-experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of programs for training and development of socio-emotional competencies.

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