

Repetition and Externalizing Socio-Emotional Consequences according to Gender in Compulsory Secondary Education

Repetición y Consecuencias Socioemocionales externalizantes según el Sexo en la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria

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Isaías Martín-Ruiz

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4696-2374>

University of Málaga

Ana Herrera-Gallego

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0943-908X>

University of Málaga

Agustín Wallace-Ruiz

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1437-0128>

University of Málaga

Abstract

Adolescence is a stage of growth where mental health problems can have considerable effects. Some personal conditions, such as gender, or some educational measures such as repetition, can be relevant to promote the appearance of externalizing socio-emotional problems. The aim of this study is to analyze the impact of repeating a course on externalizing

problems (anger and aggression) and personal resources (self-esteem, social competence and awareness of problems) according to the gender of adolescents. The sample included 230 males and 215 females between 12 and 17 years old. The test "Evaluation System for Children and Adolescents" (SENA) was used and a cross-sectional comparative design ex post facto. Descriptive analyses and comparisons between means were performed using 2x5 factorial ANOVA. The results indicate that gender and repetition of a course influence the emotional and social adjustment of adolescents. In anger, the group of girls and repeaters show higher scores than boys and non-repeaters. In aggression, repeaters have higher scores, with no significant effect of gender or its interaction with repetition. In conclusion, this study points out the impact of repetition on externalized socio-emotional problems according to gender, highlighting the relevance of personal resources as protective factors during adolescence.

Key words: repetition, aggression, anger, personal resources, adolescence, gender.

Resumen

La adolescencia es una etapa de crecimiento donde los problemas de salud mental pueden tener efectos considerables. Algunas condiciones personales, como el sexo, o algunas medidas educativas como la repetición, pueden ser relevantes para promover la aparición de problemas socioemocionales de tipo externalizante. El objetivo de este estudio es analizar el impacto de la repetición de curso en los problemas externalizados (ira y agresión) y los recursos personales (autoestima, competencia social y conciencia de problemas) según el sexo de los adolescentes. La muestra incluyó 230 chicos y 215 chicas adolescentes entre 12 y 17 años. Se utilizó el test "Sistema de Evaluación de Niños y Adolescentes" (SENA) y un diseño comparativo transversal ex post facto. Se realizaron análisis descriptivos y comparaciones entre medias mediante ANOVA factorial 2x5. Los resultados indican que el sexo y la repetición de curso influyen en el ajuste emocional y social de los adolescentes. En la ira, las adolescentes que repiten muestran puntuaciones mayores que los chicos no repetidores. En la agresión, los repetidores tienen puntuaciones más altas, sin efecto significativo del sexo o su interacción con la repetición. En conclusión, este estudio señala el impacto de la repetición en los problemas socioemocionales de tipo externalizado según el sexo, destacando la relevancia de los recursos personales como factores protectores durante la adolescencia.

Palabras clave: repetición, agresión, ira, recursos personales, adolescencia, sexo.

Introduction

Adolescence is a crucial transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, characterised by significant changes in the biological, cognitive, social, and family area. During this period, adolescents achieve important milestones such as the formation of a solid identity, the development of formal thinking, and sexual maturity (Bailen et al., 2019; Filipiak & Lubianka, 2021). Although these achievements provide valuable opportunities for learning and growth, they can also lead to stressful situations and increase emotional vulnerability due to the rapid pace of change. Common sources of stress include emotional distancing from parents, self-imposed academic pressure, concerns about body image and physical changes, the need for peer acceptance, and interactions with peers (Filipiak & Lubianka, 2021). In addition, adolescents may deal with other personal, contextual, and school-related situations that can serve as potential sources of stress and vulnerability (Bailen et al., 2019).

The prevalence of mental health problems during this developmental stage is significant, estimated at around 20% (Anglim et al., 2020; Martín et al., 2022). These experiences may persist into adulthood, potentially leading to serious consequences and significantly affecting social interactions and emotional well-being (Chen et al., 2020; Orgilés et al., 2023; Tamarit et al., 2020). Such problems are related both to socioemotional symptoms and to the personal resources available to deal with potentially vulnerable situations.

On the one hand, the socioemotional problems with the greatest personal and social impact on adolescents tend to be externalising in nature, such as anger and aggression (Lohmann, 2017). These issues are characterised by disruptive and aggressive behaviours directed towards others or the environment (Hernández et al., 2018; WHO, 2019). Anger is a common emotion that can vary in intensity (APA, 2014; Hernández et al., 2018), whereas aggression involves the intention to cause physical or psychological harm (Hernández et al., 2018; Martín et al., 2022). These behaviours are critical to the mental health of children and adolescents, as they have a significant impact on development and well-being, influencing socio-affective growth as well as social and family contexts (Lohmann, 2017; Salavera & Usán, 2019). Some studies suggest gender differences that may play a modulating

role in early adolescence (Carapeto et al., 2022; Mesurado et al., 2018; Oliva et al., 2017; Rey et al., 2023; Yancey et al., 2019). Boys tend to show higher levels of aggression as an expression of emotional dysregulation (Salavera & Usán, 2020; Yancey et al., 2019), whereas girls are more likely to express suppressed anger without outward aggressive behaviours (Oliva et al., 2017). However, other studies have found no differences between boys and girls in terms of anger or aggression (Mesurado et al., 2018).

On the other hand, personal resources are skills that enable adolescents to effectively deal with challenges during this stage of life and serve as protective factors. These include self-esteem, social competence, and problem awareness (Caqueo, 2020; Carapeto et al., 2022; Mesurado et al., 2018; Núñez et al., 2021; Oliva et al., 2017; Rey et al., 2023; Salavera & Usán, 2019; Yancey et al., 2019).

Self-esteem refers to a subjective perception of one's own abilities and competencies, influencing both self-perception and relationships with others (Fariñas & Urra, 2022). During adolescence, self-esteem plays a key role in emotional stability and overall well-being (Núñez et al., 2021). Some studies suggest that girls tend to exhibit lower self-esteem than boys (Gibby, 2021), although other research does not show a consistent pattern (Fariñas & Urra, 2022).

Social competence is the ability to adapt to community norms and apply social skills effectively. Adolescents with stronger social skills tend to have higher self-esteem and better academic performance (Huber, 2019). Specifically, girls may experience greater difficulties in communicating and expressing emotions, which can affect the stability of their social networks (Aguilar, 2020). However, some studies have found no significant sex differences in social competence (Portela, 2021).

Problem awareness is the ability to recognise difficulties and seek help. This resource tends to be higher among girls, who generally perceive and understand emotions more effectively (Gibby et al., 2021). However, this heightened awareness can also increase the risk of developing emotional problems (Schoeps et al., 2019). In this context, self-esteem and social competence are considered positive protective factors, as they predict psychological well-being in adolescents. These factors foster more rewarding

interpersonal relationships and provide young people with a greater capacity to deal with everyday challenges (Aguilar, 2020; Farías & Urra, 2022; Huber et al., 2019). Some studies suggest that there may be sex differences in the expression of these difficulties (Aguilar, 2020; Farías & Urra, 2022; Gibby et al., 2021; Huber et al., 2019; Schoeps et al., 2019), although other research has found no such differences (Carapeto et al., 2022; Mesurado et al., 2018; Portela et al., 2021).

One of the extraordinary educational measures is grade repetition, which involves a student repeating an academic year that was not successfully completed. This measure is closely related to school failure and carries both personal and social risks (Horbach et al., 2020). Repeating not only impacts academic performance but can also lead to adverse social and emotional effects, such as age-grade mismatch, stigmatisation, increased behavioural problems, and socioemotional maladjustment. In particular, the majority of students who repeat a year are concentrated in the first year of Compulsory Secondary Education, with this situation being more frequent among boys (Méndez & Cerezo, 2018).

National and international assessments indicate that Spain has a high rate of grade repetition, around 7% in secondary education, which is three times the average of both the OECD and the EU (INE, 2023; MEFPD, 2024). Repeating is a costly measure associated with school failure, disproportionately affecting students from lower socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, repeating a year increases the likelihood of school dropout, depressive symptoms, and mental health risks (Horbach et al., 2020; Livingston et al., 2018). It often coexists with learning disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, or other mental health conditions (APA, 2014).

Repeating is considered an exceptional measure that may be applied when a student has not achieved the competencies and objectives established for their age and educational level. According to the Organic Law 3/2020, governing Education in Spain (LOMLOE), the teaching team must determine whether promotion to the next grade would not benefit the student's academic progress, as it would hinder their ability to successfully follow the curriculum for the subsequent year. In this regard, the decision to retain a student should only be made after all ordinary and specific measures have been exhausted,

such as educational support, reinforcement in basic subjects like language and mathematics, or non-significant curricular adaptations.

However, some research has highlighted positive outcomes that repeating may have on students' maturity and academic progress (Battistin & Schizzerotto, 2019; Mathys et al., 2019; Valbuena et al., 2021). Repeating can provide another opportunity to acquire basic competencies and foster a culture of effort and perseverance (Choi & Harachi, 2020). Furthermore, Marsh et al. (2017) found a small positive effect of repetition on students' mathematical academic self-concept, based on PISA results. Their findings also suggest that repetition may help reduce anxiety and enhance self-efficacy.

Nevertheless, repetition can hinder adaptation to a new group and contribute to low self-esteem, loss of motivation and academic expectations, disconnection from peers and school, and an increased risk of school dropout (González & Álvarez, 2022). Students who repeat during Secondary Education tend to have a lower academic self-concept and face greater socioemotional and behavioural adjustment difficulties (Méndez & Cerezo, 2018; Sosa et al., 2016).

Repeating a year may carry negative connotations that affect students both academically and socially. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the consequences of this measure in Secondary Education, where adolescents may feel stigmatised and experience socioemotional and behavioural problems (Yang et al., 2018).

In short, adolescence is a sensitive stage that combines significant opportunities for personal and social growth with challenges that can generate stress and emotional vulnerability. Repetition is an educational measure that may have a considerable impact on mental health, specifically on the presence of behavioural problems and on adolescents' personal resources, which may be affected differently depending on gender.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyse the effect of gender and the educational measure received (repeating a year) on externalising problems (anger and aggression) and on personal resources (self-esteem, social competence, and problem awareness).

Firstly, we propose three possible effects of the variables gender and the educational measure (repetition) in externalising problems:

- **Hypothesis 1.** The first hypothesis indicates that boys will obtain higher scores in anger and aggression than girls.
- **Hypothesis 2.** The second hypothesis indicates that students who repeat will score higher in anger and aggression than those who do not.
- **Hypothesis 3.** The third hypothesis posits the existence of interactions between gender and repeating in externalising problems (anger and aggression).

Secondly, we propose three possible effects about the effect of the variables gender and the educational measure (repetition) in personal resources:

- **Hypothesis 4.** The fourth hypothesis indicates that boys will obtain higher scores in self-esteem and social competence, and lower scores in problem awareness, than girls.
- **Hypothesis 5.** The fifth hypothesis indicates that students who have been held back a year will have lower scores in self-esteem and social competence and higher in problem awareness than those who have not repeated any years.
- **Hypothesis 6.** The sixth hypothesis proposes the existence of interactions between gender and repeating in personal resources (self-esteem, social competence, and problem awareness).

Materials and Methods

Participants

This study was conducted with a sample of 445 adolescents enrolled in Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO, to use the Spanish acronym). The participating students came from four secondary schools, distributed across different year levels (see Table I). The distribution of students by grade was uneven, with a larger proportion of participants in 2nd and 1st year of ESO. While this distribution might suggest a higher number of repeaters in 2nd year, the highest percentage of repeating students was actually found in 3rd year of ESO. Overall, the proportion of students who had repeated ranged from 14.67% to 25.75% depending on the grade, with a total rate of 17.89%.

TABLE I. Distribution of students by grade.

Grade	Students	Repeating	<i>f(repeaters)</i>
1º ESO	109	16	14.67
2º ESO	210	38	18.09
3º ESO	66	17	25.75
4º ESO	60	9	15.00
Total	445	80	17.89

Source: own elaboration.
f (Percentage of repeat students per grade)

In terms of gender, the group of female participants constitutes 48.3% (215 students) aged between 12 and 17 years ($M = 13.59$; $SD = 1.14$), while 51.7% (230 students) belong to the male group, aged between 12 and 17 years ($M = 13.60$; $SD = 1.24$). No significant age differences were found between genders [$t (433) = 0.54$, $p = .957$].

The gender distribution of participants was fairly balanced, as shown in Table II. No significant differences were detected in the number of students by gender [$\chi^2 (445) = 0.733$, $p = .655$]. Finally, it is noted that there were more boys (65%) repeating than girls (35%).

TABLE II. Distribution of students by gender.

	Repeating	Non-Repeating	Total	f
Female	28	187	215	48.3
Male	52	178	230	51.7
Total	80	356	445	100

Source: own elaboration.
f (Sample percentage)

Instruments

The evaluation of externalising problems and personal resources was carried out using the SENA test (Evaluation of Children and Adolescents System) developed by Fernández-Pinto et al. (2015) for adolescents in secondary education (ages 12–18). The test uses Likert items scored from 1 (never or almost never) to 5 (always or almost always) for each item. Table III presents the internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$ and $.85$, depending on the scales) and temporal stability ($r = .88$ and $.90$) reported by the test authors (Fernández-Pinto et al., 2015). In addition to this, reliability was calculated for the study sample, yielding values similar to those reported in the test manual. Furthermore, the SENA demonstrates adequate external validity with medium-to-high values ($r = .70$), calculated with the PAI-A (Personality Assessment Inventory—Adolescents) by Morey (2015).

Externalising symptomatology was assessed in terms of anger (ANG) and aggression (AGR). The variable ANG is defined as the excessive and inappropriate experience or expression of anger, manifested in aggressive-impulsive behaviours, feelings of rage, and a perceived loss of control. It was assessed with items such as: “I slam doors or hit things when I get angry” and “I lose control when I get angry” (Fernández-Pinto et al., 2015). The variable AGR is defined as interpersonal aggression and assesses behaviours that reflect low empathy and, in more severe cases, may involve some degree of cruelty towards others (Fernández-Pinto et al., 2015). It was evaluated with items such as: “I threaten others to get what I want” and “I make fun of other people for fun.”

Personal resources were assessed in terms of self-esteem (SEL), social competence (SOC), and problem awareness (AWE). The variable SEL refers to the degree of satisfaction a person has with themselves, their self-evaluation, and personal adjustment. High scores indicate a positive self-assessment and good personal adjustment. Example items include: "I believe I have many good qualities" and "I consider myself good-looking" (Fernández-Pinto et al., 2015). The variable SOC evaluates the ability to relate effectively with others, integrate into peer groups, and thereby obtain support and reinforcement. These variables reflect a good level of personal and social adjustment, which is beneficial in minimising possible emotional deficits. Example items include: "Others count on me to do activities or group work" and "I have real friends" (Fernández-Pinto et al., 2015). Finally, the variable AWE reflects the extent to which a person is able to perceive difficulties in daily life, be aware of what is happening, and recognise the need to seek help. A high score on this scale is a positive indicator, suggesting a good prognosis and strong willingness for personal and emotional change. Example items include: "Many of my problems are due to my attitude" and "I need help" (Fernández-Pinto et al., 2015).

Procedure

The process of selecting which schools would take part in the study was carried out through convenience sampling by educational zones in the province of Málaga, following the guidelines of the Andalusian Regional Ministry of Education (2021). Four schools that agreed to participate voluntarily were randomly selected: three from the capital city and one from the province. Exclusion criteria for participants in the sample included the presence of prior clinical disorders, disabilities, students with high abilities, and/or disadvantaged socioeducational backgrounds.

The next step involved obtaining consent from the schools' leadership teams to conduct the study. Authorisation was then requested from parents and/or legal guardians, and assent was obtained from the participating students. The assessment tests were completed by the students during school hours

in their classrooms, after receiving detailed instructions and the necessary materials. The evaluation was carried out in a 45-minute session, ensuring the confidentiality of individual responses.

This study is part of the research project “Psychoeducational Assessment of Socioemotional Adjustment in Adolescents” and was conducted in accordance with the ethical and deontological standards of the Helsinki Declaration (World Health Organization, 2019). It was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Málaga.

Statistical Design and Analysis

This project is framed within associative research using a comparative or *ex post facto* cross-sectional design, in which independent variables are not manipulated but occur naturally (Ato et al., 2013). The independent variables of the study are two: gender (males and females) and the application of an educational measure of permanence (grade repetition or not). The dependent variables are externalising problems (anger and aggression) and personal resources (self-esteem, social competence, and problem awareness).

Firstly, descriptive statistics for the study variables were calculated, and assumptions of normality (Shapiro-Wilk test) and homogeneity of variances (Levene's test) were verified. Next, mean comparisons between groups by gender (males and females) and educational measure (repeaters and non-repeaters) were carried out using a 2×5 factorial ANOVA. In cases where the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met, significance was corrected using Welch's test (Ruxton, 2006).

When significant differences between means were found, effect sizes were calculated using McDonald's omega (ω) for the main effects of F , where values of 0.01 are considered small, 0.06 medium, and 0.14 large; and Cohen's d for post hoc Tukey t tests, with effect sizes classified as small ($.10|$), moderate ($.30|$), or large ($.50|$), according to Cohen's (1992) criteria.

Statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 29 (IBM, 2021).

Results

Firstly, the descriptive statistics are presented, followed by the contrasts between groups according to the dependent variables.

Externalizing problems

Analyses of externalizing problems (anger and aggression) were carried out. The descriptive statistics of the analyzed variables are shown in Table IV. The female group shows a higher score in anger ($M = 18.63$; $SD = 7.52$) than the males group ($M = 15.43$; $SD = 6.93$). In contrast, the males group shows higher scores in aggression ($M = 9.82$; $SD = 3.79$) than the female group ($M = 9.54$; $SD = 3.17$). On the other hand, the repeaters group shows higher scores in anger ($M = 19.79$; $SD = 7.80$) and aggression ($M = 11.71$; $SD = 5.69$) compared to the non-repeaters group [anger ($M = 16.87$; $SD = 7.33$); aggression ($M = 9.42$; $SD = 3.02$)].

TABLE IV. Descriptive statistics of externalizing variables

	Males		Females		Repeaters		Non-repeaters	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Anger	15.43	6.93	18.63	7.52	19.79	7.80	16.87	7.33
Aggression	9.82	3.79	9.54	3.17	11.71	5.69	9.42	3.02

Source: own elaboration.

Note. *M* (Mean); *SD* (Standard deviation); ANG (Anger); AGR (Aggression).

The analysis of variance between groups in anger and aggression is presented in Table V. Differences in anger are significant between genders [$F (1,355) = 7.91$; $p = .005$], with girls scoring significantly higher than boys, with a medium effect size ($\omega = .019$, $d = -0.483$). Differences are also significant for the educational repetition variable [$F (1,355) = 5.71$; $p = .017$], with Repeaters scoring significantly higher than Non-repeaters, with a medium effect size ($\omega = .013$, $d = -0.412$). No statistically significant interactions were

found between gender and educational repetition for this variable [$F(1,355) = 0.07; p = .789$].

For aggression, gender differences are not statistically significant [$F(1,355) = 2.40; p = .122$]. However, there are significant differences in educational repetition [$F(1,355) = 15.93; p = .000$], with Repeaters scoring significantly higher than Non-repeaters, with a medium effect size ($\omega = .040, d = -0.686$). Once again, no statistically significant interactions between gender and educational repetition were found [$F(1,355) = 1.92; p = .167$].

TABLE V. Results of factorial ANOVA analyses of externalizing problems

		ANOVA			Post Hoc		
		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	ω^2	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Anger	Gender	7.91	.005	.019	-2.81	.005	-0.483
	Repetition	5.74	.017	.013	-2.40	.017	-0.412
	Interaction	0.07	.789				
Aggression	Gender	2.40	.122				
	Repetition	15.93	.000	.040	-3.99		-0.686
	Interaction	1.92	.167				

Source: own elaboration

Note. ANG (Anger); AGR (Aggression); F (Fisher-Snedecor's F), ω (Mc Donald's omega), t (Tukey's t), p (significance level), d (Cohen's d).

Personal Resources

The descriptive statistics of personal resources (self-esteem, social competence, and problem awareness) are shown in Table VI. Boys present higher scores in self-esteem ($M = 27.52; SD = 5.71$) and social competence ($M = 34.81; SD = 6.73$) than girls [self-esteem ($M = 22.08; SD = 7.28$); social competence ($M = 31.77; SD = 7.09$)]. In contrast, Girls show higher scores in problem awareness ($M = 18.27; SD = 6.16$) compared to boys ($M = 14.96; SD = 5.19$).

Non-repeaters score higher in self-esteem ($M = 24.79; SD = 7.16$) and social competence ($M = 33.20; SD = 6.88$) than Repeaters [self-esteem ($M = 22.50; SD = 6.74$); social competence ($M = 32.68; SD = 8.70$)], but Repeaters score higher in problem awareness ($M = 17.47; SD = 6.25$) compared to Non-

repeaters ($M = 16.68$; $SD = 5.93$).

TABLE VI. Descriptive statistics of personal resource variables

	Males		Females		Repeaters		Non-repeaters	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
AUT	27.52	5.71	22.08	7.28	22.50	6.74	24.79	7.16
SOC	34.81	6.73	31.77	7.09	32.68	8.70	33.20	6.88
CNC	14.96	5.19	18.27	6.16	17.47	6.25	16.68	5.93

Source: own elaboration

Note. *M* (Mean); *SD* (Standard deviation); AUT (Self-esteem); SOC (Social competence); CNC (Problem awareness)

In Table VII, the analysis of variance between groups in personal resources is presented. The differences in self-esteem are statistically significant between genders [$F(1,355) = 27.50$; $p = .000$], with Boys scoring higher than Girls, with a medium effect size ($\omega = .068$, and $d = -0.901$). The same occurs for the educational measure variable [$F(1,355) = 4.40$; $p = .037$], where Boys also score significantly higher than Girls, with a medium effect size ($\omega = .009$, and $d = -0.360$). No statistically significant interactions are found between gender and educational measure regarding the self-esteem variable [$F(1,355) = 0.29$; $p = .592$]).

For the social competence variable, statistically significant differences are also found with respect to gender [$F(1,355) = 13.01$; $p = .000$], with Boys scoring significantly higher than Girls, with a medium effect size ($\omega = .032$, and $d = -0.620$). Regarding repetition, no statistically significant differences are found [$F(1,355) = 0.173$; $p = .678$]), nor significant interactions between gender and educational measure for this variable [$F(1,355) = 1.77$; $p = .185$]).

Finally, the problem awareness variable shows statistically significant differences with respect to gender [$F(1,355) = 12.61$; $p = .000$], with Girls scoring significantly higher than Boys, with a medium effect size ($\omega = .031$, and $d = -0.610$). No significant differences are found regarding the educational measure [$F(1,355) = 0.75$; $p = .388$]), nor statistically significant interactions between gender and educational measure for this variable [$F(1,355) = 0.06$; $p = .806$]).

TABLE VII. Results of factorial ANOVA analyses of personal resources

		ANOVA			Post Hoc (main effects)		
		F	p	ω^2	t	p	d
SEL	Gender	27.50	.000	.068	5.24	.000	0.901
	Repetition	4.40	.037	.009	2.10	.037	0.360
	Interaction	0.29	.592				
SOC	Gender	13.01	.000	.032	3.61	.000	0.620
	Repetition	0.173	.678				
	Interaction	1.77	.185				
AWE	Gender	12.61	.000	.031	-3.55	.000	-0.610
	Repetition	0.75	.388				
	Interaction	0.06	.806				

Source: own elaboration

Note. SEL (Self-esteem); SOC (Social competence); AWE (Problem awareness); F (Fisher-Snedecor's F), ω (McDonald's omega), t (Tukey's t), p (significance level), d (Cohen's d)

Conclusions

In conclusion, the aim of this study is to analyse the impact of gender and grade repetition on externalizing problems (anger and aggression) and personal resources (self-esteem, social competence, and problem awareness) in adolescents.

Firstly, regarding the hypotheses about the impact of gender and grade repetition on externalizing problems, it was found that girls show higher levels of anger, while boys and girls do not present statistically significant differences in aggression, which partially supports the first hypothesis. In addition, it was observed that adolescents who repeated a grade showed higher scores in anger and aggression compared to those who did not, which supports the second hypothesis. However, no statistically significant interactions were found between gender and grade repetition in externalizing problems, so the third hypothesis was rejected.

Caqueo et al. (2020) conclude that girls tend to experience fewer externalizing problems compared to boys, although other studies show differences in specific types of behaviours (Oliva et al., 2017; Yancey et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018). The discrepancies found in externalizing problems between genders may be explained by biological, social, and cultural influences (Caqueo et al., 2020), including differences in gender socialization and social expectations (Bettencourt et al., 2020).

Secondly, regarding the hypotheses about the impact of gender and grade repetition on personal resources, it was found that boys show higher levels of self-esteem and social competence compared to girls, but not in problem awareness, which supports the fourth hypothesis. Furthermore, adolescents who repeated a grade showed lower levels of self-esteem and social competence (though not in problem awareness) compared to those who did not, which supports the fifth hypothesis, although the differences were not statistically significant. However, no interactions were found between gender and grade repetition in personal resources, so the sixth hypothesis was rejected.

Regarding the impact of gender on personal resources, this study found statistically significant differences between boys and girls compared to other studies that indicate similarities in the use of personal resources such as social competence (Portela, 2021). Differences have also been reported between genders in self-esteem and problem awareness, consistent with other research that also points to differences in self-concept and social skills (Aguilar, 2020; Gibby et al., 2021). Moreover, studies show that students who repeat a grade present worse outcomes in self-esteem, social competence, and problem awareness compared to those who do not (González & Álvarez, 2022; Sosa et al., 2016; López et al., 2023).

This study highlights the negative consequences of repetition and challenges commonly accepted misconceptions about this practice in our educational system. Therefore, it is essential to consider alternative measures to support struggling students and minimize grade repetition, especially in socially disadvantaged environments.

The results obtained in this study reveal consistent patterns in the influence of gender and grade repetition over various variables related to

students' emotional and social well-being. On the one hand, it was found that both gender and repetition could significantly influence levels of anger, although no significant effect of the interaction between these two factors was found. Both girls and boys who repeated a grade showed higher levels of anger. Regarding aggression, students who repeated a grade scored higher regardless of gender, and no significant interaction effect between gender and repetition was found. On the other hand, it was confirmed that gender has a significant influence on all the dependent variables analysed. Boys scored higher in self-esteem and social competence, while girls scored higher in problem awareness, regardless of whether they repeated a grade. Repetition only showed a statistically significant effect on self-esteem, with non-repeating students obtaining better results.

This study suggests that gender differences have a considerable impact on anger, self-esteem, social competence, and problem awareness among students. In contrast, grade repetition seems to have a more limited and specific impact, mainly affecting self-esteem and increasing levels of aggression and anger.

Social and contextual factors, such as family, peers, and cultural context, may also contribute to gender differences in externalizing problems. For example, experiences of different socialization, where certain behaviours are reinforced depending on gender, can influence how boys and girls express anger or aggression (Bettencourt et al., 2020).

Regarding the role of personal resources, the results of this research support the idea that these factors can mitigate socio-emotional maladjustments in adolescents. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Huber et al., 2019; Núñez et al., 2021) that highlight the importance of fostering the development of social skills, positive self-esteem, and problem awareness as intervention strategies for at-risk adolescents.

Stegge and Terwogt (2017) explored the role of emotional intelligence and self-esteem as mediators in externalizing problems in early adolescence. Their findings indicated that self-esteem partially mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and externalizing problems, suggesting that positive self-esteem may help mitigate these problems.

Furthermore, associations between externalizing symptoms in

adolescence, mental health, and social competence were investigated. The results revealed that social competence acted as a mediator between socio-emotional maladjustments and mental health, suggesting that having adequate social skills can reduce these problems and help improve emotional well-being (Barry et al., 2019).

Likewise, other studies have also explored the role of social competence in aggression and substance use in early adolescence. The results indicated that social competence mediated the relationship between aggression and substance use, suggesting that the lack of these interpersonal skills could contribute to externalizing problems such as aggression and substance abuse (Choi & Harachi, 2020).

It is important to consider whether, in all cases of repetition, the ordinary measures available to support students have been previously implemented. Repetition is a drastic intervention that can have adverse effects on students' emotional and social well-being. Before resorting to this measure, it is essential to ensure that all ordinary support strategies have been exhausted, such as personalized tutoring, psychological support programs, differentiated pedagogical interventions, and the involvement of parents and teachers in the educational process.

The research highlights the importance of considering both gender differences and individual circumstances before making significant educational decisions such as grade repetition. The findings emphasize the need to implement preventive and personalized support measures that can mitigate the negative effects associated with repetition and address students' emotional and social needs more effectively. It is essential that schools and educational teams review and strengthen their intervention strategies to ensure that students receive the support they need for their overall development and well-being.

It is important to mention some limitations of this study. Firstly, the research was based on samples from a single province, which may limit its generalizability to other populations. In addition, a self-report-based approach was used, which may be subject to biases and limitations in the accuracy of the data collected.

Although this study focused on the influence of repetition

and gender on externalizing problems, there may be other unconsidered variables that could also impact these problems. Future research could explore the influence of additional variables such as family environment, culture, and individual factors. In addition, it would be interesting to conduct longitudinal studies. Studying adolescents over time would be beneficial to understand how repeating may influence the onset of certain socio-emotional problems and to identify possible protective factors and intervention strategies.

Finally, it would be important to conduct studies that evaluate the effectiveness of specific interventions aimed at strengthening adolescents' personal resources and reducing externalizing problems. This would provide stronger evidence on the effectiveness of these strategies and guide the implementation of effective prevention and treatment programs.

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