

Risk Profiles and Peer Violence in the Context of School and Leisure Time

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Though violence at school is by no means a new phenomenon, there has been growing social and scientific concern about this issue in recent years. The present study builds on prior analysis of the roles adolescents play in peer harassment, and the relationship between violence occurring at school and during free time. A representative sample of students between the ages of 14 and 18 was selected in the Community of Madrid ($N = 1622$) through random cluster sampling (school was the unit of analysis). Participants completed the C.E.V.E.O. questionnaire, which presents fifteen situations involving peer violence. The results reveal a relationship between violent situations occurring at school and during free time, and between the roles of aggressor and victim during free time. A profile analysis yielded three different categories: the “minimal violence exposure” type (1126 adolescents), the “psychological violence exposure” type (413 adolescents), and the “high risk of violence” type (83 adolescents). Judging from these results, we posit that interventions must be designed which tailor to each group and their respective risk situations.

Keywords: school violence, leisure time, peer harassment, adolescents.

A pesar de que la violencia escolar no es un fenómeno nuevo, en los últimos años ha aumentado la preocupación social y científica en torno a este problema. El presente estudio avanza en el análisis de los roles que las/os adolescentes desempeñan en relación a la violencia entre iguales, y la relación entre la violencia que se produce en la escuela y en el ocio. Se seleccionó una muestra representativa de estudiantes, de entre 14 y 18 años, de la Comunidad de Madrid ($N = 1.622$), a través de un muestreo aleatorio de conglomerados (el centro educativo como unidad de análisis). Los participantes rellenaron el cuestionario C.E.V.E.O., que evalúa quince situaciones de violencia entre iguales. Los resultados revelan una relación entre las situaciones de violencia en la escuela y en el ocio, y entre los roles de agresor y víctima en el tiempo de ocio. El análisis de tipologías permitió obtener tres perfiles: “mínima exposición a la violencia” (1.126 adolescentes), “exposición a violencia psicológica” (413 adolescentes), “adolescentes en situación de alto riesgo de violencia” (83 adolescentes). A partir de estos resultados, se plantea la necesidad de diseñar intervenciones específicas para cada uno de los grupos en diferente situación de riesgo.

Palabras clave: violencia escolar, ocio, violencia entre iguales, adolescentes.

Violence among adolescents is by no means a new phenomenon, nor does it exclusively occur in our society. However, in recent years, it has generated a great deal of social concern. The types of situations in which young men and women most often engage in violence relate to the micro-systems in which they are immersed: Peer groups, family and school. First of all, the body of research has emphasized that during this developmental stage, arguments between friends, classmates and co-workers are the most common situations to result in violence (Elzo, 2000). Furthermore, of the three micro-systems in which the adolescent is immersed, research in recent years has addressed the school context the most. Particular attention has been paid to the issue of classroom violence (otherwise known as “bullying”), which refers to a pattern of abuse and harassment among peers at school (Olweus, 1998). This phenomenon has been widely studied in recent decades and is characterized by a variety of repeated, continuous behaviors (insults, physical aggression, etc.) and a hierarchy of dominance and submission between victim and aggressor that plays a decisive role (Díaz-Aguado, 2005; Ortega, 2000). The present study subscribes to the broader view of violence proposed by the *Center for the Prevention of School Violence* (2000), which includes, in addition to drugs, weapons, disruptions and disorder, any behavior that violates the school’s educational aims, or its environment of respect, or that endangers the school’s attempts to create a space free of aggression against individuals and their property. This broader view considers bullying a sub-type of school violence, but also recognizes that if it occurs regularly and without adequate intervention, it can become chronic.

Peer violence at school has a large incidence world-wide, especially in developed countries (Craig & Harel, 2004). Early studies of this phenomenon by Olweus (1978) revealed that even at that time, peer violence in schools occurred with greater frequency than expected. Those data were corroborated by researchers in other countries including the U.K. (Smith & Sharp, 1994; Smith, Tamblamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004), Italy (Genta, Menesini, Fonzi, Costabile, & Smith, 1996), Portugal (Pereira et al., 1996), etc. In Spain, Vieira, Fernández and Quevedo (1989) conducted the first study of this phenomenon, sparking tremendous interest in the study of peer violence and harassment at school, and leading the way for a prolific line of research with varied emphasis: (a) *research on this phenomenon’s incidence at the national level* (see, for example, Defensor del Pueblo, 2000 & 2006), and in *different autonomous communities* (Díaz-Aguado, Martínez Arias, & Martín Seoane, 2004; DP-CAPV, Ararteko, 2006; Garaigordobil & Oñederra, 2009; Martín Seoane, 2003; Pulido, 2006; Sindic de Greuges, 2007); (b) *studies focused on developing valid, effective instruments to measure this phenomenon* (Álvarez, Álvarez, González-Castro, Núñez, & González-Pienda, 2006; Lucas, Pulido, Martín Seoane, & Calderón, 2008); (c) *studies that advance our understanding of the phenomenon* (Martín Seoane, Pulido,

& Díaz-Aguado, 2009; Martín Seoane, Pulido, & Vera, 2008; Pulido, Martín Seoane, & Díaz-Aguado, 2010; Pulido, Martín Seoane, & Lucas, 2010); d) *research aimed at developing and testing experimental interventions to prevent this phenomenon*, conducted in several autonomous communities including Sevilla (Ortega, 2000) and Madrid (Díaz-Aguado, Martínez Arias, & Martín Seoane, 2004).

Despite the fact that numerous studies have focused on the school violence situation, very few have analyzed the relationship between this phenomenon and violence occurring in other contexts. Conversely, in Germany, studies have taken a more global view, whereby school violence is considered within the broader framework of juvenile violence, which includes violence in the family, at sporting events, and politically-motivated violence (Funk, 1997). This broad perspective brings additional aspects to intervention. Since the problem is considered globally, the intervention must be as well: providing youth employment opportunities, or youth and family education (Del Campo, 2007) instead of focusing solely on what takes place at school.

In Spain, as other authors have pointed out previously (Lila, Herrero, & Gracia, 2008), the topic of assessing adolescent violence in a variety of contexts has received relatively little attention: while in other countries, studies of this type have been on the rise, in Spain, we continue to know very little about the incidence of repeated victimization among Spanish adolescents. A study conducted by the authors mentioned above (Lila et al., 2008) used a sample of 1908 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 years old, and found a correlation between violence occurring in familial, school and recreational contexts. Another study of note on this subject, whose sample included 2915 Swedish adolescents 14-15 years of age, observed a close relationship between experiencing violent situations at school and on the street: an association was found between being the aggressor at school and engaging in violent behavior and carrying weapons during free time, and also with being the victim of violence on the street (Andershed, Kerr, & Stattin, 2001). These results suggest that in many cases, school violence is one aspect of more general violence, or a pattern of aggressive behavior. That being said, directing our efforts toward specific individuals who engage in violent behavior at school should decrease adolescents’ violent behavior within the community at large.

Though Spanish studies that evaluate violence by comparing it across different contexts are few and far between, as mentioned above, some have noted the importance of this contextualization. Studies by authors such as Ortega and Mora-Merchán (2008), who have written extensively about harassment at school, have used sociometric measures to assess the connection between adolescents implicated in episodes of peer abuse, and have obtained data to support the importance of these factors in maintaining the dominance-submission hierarchy (to which they attribute the central nucleus of the dynamic of bullying).

In this way, if an adolescent's sociometric status within the group relates to participating in violent situations, and that status changes as a function of context, it follows that participation in violent situations must also change according to context. Recently, several Spanish studies have reported results in the same vein (Fernández-Enguita, Gaete, & Terrén, 2008; Martín & Muñoz de Bustillo, 2009; Martín, Muñoz, Rodríguez, & Pérez, 2008). Thus, bearing in mind the relationship between peer violence and status within the group, it is to be expected that participation in violent situations also changes according to context.

The present research came about through analyzing previous studies of the importance of school violence situations, and because of the need to compare this with violence occurring in the context of free time. The present study has the general objective to evaluate the incidence of the peer abuse phenomenon, in both educational and leisure contexts. So that our results may be generalizable, this research was conducted using a representative sample of students educated in the Community of Madrid. This general objective breaks down into the following, more specific objectives:

1. Determine the incidence of the different modes of peer violence (physical, verbal or by exclusion) from the point of view of victims, aggressors and witnesses, in the contexts of school and free time.
2. Analyze the relationship between different roles in the violence: victim, aggressor and observer.
3. Assess the relationship between the two contexts being evaluated: school and free time.
4. Identify risk profiles that enable us to distinguish among the different manifestations of peer violence in terms of their frequency and severity.

Method

Participants

In keeping with the objective to conduct a study with a representative sample of a student population over 14 years of age from schools in the Community of Madrid, participants were selected using a *random cluster sampling design*. The clusters were stratified according to the school's status (public or private-charter) and were proportionally sized. They were created using school as the first sampling unit. In the second stage, a classroom was randomly selected for each grade (to eliminate any potential school effect, only one group per grade was used at each of the schools selected). The following steps were taken to determine each sample's extraction. First a *Secondary sample* was chosen, which included students in their 3rd and 4th years of Educación Secundaria Obligatoria–ESO, in Spanish short version - (14 to 16 years old), or Intermediate-level Vocational Training (option to pursue vocational studies after completing ESO), or *Bachillerato* (option to complete

the final two years of high school after ESO, for college-bound students). Next, these data were balanced by a *Basic Vocational Training* sample (choice for students who have not achieved a basic level of education, nowadays called Initial Professional Qualification Programs- PCPI).

The size of each sample was computed according to the population and had a maximum error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%. After eliminating defective questionnaires, the total number of participants was 1,622 adolescents, all pursuing their studies in their 3rd and 4th years of ESO, *Bachillerato*, Intermediate-level Vocational Training or Basic Vocational Training at schools within the Comunidad de Madrid.

The final composition of each of the two samples is described below in greater detail. For the Secondary sample, a total of 1245 people were surveyed from 15 different schools, of which 59.6% were in their 3rd and 4th years of ESO, 32.8% were in *Bachillerato*, and 7.6% were pursuing Intermediate-level Vocational Training. The distribution in terms of gender was 49.4% male and 50.6% female. The girls were an average of 15.92 years old with a standard deviation of 1.54 and a range of 14 to 22 years old. The numbers were quite similar for the boys, whose average age was 15.88 years old with a standard deviation of 1.51 and a range of 14 to 22 years. Meanwhile, the Basic Vocational Training sample was comprised of a total of 390 adolescents from 37 different schools: 38.5% of participants were female and 61.5% were male. The girls' average age was 16.70 with a standard deviation of .87, while the boys' average age was 16.65 years with a standard deviation of .77. Both the boys and girls ranged in age from 16 to 20 years old. Finally, note that for both samples, the proportion of public to private-charter schools relative to the source population was maintained. Of the secondary schools sample, 60% were public and 40% were private-charter. Meanwhile, in the Basic Vocational Training sample, the proportion was 65% public, 25% private-charter and 10% were participating in a Professional Training and Insertion program called UFIL.

Variables and Measurement Instruments

The C.E.V.E.O. questionnaire. *The Assessing Violence at School and during Free Time Questionnaire*, Díaz-Aguado et al., 2004) evaluates instances of peer violence occurring in the contexts of school and free time. Adolescents are asked about the frequency with which they fall victim to violence, act as aggressors, or experience it as observers, and about a variety of fifteen violent behaviors; we employed a similar methodology as in other studies of peer violence at school (such as studies by Defensor del Pueblo, 2000 & 2006). Adolescents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they have experienced, carried out or witnessed said situations on a 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*) Likert scale. The Results section will present a factor analysis of the 15 items, for the role of victim as well as aggressor.

Procedure

Letters were sent to the selected schools, soliciting their collaboration in this study. After receiving an affirmative response, an appointment was made with each school's principal to provide them with additional details about the research objective and the questionnaire that would be administered to students, and to schedule the dates of evaluation for each school and grade. The instrument was applied collectively after first explaining the instructions to the adolescents and if questions arose, providing them with any additional information necessary. That being said, if questions came up over the course of the session, explanations were given on an individual basis. Particular emphasis was placed on conveying the confidentiality of their answers such that no one from the school would have access to their personal data. On the other hand, we impressed upon them that this activity was entirely voluntary and that they could stop at any time if they wished.

Results

First, a factor analysis (Promax rotation) was performed for the fifteen situations being evaluated; they were distributed in the following way in the school context: three factors for the role of victim (which together explained 63.11% of total variance) and two factors for the role of aggressor and observer (which explained 53.87% and 64.53% of total variance, respectively). This yielded the following three factors for the victimization situation: (a) *Exclusion* was comprised of the situations "they ignore me," "they say mean things about me," "they reject me," "they don't let me participate" and "they insult me," and its items showed high internal consistency; we obtained an alpha of .82 (CI 95%: .81 – .84) and discriminant indices (the subscale's corrected item-total correlation) ranging from .709 to .837; (b) *Moderate Victimization* included the items "they steal things from me," "they hide my things," "they hit me," "they break my things," "they call me offensive or ridiculous names" and "they use threats to scare me," and yielded an alpha coefficient of .8 (CI 95%: .78 – .81), and discriminant indices between .598 and .785; and (c) *Extreme Victimization* refers to the most severe situations such as "using threats, they make me do things I don't want to do," "they intimidate me with sexual remarks and insults", "using threats, they force me into sexual situations" and "they threaten me with weapons," and was found to have an alpha coefficient of .86 (CI 95%: .85 – .88); each item yielded high discriminant coefficients ranging from .746 to .901. Finally, note that the correlations between these three factors measured between .311 and .528.

In order to determine the dimensionality of the aggressor's behaviors, the same procedure was followed as described above, which indicated that two factors should

be extracted: (a) *Extreme Aggression* was comprised of the situations "using threats to make them do things they don't want to do," "using threats to force them into sexual situations or behaviors," "stealing their things," "threatening them with weapons," "breaking their things," "intimidating them with sexual remarks or insults," "hitting them," "making threats in order to scare them" and "hiding their things" ($\alpha = .85$, CI 95%: .83 – .86, and discriminant indices ranging from .594 to .794); (b) *Exclusion and Moderate Aggression* included the situations "rejecting them," "saying mean things about them," "insulting them," "calling them offensive or ridiculous names," "ignoring them" and "not letting them participate" ($\alpha = .85$, CI 95%: .84 – .86, and discriminant indices ranging from .707 to .813). The correlation between the two factors was .496. As for the dimensionality of the observer role, it exhibited the same pattern as the aggressor and the same two factors were extracted: (a) *Observer of Exclusion and Moderate Aggression* had an alpha coefficient of .91, CI 95%: .91 – .92, and discriminant indices between .703 and .882; and (b) *Observer of Extreme Aggression* exhibited an alpha coefficient of .89 (CI 95%: .88 – .90) and discriminant indices ranging from .714 to .813. As above, the correlation between factors was rather strong (.536).

Regarding the context of free time, the same procedure was used to elucidate the scale's dimensionality (factor analysis with Promax rotation) and the same distribution was observed as in the school context: three factors for the victim role (that together explained 59.89% of total variance) and two factors for the aggressor role (that explained 62.77% of total variance). The role of victim produced the following indices: (a) *Exclusion during Free Time* had an alpha of .82 (CI 95%: .81 – .83) and discriminant indices ranging from .769 to .661; (b) *Moderate Victimization during Free Time* had an alpha coefficient of .78 (CI 95%: .76 – .80) and values for discriminant indices between .828 and .635; and (c) *Extreme Victimization during Free Time* had an alpha coefficient of .78 (CI 95%: .76 – .8), and each item revealed a high discriminant coefficient, ranging from .875 to .626. Once again, we calculated the correlations between the three factors retained: between .389 and .558. As in the school context, a two-factor solution was found for the role of aggressor during free time: (a) *Extreme Aggression during Free Time*, alpha coefficient of .9, CI 95%: .89 – .91, and discriminant indices ranging from .786 to .857); (b) *Exclusion and Moderate Aggression during Free Time* had an alpha coefficient of .88, CI 95%: .87 – .89 and discriminant indices between .613 and .812. There was a correlation between the two factors of .48.

Promax rotation was employed because, in theory, the resulting dimensions are expected to be correlated. This oblique rotation enables one to obtain correlated factors. In fact, the correlations between the three factors (for victims as well as aggressors) reached moderate and high levels (between .311 and .528). According to Cohen (1988),

moderate correlations fall between .3 – .05 and high correlations between .5 – 1.0.

The percentages that appear below express the number of students that report having experienced these situations at least once. Though subtle, it is important to make this distinction because we are not only talking about bullying situations, but all peer violence, even when sporadic or isolated events (which can become chronic in the future without appropriate intervention).

1) The incidence of different modes of peer violence in the context of school and free time

The most common victimization situations seem to be verbal rejection (55% “they say mean things about me”) and passive exclusion (39% “they ignore me”), followed by verbal abuse (36% “they insult me”) and violence exacted against one’s property (29% “they hide my things”). Lower percentages were found (between 9% and 3%, depending on the situation participants were asked about) for the most severe forms of violence (such as sexual abuse and threatening with weapons). The number

of aggressors reported surpassed the number of victims, especially regarding exclusion and the less severe forms of violence (24% more aggressors who “ignore,” 31% more who “reject”, and 27% more who “insult”). The difference between these two roles was less marked in the less severe forms of violence, then increased in the case of stealing (where the number of people that identified themselves as victims, 8%, was greater than the number who identified themselves as aggressors, only 5%). Finally, with respect to the observers’ percentages, we found they scored similarly to the aggressors, and sometimes even higher (“making them do things” 11%, “intimidating them with sexual remarks or insults” 20%, “using threats to force them into sexual conduct or situations” 8%, and “threatening them with weapons” reached a whopping 10% of student respondents). The following figure illustrates these different roles.

Victimization situations occurring during free time showed a similar pattern to the one observed in the context of school. Here, too, the most common are verbal rejection (21% “they say mean things about me”) and passive exclusion (16% “they ignore me”), followed by verbal abuse

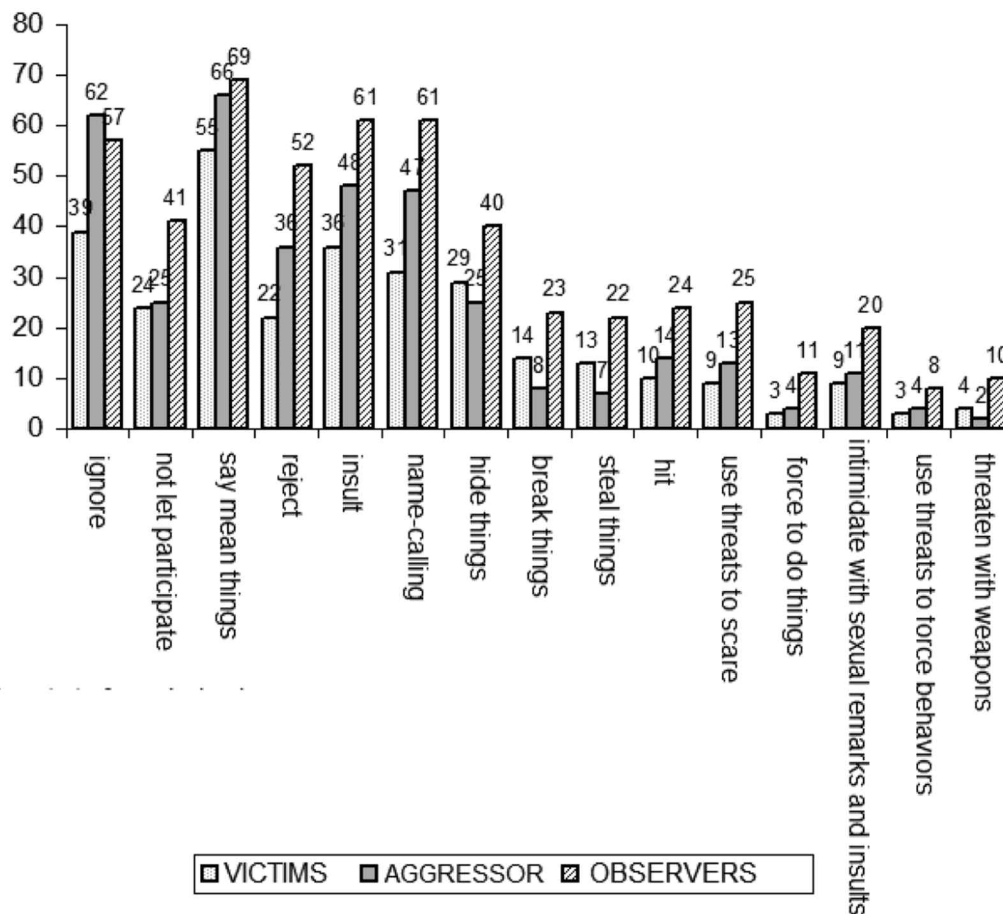


Figure 1. Comparison of the Three Roles Evaluated in School Violence Situations.

(14% “they insult me,” 15% “they call me names”) and violence against one’s property (7% “they steal my things”). Once again, lower percentages were reported for the most severe forms of violence (such as being harassed into sexual situations and being threatened with weapons, 4% and 6%, respectively). Regarding the number of reported aggressors, the same pattern was exhibited here as in the school context; the number of aggressors exceeded the number of victims, especially when it came to exclusion and the less severe kinds of violence (43% say mean things about other people, 29% ignore, 32% insult, and 32% call people names).

Comparing the percentages obtained in the two contexts (school and free time), it is apparent that lower percentages were reported in the context of free time, especially in exclusion and verbal abuse situations, where in some cases the decrease was as much as 34% (like on the item “they say mean things about me”). Only in the most severe cases, such as forcing people into sexual situations and carrying weapons, did the percentages increase instead of decreasing (during free time, these increased 1 and 2%, respectively). The same results were observed when comparing the aggressor role across the two contexts, but for them, there was also a 2% increase on the item “making people do things.”

Similarly, when analyzing the final means according to factor (the groupings yielded through factor analysis), we discovered differences as a function of role in both contexts. In the school context, we found that victims exhibited higher means on the exclusion factor and the moderately severe -

or verbal abuse- factor ($M = 6.57$ and 7.77 , respectively), as opposed to extreme violence –or physical violence- factor ($M = 4.32$). In the role of aggressor, on the other hand, the two factors analyzed had very similar scores: aggressors of exclusion or moderate violence – or verbal abuse- ($M = 10.9$), and aggressors of extreme violence –or physical violence- ($M = 10.58$). Situations occurring during free time exhibited a very similar pattern: victims reported higher scores of exclusion and verbal abuse than of physical aggression, whereas aggressors reported similar scores on the two factors.

2) Correlations between roles: victim, aggressor, and observer

The table below displays correlations between the different roles we evaluated (victim, aggressor and observer) in the school context. The most striking of these results is the correlation between the roles of aggressor and observer (the lowest r was $.256$ and the highest was $.489$).

Also, our comparison of victimization and aggression situations during free time revealed a correlation between being the aggressor in extremely violent situations, and being the victim (in all three of the factors assessed), as conveyed by the following table.

These results suggest a correlation between participating as the aggressor during free time, and being the victim of violent situations during free time; the highest correlations were associated with exacting extreme violence ($.265$, $.298$ and $.442$).

Table 1

The Relationship between Being the Victim and/or Aggressor, and the Role of Observer in the School Context

	Observers	
	Exclusion and moderate severity	Extreme Severity
Victim		
Moderate Severity	.056	.172**
Exclusion	.112**	.107**
Extreme Severity	.112**	.169**
Aggressor		
Exclusion and Moderate Severity	.256**	.489**
Extreme Severity	.425**	.378**

** The correlation is significant to the .01 level (bilateral).

Table 2

The Relationship between Situations Experienced as Victim or Aggressor during Free Time

Aggressor	Victim		
	Extreme Severity	Exclusion	Moderate Severity
Exclusion and Moderate Severity	.198**	.153*	.142**
Extreme Severity	.265**	.298**	.442**

** The correlation is significant to the .01 level (bilateral).

* The correlation is significant to the .05 level (bilateral).

3) *Correlations between the two contexts assessed: school and leisure*

The correlations observed between the two contexts evaluated (classroom and free time) are presented in the tables below.

These results suggest that participating as the aggressor at school correlates with participating as the aggressor during free time; the highest correlations found were .499 and .569. We also confirmed a correlation between being the victim in the two contexts evaluated. Particularly noteworthy was the correlation between being the victim of exclusion during free time and being the victim of extremely severe aggression at school (.341). Also, even though the correlations between being the victim of extreme violence at school and being the victim of moderate and extreme violence during free time fell below the established limits used in this type of research, they followed the same direction as the other results.

4) *Classifying risk of violence*

Toward the aim of analyzing in greater depth different situations involving violence, and in order to distinguish between isolated violence and more frequent or severe situations, we performed a risk profile analysis. We opted for a cluster analysis using the K-means procedure to create a classification. Separate analyses were performed for the various situations and roles evaluated: school and free time / victims and aggressors. Various solutions were examined, but in every case we chose the three-group, or three-cluster, solution because it was the most informative. Using the factor scores for each situation and condition to reduce the number of variables, and to achieve greater clarity, a combined cluster analysis was then performed: the victimization at school and during free time factors, and the aggression at school and during free time factors. Ultimately, the three-group solution presented in Table 5 seemed most adequate.

Table 3

Correlations between Violent Situations at School and in Free Time, as a Function of the Role of Victim

Victim School	Victim Free Time		
	Exclusion	Moderate Severity	Extreme Severity
Extreme Severity	.341**	.163**	.138**
Exclusion	.245**	.231**	.214**
Moderate Severity	.230**	.223**	.298**

** The correlation is significant to the .01 level (bilateral).

* The correlation is significant to the .05 level (bilateral).

Table 4

Correlations between Violence at School and during Free Time, as a Function of the Role of Aggressor

Aggressor School	Aggressor Free Time	
	Exclusion and Moderate Severity	Extreme Severity
Extreme Severity	.499**	.377**
Exclusion and Moderate Severity	.354**	.569**

** The correlation is significant to the .01 level (bilateral).

Table 5

Means of the Clusters Obtained through Combining Situations

	Cluster		
	1	2	3
Victim exclusion school	7.35	8.53	9.39
Victim moderate severity school	7.26	8.77	9.63
Victim extreme severity school	4.17	4.56	5.20
Aggressor exclusion and moderate severity school	8.46	15.74	20.73
Aggressor extreme severity school	9.41	11.63	21.12
Victim exclusion free time	6.74	7.94	9.92
Victim moderate severity free time	4.16	4.44	5.73
Victim extreme severity free time	4.10	4.24	5.88
Aggressor exclusion and moderate severity free time	7.14	11.60	19.46
Aggressor extreme severity free time	8.16	8.94	18.07

The three groups resulting from this global combination of factors are characterized by:

- Group 1, with *minimal exposure to violence*, was comprised of 1126 subjects that have not participated as aggressors or suffered as victims any situation about which they were asked.
- Group 2, with an *elevated tendency to exclude and reject others*, consisted of 413 adolescents who were neither the victims of exclusion nor aggression by their peers, but who exhibited to great extent exclusion and rejection behavior toward others.
- Group 3 had *high exposure to violence* and included 83 adolescents who have generalized contact with violence in both contexts (school and free time), in either or both of the roles assessed. The high scores they reported on aggression turned out to be especially relevant.

Figure 2 graphically depicts the aforementioned solution. 69.4% of adolescents would fit the first profile, having no experience with peer violence at school or in their leisure time; 25.46% would fall into the second category, participating in psychologically violent situations; and finally, 5.1% would be classified as at-risk, frequently participating as the aggressor both at school and during free time, in both forms of aggression: exclusion and verbal abuse, and physical violence.

Conclusions

As previous studies of school violence in Spain have found (Defensor del Pueblo, 2000, 2006; Díaz-Aguado, et al., 2004; Martín et al., 2008), the most frequent situations to arise are exclusion, verbal abuse and violence against property. Though lower scores were reported, the percent of adolescents who have experienced severe forms of violence (such as sexual abuse and threats with weapons) is highly worrisome. This pattern, which occurred in all three roles we evaluated, may reflect an escalation of violence (beginning with name-calling and gradually progressing into more serious acts such as isolation, rejection and even physical aggression). This finding, together with the collective nature of these behaviors, tends to be associated with the victim's inability to escape their situation. This is exacerbated by the complacency of observers who silently bear witness but do not intervene, leaving the victims helpless and giving the aggressors what they tend to interpret as implicit support (Díaz-Aguado et al., 2004). These findings suggest it makes little sense to treat the issue of violence on an individual basis, in terms of the aggressor's and the victim's profiles. Instead, the problem must be explained from an interactive point of view, bearing in mind the characteristics of the school context and particularly other classmates' behavior (Cowie, 2000; Pellegrini, Bartini,

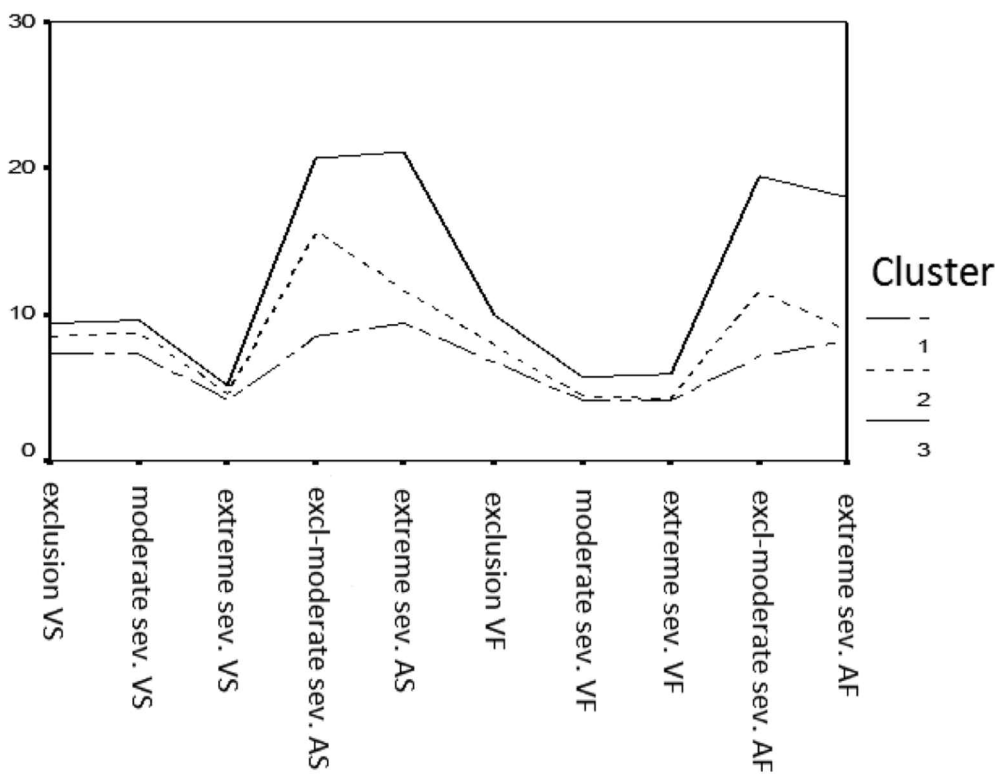


Figure 2. Means for the Three Clusters Obtained from Combining Roles and Contexts: Victim School (VS), Aggressor School (AS), Victim Free Time (VF) and Aggressor Free Time (AF).

& Brooks, 1999; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, & Lagerspetz, 1999).

With regards to our analysis of the roles in peer violence (victim, aggressor and observer), the results reveal that in less dire situations, the number of observers far exceeds the number of victims, but is similar to the number of aggressors; however, in cases of more extreme, destructive behavior, the differences between these roles increase. This may indicate that these behaviors are not enacted in hiding, but rather out in the open in front of other classmates. This finding reflects the group dynamic of these aggressions, which are perpetrated against a single victim or group of victims, less numerous than the aggressors (Díaz-Aguado et al., 2004; Martín Seoane et al., 2008). This result clarifies how crucial observers are to detecting and preventing this phenomenon.

Regarding the relationships between the three roles, a close association was observed between engaging in violent situations in the context of school and participating as the aggressor on other occasions. This is one more indication that these situations are collective; students that observe one time may on other occasions perpetrate the aggression themselves (Díaz-Aguado et al., 2004). In light of this, we may conclude that the presence of violence in adolescents' lives is far-reaching, even becoming an everyday or mundane occurrence. Also note the scarce relationship between the roles of victim and observer. This would seem to suggest that victims are seldom present when similar things happen to their classmates.

Furthermore, these results indicate a relationship between violence at school and during free time, which supports the findings of at least one previous study (Díaz-Aguado et al., 2004). This finding signals the need to work closely with students who lack conflict-resolution skills who are frequently implicated in this type of situation, not only in the context of school but during their leisure time.

While detailing this study's theoretical background, it was mentioned that evaluating adolescent violence across various contexts has scarcely been studied in Spain; this is therefore an important contribution the present research has made. Then again, other studies have indicated the importance of this contextualization, along the lines of what the present study found. Of the studies that have observed a relationship between sociometric status and contextualization, the work of Fernández-Enguita et al. (2008) stands out. Those authors explored patterns of integration between native and non-native students by analyzing the type of interactive networks enacted in the classroom during play and work situations. That study concluded, by means of a sociometric analysis of the groups, that there is greater equality and permeability during play compared to work situations. Those authors proposed the explanatory hypothesis that perhaps there is greater segregation while working because of academic pressure. In that vein, consider the following study by Martín and Muñoz de Bustillo (2009), who analyzed preference and rejection between peers (once again using sociometry),

taking into account both academic and recreational scenarios. By evaluating a sample of 777 elementary and secondary school students, they observed that preference and rejection are mediated by interpersonal contexts: while preference is emphasized in the academic context, rejection has a trans-contextual connotation. In light of their results, the authors also concluded that peer relationships are strongly mediated by the type of activity they engage in, and the meaning they attribute to that activity. Lastly, Martín, Muñoz, Rodríguez, and Pérez (2008) conducted a study in which they applied a sociometric questionnaire to compare a sample of 60 minors living in Residential Centers (RC) for wards of the state, and a normalized sample of 843 minors, to reveal differences according to context. The minors in RC, when doing their academic work, were significantly less often chosen and more often rejected than the other pupils; conversely, no significant differences were observed when rejection and selection took place in the sphere of leisure activities. Those authors concluded that relations between minors in RC and their classmates became more normal the less formal the environment was: they seemed to be more accepted by their peers when engaged in informal, open activities such as play, while problems arose in establishing relations when they took place in a more formal environment with an instructional bent, supervised by teachers. These studies' results, similar to those of the present study, attest to the importance of including the context variable in this type of evaluation.

The findings of the present study indicate that even though the majority of the adolescents assessed did not frequently participate in violence at school or in their free time, a number of them exhibited an elevated tendency to exclude and reject others (psychological violence). This result resembles the findings of other studies in that exclusion was the most frequent manifestation of peer violence (Defensor del Pueblo 2000, 2006; Díaz-Aguado et al., 2004; Martín Seoane et al., 2008). Engaging in this type of behavior may be associated with an escalation of violence: it begins with isolating and exclusionary behaviors and if there is no repercussion or negative consequence, it becomes normalized and later gives rise to more serious, violent situations (from verbal abuse to physical aggression or coercion to participate in certain situations, for example). Given that this scenario is characterized by continuous exposure to violence, this would be the case for the group of adolescents at particular risk for aggression.

This pattern of extreme behavior may be a reflection of the dominance-submission model posited by some authors (Ortega, 2000). From that perspective, situations that arise, such as trouble getting along, become rigid interactive frameworks that are difficult to defend against when lacking in maturity, as adolescents are. The cluster analysis performed as part of this study allows us a closer view of peer violence, which may promote the development of more effective interventions.

Furthermore, this broad perspective on the issue allows one to incorporate other aspects into intervention that until now have not been taken fully into account. To use a more global focus in examining the issue of peer violence, the intervention must also be broader, and not only focus on situations occurring at school. As other authors have posited previously (Del Campo, 2007), intervening in violent situations during adolescence necessitates actions such as promoting juvenile employment opportunities and juvenile and family education. Any intervention carried out solely in the context of school, that is not complemented by the spheres of family and leisure time, will be incomplete and will fail to grasp the complexity of this problem.

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