




**Abstract**

## **Assessing the emotional experience of young physical education students during the traditional game *tail tag***

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When engaging in playful motor experiences, students display all dimensions of their motor conduct, with the emotional dimension being particularly prominent and relevant in the educational context (Lagardera & Lavega, 2004). Unlike sports, traditional games, such as *tail tag*, offer more diverse and enriching models of human communication (Martínez-Santos et al., 2020). Tail tag, in particular, is characterised by its instability (i.e., alliances, friendships, and antagonisms that change over time) and lack of an interruption mechanism (i.e., a game without memory). Therefore, the aim of the study was to assess the consequences on the emotional dimension of young primary education students during an unstable motor game without memory, such as *tail tag*.

Forty Spanish students from two fifth-grade primary education classes, 16 girls and 24 boys, participated in the study. The students of each class played *tail tag* for ten uninterrupted minutes in a 15 m × 14 m rectangle. *Tail tag* is a traditional game based on capturing the *other players' tails* while keeping their *tails* safe. After the game, participants were asked to individually declare the emotion they experienced most

intensely, choosing one of nine different emotions: four positive ones (*joy, humour, affection and happiness*) and five negative ones (*sadness, fear, anger, shame and rejection*), by the *Games and Emotions Scale for Children* (GES-C). GES-C has been validated in primary school students aged eight to 12 (Alcaraz-Muñoz et al., 2022). Students participated in a familiarisation session before playing *tail tag*. The chi-square test was used to analyse the frequency of the emotion they experienced most intensely and to compare girls and boys.

Emotions declared were not equiprobable: *joy, anger and happiness* supposed 95% of the most salient, vivid emotions felt by the students ( $p < .001$ ). Likewise, positive emotions (77.5%) were more intensely felt ( $p = .001$ ) than negative ones (22.5%). The emotion ( $p = .45$ ) and the type of emotion ( $p = .22$ ) most felt by boys and girls were similar.

These results suggest that the emotional experience elicited by *tail tag* (i.e., an unstable motor game without memory) can be predicted to be predominantly positive in primary education students, for both girls and boys and interpreted in relation to the structural traits of the situation generated. Therefore, this information can be utilised by physical education teachers to design teaching strategies that foster pupils' emotional well-being.

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