



Maltrato escolar entre estudiantes de secundaria de Guanajuato, México

Bullying among middle school students from Guanajuato, Mexico

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Cómo citar este artículo:

Chávez Hernández, A.M., Rodríguez Huerta, M., Gutiérrez Gordillo, H., Delgado Luna, M. A. & Herrera Rodríguez, J. (2016). Bullying among middle school students from Guanajuato, Mexico. *Educación y ciencia*, 5(45), 6–18

Fecha de recepción: 6 de marzo de 2016
Fecha de aceptación: 13 de mayo de 2016

Resumen

El maltrato escolar es un tema de reciente investigación en México. El tipo de estudio fue comparativo, ex post facto y transversal, con un muestreo probabilístico; participaron 1552 estudiantes, ambos sexos, con promedio de edad de 14 años, de 4 municipios del estado de Guanajuato, México. Se eligieron escuelas en zonas semi-rural y urbana. Se aplicó el Cuestionario de Intimidación y Maltrato entre Iguales de Mora-Merchán (2000). Se obtuvo una prevalencia de maltrato del 53% global y se encontraron algunas diferencias significativas según sexo y roles. La prevalencia coincidió con reportes internacionales. Se analizan posibilidades para la discriminación fina de los roles participantes en el bullying que permitan incidir en diagnósticos oportunos y estrategias integrales de prevención universal, selectiva e indicada.

Palabras clave: bullying, maltrato escolar, adolescentes, nivel secundaria, México

Abstract

Bullying is a recent research topic in Mexico. This was a comparative, ex post facto, transversal study with a probabilistic sample of 1552 students of both sexes (median age 14), from 4 municipalities from the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. The schools were from both, urban and semi-rural areas. The Questionnaire of Intimidation and Bullying of Mora-Merchán (2000) was used. A prevalence of 53% of abuse was found, with some significant differences attributed to sex and role in bullying. This prevalence coincides with the reports of international studies. Also, differences were found from previous studies in Mexico. Further research should emphasize and analyze on bullying roles to contribute to early diagnosis of bullying dynamics and comprehensive strategies of universal, selective and indicated prevention.

Keywords: bullying, school harassment, adolescents, middle schoolers, Mexico

Introduction

Bullying is defined as the recurrent behavior used to aggressively dominate, abuse, or intimidate others with the use of force, threats or coercion (Juvonen & Graham, 2014, p. 160). It may also be defined as the establishment of unequal relationships and reciprocal practices of domination and submission between individuals (otherwise equals) that share spaces and contexts for prolonged times –such as schools– (Avilés, Iruña, García-López & Caballo, 2011, p. 58).

Bullying occurs when an individual or a group adopts a dominant role towards another, perceived as powerless, causing reiterative and intentional harm-doing in the form of physical, psychological, social, or moral pain. While bullying is characterized with violence between peers, it should be noted that not every conduct describable as violent and occurring in school settings should be classified as bullying, as said notion does not encompass all violent school behavior (Gómez-Nashiki, 2013). By these annotations, for example, school fights grounded on conflicts of interest are not part of a bullying relationship if those involved perceive each other as equals (marking a horizontal, rather than a vertical relationship), and the aggressions are not recurrent (Valadez-Figueroa, 2008).

Although the study of bullying tends to focus on children in school settings, the phenomenon also happens among adults in domestic or work environments. However, unless stated otherwise, research and statistics of bullying refer to school-aged children and adolescents. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2009), around 10% of children of the world are victims of bullying, with a similar proportion of children who are bullying offenders, also referred to as bullies.

In addition to what has been called traditional bullying (in-person intimidation, abuse, and harm-doing), there has been an increasing interest in cyberbullying –which includes threats in social media, mobile phones or email, and posting content online without the consent of the victim– as its practices have been on the rise (Avilés, Iruña, García-López & Caballo, 2011).

Spanish researcher Mora-Merchán (2015) estimated that around 5% of all students worldwide participate in bullying relationships at least once a week, noting that cyberbullying offenses are at least as relevant as those from traditional bullying are. The evolving forms of school violence, particularly in the form of cyberbullying, represents additional obstacles towards the solution of all forms of bullying, challenging the strategies towards its eradication.

Risk factors for Bullying in International samples

Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of 172 published investigations about bullying to determine individual and contextual factors that predicted bullying and victimization. They found that the most salient features for bullies were externalizing behavior, internalizing symptoms, social competence and academic challenges, negative attitudes and beliefs towards others, negative self-cognitions, few abilities to resolve problems, negative community atmosphere, and family environments characterized by conflict and poor parental monitoring. On the other hand, for victims, the most prevalent characteristics were externalizing behavior, internalizing symptoms, lack of adequate social skills, and negative self-cognitions.

Guerra, Williams & Sadek (2011) conducted a mixed study spanning 3 years (from 2005 to 2008) to uncover predictors of bullying and victimization in California, USA. They collected data from 2678 students ranging from elementary school to high school; also, 14

focus groups were conducted with a different sample of 115 students. They found that declines in self-esteem and increases in negative perceptions about the school environment predicted negative changes in the observed bullying relations, for both, bullies and victims. Normative beliefs, particularly beliefs about victims being inherently weak and vulnerable, were the strongest predictors; this emphasizes that children and adolescents come to internalize that bullying is acceptable, and as a consequence are more likely to become either bullies or victims, emphasizing the need for psychosocial strategies to address bullying in schools.

In Barcelona, Spain, García-Continente, Pérez-Giménez & Nebot-Adell (2010) sampled 2727 students from 66 secondary schools, finding that 10.7% of them had suffered bullying as victims; they also found a significant positive correlation of being a victim with having a general negative mood.

Also in Spain, Méndez & Cerezo (2010) sampled 886 students from secondary schools between ages 11 and 18. The researchers administered the Bull-S test to detect bullying, and a scale developed by themselves to explore substance consumption and other health-related problems. Their results revealed that 20.8% of the students were involved in bullying relationships, whether as offenders, victims, or bully-victims (individuals who are both bullies and victims). Everyone involved in bullying relationships stated some degree of substance abuse; however, the prevalence of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and cocaine use was higher among offenders.

In another study employing the Bull-S test, Cerezo-Ramírez (2015) studied sex variables in association with bullying in a sample of 107 Spanish students (ages between 7 and 13). It was revealed that all offenders were boys, whereas boys represented only 33% of victims, concluding that bullying has a gender component for both victims and offenders.

This concurs with other international samples. For example, in England, Arseneault, Bowes & Shakoor (2010) found that bully victimization was more prevalent among boys than girls, although girls tended to be more engaged in indirect bullying.

Studies about bullying from Latin America

Romera-Félix, Del Rey Alamillo & Ortega Ruiz (2011) conducted a qualitative study about bullying with a sample of 3,042 children in primary schools from the metropolitan zone of Managua, Nicaragua. Employing the COVER Questionnaire (Coexistence, Violence and Risk Experiences Questionnaire), the researchers found a prevalence of bullying in 50% of the studied sample (6% offenders, 25.3% victims, and 18.7% bully-victims), having presented 45.3% of verbal abuse, 37.5% physical abuse, 37.1% bullying by social isolation, and 15.5% of psychological abuse. The authors partially attributed the high prevalence of bullying (compared to rich countries, notably those European) to adverse social factors, such as poverty.

In Colombia, Ghiso & Ospina Otavo (2010) conducted a qualitative study about social representations associated to bullying in public schools in Medellín and Antioquia, with a sample of students aged 11 – 15 from all socio-economic backgrounds. In their ethnographic study, they found primarily three dimensions configuring school harassment and bullying: values, imaginaries, and representations, highlighting the importance of psychosocial factors for bullying.

In rural Peru, Amemiya, Oliveros & Barrientos (2009) identified risk factors for bullying with a qualitative instrument administered to a sample 736 students. They found a prevalence of bullying behavior in 47.4% of the sample. The most salient risk factors were negligent parenting, disability and the existence of gangs around the schools.

Río-Pérez, Bringué Sala, Sádaba Chalezquer, & González González (2009) conducted a comparison of cyberbullying across Latin America by surveying 21,000 students online (ages 10 – 18). Their findings show that 12.1% of them had experienced some kind of cyberbullying behavior; with the most prevalent type was via cellphone (13.3%). Venezuela presented the highest rate (17.5%) followed by Mexico (14.7%), Argentina (14.6%), Chile (13.3%), Peru (11.9%), Colombia (11.3%), and Brazil (8.4%). Regarding sex differences, males reported a 22.4% of cyberbullying, in comparison with 13.4% of females. Although an important problem demanding attention, the rates of cyberbullying were not found higher than those from countries like Sweden or the United States.

Bullying studies from Mexico

The problem of bullying has increasingly attracted attention in Mexico. In 2014, the OECD informed that a third of Mexican teachers reported intimidation or verbal abuse among their students on a weekly basis (alongside teachers from Brazil, Sweden and Belgium). In spite of this report being picked up by the media claiming that Mexico ranked at the top in worldwide charts of bullying, there is still much clearing needed about the prevalence of bullying in Mexico.

For example, Muñoz-Abundez (2008) compared the official statistics of school violence from Mexico to those of other countries. Through a detailed analysis, he concluded that in spite of the increasing violence problem in Mexico, there were no facts to support that school violence in Mexico was more prominent than in more developed countries like Japan or the United States.

Regarding local studies, Castillo-Rocha & Pacheco-Espejel (2008) administered questionnaires to a sample of 257 students (mean age = 14) in Yucatan. They found the most prevalence of bullying in the form of verbal abuse present in up to 53.4% of the sample; followed by physical abuse (22.2%), social isolation (24.2%), destruction of belongings (16.7%), and harm-threats (15.5%).

In Tijuana, Avilés-Dorantes, Zonana-Nacach, & Anzaldo-Campos (2012) surveyed 321 students, finding a prevalence of 17% of bullying in all forms; within this percentage, the most frequent was physical abuse (52%), verbal abuse (62%), social isolation (71%) and cyberbullying (22%).

In Morelia, researchers Domínguez-López, & Manzo-Chávez (2011) conducted a quantitative exploratory research with a sample of 102 secondary school students (mean age = 13.7), finding statistically significant differences according to sex and socio-economic level for bullies, victims and witnesses/bystanders. They found presence of bullying in 66.7% of the sample. Males expressed more physical aggression and threats, while females tended more to social exclusion and verbal abuse. A total of 65% of bystanders expressed passive roles of abstention in seeking help, based on fear of being the next victim. Physical aggression was more prevalent in lower socioeconomic levels.

In Tamaulipas, Joffre-Velázquez et al. (2011) estimated a prevalence of 25% of bullying in Mexican students by sampling 688 students aged 11 – 16 (mean age = 13.6). Their instrument was the CIMEI Questionnaire, measuring intimidation and peer abuse. Of the sample, 20.5% were identified as victims, 13.1% as bullies and 27.4% as bully-victims. They found that the most prevalent social risk factors for victims were having physical disability, and normative beliefs about bullying (namely, parents that considered bullying a normal part of childhood); salient social risk factors for bullies were preference of violent television programs, and having proximity with gangs.

Gómez-Nashiki (2013) analyzed bullying in five elementary schools from Colima. With a qualitative-ethnographic approach, he identified physical, psychological, verbal and

sexual violence as the main forms of bullying. When interviewing bullies, the researcher found that the main recurrent motivation behind harassment was a need for personal satisfaction based on a continued recognition towards themselves, and a need to find a place secured in school by maintaining asymmetrical (dominant) interactions to their peers. On the other hand, those who were bullied experienced constant fear of becoming the next victim. When analyzing sex differences, the author found that boys were more oriented towards practicing physical violence, while girls tended to psychological violence and verbal abuse. The author also noted, although scarcely, several girls bullying boys, mainly by threats of physical violence. Finally, in his study, Gómez-Nashiki found few institutional resources and support to address the problem of bullying, having to draft strategies that rely mainly of information and psycho-education.

Mejía-Hernández & Weiss (2011) conducted a study with female students from middle schools, finding that their aggression towards others was based on imaginaries of honor and prestige.

Another study of students from middle school reported that those who had witnessed (bystanders) or received (victims) bullying aggressions recognized open harmful intentions in interactions of bullying, and also that victims and bystanders had acknowledged the success of bullies in the establishment of dominant hierarchies in their peer group (Haro-Solís, García-Cabrero & Reidl-Martínez, 2013).

Valadez-Figueroa (2008) conducted a quantitative study regarding bullying in all secondary public schools of the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (adding a total of 16 schools). A probabilistic sample of 1,091 adolescents participated in this research; school principals and 10 teachers per school were also studied, as well as 475 parents. This study revealed that bullying was present in all the studied schools. The most present type of abuse was psychological (in the form of name-calling, ridiculing, and threatening), followed by exclusion or social isolation; verbal abuse; economic abuse (theft, destruction of belongings); and sexual abuse (in the form of fondling).

The association between psychopathology and bullying in Mexican samples has also been researched. For example, Albores-Gallo, Saucedo-García, Ruíz-Velasco & Roque-Santiago (2011) conducted a study with a sample of 340 children of public schools from Mexico City. Having identified bullies (89), victims (57), bully-victims (19) and neutral bystanders (175) with the Bull-S test, the authors identified that bullies presented more anxiety symptoms, somatic symptoms and externalizing behavior; bully-victims had attention problems and externalizing behavior, while victims only presented anxiety symptoms.

The aim of the present study was to measure the prevalence of bullying among middle school students from the State of Guanajuato, Mexico, by typifying different roles and their association to sex, geographical areas (urban or semi-rural), and education system (Distance Education or Technical Education).

Methods

This was a comparative, ex post facto, transversal study with a probabilistic sample of 1552 middle school students from 4 municipalities from the State of Guanajuato, Mexico (461 from Romita, 476 from León, 359 from Celaya, and 256 from Jaral del Progreso) aged between 12 and 16 years; 738 (47.5%) were female and 814 (52.5%) were male.

Guanajuato is a state in the central zone of Mexico, consisting in 46 municipalities. It has a population of 5.4 million, representing 4.9% of the Mexican population. As a state, it has a high rate of school assistance, as 94.6% of the school-aged population is enrolled in education (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática [INEGI], 2012).

The sampled municipalities were chosen for their population contrasts: two large cities and two medium-sized municipalities. León, the most populated city in the state, is home for 26.2% of the state population; Celaya is the third most populated city with 8.5%; Romita ranks 26th with 1.0%; and Jaral del Progreso ranks 32nd with 0.7% of the state population (INEGI, 2012). Only public schools were studied. A total of 8 middle schools were considered: 4 of them had a Distance Education System (DES or Tele-secundaria in Spanish) and the 4 remaining had a system of Technical Education. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the studied schools.

Table 1. Characteristics of studied schools

Municipality	Sample size	Number of schools	Geographical area	Education System
León	476	2	Urban	Technical
Celaya	359	1	Urban	Technical
Romita	461	4	Semi-rural	3 DES 1 Technical
Jaral del Progreso	256	1	Semi-rural	DES

Instrument

The Questionnaire of Intimidation and Bullying ([QIB], Cuestionario de Intimidación y Maltrato entre Iguales) of Mora-Merchán (2000) was used; QIB is a self-report, has 30 items with Likert Scaling, distributed in three categories that assess family and school characteristics and type of boundaries, and also bullying issues. The QIB evaluates the behavior of the students according to three pure roles (victims, bystanders, and bullies) and one more with mixed features (bully-victims).

Procedure

The corresponding authorizations were obtained to get access to all the lists of students to calculate a representative sample from each school. Participant groups were selected at random. The instrument was applied in groups, anonymously and voluntarily.

Ethical considerations included the informed consent from both parents and school authorities. Also, confidentiality and anonymity was assured. As a follow-up measures, conferences were given at the participant schools regarding risk behaviors, and global results were shared with school authorities.

The SPSS 20 software package was employed for the statistical analysis, including descriptive statistics, chi square and contingency tables.

Results

The studied sample consisted of 1552 middle school students ranging from 12 to 16 years. Table 2 shows the ages of the students according to sexes.

Table 2. Age and sex of the sampled students.

	12 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years
Female	117	247	233	130	11
Male	120	277	232	159	26

Table 3 shows the frequency and distribution of roles in bullying as found in the Mora-Merchán theory and instrument.

Table 3. Distribution of bullying roles found in the sample.

	Bystanders %	Victims %	Bullies %	Bully-victims %
Frequency	45.68 (709)	21.07(327)	18.88 (293)	13.08 (203)

Statistical procedures were performed to determine differences according to sex, age, geographical area and school year. Table 4 shows role percentages according to sex; to compare the behavior of both sexes, chi square tests were performed, resulting in a statistical value of $X^2 = 59.415$; when compared to an χ^2 with 3 degrees of freedom, a p-value of 3.85×10^{-12} was obtained. This p-value is low, nearly zero, indicating that bullying behavior is different amongst males and females. The most marked difference between sexes occurred in bystanders, as the frequency of female bystanders was 17% higher. On the other hand, males tended more towards being bullies, while the frequency of victims was practically the same for both sexes.

Table 4. Percentages of bystanders, victims, bullies and bully-victims by sex

	Bystanders %	Victims %	Bullies %	Bully-victims %
Female	54.60 (403)	20.73 (153)	14.77 (109)	8.53 (63)
Male	37.63 (306)	21.27 (173)	22.63 (184)	17.22 (140)

Age differences

When analyzing percentages of bullying presence by age, it was found that roles of bullies, victims, and bully-victims added 47.03% for students aged 12, 53.90% for those aged 13, 52.80% for those aged 14, 56.40% for those aged 15, and 55.55% for those aged 16. These percentages show that the youngest middle-schoolers (aged 12) were less affected by bullying; in turn, that the oldest (aged 15-16) were the most affected. A chi square test was applied to determine the relevance of these results; a statistical value of $X^2 = 24.225$ was obtained; when compared to an χ^2 with 12 degrees of freedom, a p-value of .019 was obtained. This small p-value indicates that at least one age group had a different behavior than the rest (Table 5).

Table 5. Percentages of spectators, victims, bullies and victimized-bullies by age

	Bystanders %	Victims %	Bullies %	Bully-victims %
12	51.69 (122)	25 (59)	11.86 (28)	10.17 (24)
13	44.38 (233)	21.9 (115)	18.86 (99)	13.14 (69)
14	45.59 (212)	19.57 (91)	18.82 (88)	14.40 (67)
15	43.25 (125)	17.65 (51)	25.61 (74)	13.15 (38)
16	44.44 (16)	30.56 (11)	11.11 (4)	13.89 (5)

Differences according to geographic area

For schools in urban zones, bullying was present in 52.93% of the students, while for schools in semi-rural zones, the presence was of 53.13%. Table 6 shows these percentages according to roles. The chi square obtained value was $X^2 = 1.3133$, compared to an χ^2 with 3 degrees of freedom, a p-value of .726 was obtained. This high p-value indicates statistically similitude between urban and semi-rural schools.

Table 6. Percentages of bystanders, victims, bullies and bully-victims by zone.

	Bystanders %	Victims %	Bullies %	Bully-victims %
Urban	45.03 (376)	20.47 (171)	19.76 (165)	12.69 (106)
Semi-rural	46.44 (333)	21.75 (156)	17.85 (128)	13.52 (97)

Differences according to school grades

Middle school in Mexico is divided in three grades: first, second, and third, traditionally corresponding to ages 12, 13, and 14, respectively. Table 7 shows percentages of students implicated in bullying per grade. The chi square test showed an $X^2 = 9.801$, compared to an χ^2 with 6 degrees of freedom, a p-value of .133 was obtained. As this p-value is higher than 0.05, it shows that there are no statistically significant differences among school grades.

Table 7. Percentages of bystanders, victims, bullies and bully-victims by school grade

	Bystanders %	Victims %	Bullies %	Bully-victims %
First	48.96 (285)	22.50 (131)	15.97 (93)	11.34 (66)
Second	42.93 (231)	20.81 (112)	20.44 (110)	13.94 (75)
Third	44.67 (193)	19.44 (84)	20.83 (90)	14.35 (62)

Question analysis

The following paragraphs summarize some of the most important results drawn from the questions of the instrument. It should be noted that, because the answers were not presented in a mutually-exclusive format, some of the percentages exceed 100%; besides, ten questions were added to the Mora-Merchán instrument to study related aspects to bullying.

Bystanders felt safer and better at home than students identified in other roles. It was noted that bully-victims were those who felt the worst at home. Bystanders felt the least lonely at recess, while victims felt the loneliest and most rejected, followed by bully-victims (Table 8).

Table 8. Percentages of the question: ¿How do you feel at home?

	Bystanders	Victims	Bullies	Bully-victims
Fine	75.32	62.69	67.23	59.61
Not good not bad	21.44	33.94	29.01	34.97
Bad	2.54	3.05	2.73	3.94

General appreciations among victims and bully-victims were that the reasons behind harassment and intimidation were just to bother. Bullies expressed provocation as the main reason behind their own aggressions (Table 9).

Table 9. Percentages of the question about the reasons of bullying.

	Bystanders %	Victims %	Bullies %	Bully-victims %
Nobody has bullied me	85.19	19.57	71.33	19.21
I do not know	3.81	19.57	5.46	15.27
Because I provoked them	1.69	6.42	8.19	12.31
Because I am different	2.12	9.79	2.05	6.90
Because I'm weaker	0.14	9.79	1.71	8.87
Just to bother me	2.26	24.46	6.48	22.66
Just to joke me	0.85	4.59	3.41	8.37
Others	0.99	4.89	1.36	5.42

Bullying was expressed to occur mostly in classrooms (31.2%), followed by the streets (30.09%), and the yard (22.6%), but a third percentage (30.68) said that they do not know.

Students mostly expressed that school teachers do intervene to stop bullying (48.42%); a 22.26% expressed that teachers did not intervene at all to stop bullying. These answers were similar in victims and bullies (in both groups, 53% answered rarely and 26% frequently). It was among bystanders and bully-victims where more differences were found, as bystanders expressed that teachers intervened rarely in a 40%, and frequently in a 34%; bully-victims expressed that teachers intervened rarely in a 63%, and frequently in a 19%. Finally, the small percentage (14.8%) said a student used to stop the intimidation event.

Students expressed that they shared their situations with others only in small percentages: 17.69% with their family, and 15.01% with classmates. It was noted that victims talked most with their families about it (30.3%), while those sharing with classmates tended more to be bully-victims (31.5%) (see Table 10).

Table 10. Percentages by roles, about who they talk to if they are bullied

	Bystanders	Victims	Bullies	Bully-victims	General %
Nobody has bullied me	67.42	16.51	60.41	21.67	49.15
I do not talk with anybody	6.06	24.77	7.51	19.70	12.14
With teachers	7.75	12.84	7.17	16.25	9.85
With my family	12.83	30.3	12.29	22.16	17.68
With classmates	6.34	26.60	11.60	31.52	15.01

The most common form of intimidation found was physical harm, with a 30.1%, almost twice the second-most frequent form (name-calling or ridiculing) (see Table 11).

Table 11. Forms of bullying

	%
Name-calling or ridiculing	15.9
Physical harm	30.1
Theft	1.37
Threats	9
Rejection, isolation	9.8
Destruction of property	13
I don't know, others	15.9

Students involved in bullying expressed that it mostly occurred occasionally (56.919%), followed by frequently (24.347%). Bystanders also expressed similar percentages: 59.5% occasionally and 25.81% never (Table 12).

Table 12. Percentages about the frequency of bullying events

	Bystanders	Victims	Bullies	Bully-victims	General
Never	25.8	14.7	10.9	6.4	18
Few times	59.5	54.4	52.6	58.1	56.9
Many times	14.1	30.3	35.1	34.9	24.3

Overall most students expressed that bullying was wrong, however bullies and bully-victims expressed more frequently that bullying was normal among students. Regarding reactions towards bullying aggressions, some students (16.8%) expressed to not defend themselves, although a 38.90% said that they thought something should be done about it.

Conclusions

Bullying is recognized as a worldwide problem; according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2009) around 10% of children around the world are victims of bullying, with a similar proportion of bullies. Recent research allows the comparison of prevalence and characteristics of bullying across geographical and social settings.

Reports of prevalence of bullying are markedly different worldwide, having estimated its presence in a wide range, from 5 to 65%; these differences, along inconsistencies in the definition and evaluation of the phenomenon, call for a comprehensive conceptualization and measure of bullying.

Bullying is a dynamic phenomenon that involves different roles that tend to complementarity, therefore a bully can become a victim in a different situation, and a bystander can contribute to violence without an intention or awareness.

The study of bullying in Mexico is recent, and only a few studies have been reported. There is still a need for research that analyses the more complex setting of bullying in schools in this country, including the role of teachers and school authorities, and the active roles they play in bullying. It may be that bullying in Mexico is marked by the country's characteristics of structural violence, such as poverty, corruption, and organized crime, as the effects of the social context and environment contribute to the invisibility, normalization and acceptance of general violent behavior (Cuadrado, 2011).

It is notable that the school authorities set limitations towards asking outside the topic of violence among students. This should be considered a limitation for the study, alongside the fact that the self-report instrument is not considered a direct observation of human behavior.

For studies done in Mexico, the reported differences in prevalence of bullying are wider than those found in international samples, as Mexican studies have reported a prevalence ranging from 17% (Avilés-Dorantes, Zonana-Nacach, & Anzaldo-Campos, 2012) to 66.7 % (Domínguez & Manzo, 2011).

The present study found a prevalence of 53% of bullying in the studied sample, as either victims, bullies, or bully-victims. This prevalence is similar to some studies but different to others, adding to the wide spectrum of results that show the need for a more specific analysis of the problem. For example, the prevalence found in this study is notably higher than the reported in Spain (20.8%) by Méndez & Cerezo (2010). On the other hand, they are similar to the findings of Romera-Félix, Del Rey Alamillo y Ortega Ruiz (2011) in Latin American samples, with a prevalence of 50%, although with a different distribution of roles: for example, in Managua (Nicaragua), they found a 6% prevalence of bullies, 25.3% of victims, and 18.7% of bully-victims, while in the Guanajuato sample of this study, bullies were found in a triple proportion (18.879%), whereas the ratio of victims and bully-victims was lower (21.070% and 13.080%, respectively).

To compare these results to other studies in Mexico, bullying in Guanajuato was found in a lower proportion than the prevalence in Morelia, Michoacán (66.7%) (Domínguez-López & Manzo-Chávez, 2011), but higher than the one found in Mexico City (48.529%) (Albores-Gallo, Saucedo-García, Ruíz-Velasco & Roque-Santiago, 2011), Tamaulipas (25%) (Joffre-Velázquez et al. (2011), and the more contrasting prevalence of Tijuana, with a mere 17% (Avilés-Dorantes, Zonana-Nacach, & Anzaldo-Campos, 2012). In Yucatán a wide but similar proportion was found, with reports of bullying ranging from 15.5 to 53.4% (Castillo Rocha & Pacheco Espejel, 2008).

Cerezo-Ramírez (2015) found in Spain that sex was an important variable to consider by showing that all the bullies in his study were male, while most of the victims (66%) were

female. Those results differ with the findings of this study, as 14.77% of bullies were female, with the percentage of male victims (21.27%) doubled the one found in Barcelona (10.7%) (García-Contiente, Pérez-Giménez y Nebot-Adell, 2010). The comparison of female and male victims of this study suggests that for Guanajuato there are no significant differences regarding sex. Although different from the findings from Spain, the results from this study are similar to those found in other countries, such as England, where Arseneault, Bowes y Shakoor (2010) found that more males were bully-victims; a finding confirmed in the Guanajuato sample, where 17.22% of bully-victims were male, whereas only 8.53% of them were female.

Regarding the distribution of bullying roles found in studies in Mexico, it stands out that in Tamaulipas, Joffre-Velázquez et al. (2011) identified 20.5% of victims, a proportion very similar to the one found in Guanajuato (21.07%). Also for Tamaulipas, a proportion of 13.1% of bullies was found, a rate 4.22% lower than in Guanajuato; bully-victims in Tamaulipas accounted for 27.4%, while in Guanajuato it was considerably lower, 13.08%. This comparison suggests that students in Guanajuato are less likely to fluctuate within passive and active roles in bullying.

The findings of this study showed no significant differences according to geographic area (urban or semi-rural), suggesting that bullying is a phenomenon that affects communities regardless of their characteristics, this may be due to the shaping of subjectivity tied to global phenomena that marks adolescents in all sorts of social settings.

Notably, physical damage, name-calling, and ridiculing were the most frequent types of aggression. This coincides with the samples from Michoacán (Domínguez-López & Manzo-Chávez, 2011), where it was found that males expressed more physical aggression and threats, while females tended more to social exclusion and verbal abuse; it also matches the findings in Colima, where Gómez-Nashiki (2013) identified physical violence, psychological violence, and verbal and sexual abuse as the main forms of intimidation. In addition, in Guadalajara, Valdez-Figueroa (2008) found that psychological abuse (insults, ridiculing, and threats) was the most frequent type of abuse, followed by social exclusion, verbal abuse, economic abuse (theft, destruction of property), and sexual abuse (in the form of fondling).

Lastly, it should be mentioned that the instrument employed for this study (Mora-Merchán, 2000) has been modified according to the findings of international studies. However, the results of this study confirm the reported findings that show a wide range of prevalence, even within the same country, varying according instruments and methods used.

Further studies should validate the Mora-Merchán questionnaire for Mexican population, emphasizing roles (bystanders, victims, bullies, and bully-victims). Said validation should corroborate with qualitative techniques to contribute to early diagnoses of students in risk of being bullied or being bullies themselves, to address the problem with comprehensive strategies of selective and indicated prevention alongside efforts in universal prevention of risk behavior.

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