

Expressions of school violence in adolescence

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Abstract

Background: Research on school violence, which disserves the quality of the process of teaching and learning in schools, has increased in recent decades. The aims of this study were to identify the most prevalent types of school violence in Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE) according to the opinion of students, and to analyse differences in gender, school year, and the academic performance of the student informants. **Method:** The CUVE3-CSE questionnaire was applied to 4,943 CSE students (average age: 14.04; SD: 1.38) who are studying at 33 public and private schools. **Results:** Showed the predominance of classroom disruption and student-to-student verbal violence, as well as differences in the level of perceived violence according to the variables analysed (gender, school year and academic performance). **Conclusions:** The study underscores the wide-ranging typology of violence at schools, and its everyday occurrence in classrooms, which highlight the need for improving our understanding in order to enhance the efficacy of prevention and intervention programs.

Keywords: school violence, Compulsory Secondary Education, gender, academic performance.

Resumen

Manifestaciones de violencia escolar en la adolescencia. Antecedentes: en las últimas décadas se han incrementado las investigaciones sobre violencia escolar, la cual perjudica la calidad del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje en los centros educativos. Esta investigación tiene como objetivos identificar los tipos de violencia escolar más habituales en la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO) y analizar las diferencias por género, curso escolar y rendimiento académico del alumnado respecto a los tipos de violencia. **Método:** se aplicó el cuestionario CUVE3-ESO a 4.943 estudiantes (media de edad: 14,04; DT: 1,38) que cursan ESO en 33 centros públicos y concertados. **Resultados:** muestran un predominio de la disrupción en el aula y la violencia verbal entre el alumnado, así como diferencias en el nivel percibido de violencia en función de las variables analizadas (género, expediente académico y curso escolar). **Conclusiones:** el estudio deja entrever cómo la violencia en contextos escolares presenta una tipología amplia y variada, ejercida de forma cotidiana en las aulas, por lo cual se debe seguir profundizando en su conocimiento para acrecentar la eficacia de las medidas de prevención e intervención.

Palabras clave: violencia escolar, Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, género, expediente académico.

Currently, violence among youngsters is a top priority for the Spanish education system. Recent socioeconomic, cultural and educational innovations have had an impact on peaceful coexistence at schools. Schools are not only required to achieve the highest academic performance, but are also to ensure safe school environments. Nevertheless, conflict at school is increasing exponentially at younger ages (Moral, Suárez, Villareal, & Musitu, 2014; Pérez-Carbonell, Ramos-Santana, & Serrano, 2016).

Adolescence is characterized by intense change and transformation in all aspects of development: physical, psychological, and social (Moral, Suárez, & Musitu, 2012). The community becomes their most relevant scenario, and together with family and school they foster the psychosocial adjustment of the adolescent (Eisman et al., 2016; Herrera, Romera, Ortega, & Gómez, 2016). Adolescence is a critical transitional stage in the course of human development that is marked by a multitude

of convulsive and changing situations. Indeed, research in recent decades has underscored the enormous impact of the phenomenon of school violence at this stage of education, which is detrimental to the teaching-learning process, evolutionary development, and peaceful coexistence at school; and has negative repercussions on wellbeing, psychological health, and social relations (Cava, Buelga, Musitu, & Murgui, 2010; Estevez & Jiménez, 2014).

Within this tendency, there is growing concern and social alarm generated by this phenomenon that can give rise to the use of incorrect terminology. In this study violence is defined as any behaviour or omission intended to cause personal injury or harm (Álvarez-García, Rodríguez, González-Castro, Núñez, & Álvarez, 2010). Violence may adopt different forms in schools: direct and indirect physical violence (Álvarez, Álvarez-García, González-Castro, Núñez, & González-Pienda, 2006); direct or indirect verbal violence (Defensor del Pueblo-UNICEF, 2007); social exclusion (Pachter, Bernstein, Szalacha, & Coll, 2010); disruption in the classroom (Álvarez-Martino, Álvarez-Hernández, Castro, Angel-Campo, & González, 2016; Chafouleas et al., 2010; Hulac & Benson, 2010); and violence using information communication technology (ICT) (Álvarez-García, Barreiro-Collazo, Núñez, & Dobarro, 2016; Tokunaga, 2010).

There is broad consensus in several studies examining the relation between gender and school violence that the former is

a relevant modulating variable, with a higher incidence in boys than girls in situations having a strong social impact (physical and violent aggression), whereas the incidence for low intensity violence (rumours or insults) was higher in girls than boys (Calvete, Orue, Estévez, Villardón, & Padilla, 2010; Carbone-López, Esbensen, & Brick, 2010; Díaz-Aguado, Martínez, & Martín, 2010). In comparison, other studies found no significant gender differences in indirect violence, but a greater prevalence of direct violence was observed in boys (Peets & Kikas, 2006; Toldos, 2005). As for the relation between gender, school violence and the use of ICT, a number of studies have underscored that girls are more predisposed to being victims, and boys aggressors (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; Félix-Mateo, Soriano-Ferrer, Godoy-Mesas, & Sancho-Vicente, 2010; Slonje & Smith, 2008). Notwithstanding, other studies report no gender differences in violence using ICT (Domínguez, López, & Álvarez, 2011; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Katzer, Fetchenhauer, & Belschak, 2009).

A further key aspect to be considered in applying prevention and treatment programs is the prevalence of each type of violence in each stage and year of education. The level of student-to-teacher violence was found to be greater in Secondary than Primary Education, but there was more aggression and victimizing behaviour in Primary than Secondary Education (Fernández, Álvarez, Ceña, & Álvarez-García, 2010). An analysis of the level of education, the school year, and the students' age revealed that in general terms, the number of aggressors tended to decline as age increased with each school year (from 3rd year of Primary to 4th year of CSE). Nevertheless, there were two moments in which the inverse occurred i.e., the number of aggressors increased with age: 5th year Primary and 2nd year CSE. The highest prevalence of aggression was observed in 2nd year of CSE, with the highest percentage of disciplinary hearings and reports (Ararteko-IDEA, 2006; Avilés & Monjas, 2005). Similarly, studies on violence using ICT show a curvilinear relation between age and this type of violence (Álvarez-García et al., 2011; Tokunaga, 2010).

As for academic performance, several studies have found a negative relation between aggressive behaviour and academic performance (Pérez-Fuentes, Álvarez-Bermejo, Molero, Gázquez, & López, 2011). Other authors have highlighted this bidirectional relation (Dobarro, 2011; Totura, Green, Karver, & Gesten, 2009).

Thus, the present study focused on Compulsory Secondary Education, which is considered to be the highest conflict stage, and a rigorous and systematic analysis was performed on the levels of school violence, and the possible differences in gender, school year, and academic performance. The study focused on the students' point of view, and their opinion served to highlight key issues and their interpretation signals new responsibilities and procedures that guarantee safe teaching-learning contexts.

Method

Participants

A total of 4,943 CSE students, aged 12 to 17 years ($M= 14.05$; $DT= 1.39$), were evaluated. The sample was selected from a population of CSE students attending state funded schools (both state schools and private state-funded schools) in Galicia –North-western Spain– (86,788 students at the time of undertaking the study). A cluster stratified random sampling technique was used to obtain a representative sample of the population of students for

each year, and the type of school (Table 1). Girls were slightly overrepresented in the sample in relation to the population.

Instruments

The CUVE3-CSE questionnaire (Álvarez-García, Núñez, & Dobarro, 2012) was administered to CSE students to evaluate the frequency of different types of school violence involving both teachers and students. A 5-point Likert type scale was used consisting of 44 statements, with five response options ranging from 1 -Never- to 5 -Always-. Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for each factor in the sample analysed in this study was good: Classroom Disruption ($\alpha = .77$); Student-to-Student Verbal Violence ($\alpha = .75$); Student-to-Student Direct Physical Violence and Threats ($\alpha = .81$); Student-to-Student Indirect Physical Violence ($\alpha = .76$); Social Exclusion ($\alpha = .72$); ICT Violence ($\alpha = .89$); Student-to-Teacher Verbal Violence ($\alpha = .75$); and Teacher-to-Student Violence ($\alpha = .89$).

Procedure

Having selected the sample, the school boards were informed of the aims of the study, and authorisation was obtained to administer the questionnaires at the schools. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from all of the parents or legal guardians of children participating in the study. Data gathering was undertaken during the academic year 2015-2016. All of the students freely volunteered to participate in the study, and were informed they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without the need for any justification. Prior to responding to the questionnaire, students were informed about the aims of the study and that their data would remain anonymous and confidential. The instructions were explained by the same research team in the students' habitual classrooms. The study was conducted according to the ethical standards established by the Declaration of Helsinki (1975).

Data analysis

The first step was to analyse the frequency of the types of school violence by calculating the mean and standard deviation for each factor on the CUVE3-CSE. The next step was to examine differences in the level of perceived school violence according to gender, academic performance, and school year. Thus, a one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVAs), and post-hoc Tukey test were performed. All analyses were carried out using the statistical software package SPSS 21.0.

		Sample		Population	
		N	%	N	%
Type school	State	3512	71.0	62294	71.7
	Private state sponsored	1431	29.0	24494	28.3
Year	1 st CSE	1336	27.0	23184	26.7
	2 nd CSE	1291	26.1	23055	26.6
	3 rd CSE	1262	25.5	21425	24.7
	4 th CSE	1054	21.3	19124	22.0
Gender	Boys	2411	48.8	44682	51.5
	Girls	2532	51.2	42106	48.5
Total		4943	100	86788	100

Results

Level of perceived school violence, the most frequent types, and gender differences

As shown in Table 2, the level of school violence perceived by students was mostly low-to-moderate. The most frequent type of violence was classroom disruption. Verbal violence was more frequent than physical violence or social exclusion. Violence in real-life situations was more frequent than violence using electronic device. Moreover, girls perceived statistically significantly more classroom disruption, student-to-student verbal violence, and student-to-teacher verbal violence than boys. In contrast, boys perceived more teacher-to-student violence, and student-to-student direct physical violence and threats than girls. The size of these differences was small. No statistically significant gender differences were found in social exclusion, ICT violence, or student-to-student indirect physical violence.

Differences in the level of perceived school violence according to academic performance

Statistically significant differences in academic performance were observed in all of the types of school violence analysed. However, the size of the differences was small. The general tendency was that students who successfully passed all of their exams perceived more classroom disruption, but lower levels of other types of violence (Table 3).

Differences in the level of perceived school violence according to the school year

Statistically significant differences were observed according to the school year and the types of violence analysed (Table 4). However, the size of the differences was small. The highest Social

Table 2
Level of school violence perceived by students, the order of frequency, and gender differences

Order	Factor	M (DT)			F	Sig.	μ ²
		Total (N = 4943)	Boys (n = 2411)	Girls (n = 2532)			
1 st	CD	3.29 (1.00)	3.22 (1.01)	3.36 (0.99)	22.56	<.001	.005
2 nd	SSVV	2.90 (0.89)	2.79 (0.89)	3.00 (0.88)	71.00	<.001	.014
3 rd	TSV	2.31 (0.85)	2.36 (0.89)	2.25 (0.81)	19.47	<.001	.004
4 th	STVV	2.27 (0.85)	2.20 (0.85)	2.33 (0.85)	26.76	<.001	.005
5 th	SSDPV	2.00 (0.80)	2.03 (0.82)	1.97 (0.77)	6.30	.012	.001
6 th	SE	1.86 (0.80)	1.87 (0.81)	1.85 (0.79)	0.38	.540	<.001
7 th	SSIPV	1.78 (0.71)	1.78 (0.75)	1.78 (0.68)	0.05	.823	<.001
8 th	ICTV	1.75 (0.70)	1.73 (0.73)	1.77 (0.68)	2.63	.105	.001

CD = Classroom Disruption; SSVV = Student-to-Student Verbal Violence; TSV = Teacher-to-Student Violence; STVV = Student-to-Teacher Verbal Violence; SSDPV = Student-to-Student Direct Physical Violence and Threats; SE = Social Exclusion; SSIPV = Student-to-Student Indirect Physical Violence; ICTV = ICT Violence.
Minimum = 1, Maximum = 5

Table 3
Comparison of the level of school violence observed according to the academic performance informed by the student (N = 4943; n_A = 2848; n_S = 801, n_R = 1294)

Performance		Mean	D.T.	F	Sig.	μ ²	Post hoc (Tukey)	Sig.
CD	Pass	3.35	0.98	14.54	<.001	.006	A > S A > R	.016 <.001
	Fail	3.24	1.00					
	Repeater	3.18	1.03					
SSVV	Pass	2.87	0.87	3.14	.043	.001	R > A	.036
	Fail	2.91	0.93					
	Repeater	2.94	0.91					
TSV	Pass	2.25	0.80	14.02	<.001	.006	S > A R > A	.011 <.001
	Fail	2.35	0.90					
	Repeater	2.40	0.92					
STVV	Pass	2.24	0.83	3.67	.026	.001	R > A	.043
	Fail	2.30	0.85					
	Repeater	2.31	0.89					
SSDPVT	Pass	1.95	0.76	13.88	<.001	.006	S > A R > A	<.001 <.001
	Fail	2.08	0.87					
	Repeater	2.06	0.82					
SE	Pass	1.82	0.76	7.86	<.001	.003	S > A R > A	.016 .002
	Fail	1.91	0.82					
	Repeater	1.91	0.86					
SSIPV	Pass	1.74	0.68	9.59	<.001	.004	S > A R > A	.037 <.001
	Fail	1.82	0.76					
	Repeater	1.84	0.76					
ICTV	Pass	1.73	0.67	3.17	.042	.001	-	-
	Fail	1.77	0.78					
	Repeater	1.78	0.73					

CD = Classroom Disruption; SSVV = Student-to-Student Verbal Violence; TSV = Teacher-to-Student Violence; STVV = Student-to-Teacher Verbal Violence; SSDPVT = Student-to-Student Direct Physical Violence and Threats; SE = Social Exclusion; SSIPV = Student-to-Student Indirect Physical Violence; VICT = ICT Violence
Minimum = 1, Maximum = 5

Exclusion was found in the 1st year of CSE. The lowest student-to-student verbal violence and teacher-to-student violence were observed in the 1st year. Classroom disruption, and student-to-student direct physical violence and threats were more frequent in the 2nd year. Student-to-teacher verbal violence and ICT violence were higher in the 2nd and 3rd as compared to the 1st and 4th year. Student-to-student indirect physical violence was highest in the 3rd year and the lowest in the 1st year.

Discussion

In general terms, the results obtained show a low-to-medium level of school violence in CSE in Galicia, which is in line with studies undertaken in other Spanish regions (Albaladejo-Blázquez, Ferrer-Cascales, Reig-Ferrer, & Fernández-Pascual, 2013; Fernández-Baena et al., 2011). The most frequent type of school violence was classroom disruption, followed by student-to-student verbal violence, which agrees with the findings of other studies in Spain (Álvarez-García, Dobarro, Álvarez, Núñez, & Rodríguez, 2014; Carozzo, 2010; Díaz-Aguado et al., 2010), and internationally (Kaplan, 2009;

Tomasini, Domínguez, & Peralta, 2013). Moreover, low intensity violence was confirmed to be the most prevalent type in school.

The results obtained also corroborated gender differences according to the academic performance, and school year of the student informant. Whilst several studies have found differences (Cerezo & Ato, 2010; Piñeiro, Areñe, López-Espín, & Torres, 2014; Villarreal-González, Sánchez-Sosa, Veiga, & Del Moral-Arroyo, 2011), others have not (Baldrý, 2005). Girls inform of more classroom disruption, student-to-student verbal violence, student-to-teacher violence, and ICT violence, whereas boys perceived more teacher-to-student violence, student-to-student direct physical violence, threats, and social exclusion. These results substantiate the findings of numerous studies (Díaz-Aguado & Martín, 2011; Moreno, Neves de Jesús, Murgui, & Martínez, 2012; Velasco & Álvarez-González, 2015). Notwithstanding, our results differ from studies that consider social exclusion to be the type of violence mostly perceived by girls (Crapanzano, Frick, & Terranova, 2010; Postigo, González, Mateu, Ferrero, & Martorell, 2009). It is worth noting that indirect physical violence is exercised equally by girls and boys (Owens, Daly, & Slee, 2005; Toldos, 2005).

Table 4
Comparison of the level of school violence observed according to the school year of the reporting student (N = 4943; n_{1st} = 1336; n_{2nd} = 1291; n_{3rd} = 1262; n_{4th} = 1054)

	Year	Mean	D.T.	F	Sig.	μ ²	Post hoc (Tukey)	Sig.
CD	1 st CSE	3.27	1.02	8.81	<.001	.005	2 nd > 1 st 2 nd > 3 rd 2 nd > 4 th	.002 <.001 <.001
	2 nd CSE	3.41	1.00					
	3 rd CSE	3.24	1.00					
	4 th CSE	3.23	0.98					
SSVV	1 st CSE	2.81	0.93	7.40	<.001	.004	2 nd > 1 st 4 th > 1 st	<.001 .009
	2 nd CSE	2.97	0.88					
	3 rd CSE	2.89	0.87					
	4 th CSE	2.93	0.87					
TSV	1 st CSE	2.08	0.83	47.07	<.001	.028	1 st < 2 nd 1 st < 3 rd 1 st < 4 th 4 th < 3 rd	<.001 <.001 <.001 .014
	2 nd CSE	2.37	0.87					
	3 rd CSE	2.45	0.84					
	4 th CSE	2.34	0.80					
STVV	1 st CSE	2.18	0.88	14.59	<.001	.009	1 st < 2 nd 1 st < 3 rd 4 th < 2 nd 4 th < 3 rd	<.001 .001 <.001 .025
	2 nd CSE	2.37	0.87					
	3 rd CSE	2.30	0.85					
	4 th CSE	2.20	0.79					
SSDPVT	1 st CSE	1.96	0.80	5.44	.001	.003	2 nd > 1 st 2 nd > 4 th	.008 .002
	2 nd CSE	2.06	0.81					
	3 rd CSE	2.01	0.78					
	4 th CSE	1.94	0.78					
SE	1 st CSE	1.94	0.88	7.01	<.001	.004	1 st > 2 nd 1 st > 3 rd 1 st > 4 th	.010 .016 <.001
	2 nd CSE	1.84	0.77					
	3 rd CSE	1.85	0.77					
	4 th CSE	1.80	0.74					
SSIPV	1 st CSE	1.67	0.70	19.75	<.001	.012	3 rd > 1 st 3 rd > 2 nd 3 rd > 4 th 2 nd > 1 st 4 th > 1 st	<.001 .018 .006 <.001 .001
	2 nd CSE	1.80	0.73					
	3 rd CSE	1.88	0.73					
	4 th CSE	1.78	0.68					
ICT	1 st CSE	1.69	0.73	10.38	<.001	.006	1 st < 2 nd 1 st < 3 rd 4 th < 2 nd 4 th < 3 rd	<.001 <.001 .007 .001
	2 nd CSE	1.80	0.72					
	3 rd CSE	1.81	0.69					
	4 th CSE	1.70	0.66					

CD = Classroom Disruption; SSVV = Student-to-Student Verbal Violence; TSV = Teacher-to-Student Violence; STVV = Student-to-Teacher Verbal Violence; SSDPVT = Student-to-Student Direct Physical Violence and Threats; SE = Social Exclusion; SSIPV = Student-to-Student Indirect Physical Violence; ICTV = ICT Violence.
Minimum = 1; Maximum = 5

In terms of school performance, the data revealed a higher incidence in all types of school violence in students repeating a year or failing subjects, with the exception of classroom disruption, which was perceived more by students who successfully passed all of their exams. Thus, it appears that the most interested students in the class perceived more classroom disruptive behaviour; and low performing students with poor academic results tended to participate in violent situations, and thus to perceive them as such (Andreou, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001). Finally, with reference to the year in which the students was registered, the results show that intermediate years had the highest incidence of school violence (second and third year CSE). This partially corroborated a similar pattern observed in previous studies of a higher frequency of school violence in the first cycle of CSE (Álvarez-García et al., 2011; Defensor del Pueblo-UNICEF, 2007; Félix, Soriano, & Godoy, 2009).

The aim of this study was to obtain rigorous and up-to-date data on the most prevalent types of school violence in CSE and the characteristics associated to them. From a practical point of view, the data are fundamental for raising our understanding and awareness in order to implement efficacious intervention programs to tackle this issue. Bearing in mind the results obtained, raising awareness and training of the educational community should constitute are

crucial elements for fostering change and improving peaceful coexistence at school. Moreover, preventive measures should be considered with the priority on designing new needs analysis to implement peaceful coexistence and teacher training programs; and intervention programs such as immediate intervention or other frontline initiatives working in close contact with teachers, counselling and mediation staff, and peaceful coexistence units at schools in order to develop our understanding and for implementing action plans and protocols, conflict resolution management and mediation between parties, conventional arbitration, procedures for correcting serious misbehaviour, and for establishing a frame of reference for disciplinary proceedings (Álvarez-García, Núñez, García, & Barreiro-Collazo, 2018).

The main limitations of this study derived from the exclusive use of third-person opinion questionnaires; girls were slightly over-represented in the sample, which may have biased the scores obtained; and only a one-side perspective of the student was examined, but no views from other actors involved in the school context were assessed i.e., parents and teachers. It would be interesting in future research to replicate the study applying other evaluation techniques such as interviews or group discussion, and to assess scores from teachers and family.

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