Perception of the consequences of bullying beyond the classroom: A quasi-quantitative approach

Percepción de las consecuencias del bullying más allá de las aulas: Una aproximación cuasi-cuantitativa

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Abstract

The perception of the consequences of bullying goes beyond those involved and may vary depending on the role played in this situation. The objectives of the present study involve the analysis of the perception of the consequences of school harassment using a quasi-quantitative methodology. To this end, a questionnaire developed ad hoc was administered to 348 students during school hours, and parent-teacher discussion groups were held. The results show that teachers, students and families perceive differently the consequences of bullying. The main perceived consequences are to fear the aggressor and the bad reputation of the school. Harassing students tend to perceive that the consequences are linked to the psychological damage of the victim and do not perceive repercussions beyond the classroom. Students who do not harass perceive that the consequences of harassment extend to families and society. It is concluded that the perception of the consequences of harassment must be taken into account, since it is crucial to increase awareness of bullying in other contexts.

Keywords: School harassment; Teenagers; Consequences; Educative community

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Resumen

La percepción de las consecuencias del acoso escolar va más allá de los implicados y puede variar en función del rol que se tiene en esta situación. Los objetivos del presente trabajo suponen el análisis de la percepción de las consecuencias del acoso escolar aplicando una metodología cuasi-cuantitativa. Para ello, se administró un cuestionario elaborado ad hoc a 348 alumnos durante el horario escolar y se llevaron a cabo grupos de discusión de padres, madres y profesorado. Los resultados muestran que el profesorado, el alumnado y las familias perciben de forma diferente las consecuencias del acoso escolar. Las principales consecuencias percibidas son el miedo al agresor y la mala reputación del centro. Los estudiantes que acosan tienden a percibir que las consecuencias están vinculadas con el daño psicológico de la víctima y no perciben repercusiones más allá del aula. Los estudiantes que no ejercen acoso perciben que las consecuencias del acoso se extienden a las familias y la sociedad. Se concluye que hay que tener en cuenta las consecuencias del acoso y la percepción que se tiene de ellas, ya que es crucial para aumentar la concienciación del daño que pueden provocar las situaciones de acoso en otros contextos.

Palabras clave: Acoso escolar; Adolescentes; Consecuencias; Comunidad Educativa

Introduction

Bullying at school is a psychological and social problem that has consequences that go beyond the students who are directly affected (Ortega, Sánchez, & Córdoba, 2008). Using the ecological approach of Bronfenbrenner (1979), the student is not the sole party responsible or the only one affected by an act of bullying; the responsibility and the harm of its consequences fall upon all the interconnected contexts in which it takes place, for example, in the family and within the circle of friends (Ortega et al., 2008). Therefore, it is essential to analyze the perception of the effects of bullying in different contexts and whether there is a differential profile that helps to understand the differences in the views of these consequences.

Consequences of bullying at individual level

The consequences of bullying at the individual level are linked to health and psychosocial variables and affect not only the victims, but also the students who carry out the bullying (Rigby, 2003). In the case of the aggressor, it leads to the overvaluation of violence as a means of achieving their objectives, rejection of rules, abuse of power, and possible extension towards pre-criminal behavior, while among the victims it can cause learning difficulties, disinterest, school phobia, poor performance, absenteeism, stress, psychological disorders, depression, anguish and anger, anxiety and, in extreme cases, these situations can lead to suicidal thoughts (Hernández Prados & Solano Fernández, 2007).

One of the consequences of school bullying is related to the psychological dimension of self-esteem, as this is severely damaged in students who bully and the victims and observers (O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001, Flores & Grijalva, 2017).

On the other hand, bullying at school is related to higher prevalence of symptoms of anxiety and depression, particularly among girls (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001; Torres Castro, 2012). Meta-analyses that take into account the consequences of school bullying at the individual level indicate that, in general, both bullies and victims have more psychosomatic problems than students not involved in situations of bullying (Gini & Pozzoli, 2008). In addition, victimization by fellow students contributes to changes in internalizing problems (Reijntjes, Kamhuis, Prinzie & Telch, 2010), such as, for example, inhibition, restlessness, avoidance, shyness, etc. Likewise, the meta-analysis by Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, and Sadek (2010) shows that there is a series of variables that contribute to increasing the severity of the consequences of bullying, such as, for example, externalizing behavior, the status between peers, the level of social competence, and the type of internal thoughts. In addition, the bullying situation generates fear of the aggressor, with students possibly avoiding certain places during the school day, for instance (Glew, Rivara, & Feudtner, 2000; Hazier, Hoover, & Oliver, 1992).

Bullying also influences students' learning (Lacey & Cornell, 2013; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009). Experiencing this kind of situation is related to lower academic performance, which tends to be lower as the severity of the bullying increases (Eriksen, Nielsen, & Simonsen, 2014) and, in the case of bullies, it is associated with a higher probability of academic failure (Carney & Merrell, 2001).

In the case of the victims, it is found that, in the long term, situations of bullying can influence physical and mental health in adult life (Lereya, Copeland, Costello, & Wolke, 2015; Sourander et al., 2011). For example, students who suffer bullying are almost twice as likely to suffer from bullying 36 years later as those who do not (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Lober, 2011). Moore et al. (2017) found a strong relationship between experiencing bullying and mental health problems and substance use.

The perception of these consequences has not been studied from the point of view of the student, the families, and the educational community, simultaneously considering qualitative and quantitative approaches, so, in this study we propose to investigate who tends to perceive these types of repercussions.

Consequences of bullying in other contexts

School bullying emerges extends beyond the school when student aggressors transfer their violent behavior to other contexts (Oñate & Piñuel, 2005). Student aggressors are not merely aggressive in one place, but they demonstrate this type of behavior in various places and at various times in their life (Hernández Prados, & Solano Fernández, 2007).

Situations of bullying and violence generate environments of evident discomfort among students, teachers, and families (Cerezo, 2006), which shows that bullying is not a phenomenon that affects solely the students involved. The classroom is a space that students may consider to be autonomous; however, much of the information is communicated by the students to other classmates in different groups and this attitude has a decisive influence on the prestige and behavior of the teacher (Gómez Nashiki, 2014). Teachers state that prestige, reputation, and status are decisive in their careers and this can affect the school and other places (Ball, 1989).

The aggressiveness of the students at school is sometimes transferred to other future relationships, such as that with a partner. There are studies that show that there is a relationship between violence with a partner and having been a bully (Ortega-Rivera, Sánchez & Ortega, 2010).

In addition, longitudinal studies demonstrate that some students identified as aggressors at school had children that behaved aggressively proportionally more than those who were not aggressors (Lino, 2007).

The consequences at the community level, in the case of student bullies, are mainly related to a greater probability of demonstrating violent and antisocial behavior in adulthood, thus consolidating socially undesirable behaviors (Bond et al., 2001; Farrington, 2005; Hunter, Mora-Merchán, & Ortega, 2004; Sourander et al., 2011), which may lead to problems with the police (Frick et al., 2003).

It is possible that the various parties involved in school bullying situations may have different views of the consequences of this bullying, so, in this study, we propose investigating whether there are differences in the perception of these consequences beyond the school context that could be associated with the role of the student and the individuals who form part of the educational community.

Gender differences in perception of the consequences of school bullying

A study by López-Hernáez (2013) shows that 50.6% of boys have bullied at some time, compared to 6.9% of girls, who also suffer from bullying less frequently–74.6% of girls and 64.8% of boys say they have not been the victims of bullying. Meanwhile, the differences between boys and girls appear to be a relevant factor in the type of violence and opinions on victims and bullying (García & Orellana, 2008).

The empirical evidence shows that boys tend to be involved in bullying conduct more often than girls (Cook et al., 2010). However, there are slight differences between boys and girls in the type of bullying carried out (Farrington & Baldry, 2010). A study by Barzilay et al. (2017) conducted in 10 countries shows that boys tend to suffer physical and/or verbal bullying, while in girls it is more linked to interpersonal relationships. That is, girls tend more frequently to practice certain types of abuse that are not perceptible, such as indirect social bullying (Zych, Farrington, Llorent, & Ttofi, 2017), that is, they laugh more at their victims or talk more badly about them behind their backs (Defensor del Pueblo, 2007; López-Hernáez, 2013; Oñate & Piñuel, 2007; Ortega et al., 2008; Ortega & Mora-Merchán, 2005). In the case of boys, bullying is more often physical and verbal (Anastasi, 1982). However, there are studies that show that girls can use physical violence just like their male peers (Torres Castro, 2012).

These results show that this variable could influence the perception of the consequences of bullying, given the differences between boys and girls in the type of bullying carried out and experienced.

Profiles regarding the perception of the consequences of school bullying
It is possible that the perception of the consequences of bullying in school varies depending on the characteristics of the students. For example, a study by Al Ali, Gharaibeh, and Masadeh (2017) demonstrates that students have a differential perception of the bully and the victim of school bullying, in such a way that the former is characterized by showing disrespect to other people, wanting to show that they have power, wishing to impress others, and wanting to feel superior, while the victim is perceived as a student with low self-esteem, who expresses themselves in a different way to the others, is shy, and who does not have friends. These profiles could be related to the existence of differences in the perception of the consequences of bullying.

Other studies that suggest there are different student profiles depending on the situation of school bullying have, for example, allowed the identification of the profile of aggressiveness of adolescents in relation to such situations (Shao, Liang, Yuan, & Bian, 2014); and the profile of the victim, bully, and typical student (Lam, Law, Chan, Wong, & Zhang, 2015), or the pattern of response to bullying situations (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2011). Pan, Liu, and Luo (2017) showed that the type of profile (bullies, victims, bully-victims, and non-involved children) can influence the choice of the class for the next course, in such a way that the non-involved students tend to remain in the same class as the previous year, the student victims and bullies tend to change classes, and the students categorized as bully victims tend to choose classes in which there are bullying situations. This type of choice may be related to the extension of bullying beyond the classroom.

These characteristics of the student body could influence the perception of the consequences of bullying, so, in this study, the hypothesis is that the different roles that students have in bullying situations could be related to a differential profile of perception of the consequences of bullying.

This study
The following objectives are proposed in this study:
1. To explore the perceptions of the consequences of bullying in schools.
2. To find out what the perception of the consequences of bullying is in other social contexts.
3. To determine whether there are differences between boys and girls regarding greater or lesser awareness of the harm caused by bullying.
4. To analyze whether there are differential profiles in perception of the consequences of bullying.

Method

Participants
In order to ensure that the selected sample was representative, we conducted simple random sampling, stratified by zones (Table 1). The total number of participating students turned out to be 348, who were enrolled in any of the four courses of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO by the Spanish acronym). There was a predominance of public schools compared to state-subsidized private schools, as well as a greater participation from students in the provincial capital (Logroño) rather than the province, more boys than girls, and more students from the first levels of Compulsory Secondary Education than the later levels.

In the selection of the sample, all the public and state-subsidized private schools in Logroño and all of the regional administrative centers were taken into account. The request for participation was sent by e-mail to the counselors of each school, in which the objectives of the research were explained, in addition to asking them whether they would participate. The students were chosen by the counselors and tutors of each school at random, although the sample was fixed previously by taking into account the proportion of the number of students by the type of school (public or state-subsidized private), locality (Logroño and province), and course (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th level of ESO).

Table 1.
Description of the sample

| | Type of school | | Locality | | Course | | Sex | |
	Public	State-Subsidized	Logroño	Comarca	1º-2º	3º-4º	Boys	Girls
N	206	142	215	133	190	158	179	169
%	59.2	40.8	61.8	38.2	54.6	45.4	54.1	48.6

The semi-structured interviews were prepared by 30 professionals from the education sector: teachers, tutors, counselors, directors, and heads of studies. The sample consisted of men and women between 27 and 64 years old who taught different subjects at all ESO levels, at both public and state-subsidized private schools in Logroño and other areas of the province.

The discussion groups were comprised of four members, two of them students and the other two mothers and fathers. They were selected according to standardized criteria–same sex and locality–and non-standardized criteria–different type of course and educational center–to generate greater variety in the data.

Instrument

In order to create the questionnaire, the School Bullying Questionnaire (Medina, 2006) was used as a reference, although it was redesigned and prepared on an ad hoc basis for this study. This instrument was subjected to a first evaluation of validity according to the criteria of experts in order to ensure that the items achieved the established and planned requirements for the research objectives, that there was clarity in the formulation of questions, to eliminate possible errors of understanding and order, in terms of the amplitude and number of questions, and regarding dimensions depending on the priority of the objectives. For this purpose, we contacted 10 university lecturers belonging to the areas of Didactics and School Organization, a teacher, a father, and an ESO student. After their opinions were collected, the initial questionnaire was amended according to their recommendations, obtaining an instrument containing 31 questions divided into four dimensions: The first gathers information on the "knowledge and characteristics of school bullying"; identification, concept and causes/consequences of bullying among students, the family, and society (23 questions); the second informs on "measures" that are being taken or which should be taken in schools, with the families and in other social contexts in La Rioja (3 questions); the third section addresses the "environment" in the family and in the educational centers (3 questions); and the last dimension addresses "the environments" that influence the prevalence of bullying (2 questions). In this article, we analyze a large part of dimension 2, within which the questions are chosen relating to the consequences of school bullying.

The questionnaire was subsequently submitted to a pilot study to gauge the internal consistency and reliability of the questions, something that was done by establishing control questions that ensured the accuracy of the answers (García-Longoria, 2000). To do this, it was applied to 35 students at random, equivalent to 10% of the total sample. The resulting data were processed using the statistical program SPSS 19.0 for Windows and the analysis of frequencies and percentages served to retain questions that were answered at a percentage higher than 10%, with those that did not reach this figure being rejected.

The results regarding the factorization and with previous exclusion of the open questions, allow us to conclude that the questionnaire explains 70% of the total variance. Finally, the reliability of the scores was studied using Cronbach's alpha test, producing a reliability of .89.

The interviews conducted were of a documentary type and based on opinion (Duverger, 1996), since what interests us about the participants is their opinion and actions regarding bullying in schools. They also had a semi-structured nature. The questions that were linked to the objectives were the same as those included in the questionnaire in terms of content, both in the interviews and in the discussion groups, and both were subjected to the Delphi technique by the group of experts who participated in the validation of the questionnaire. Also, the final questions were established after the first interview, discussion group, and the analysis of the results.

Procedure

The questionnaire was administered within the classes together with the counselors and tutors, in order to better explain the instructions for completion to the participants and to facilitate more complete answers to all the questions. Missing values accounted for 0.21% of the cases, these being dismissed because they did not reach a significant percentage of the sample. For the interviews and discussion groups, the participants were contacted at the time when the questionnaires were delivered, agreeing on an appointment for the meeting. This was carried out in a quiet area, where the procedures were explained to them, how they would be recorded, that they should not speak too quickly, and they should not mention specific names, among other matters. The conversations in both the interviews and discussion groups were recorded and processed (Gil-Flores & Perera, 2001).

The aims that were proposed for this research combine a quantitative and qualitative methodology as a result of the integrating approach. This study has a descriptive nature; however, we have also tried to determine possible associations between variables and their significance.

Data analysis

Once all of the instruments had been applied, the information collected was then codified, classified, and analyzed using various techniques. Quantitative data were analyzed with the aid of the statistical techniques program SPSS 19, obtaining frequencies, percentages, and correlation coefficients between the variables, taking into account Pearson's χ^2 statistics, Cramer's V, and corrected standardized residual analysis, to determine whether there was a relationship–and, if so, its intensity–between the dependent and independent variables. The analysis of corrected standardized residuals allows us to establish the degree of concentration of the participants based on their given answers and to study whether this concentration of cases is significantly higher (or lower) than expected in the case that the association between the variables was not statistically significant.

Finally, a latent class analysis (LCA) was carried out, which was estimated using the software R and the *poLCA* package (Linzer & Lewis, 2015), selecting the following survey questions: have you bullied?; consequences for the victims; consequences for the aggressors; consequences for the families of victims; consequences for the families of aggressors; consequences at the school; and social consequences.

With regards to the qualitative information, the recordings were transcribed using the program Atlas.ti and the texts were analyzed by dividing them into categories that fitted into the stated objectives. At the time of analyzing the information, quantitative criteria were taken into account, that is, an idea was repeated by several participants, together with criteria of information quality.

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Results

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Perception of the consequences of bullying in schools

Regarding the first objective, that is, finding out about the consequences of bullying at schools, the results obtained are shown in Table 2. The most common response given by the students is that bullying creates an environment of fear of the aggressor (29.9%), followed by the perception that the observing students do nothing in these situations (19.8%).

Analysis of the discussion groups shows that the teachers think that a fairly common consequence of bullying in schools is an increase in the schools' poor external reputation and the bad environment within them. They also believe that they should increase their work and neglect the other needs of other students, as well as

considering that it becomes more serious if they do not see it, and that the observers become passive by learning to keep quiet at school and on the street.

> *"The children realize, they're passive observers and they keep quiet because they think that they'll be the one chosen. This is similar to Stockholm syndrome with the aggressor; they get away and keep quiet because they think they'll be next…"* (Teacher 5)
> "Well, it's a very bad external impression and bad vibes between everyone." (Teacher 12)
> *"It requires so much work that other issues have to be neglected; we always have to prioritize and deal with the most important things, it takes a lot of effort, produces tension because we don't have enough time; we look for ways to coordinate to cover it better."* (Teacher 15)
> *"Because the teachers don't see it, they only see those they want to, the ones who are sensitive, those who have they willingness to see it."* (Teacher 18)

Students believe that bullying fosters fear in schools, that some of the students involved leave school, and that victims can react and create more violence than there already is. On the other hand, parents say that after any act of bullying, the schools fall into disrepute because everything is exaggerated:

> *"At school, no one speaks to them for fear of being attacked too; everyone is scared. Not cool, bad vibes."* (Student 4, group 1)
> *"They stop studying, the schools are left with fewer students."* (Student 3, group 1)
> *"It's that if you defend [a victim], you'll normally come out losing, because they can hit you too, because normally the ones doing the hitting are the strongest in the class and they end up hitting you. One day someone was hitting a friend of mine and I got involved and told them to stop and he came to hit me. We hit each other and that set off a good one in the whole institute."* (Student 4, group 2)
> *"My daughter had a classmate who was bullied and it reached the media, and then the people outside who didn't know about the case really thought there was bullying going on, but if you were at the school and you know what the story is about, you realize that there was no such bullying."* (Father 7, group 2)
> *"In this case the director, the AMPA [Association of Students' Parents] provided very quick solutions... everyone collaborated, I think quite well. The school has done everything possible, and if not then that's bad for everyone."* (Father 8, group 1)

Perception of the consequences of school bullying in other contexts

Regarding the second objective, that is, finding out about the perceptions of the consequences of bullying in other social contexts, 41.7% of the students responded that the aggressors continue being violent outside the school in the future (see Table 2) and they also feel that they are scared outside the school (32.5%).

The analysis of the discussion groups showed that teachers believe that, in general, bullying leads to social inequality, lack of respect, and more violence outside the school:

> *"The violence is transferred outside the school in the form of inequality and lack of respect for everyone."* (Teacher 2)
> *"It's obvious that the kids who bully at school don't become little angels when they go out onto the street and if we don't do everything possible to reeducate them, the consequences could be catastrophic at all levels."* (Teacher 15)

The students believe that, because of bullying at school, in society there is less culture, more fear, and extreme suffering on the part of the victims; many of them do not leave their homes, they become distanced from their friends, they make people feel pity, they take out their suffering on people close to them, and they even need the intervention of the police or security. On the other hand, the parents worry that passive observers will continue to do the same outside the school and the environment of bullies and the bullied moves out into the street.

> *"And there's less culture because no one wants to study", "and generalized fear in other places outside the school."* (Student 4, group 2)

"They don't leave the house and they're left looking a bit stupid, without any friends." (Student 4, group 1)
"And sometimes he speaks to his mother and he raises his voice with her much more than he used to… and the rest of the people think, look at that one, he's been beaten up, poor guy." (Student 3, group 2)
"These ones can complain to the Guardia Civil *[Spanish military police] and be escorted all day."* (Student 1, group 1)
"The problem is that a student can't do anything when they see that other students are attacking someone else and then that spreads to working life in the future, and it's seen as something normal, in all of society too." "Before, if something happened in the street you would get involved to help, but nowadays there's no conscience to help when you really think that what someone's doing is wrong…" (Parent 1, group 2)
"There have always been marginalized people and others who tend to marginalize them, and particularly among the boys there always had to be a cocky one in class, and he would be outside [school] too." (Parent 4, group 1)

Table 2.
Consequences in educational centers and other contexts.

	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Total (%)
Consequences in educational centers			
Fear of the abuser	24.0	36.1	29.9
Mimic of the abuser's attitude	16.8	20.7	18.7
The students that watch do not act	17.9	21.9	19.8
Toughening of disciplinary measurements	14.5	12.4	13.5
Does not know/Does not answer	26.8	8.5	18.1
Consequences in other contexts			
Abusers as social models	5.3	8.9	7.2
The abuser harasses other people	32.4	51.5	41.7
Fear outside the center	30.2	34.9	32.5
Does not know/Does not answer	28.5	8.3	18.7

Differences between boys and girls in perception of the consequences in and outside the school

Analysis of the relationship between gender and the perception of the consequences of bullying in the school proved to be significant (χ^2_4=21.410, p<.000; V=.248). In addition, the corrected standardized residual analysis shows that the girls tend to think that one of the consequences is fear of the aggressor (r_{ij}^A=2.5). On the other hand, the boys do not usually answer the question (r_{ij}^A=4.3) in comparison with the girls.
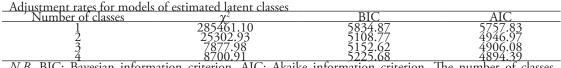
Likewise, analysis of the relationship between gender and the response to the question on the consequences in other social contexts also proved to be significant (χ^2_3=28.779, p<.000; V=.288). It is observed that girls tend to think that the consequences of bullying in other types of social contexts are linked to the aggressor bullying other people in the future (r_{ij}^A=3.6). Meanwhile, the boys significantly tend not to answer the question (r_{ij}^A=4.8).

Establishment of profiles on the consequences of bullying

The fourth and final objective, that is, to study whether there are differential profiles in perception of the consequences of bullying, led us to apply a latent class analysis (LCA).

The LCA was first carried out testing the model with a single class, and then more classes were added, up to a total of four. Table 3 includes information on the adjustment rates for each of the four models constructed.

Table 3.
Adjustment rates for models of estimated latent classes

Number of classes	χ^2	BIC	AIC
1	285461.10	5834.87	5757.83
2	25302.93	5108.77	4946.97
3	7877.98	5152.62	4906.08
4	8700.91	5225.68	4894.39

N.B. BIC: Bayesian information criterion. AIC: Akaike information criterion. The number of classes indicates the number of different profiles tested, for example, the 2 would indicate that there are two student profiles that differ in the pattern of responses given in the instrument.

The table shows that the rates decrease as the number of classes increases until reaching the best rate of adjustment on reaching three latent classes, with this being particularly reinforced by the reduction of the χ^2 index.

In order to interpret the results underlying the latent class model, it is important to consider not only the statistical indicators, but also the substantive significance of each of the classes. The conditioned probabilities of the model of three latent classes are shown in Table 4.

Table 4.
Probabilities associated to each class.

Probability of each class	1st Class: Abuser (Probability=.075)	2nd class: Non-agressor student (Probability=.871)	3rd class: Skip answers (Probability=.129)
Consequences in victims			
Irreversible psychological damage	.78	.35	.00
They become stronger	.07	.15	.00
They become suspicious	.03	.19	.00
They become withdrawn	.12	.30	.00
Does not know/Does not answer	.00	.01	1
Consequences in the abuser			
Their bad reputation impacts their future	.03	.42	.00
A worse abuser harasses them	.20	.16	.00
They are feared	.13	.39	.00
Does not know/Does not answer	.63	.03	1
Consequences in the victim's family			
They protect more their children	.09	.38	.00
Anger towards the institution	.09	.26	.00
Psychological damage	.73	.32	.00
Does not know/Does not answer	.10	.05	1
Consequences in the abusers family			
Bad reputation	.75	.32	.00
Face the consequences	.00	.51	.00
Psychological damage	.00	.15	.00
Does not know/Does not answer	.25	.02	1
Consequences in the center			
Fear of the abuser	.00	.36	.00
Bad environment	.06	.22	.00
Low assistance to the center	.00	.24	.00
Excesive control in the centers	.00	.16	.00
Does not know/Does not answer	.94	.02	1
Consequences in society			
Less culture	.00	.09	.00
Fear outside the center	.00	.39	.00
Tendency to future aggressions	.07	.50	.00
Does not know/Does not answer	.93	.03	1

Examining the table of probabilities, it can be observed that class 1 includes 7.5% of the students. This category may be classified as aggressors. The profile allows us to conclude that the students classified as aggressors tend to perceive that the victims suffer psychological damage to a greater extent and may also think that they become antisocial. With regard to the consequences for the aggressor, they tend not to respond. In some cases they may be afraid of a worse bully arriving and doing the same to them. They also tend to think that the families of the victims suffer too and, like the victims, suffer psychological damage, and that in the families of the aggressors they earn a bad reputation. On the other hand, they tend not to respond regarding the perception of consequences of bullying in the school.

Class 2 includes 87.1% of the students and can be classified as students who do not carry out bullying. These students tend to think that the victims suffer a series of psychological consequences and that they can be antisocial, although they also think that they can become stronger and/or more suspicious. The majority think that the aggressor will have a bad reputation that will affect them in the future, but they are also afraid of him or her. They believe that the families of the victims tend to protect their children and also suffer psychological damage like the victims themselves, although they may also show anger towards the school. They believe that the families of the aggressors tend to pay the consequences of the behavior of the bully. These students also think that they are scared of the aggressors in school, that this can create a poor atmosphere, and that they may not want to go to the school. On the other hand, they assume that in the future these aggressors could harm others and, in some cases, they are scared of them outside the school.

Finally, class 3 includes 12.9% of the sample. The characteristic of this profile is that they tend not to answer the questionnaire.

Discussion

The objectives of this study were to find out the consequences of bullying in schools and in other social contexts, to determine whether the gender variable has an influence on greater or lesser awareness of the harm caused by bullying and, finally, to analyze whether there are differential profiles in the perception of the consequences of bullying. In order to do this, we analyzed the perception of the consequences of school bullying among the students of La Rioja using a quantitative and qualitative methodology.

With regards to the first objective, the results obtained allow us to verify that, according to the students surveyed and in general, the first consequence of school bullying they perceive is that everyone is afraid of the aggressor in the school. This result is consistent with Glew et al. (2000) and Hazler et al. (1992), since the participants in their studies conclude that they feel fear and avoid certain places to avoid encountering the student who bullies them. This could also be related to the enhancement of certain inhibitory behaviors in bullying situations (Reijntjes et al., 2010) and indirectly with the development of school phobia (Hernández Prados & Solano Fernández, 2007).

Students are also concerned that some victims abandon their studies or become rebellious, with this result complementing the findings of Carney and Merrell (2001) and Eriksen et al. (2014), which show that bullying situations reduce the academic performance of both the bully and the victim. In addition, Hernández Prados and Solano Fernández (2007) underline that bullying situations are also associated with school absenteeism and, together with poor performance, these are predictors of academic failure.

Meanwhile, the teachers are concerned about the bad reputation of the school, the poor environment within the school, having to increase their work and neglecting other needs, and the fact that observers can be passive and remain silent (Gómez Nashiki, 2014; Ball, 1989). This concern about passivity and silence is that they may become a barrier to seeking help (Boulton, Boulton, Down, Sanders, & Craddock, 2017). Parents and teachers share the opinion that any act of bullying in a school creates a poor external image. This negative image of a school is a consequence associated with the distress that bullying generates (Cerezo, 2006) and the extension of violent conducts outside the classroom (Oñate & Piñuel, 2005).

Regarding the perception of the consequences of bullying in other social contexts, the results of the present study show that the main consequence of bullying outside schools is that the aggressor may continue to harass others in the future. Parents and teachers also claim that harassment generates social inequality and disrespect outside school. The students think that, because of bullying, in society there is less culture, more fear, and increased levels of suffering among the victims. That is, the participants of this study agree that the consequences of bullying extend to other contexts, leading to the intensification of socially undesirable behaviors (Bond et al., 2001; Farrington, 2005; Hunter et al., 2004; Sourander et al., 2011) and the extension of bullying to other contexts and life stages of a person (Hernández Prados & Solano Fernández, 2007).

Analysis of the differences between boys and girls shows that girls have a clearer idea than boys about the harmful consequences of bullying. This could be associated with the differences in the type of bullying carried out, given that girls tend to carry out bullying with social consequences (Zych et al., 2017), which can lead to the intensification of internalizing behaviors, such as shyness, anxiety, or inhibition Reijntjes et al., 2010), thus increasing the incidence of psychosomatic problems (Gini & Pozzoli, 2008). Girls also perceive as more relevant consequences the fear of the aggressor and the concern that this person may harass other people in the future, that is, they indicate that the consequences are not focused solely on the here and now, but that there is some concern that the situation may spread to other contexts in the long term (Oñate & Piñuel, 2005).

With regards to the final objective, establishment of latent classes allows us to identify 87.1% of students as non-aggressors, 7.5% of students do carry out bullying in some form, and 12.9% of students have a tendency not to respond to the questions. The percentage of students who are not aggressors is similar to those reported by Ortega et al. (2012) and Díaz-Aguado, Martínez Arias, and Babarro (2013).

The results of this study complement the findings of Waasdorp and Brasdshaw (2001), indicating that this different profile may be associated with a more localized perception of the consequences of bullying on the part of aggressor students, since they perceive that the largest consequence is related to the psychological damage done to the victim, and that, in the case of students who are not bullies, there is a broader view of the repercussions associated with internalizing behaviors, such as social isolation, parental overprotection, and fear of the aggressor both in and outside the school.

The third group tends not to answer the questions, not even identifying themselves as an aggressor student or as a student who does not bully others. This is possibly because they are not fully identified by any of the categories, with the reasons perhaps being due to fear of responding, passivity (Boulton et al., 2017), or unawareness of the consequences of bullying.

As the results show, bullying creates long-term suffering for victims and even their families and, generally, study participants who have not carried out bullying agree that the greatest consequence of bullying outside the school is that the violence is extended to other contexts, creating social inequality, lack of respect, and the fact that aggressors harass others or that observers and victims retain their role in other social contexts (Hernández Prados & Solano Fernández, 2007), while students who do bully others perceive the irreversible psychological damage in the victim as the main consequence (Bond et al., 2001; Torres Castro, 2012).

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. Firstly, this research has an ex post facto transversal design, which makes it impossible to see whether the perception of the consequences of the bullying varies as the student progresses through their education. On the other hand, the sample used is from the province of La Rioja, which means that generalizing the results to other environments must be done with due caution. The use of a self-report measure for quantitative study has an inherent probability of bias, such as social desirability. However, the results obtained from the questionnaire applied and the discussion groups have a high percentage of consistency.

Implications

This paper shows that the consequences of bullying go beyond the physical and psychological damage suffered by the victims. This perception of the repercussions extends to the families, the school, and other contexts. The results demonstrate the need for prevention and intervention programs for school bullying to address not only the immediate context of this situation, but extend beyond the educational focus. One measure proposed within schools to deal with these bullying situations is to further encourage group work in order to increase self-esteem and a positive sense of identity, thanks to continuous debate and negotiation of ideas between students (Ortega et al., 2008). Polo, León, and Gonzalo (2011) state that there is a direct relationship between the negative climate in coexistence and the absence of group work. Working with methodologies based on cooperative approach, students learn how to better resolve conflicts, while self-esteem, empathy, and social skills are increased (Hernández-Prados, 2007), and socio-emotional development and aggressive behavior is reduced.

Meanwhile, it is important to bear in mind that school bullying is not a harmless phenomenon that only affects children during infancy and adolescence. As we have already stated, it has effects beyond the school context and, in certain situations, can influence physical and mental health in adulthood (Lereya et al., 2015).

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