

PEER ABUSE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION BY GENDER AND SCHOOL YEAR. THE RELATIONSHIPS WITH EQUALS, SCHOOL LIKING AND SATISFACTION WITH LIFE FOR BULLIES AND VICTIMS

EL MALTRATO EN EDUCACIÓN SECUNDARIA SEGÚN SEXO Y CURSO ESCOLAR. RELACIONES CON IGUALES, GUSTO POR LA ESCUELA Y SATISFACCIÓN VITAL DE MALTRATADORES Y VÍCTIMAS

ABUSO EM ADOLESCENTES: DIFERENÇAS DE ACORDO COM O SEXO E O ANO ACADÊMICO, E A SUA RELAÇÃO COM O GOSTO PELA ESCOLA, A RELAÇÃO COM OS COLEGAS E A SATISFAÇÃO COM A VIDA

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ABSTRACT: A review and an analysis of peer abuse and bullying in adolescents were carried out for the purposes of this piece of research. An assessment was made of the ways peer abuse can be presented during this stage of human development, as well as the differences according to gender and school year. Additionally, the potential association with other variables was analysed such as school liking, the relationships with equals and the satisfaction of adolescents with life. The results were compared depending on whether the adolescent was a victim or a bully and the relationship between being a bully and being a victim was put under analysis. The study was carried out with 1,128 adolescents registered in the 1st and 4th years of obligatory secondary school (average age: 14.4 years old). 13% of the respondents stated that they had been bullied some time and 21.2% stated they had taken part in an episode of bullying. There is more bullying in the 1st year of obligatory secondary education than in the 4th year. The most frequent form of bullying was verbal (28.5%); followed by spreading lies

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	<p>and rumours with the intention of harming others (27.4%), which was more frequent amongst girls; social bullying (ignoring or excluding others) is suffered by 18.4% of the respondents with no gender difference; physical bullying is suffered by 7.7% and mostly amongst boys. Bullies and victims, compared to others, feel unhappier and think their moment in life is worse than others. Bullies feel less accepted and more disliked by others. Victims like school less than others. The differences with other papers are discussed here</p>
<p>PALABRAS CLAVE: maltrato bullying adolescencia víctima maltratador</p>	<p>RESUMEN: En esta investigación se presenta una revisión y un estudio sobre el maltrato y el bullying en la adolescencia. En ella se valoraron las formas en que puede presentarse el maltrato en esta etapa del desarrollo y las diferencias según el sexo y el curso escolar. Además se analizó la posible relación con otras variables como el gusto por la escuela, las relaciones con los iguales y la satisfacción vital de los adolescentes. Se compararon los resultados en función de si el adolescente era víctima o maltratador y se estudió la relación entre ser maltratador y ser víctima. El estudio se llevó a cabo con 1128 adolescentes escolarizados en 1º y 4º de ESO (media de edad: 14.4 años). Un 13% afirmaba haber sido maltratado, y un 21.2% haber participado en algún episodio de maltrato. Hay más maltrato en 1º de ESO que en 4º de ESO. El maltrato más frecuente era el verbal (28.5%); seguido de bulos y cotilleos con el fin de hacer daño (27.4%), siendo más frecuente en chicas; el maltrato social (ignoran, apartan) lo sufren el 18.4% de los encuestados sin diferencias por sexo; el maltrato físico lo sufren el 7.7% y de forma más acusada los chicos. Maltratadores y víctimas, en comparación con los demás, se sienten más tristes y consideran que su momento vital es peor. Los maltratadores se sienten menos aceptados y sienten que caen peor a los demás. A las víctimas les gusta menos la escuela. Se discuten las diferencias con otros estudios.</p>
<p>PALAVRAS-CHAVE: abuso bullying idade vítima agressor</p>	<p>RESUMO: Foi realizada uma revisão e, posteriormente, um estudo sobre abuso e bullying na adolescência, as suas formas de abuso e a sua relação com idade, ano escolar, gosto pela escola, relacionamento com os colegas e satisfação com a vida. Os resultados foram comparados de acordo com se ele era uma vítima ou um agressor. A relação entre ser abusador e ser vítima é estudada. O estudo é realizado com 1.128 adolescentes inscritos (idade média: 14,4 anos). 13% disseram que foram maltratados e 21.2% participaram de um episódio de abuso. Há mais abusos no 1º ESO do que no 4º ESO. O abuso mais frequente foi verbal (28,5%); seguido de bulos e fofocas para prejudicar (27,4%), sendo mais frequente em meninas; 18,3% sofre o abuso social (ignorar, deixar de lado); abuso físico é sofrido por 7,7% e mais meninos. Os agressores e as vítimas, em comparação com os outros, sentem-se mais tristes e consideram sua vida pior. Os abusadores sentem-se menos aceitos e sentem que pioram. As vítimas gostam menos de escola. As diferenças com outros estudos são discutidas.</p>

1. Introduction

Bullying is currently a major social and public health concern due to its incidence in the world (Chester *et al.*, 2015; OMS, 2002), as it is an event that can take place in any school. Childhood and adolescence are two vulnerable stages of life, with violence being one of the most remarkable aspects of this vulnerability (Gil Villa 2016).

The phenomenon of bullying was described for the first time by Swedish Doctor Heineman (1972) based on his observations of aggressive behaviour in various school patios. Olweus (1973) defines this concept as an asymmetrical power relationship where there is an imbalance of strength, a series of negative actions being inflicted with the purpose of harming and creating discomfort by one or several students on a frequent basis, making the victim incapable of defending themselves. González and Escudero (2018) differentiate between school harassment or *bullying* (when the action of bullying is continued in time), and they refer to *bullying or violent action* when the frequency is reduced.

Bullying amongst equals can be of various types:

- *Verbal* bullying which creates discomfort through insulting, spreading lies and rumours, mocking or laughing at others.
- *Relational and psychosocial* bullying through the discrimination in the form of forced exclusion of classmates on the grounds of their being different (Etxeberria, & Elosegui, 2010; Orpinas & Horne, 2006; Pedreira, Cuesta, & Bonet, 2011), subtly excluding classmates from the groups (Mateu-Martínez, Piqueras, Rivera-Riquelme, Espada & Orgilés, 2014) on account of their performing differently in school, both in the case of underperformance as over performance (Estell *et al.*, 2009), or on account of having different physical traits and features (Brixval, Rayce, Rasmussen, Holstein, & Due, 2012).
- *Physical* bullying which is inflicted by the abuser or bully through material contact, causing harm (Álvarez-García *et al.* 2013), which can be direct on the victim (hitting, kicking, punching), or indirect on the

belongings of the victim (stealing, breaking or hiding them) (Defensor del Pueblo & UNICEF, 2007).

- Bullying inflicted *through electronic devices and ITs*, displaying aggressive behaviour specially through the mobile phone and the Internet by disseminating photos, videos and messages with the aim of harming others (Ortega *et al.*, 2012), which is known as cyberbullying.

The national statistics (Moreno *et al.*, 2016) indicate that 84.3% of adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 state that they have never been the victims of bullying. Out of the 15.6% who state they have experienced it sometime, 5.6% report that bullying is continuous and somehow frequent (ranging from 2 to 3 times a month to several times a week). Boys are reported to have experienced bullying more often than girls and it is also seen more frequent in younger students rather than older.

With regards to having taken part in an episode of bullying, 82.2% state that they have never been part of one. Out of the 17.8% who have taken part, 5.6% have frequently taken part (ranging from 2 to 3 times a month to several times a week). There are also differences when it comes to gender, with more frequency in boys (7.5%) than girls (3.7%); and in terms of age, being more frequent in younger students than older.

According to a report issued by Save the Children (2016a), harassment is more common amongst the younger students with the frequency being higher amongst the first years of obligatory secondary education (ESO). In that report, girls are reported to experience more harassment than boys (10.6% against 8%). When it comes to the bullies, boys represent a higher percentage (6.3% against 3.5% in girls).

Given the above, it would seem relevant to study the differences by gender and age in situations of bullying amongst adolescents. Some research (Romero, Cuevas, Ferney, & Sierra, 2018) reveals that there are significant differences between men and women in the form of school intimidation used and the consequences associated to mental health.

Amongst the forms of bullying highlighted, verbal bullying is the most frequent (Save the Children, 2016a). Thus, six in ten underage children state they have been insulted in the last months and, amongst them, 22.6% state that this was a frequent event. Over half of the adolescents interviewed for this study (21,487 students between the ages of 12 and 16) state that they have been called names, and 20.9% indicate this has been a

frequent event. Being the victim of the spreading of lies and rumours is present occasionally in 28.8%, and frequently in 14.6%. In terms of relational bullying, the statistics indicate that 16.6% of the interviewees state that they have been victims of exclusion on occasion and 8.4% on a frequent basis. With regards to physical bullying, 21.5% have experienced it on occasion and 6.3% on a frequent basis.

The majority of studies point at male students more often taking part in acts of physical bullying (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim & Sadek, 2010; Hoggund & Leadbeater, 2007) and also verbal bullying (Craig *et al.*, 2009; Orpinas, Fleschler & Sinicropo, 2004). In this sense, girls who bully their classmates tend to use indirect and relational strategies, whereas boys use more direct ways of being aggressive (Navarro, Larrañaga & Yubero, 2011).

The most habitual place for school bullying is the school patio (Fu, Land & Lamb, 2013; Magaz, 2012; Magaz *et al.*, 2016; Undheim & Sund, 2010). From the victim's point of view, there is more incidence in girls, both in personal bullying (10.6%) and in cyberbullying (8.3%) (Save the Children, 2016b).

Research carried out in various countries establish the incidence of bullying at 15% to 50% (Molcho *et al.*, 2009). Some studies refer to the most severe cases being between 3% and 10% (Fu, Land & Lamb, 2013; Magaz, Chorot, Sandín, Santed & Valiente, 2011; Solberg & Olweus, 2003; Undheim & Sund, 2010).

From the 90's onwards numerous pieces of research attempted to investigate into this phenomenon more in depth through analysing other variables and dimensions that can predetermine or be associated with bullying amongst adolescents: emotional attachment and support from the family, interpersonal relationships, psychological and social variables, school coexistence, etc.

The relationships with equals are important for the analysis of bullying amongst adolescents (Del Rey & Ortega, 2007). Thus, Cerezo (2001) explains that bullying is an expression of lousy interpersonal relationships amongst equals within the school context, taking the social environment as a determining factor.

Variables such as emotional attachment to school, the sense of belonging to the establishment and greater school support are deemed to be protective factors against the penetration of bullying by some researchers (Musalem & Castro, 2015).

In terms of the personal variables that might determine or be present in school bullying (regardless of being a bully or a victim), the available research points at some key aspects:

the studies on the satisfaction with life in cases of bullying have been focusing mostly on the victims, finding a negative relationship, as expected, between both variables. Thus, the level of satisfaction with life is lower amongst adolescents who are being bullied (Navarro, Ruiz-Oliva, Larrañaga & Yubero, 2015; Valois, Kerr & Huebner, 2012).

2. Explanation and objectives

This paper attempts to reveal the situations of bullying that are present in secondary education in the city of Salamanca, Spain, taking into account the viewpoints of the bully and the victim. Additionally, we believe it will be interesting to analyse whether there are gender or school year differences as other national and international papers have pointed out. Our research is based on the differences between students in the first stage of secondary education and those who are at the end of it.

In the same way, this is an attempt to ascertain how other variables such as school liking, the relationships with equals and the level of personal satisfaction/ satisfaction with life associate with the roles of the bully and the victim.

3. Method

The research used a technique where boys and girls enrolled in the 1st and 4th years of obligatory secondary school were interviewed. The project design was descriptive, cross-sectional, comparative and quantitative.

3.1. Sample

The sample of adolescents in secondary school (1st and 4th years) has been extracted from 16 schools of the city of Salamanca (Spain). These schools were selected through multistage random sampling stratified by clusters, with the areas of social action of the city and the types of school centre (public and semi-public) being represented. Amongst the students taking part, those who did not provide fully completed questionnaires and those outside the 12-18 age range were excluded. Lastly, an equal number of cases were randomly selected (no.: 282) for the four groups under study: boys and girls in 1st and 4th years of obligatory secondary school, which yields a total sample of 1,128 students. The 1st year students (1^oESO) were 12.9 years old (SD: 0.59), 4th year students (4^oESO) were 16.1 (SD: 0.75) on average, with the average age for the total sample being 14.4 years (SD: 1.71).

3.2. Measurement instruments

In order to assess bullying and peer abuse, six specific questions of the HSBC-2014 Spain questionnaire have been selected (Moreno, *et al.*, 2014), which are based on the proposal made by Olweus (1996). This block of questions includes a presentation which explains which behaviours constitute bullying amongst classmates and which do not: "A student is being bullied when another student or a group of them says to him or her hurtful or unpleasant things. There is also bullying when somebody is teased repeatedly in a way that he or she does not like or when they are deliberately excluded from the group. There is no bullying when two students of similar strength and power argue or fight with each other. There is no bullying either when teasing is friendly or playful." The questions refer to how many times in the last two months a student has been bullied (p1); has been involved in an episode of bullying as a bully (p2); has been hurt by way of insults, laugh or mockery (p3); has been excluded from his or her group of friends or totally ignored (p4); has been hit, pushed, shaken or locked somewhere (p5); has been the victim of people spreading lies or inventing rumours about them so that he or she is not liked by others (p6). The answer options were five, ranging from 1 (never in the last two months) to 5 (several times a week). These questions include several types of bullying: verbal bullying (p3), social bullying (p4), physical bullying (p5) and psycho-social bullying (p6), as well as distinguishing between the different roles in bullying situations: victim (p1) or bully (p2).

For the purpose of analysing the variables that might be associated to bullying (school liking, relationship with equals and personal satisfaction/ satisfaction with life), the following questions of the HSBC-2014 questionnaire were selected:

- School liking: "Currently, how do you feel about school?", with four answer options ranging from 1 (I like it a lot) to 4 (I don't like it at all).
- Relationship with equals, with two questions: "My classmates accept me as I am", with answers ranging from 1 (Totally agree) to 5 (Totally disagree); "Generally, I am liked by others my own age", with answers ranging from 1 (This is not true) to 3 (This is really true).
- Personal satisfaction/ satisfaction with life, with two questions: "I often feel sad, down or feel like crying", with answers ranging from 1 (This is not true) to 3 (This is really true); "Generally, at what point of the ladder do you feel your life is at present?", with answers ranging from 0 (The worst life possible) to 10

(The best life possible) (question adapted from Cantril, 1965).

Additionally, the questionnaire includes several sociodemographic questions (age, gender and school year).

3.3. Statistical Analysis

The Levene's test is used to analyse the homogeneity of variances in the potential comparisons by gender and school year. As the test results indicate that homogeneity cannot be assumed in any of the comparisons, contrast is obtained with the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test for gender and school year comparisons. For the analysis of the association between ordinal variables, Kendall's tau-b is calculated. For the purposes of

comparing averages of two groups (bully or not; victim or not), the Student's *t*-test is used, with a correction in the event where homogeneity of variances cannot be assumed.

4. Results

4.1. The leading roles: the bully and the victim

The statistics reveal that 3.3% of adolescents state that they have been bullied "a lot" in the last two months (approximately once a week/ several times a week), 9.7% have experienced "some" bullying (it has taken place once or twice in total/ 2 or 3 times a month), and 87% have never experienced bullying. Therefore, 13% state that they have experienced some type of bullying (table 1).

		Victim				Aggressor			
		1º ESO		4º ESO		1º ESO		4º ESO	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Never	Never	78.4%	86.2%	92.2%	91.1%	75.9%	79.4%	78.7%	81.2%
Some	Once or twice	13.5%	7.8%	5.0%	6.4%	14.5%	12.1%	17.0%	16.0%
	2 or 3 times a month	2.5%	1.4%	1.1%	1.1%	5.3%	4.3%	2.1%	1.1%
A lot	Approximately once a week	2.1%	1.4%	0.7%	0.7%	2.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0%
	Several times a week	3.5%	3.2%	1.1%	0.7%	2.1%	3.2%	1.1%	1.8%

In terms of gender, male students in the 1st year of secondary education state that they experience more bullying than girls in their same year (table 2). 21.6% of the boys in their first year

of secondary school state they have experienced some type of bullying, against 13.8% of the girls in their same year ($p < .05$). Such differences disappear in the 4th year.

	1º ESO		4º ESO		Total				
	Boys (1a)	Girls (1b)	Boys (2a)	Girls (2b)	1º	4º	Boys	Girls	
Victim	1.39 >	1.28*	1.13 =	1.13	1.33 >	1.13***	1.26 =	1.21	1a>2a*** 1b=2b
Aggressor	1.40 =	1.37	1.29 =	1.25	1.38 =	1.27	1.34 =	1.31	1a=2a 1b=2b

Mann-Whitney test; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

In terms of the school year, there is less bullying in 4th year (17.3%) than in 1st year of obligatory secondary school (8.3%) ($p < .001$). Such decrease is especially noticeable in male students, who reveal

21.6% in 1st year and 7.8% ($p < .001$) in 4th year of obligatory secondary school.

78.8% of the students interviewed report they have never bullied another classmate in the

last two months, and therefore 21.2% states that they have used some type of bullying or another. Amongst the latter group, 3.1% states they have been involved quite frequently (approximately once a week or several times a week). There are no differences by gender or school year, which reveals that the presence of bullies is similar in male and female students and in the 1st and 4th years of obligatory secondary school.

The statistics show a significant association between being a bully and being a victim (Kendall's Tau-b test, value: 0.155; sig.<.001). This is a positive

association, this is, the more frequently bullying is experienced by someone, the more probable it is for that someone to be a bully.

The statistics show an association between having experienced bullying or not and being a bully. Amongst those who have been severely bullied, 21.1% of the cases are severe bullies, against 2.3% who have not been bullied. Amongst those not experiencing bullying by others, 81.1% state that they do not bully others, with this percentage decreasing to 50% amongst those who have experienced severe bullying (table 3).

Table 3. Percentage of bullies when they are also victims

n		Aggressor			
		Never	Some	Mucho	
Victim	Never	981	81.1%	16.5%	2.3%
	Some	109	67.9%	28.4%	3.7%
	A lot	38	50.0%	28.9%	21.1%

Amongst the adolescents who are habitual bullies, 22.9% have experienced habitual bullying, against 2.1% who are not bullies. Amongst those who are habitual bullies, 65.7% have never experienced bullying, whereas, amongst those who are not bullies the percentage is 89.5% (table 4).

Table 4. Percentage of victims when they are also bullies

Table 4. Percentage of victims when they are also bullies

n		Victim			
		Never	Some	A lot	
Aggressor	Never	889	89.5%	8.3%	2.1%
	Some	204	79.4%	15.2%	5.4%
	A lot	35	65.7%	11.4%	22.9%

Therefore, we can conclude that there is an association between being a bully and being a victim of bullying. Nevertheless, there are cases where students who have not been bullied, do bully others (65.7% of the bullies have not experienced bullying), and in the same way, there are cases of students who do not bully others, who have actually experienced bullying themselves (50% of those bullied do not bully others).

With these statistics we may propose a classification according to being a bully/ victim: those outside bullying (neither bullies or victims, who are 70.6%), within the bullying cycle (bullies and

victims, who are 0.7%), bullies (bullies who do not experience bullying, who are 2.0%) and victims (experiencing bullying but not bullying others, who are 1.7%), and finally, other combined situations (see table 5).

Table 5. Roles in bullying

Never		Victim		
		Some	A lot	
Aggressor	Never	Fuera del ciclo (70.6%)	(6.6%)	Víctima (1.7%)
	Some	(14.4%)	(2.7%)	(1.0%)
	A lot	Agresor (2.0%)	(0.4%)	Ciclo de maltrato (0.7%)

In terms of the various forms of bullying under analysis, the most frequent is verbal bullying, "hurting others by means of insulting, laughing at or mocking them" (28.5% has experienced it sometime); followed very closely by bullying by means of "spreading lies or rumours about me so that I am disliked by others" (27.4% have experienced it); in the third place is what we call social bullying, i.e. "I am excluded from the group of friends, I am ignored" (28.4%); and in the last place is physical bullying, "I am hit, kicked, pushed, shaken or locked somewhere" (7.7%).

In some cases, there have been significant differences in the type of bullying by gender

and school year (table 6). “Insults, laughing at and mocking” are more prominent in the 1st year (34.6%) than in the 4th year (22.3%) ($p < .001$). In the 4th year, this type of bullying is very frequent in

2.8% of the students, whereas in 1st year it is in 9.4% of them, which proves that verbal bullying decreases (table 7), and reveals the same frequency in both genders.

Table 6. Comparisons by gender and school year: forms of bullying

	1º ESO		4º ESO		Total				
	Boys (1a)	Girls (1b)	Boys (2a)	Girls (2b)	1º	4º	Boys	Girls	
Insults... (verbal)	1.64 =	1.64	1.33 =	1.33	1.64 >	1.33***	1.49 =	1.48	1a>2a*** 1b>2b**
Ignored... (social)	1.36 =	1.50	1.23 =	1.34	1.43 >	1.28*	1.29 =	1.42	1a=2a; 1b=2b
Hit... (physical)	1.26 >	1.11**	1.10 >	1.07*	1.19 >	1.08**	1.18 >	1.09**	1a>2a** 1b=2b
Lies... (psycho-social)	1.50 >	1.70*	1.28 >	1.40*	1.60 >	1.34**	1.39 <	1.55***	1a=2a* 1b>2b*

Mann-Whitney test; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Social bullying (by exclusion/ ignoring) is more frequent in the 1st year of obligatory secondary education (20.6% has experienced it sometime) than in the 4th year (16.1%) ($p < .05$). In the 1st year

of the obligatory secondary education it is very frequent in 7.2% of the students, whereas in the 4th year it is in 3.4% of them. Boys and girls experience it equally (tables 6 y 7).

Table 7. Verbal and social bullying by gender and school year

		Insults, laugh or mockery				Ignored			
		1º ESO		4º ESO		1º ESO		4º ESO	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Never	Never	65.2%	65.6%	78.7%	76.6%	80.9%	78.0%	85.8%	81.9%
Some	Once or twice	21.3%	21.3%	13.8%	18.1%	11.3%	9.9%	8.5%	9.9%
	2 or 3 times a month	4.3%	3.5%	5.0%	2.1%	2.5%	2.8%	3.5%	3.5%
A lot	Approximately once a week	2.5%	2.8%	0.7%	2.1%	1.4%	2.8%	1.4%	1.4%
	Several times a week	6.7%	6.7%	1.8%	1.1%	3.9%	6.4%	0.7%	3.2%

Physical bullying (by hitting, pushing, etc...) is experienced more by boys (10.5%) than girls (5%) ($p < .01$), and is more prominent in the 1st year of obligatory secondary education (10.3%) than in the 4th year (2.1%) ($p < .01$). Specifically, “very frequent” bullying is experienced more by boys (2.3%) than

girls (1.3%), and it is more prominent in 1st year students (2.5%) than in 4th year students (0.9%) of obligatory secondary education, with the most affected group being 1st year boys (13.8%) and the least affected group being 4th year girls (3.2%) (tables 6 y 8).

Table 8. Physical bullying and bullying by spreading lies by gender and school year

		Hit, pushed, shaken or locked somewhere				People spreading lies or inventing rumours...			
		1º ESO		4º ESO		1º ESO		4º ESO	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Never	Once or twice	86.2%	93.3%	92.9%	96.8%	73.8%	64.5%	80.1%	72.0%
Some	2 or 3 times a month	8.2%	4.6%	5.7%	1.8%	14.9%	19.5%	14.2%	19.5%
	Approximately once a week	2.1%	0.7%	0.7%	0.4%	3.9%	5.3%	3.9%	6.4%
A lot	Several times a week	0.7%	0.4%	0.4%		2.8%	3.2%	1.4%	0.7%
	Varias veces a la semana	2.8%	1.1%	0.4%	1.1%	4.6%	7.4%	0.4%	1.4%

Bullying by means of spreading lies and rumours with the intention of making someone be disliked by others is experienced mostly by girls (31.7%) than boys (23%) ($p < .001$), both in the 1st year ($p < .05$) and the 4th year ($p < .05$) of obligatory secondary education. And it is more prominent in 1st year (30.9%) than in 4th year (23.9%) ($p < .01$) of obligatory secondary education. The group mostly affected by it is 1st year girls (25.5%) and the one least affected is 4th year boys (19.9%) (tables 6 y 8).

4.3. School liking, relationship with equals and satisfaction with life

The results show that bullies (students who have bullied others sometime) like school the same as those who do not bully others, whereas victims (students who have been bullied some time) like school less (2.16) than students who have not experienced bullying (2.43) ($p < .001$) (table 9).

Table 9. Differences in school liking, relationships with equals and satisfaction with life

	Aggressor				Victim			
		No	Yes	t (sig.)		No	Yes	t (sig.)
Currently, how do you feel about school? 1: I like it a lot vs. 4 I don't like it at all	M	2.21 =	2.28	.381	M	2.16 <	2.43	<.001
	SD	.94	.97		SD	.92	1.0	
My classmates accept me as I am. Totally 1: agree vs. 5: disagree	M	1.68 <	2.43	<.001	M	1.78 =	1.78	.985
	SD	.86	1.26		SD	.95	.96	
Generally, I am liked by others my own age 1: This is not true vs. 3 This is really true	M	2.58 >	2.34	.020	M	2.56 =	2.55	.801
	SD	.53	.67		SD	.55	.55	
I often feel sad, down or feel like crying 1: This is not true vs. 3 This is really true	M	1.52 <	1.87	<.001	M	1.52 <	1.67	.024
	SD	.53	.71		SD	.65	.70	
Generally, at what point of the ladder do you feel your life is at present? 0: The worst life possible vs. 10: The best life possible	M	7.77 >	7.23	.001	M	7.76 >	7.48	.030
	SD	1.72	1.96		SD	1.76	1.72	

In terms of their relationship with equals, in comparison with others, bullies feel less accepted by their classmates ($p < .001$) and feel they are less liked ($p < .05$); whereas victims, in comparison with

the others, feel equally accepted and believe they are liked the same as others.

In terms of their psychological state, bullies feel sadder in comparison to others ($p < .001$) and

they believe their moment in life is worse ($p < .01$). This is a similar situation to that of the victims in comparison to the others, as they state they feel sadder ($p < .05$) and in a worse moment of their lives ($p < .05$).

5. Discussion and conclusions

The statistics in this paper reveal that 87% of adolescents state they have never experienced bullying. Out of the 13% who have experienced some form of bullying, 8.2% have experienced it only on occasion (once or twice in the last two months) and 4.8% have experienced it on a more continuous basis.

In comparison with the national data, the percentage of Salamanca adolescents (87%) who state they have never experienced bullying, is higher than in Spain generally (84.3%). In spite of this difference, the events of continued bullying are similar in Spain generally (5.6%) and in Salamanca (4.8%).

In terms of the differences by gender and school year, 1st year boys in obligatory secondary education experience bullying more often than girls according to this research, whereas such differences do not exist in 4th year. As is the case with the national results, bullying decreases as age increases, especially in male students.

In terms of the position of the bully, 78.8% have never been involved in a bullying event as a bully; out of the 21.2% who have, 14.9% have done so once or twice in the last two months and 6.4% have done it on a more continued basis. These statistics are worse than those obtained at national level in the HBSC study (Moreno *et al.*, 2014). In Spain, the percentage is 82.2% for those who have never been involved in bullying events as bullies and 17.8% who have been involved in an event of this type, with 5.6% being involved on a continued basis.

The research indicates that men are usually involved in these aggressive behaviours more frequently (Elgar *et al.*, 2015). The paper published by Zych, Ortega-Ruiz, & Marín-López (2018) indicates that women reveal higher scores than men in terms of social consciousness and social skills. It would therefore seem appropriate to specifically analyse these differences by gender in order to help clarify the need to establish preventative measures addressed to men.

In terms of the association between having experienced bullying and having been involved in bullying events as a bully, some pieces of research find associations between these roles indicating a circular association in bullying (Urchaga, Carballa, Barahona & González, 2018). This paper has found

a significant association between being a bully and being bullied.

In terms of the various forms of bullying under analysis, all of them are more frequent in the 1st than in the 4th school year of obligatory secondary education. Bullying caused by means of “spreading lies or rumours about me so I am disliked by others” is more frequent amongst girls.

Like in the aforementioned research, girls tend to use verbal rather than physical bullying (Navarro, Larrañaga & Yubero, 2011). The report issued by Save the Children (2016a) points out verbal bullying as the most frequent form in six out of ten children under 18. Male students are mainly the bullies in events of physical and verbal bullying, mainly in the school patio. In our research 1st year boys and girls recognise having been physically bullied (7.7%), although it is 1st school year boys who mostly experience it. Social bullying (“I am excluded from the group, I am ignored”) is experienced equally by boys and girls. The statistics are higher than those found at national level (16.6%).

In the last instance, we have physical bullying. 7.7% of the interviewees state that they have been “hit, kicked, shaken or locked somewhere” on a frequent basis, against 6.3% in Spain generally. Similarly to the case at national level, our research reveals that boys experience it more frequently, especially those in 1st year of obligatory secondary education.

With regards to the analysis of other variables such as school liking, the relationship with equals or satisfaction with life in adolescents:

Adolescent *bullies* like school in the same degree as non-bullies, whereas *victims* like school less than students who have not experienced bullying, in the same degree as indicate other pieces of research (Navarro, Ruiz-Oliva, Larrañaga & Yubero, 2015; Valois, Kerr & Huebner, 2012).

In terms of their relationships with equals, *bullies* feel less accepted by their classmates and feel they are more disliked; whereas *victims*, in comparison with the others, feel equally accepted and believe they are liked the same as others. Their relationships with their equals are crucial in this stage of their development. Having few friends, not having a best friend or having friends who are not supportive or protective increase the probability of adolescents experiencing rejection or exclusion from their peers and of becoming an easy target for bullies (Musalem & Castro, 2015). Shetgiri (2013) states that having more friends and relationships with protective peers can protect children from being victimised.

This is partially confirmed by other pieces of research (Sánchez, Ortega & Menesini, 2012; Ttöfi & Farrington, 2008) where both bully and victim

have low levels of social relationships, which is more prominent in the victims. Victimization experiences are good predictive factors of social dissatisfaction (Salmivalli, 2010), as well as of antisocial behaviour (Bender & Lösel, 2011; Farrington y Ttofi, 2011) and often last beyond the school years (Ttofi, Farrington & Lösel, 2011).

In terms of their psychological state, the results of this research reveal that both bullies and victims feel sadder and their satisfaction with life is lower than that of their classmates. MacDonald, Piquero, Valois and Zullig (2005) noticed that a positive school atmosphere contributes to increased satisfaction with life, which in turn is associated with fewer cases of violent behaviour. In the same way, other pieces of research show that there is a reverse association between school atmosphere and victimisation and between this and satisfaction with life (Martínez Ferrer, Moreno Ruiz, Amador & Orford, 2011).

Consequently, it would seem appropriate to consider the following aspects when dealing with bullying in adolescence:

Prevention from the early stages of life. The results of this research reveal major differences amongst school years, showing higher levels of bullying in first-year obligatory secondary education students. This suggests the need to propose preventative actions at the primary school stages.

Improvement of adolescents' emotional intelligence. There is a direct association between emotional intelligence and aggressive behaviour (Estévez, Estévez, Segura, & Suárez, 2019). Promoting emotional intelligence increases the ability of recognising feelings, managing them, accepting, recognising and controlling emotions, thus decreasing the emotional shock experienced in cases of violence and compensating with personal stability (Elipe *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, the work of the educational establishments is crucial because it improves the students' behaviour (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Fernández-Berrocal, Cabello, & Gutiérrez-Cobo, 2017; Zych, Beltrán-Catalán, Ortega-Ruiz, & LLorant, 2018).

Promoting positive school coexistence. "Although school is not the causing factor, or the only place where violence is displayed, educational establishments have a key role in the fight against it" (Save the Children, 2016a, p.77). This is why teachers and the school management board must be responsible for helping overcome violence in the school centre and its surroundings, as this affects students, their learning process, their liking of school and their level of satisfaction, and

for ensuring the prevalence of the wellbeing and the ultimate interest of the child (Nocito, 2017). In this sense, when school coexistence is sought after and improved, it has a high impact on learning, social development and students' interrelations (Álvarez-García *et al.*, 2013; Conde & Ávila, 2018). When positive relationships amongst the members of the school community become fragile, conflict emerges and, also sometimes violent situations in the form of bullying. A working atmosphere that is friendly, where students feel comfortable in the school, benefits social integration, motivation and learning (González & De Castro, 2019), contributes to the improvement of attitudes, skills and social integration and interrelation abilities (Aimi, Trubini, Barbiani, & Pinelli, 2011) as well as the degree of personal independence of the students (Fuentes, García, Gracia, & Lila, 2011).

Reinforcement of the bonds with adults, especially with the family and the teachers. Miranda, Oriol, Amutio and Ortúzar (2019) indicate that adult support at home and in a school positively contribute to higher levels of satisfaction with life in students who are highly affected by victimisation in comparison to those who perceive they have low support. Friendly and caring teachers who protect their students against victimisation (Shetgiri, 2013), as well as positive family relationships, are determinant in the subjective wellbeing of adolescents (Cánovas, Riquelme, Orellana, & Sáez, 2019; Guevara & Urchaga, 2018a).

Improvement of satisfaction with life. The school's social atmosphere and satisfaction with life are closely related according to some research (Leria-Dul & Salgado-Roa, 2019). Those children who perceive better coexistence in the classroom have higher levels of satisfaction with life (Guevara & Urchaga, 2018b), with this variable being of major importance for the adolescent's wellbeing.

The main limitation of this piece of research is the fact that is based on a cross-sectional design and therefore it does not allow us to establish a cause-effect link. Another limitation is that cyberbullying has not been included in the study, which would have increased the bullying rate, taking into account that this is a form of bullying that is on the increase according to research.

It would be necessary to propose longitudinal research to allow establish causal links and assess the effectiveness of preventative and coexistence improvement programs. It would also be necessary to further investigate into the causes of the differences by gender and school year in the various forms of bullying.

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