ΣΟΦΙΑ–SOPHIA

Investigation Article

Prevalence of School Bullying in State Schools of Bucaramanga city, Colombia*

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Abstract

The objective of the article is to determine the prevalence of school bullying that occurs in state educational institutions of Bucaramanga-Colombia through a cross-sectional quantitative research and a non-experimental design. The sample consisted of 1776 students (48.9% female and 50.5% male) in grades 4° to 11°. The study was developed in three phases: characterization of state educational institutions of Bucaramanga; random selection of the school groups on which the information was collected; data collection and analysis. The results show a prevalence of victimization of 8.1% for the case of school bullying perpetrated on a personal basis; and 5% for school bullying carried out through virtual means.

Keywords: Aggression, education sciences, school context, primary education, violence.

Introduction

School bullying consists of repeated and intentional mistreatment of peers, through physical and/or psychological aggression, exercised by one student over another on a prolonged basis; it implies an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power or force, whether real or perceived (Olweus, 1993). Thus, school bullying is part of school violence, since it includes intentional and systematic acts of harm, aggression and threat, manifested in different forms and levels, which are classified into six categories of antisocial behavior: disruption in classrooms, discipline problems (teacher-student conflicts), bullying, vandalism and property damage, physical violence (aggression, extortion, etc.) and sexual bullying (Chaux, 2012; Moreno, 2007).

In the literature (Rodríguez, 2009), it is pointed out that school bullying derives from a type of interpersonal relationship developed in a group, which has the purpose of causing harm and humiliation, and which is characterized by repeated behaviors of intimidation and exclusion directed towards an individual who is in a disadvantaged position. School bullying is described as a form of peer violence that includes repetitive and time-consuming behaviors of abuse by a student (aggressor), generally supported by a group (spectators), against a defenseless victim who cannot come out of it by his/her own; these behaviors are maintained by ignorance and passivity of people who do not intervene directly in this problem (Díaz-Aguado, 2005).

The main actors involved in this problem are: the aggressor (who causes damage or fear to a person); the victim (the person who receives the aggressions); and the spectators or witnesses, who are divided into four categories: indifferent ones (not involved), blamed ones (do not intervene for fear of the aggressor, but feel guilty about it), amoral ones (who justify the power that the aggressor has over the victim), and those involved, either by encouraging the aggressor or by defending the victim (Martín, Lobato, & Gómez, 2007).

With regard to the victims, two classes have been identified: the provocative ones and the passive or submissive ones. The former show a combination of anxiety with an aggressive reaction that is generally perceived as challenging, which aggressors often use as an excuse to perform their bullying acts. These types of inappropriate defensive responses tend to be motivated by the positive assessment of violence in the family group, where victims are encouraged to respond to aggression through the same route of aggression (García, Guerrero & Ortiz, 2012). Passive victims, on the other hand, show insecurity, anxiety and submission; and at the same time they are physically weak, with a negative attitude towards violence and aggression; they often flee or cry. In most cases, passive victims experience their negative experience in silence and remain alone in the educational institution (Olweus, 1998).

Among the factors predisposing to school bullying, it is highlighted that harassed students lack a consolidated social network, present school vulnerability and deficiencies in social integration; they also present difficulties in their social relations, which causes low status in the group and their stigmatization as weak (Avilés, 2009a). Another factor that predisposes the appearance of school bullying is related to the physical characteristics of the victims, which can lead to the aggressors being more interested in these students than in others; For example, a high rate of school bullying has been observed for obese, visually impaired or speech-impaired, students with physical disabilities, cognitive impairment, as well as cultural or gender elements (Moreno, 2007).

Several studies (Amemiya, Oliveros, & Barrientos, 2009; Batsche, & Knoff, 1994; Chaux, 2012; Olweus, 1998) have established that the main consequences for children and adolescents victims of school bullying

are related to physical health problems, emotional and social health issues. They see the educational institution as an unsafe place and often refuse to attend it; in the United States up to 7% of students stay at home at least once a week due to the bullying received. The victims report difficulty sleeping, enuresis, abdominal pain, headaches, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, deficits in social skills, social isolation and suicidal ideation. Additionally, it has been identified an increased risk of self-destructive and hetero- destructive behaviors (Milicic, & López, 2008).

Regarding the profile of the harassers, several studies show characteristics related to greater physical strength with respect to their victims and their partners in general, little concern for the feelings of others, they may be depressive, impulsive, hostile, show little empathy, high levels of self-esteem, present deficits in communicative skills and conflict resolution, as well as aggression and manipulation. Two categories of harassers are described: the active ones, who directly attack their victims; and the passive ones, who participate or support the planning of the harassing act, but do not act on it (Olweus, 1998). Among the possible motivations of the harasser is the need for power and mastery over others. Family difficulties play a determining role, as many of the perpetrators have experienced family conflicts. Olweus (2007) also identifies self-benefiting as a causal component of bullying, since in exercising harassing behavior a student can obtain money, food, valuables and social recognition.

On the other hand, witnesses or spectators, who do not take an active role in the bullying situation and prefer to "do nothing", are equally intimidated by the aggressor, thus inhibiting their motivation to provide assistance to the victims. In the existent literature, it is pointed out that school bullying causes an incitement to participate in acts of bullying, even though they are not the initial perpetrators of the hostile event. Another element that characterizes viewers is that they develop resistance in dealing with victims for fear of being rejected by other partners or becoming victims as well (Ombudsman (1999; Olweus, 1998).

The main advances in educational policies against school bullying have been made in Nordic countries and the United Kingdom, where the proposals of Olweus, Smith and Sharp respectively have been incorporated into the proposals for intervention by the ministries of education. In the case of the United Kingdom, it has been implemented a Specific Code of Conduct on bullying among peers, of compulsory use for

educational institutions (Ombudsman, 1999). Norway, Finland and Sweden, in particular, have developed strategies that involve not only schools but society as a whole, by establishing state laws in three different areas: national policy, community policy and national school policy (Ombudsman 1999). Since 1998, the European Observatory on School Violence has been established to consolidate a broad international database of easy access and, in turn, to expand its research on issues related to social violence, in order to create clear and common concepts about bullying and school violence, both for the research community and for the school community (Ortega-Ruíz, 1998).

In Latin America, countries such as Mexico, Argentina, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Chile and Peru, among others, have carried out descriptive studies of this phenomenon and have implemented programs of attention and prevention of school bullying. However, there are no concrete educational policies, aimed at its prevention, reduction and attention. However, the ministries of education of the respective countries have proposed programs and strategies aimed at the eradication of violence, the promotion of good treatment, prevention of abuse and school education in coexistence, which have not yet been evaluated (Aguirre , 2009; Milicic, & López, 2008).

In Colombia, the Congress of the Republic established the Law 1620 of 2013, which created the National System of School Coexistence and Training for the Exercise of Human, Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Prevention and Mitigation of School Violence, by which children and adolescents are recognized as subjects of rights, and the educational community at the levels of pre-school, basic and middle as responsible for training for the exercise of them; this according to the provisions of the National Political Constitution, Laws 115 of 1994 and 1098 of 2006, the provisions of the National Council of Social Policy and other rules associated with school violence, which raise specific demands on the school system (Law 1620 of 2013).

The purpose of Law 1620 of 2013 is to contribute to the formation of active citizens who contribute to the construction of a democratic, participatory, pluralistic and intellectual society, in accordance with the constitutional mandate and the General Law of Education, promoting and strengthening citizenship training and the exercise of the Human, Sexual and Reproductive Rights of the students, of the preschool, basic and middle levels of education (Law 1620 of 2013). Likewise, this law seeks to promote, strengthen

and articulate actions of different instances of the State for school coexistence, the construction of citizenship and education aimed at the exercise of Human, Sexual and Reproductive Rights of children and adolescents of preschool, primary and secondary educational levels (Law 1620 of 2013).

For this purpose, it is proposed to form the National Committee of School Coexistence, permanently integrated by the Ministry of National Education (MEN, for its initials in Spanish) or the Vice-Ministry of Preschool, Basic and Middle Education, that will preside over it; The Ministry of Health or a delegate; the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF, for its initials in Spanish) or a Deputy; as well as non-permanent representatives such as the High Presidential Counselor for Coexistence and Citizen Security or a Delegate; the Presidential High Councilor for the Equity of the Woman or a Delegate; the Minister of Culture or a Deputy Vice-Minister; The Minister of Information Technologies and Communications or a Deputy Vice-Minister; The Minister of the Interior or a Deputy Vice-Minister; The Minister of Justice and Law or a Deputy Vice-Minister; and the Director of the Police of Children and Adolescents or a Commander Delegate (Law 1620 of 2013).

This committee must define and coordinate the management and operation of the system at the national, territorial and school levels, directing its actions to the fulfillment of the main objective of Law 1620 of 2013, harmonizing them with national and sectorial policies, as well as with strategies and programs related to the prevention and mitigation of school violence (Law 1620 of 2013).

Likewise, Law 1620 implies the formation of municipal, district or departmental committees, made up of representatives of the Secretariats of Government, Education and Culture, the Regional Director of the ICBF, the Family Commissariats and the Police of Children and Adolescents, as well as a Representative of the rectors of educational establishments; who should guarantee the implementation of the Comprehensive Care Route for School Coexistence in their respective jurisdictions, and compliance by all entities that make up the system (Gaviria, et al., 2012).

Within the scope of each educational institution, it is established the creation of a School Coexistence Committee, which will support the promotion and follow-up of school life, as well as the development of coexistence manuals, prevention and mitigation

programs for school violence; giving treatment and support for the management and resolution of school conflicts through the application of coexistence manuals, ensuring compliance with the provisions established therein, taking into account the regular conduct established by each institution (Gaviria, et al. , 2012). These committees of coexistence are led by teachers of the institutions. In consonance with this, several authors (Chagas, 2005; García & Ortiz, 2012) agree on the importance of including teachers in decision-making and intervention to improve school coexistence; however, they also agree on the need to provide them with tools intended to reduce the methodological mistakes teachers often make due to subjective judgments and empirical strategies that may hinder conflict resolution processes in the school context.

In the literature, there have been reported the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (OBPP) of the University of Bergen, Norway (Olweus, 1998); and the *Sevilla Anti-Violence School Program* (Save, for its initials in Spanish) of Spain (Ortega, & Del Rey, 2001). The OBPP uses an approach that involves intervention measures at the institutional, classroom and individual levels; this program has a questionnaire to establish the magnitude of the problem, poses reflection sessions and monitoring activities during school recesses and the formation of teams of teachers that actively involve the parents (Olweus, 1998). On the other hand, the Save Program proposes two lines of intervention: preventive and remedial. At the preventive level, it proposes to work in the fields of education on emotions, feelings and values, cooperative group work and the democratic management of coexistence; in the remedial line, it works on conflict resolution, peer support, quality circles, empathy development programs, and assertiveness development programs (Ortega, & Del Rey, 2001).

Since the first publications by the Norwegian psychologist Dan Olweus in the 1970s, school bullying has been an issue that has increased the interest of the scientific community over the decades in several countries, being prevalence one of the most researched themes (Milicic & López, 2008, Pérez-Fuentes, Gázquez, Fernández-Baena & Molero, 2011).

In Europe, where there emerged the first studies on school bullying, it's been registered that at least 15% of European students have been intimidated or assaulted, or witnessed a conflict situation (Debardieux, & Blaya, 2001); reviewing the prevalence of school bullying

by nations, it is identified that 18.2% of students have been involved in bullying in Norway and Sweden, with 10.1% being victims, 6.5% being aggressors and 1.6% viewers (Solberg, & Olweus, 2003). In the case of Spain, a study carried out with a representative sample of secondary education institutions in the city of Valladolid shows that 8.1% of students have been involved in situations of school bullying, of which 5, 7% are victims (Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009).

On the other hand, it has been identified in a representative sample of 6,000 students in England (Whitney, & Smith, 1993), that 21% of them have been involved in school bullying, being 14% victims and 7% aggressors; in the Netherlands, it has been identified a general prevalence of students involved in school bullying of 34%, being 13% victims, 17% aggressors, and 4% spectators (Whitney & Smith, 1993).

In the case of the United States, using a sample composed of 7,182 high school students from various schools around the nation, it was found that 20.8% had been harassed during the two months prior to the study, specifying that 53.6% of these received verbal assaults, 13.6% through virtual means, and 51.4% would have suffered intentional social isolation (Avilés, & Monjas, 2005). 13.3% of the students reported bullying in the last two months prior to data collection, which was carried out using verbal aggression (37.4%), by social isolation (27.2%), or using virtual media (8.3 %) (Avilés & Monjas, 2005).

In Latin America, several studies have also been carried out to identify the prevalence of school bullying in several countries in the region; in Mexico, it has been reported that between 20% and 32% of students report having been assaulted in school, being verbal aggression the most prevalent (72%) (National Institute of Public Health, 2006). In Nicaragua, a study with a representative sample of Managua city reported a prevalence of school bullying of 51.7%, with verbal aggression being the most recurrent, and coincident with the data found in Mexico (Romera, Del Rey & Ortega, 2011).

In Brazil, in a study with a representative sample of *Pelotas* city in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, it was identified that 17.6% of the students had undergone school bullying, which manifested through various types of aggressions: verbal (75.1%), physical (62.4%), emotional (23.8%), racial (6.3%) and sexual (1.1%) (Moura, Cruz and Quevedo, 2011) (Recha, R., Halpernb, Tedescoc, & Santosd, 2013). Also in the state

of Rio Grande do Sul, it was identified a prevalence of 10.2% of assaulted students in a representative sample of the city of *Caxias do Sul*, being in this case physical aggression the most reported (38, 7%) (Recha, Halpernb, Tedescoc & Santosd, 2013).

In Peru, according to studies carried out in schoolchildren from four populations in the country (Ayacucho, Cusco, Junín and Lima East), there is a prevalence of victimization for school bullying of 47%, with physical aggression as the main type of bullying (34.8%), followed by verbal aggression (34.5%), psychological maltreatment (9.5%) and sexual aggression (4.7%) (Amemiya, Oliveros, & Barrientos, 2009, Oliveros, Figueroa, Mayorga, Cano, Quispe, & Barrientos, 2008).

Finally in the Colombian context, in a study that had as one of its objectives to determine the level of bullying in schools in the town of Ciudad Bolívar in Bogotá, and in which a survey format was applied to a sample of 3,226 students of primary and secondary education, it was identified that 21.8% of the students have been victims of school bullying (Cepeda-Cuervo, Pacheco-Durán, García-Barco, & Piraquive-Peña, 2008). In a study of 14 schools (10 private ones and 4 state ones) in Cali, Colombia, from which it was selected a non-probabilistic sample of 2,562 students (1,049 men and 1,513 women) from school grades 6°, 7° and 8°, it was found that 24.7% of the students have been victims of bullying behaviors such as verbal, physical and psychological aggression (Paredes, Álvarez, Lega, & Vernon, 2008).

In a specific case in the municipality of Floridablanca (Bucaramanga metropolitan area), in Santander province, a descriptive study was carried out with a sample of 304 students of school grades 6°, 9° and 11°, through which it was identified a prevalence of school bullying of 24.7%, which highlights the importance of social support networks in mitigating the individual, institutional and social affectation caused by school bullying (Uribe, Orcasita, & Aguillon, 2012).

The quality of prevention programs and the control of school bullying are subject to the level of knowledge about this phenomenon (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). This assumption gives rise to the present work, whose objective is to determine the prevalence of school bullying that occurs in state educational institutions of the municipality of Bucaramanga-Colombia, to contribute knowledge on the subject to the scientific community and Colombian society.

Methodology

The type of research carried out is cross-sectional descriptive, with a quantitative approach using a non-experimental design.

Participants

All (the subjects) involved in this research did so voluntarily with full knowledge of the study objectives; there were signed informed consents (of educational institutions), permits (of parents) and assents (for underage). The population (N) of students of state educational institutions of the city of Bucaramanga-Colombia was composed by 48,242 subjects. The sample (n) consisted of 1776 students from school grades 4° to 11° of eight educational institutions in the city, with a mean age of 13.37 years (SD = 2.83). The sample was obtained by simple random sampling, considering a reliability of 99% and a sampling error of 3%. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participating students.

Table 1. Demographic information of students participating in the study

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Female	851	47.92
Male	790	44.48
Ns/Nr*	135	7.6
Age		
8-10 years	238	13.4
11-14 years	865	48.7
15-17 years	587	33.05
18- >18 years	50	2.82
Ns/Nr*	36	2.03
School grade		
4°	179	10.08
5°	199	11.2
6°	273	15.37
7°	266	14.98
8°	186	10.47
9°	212	11.94
10°	257	14.47
11°	204	11.49

*He/she doesn't know/doesn't answer
Source: self-made

As an inclusion criterion, it was established that the students should have the written permission of their parents or legal guardians, sign the informed consent format for participation in the study, be enrolled in the selected institution and belong to the school group chosen for the collection of information.

Instruments

Initially, three formats were used for the development of the study: two informed consent forms (one institutional and one for parents) and an informed assent format (for underage), which present the reader with the justification and the objectives of research, procedures to be used, discomfort or expected risks, potential benefits, the guarantee of receiving a response to any question, and clarification of any doubts about the procedures, risks, benefits and other issues related to research, freedom to withdraw their consent at any time and to stop participating in the study, security and confidentiality of the information, and other aspects that are established in article 15 of Resolution No. 008430 of 1993.

In the process of gathering information, it was first used the Institutional Characterization Format, consisting of fifteen items aimed at investigating educational institutions, location and contact data, strategic framework, infrastructure, number of campuses and students in relation to school grades, sex and school session, number of teachers per campus and their training; finally, the format inquires about the institutional projects or alliances that the institution has and that are being executed at the time of the visit.

Next, it was presented to the students the "Questionnaire on the initial state of school coexistence, Form A, Students", consisting of ninety-one (91) items, divided into three parts. The first part consists of fifteen (15) questions, which ask for students' identification data, such as school grade, age, family conformation and physical self-perception. Part two, with twenty-seven (27) items, investigates the family dynamics of students, possible difficulties at home and causes of conflict. Part three, consisting of forty-nine (49) questions, seeks to identify situations of physical or psychological rejection or abuse that they have received in the institution. The fourteen (14) initial questions of part three refer to the type of maltreatment that occurs, the frequency of it, the behavioral responses to the aggressions towards them or towards a third party; then seven (7) questions are used to investigate possible discriminations exercised, observed or received by skin color, religion, culture

or foreign origin; later, (28) questions are focused on examining possible aggressions exercised or received by students through cell phones and/or the internet, frequency of abuse, platforms by which they occur, and the response to them or to a third party for the abuse by these means.

Procedure

For the development of the research, three methodological phases were executed; the first one was the identification of each of the educational institutions of state character in the city of Bucaramanga-Colombia, for its later characterization, according to the Institutional Characterization Format; at this stage, the school executives signed the institutional informed consent format.

Once the institutions were identified, and knowing the details of their administrative functioning and number of students, it started the second phase, in which there were randomly selected the school groups on whom the information required in each educational institution would be collected. In this phase, the research proposal was informed, conducting group meetings with the educational community (managers, teachers, parents and students); parents were also asked for their respective signed permission for the participation of their children, and the students were asked for their written informed assent.

Finally, the third phase was directed to the collection of information through the "Questionnaire on the initial state of school coexistence, Form A, Students", for the subsequent tabulation and data analysis, ending with the systematization of reports results, which would be informed to the participating institutions.

Ethical Considerations

The present is established as a minimum risk investigation, as established in Article 6 of resolution 8430 of 1993, which indicates the technical and administrative criteria of human research in Colombia. Taking into account that this research involves intervention with children and adolescents, there were considered the legal provisions in force on the ethical aspects to be taken into account with this population, such as the Code of Children and Adolescents (Law 1098), Resolution 8430 of 1993 (Informed Consent Procedures and Informed Assent Procedures) and Law 1090 of 2006 (Deontological and Bioethical Code of the Exercise of Psychology in Colombia). This research was carried out with the express authorization of Universidad Industrial de Santander (UIS), the directors of the institutions of basic and secondary education, and the ethics committee appointed by the UIS that endorsed the proposal.

Results

Through a frequency analysis, it was possible to identify a prevalence of 8.1% of students who reported being victims of bullying, physical or psychological intimidation, rejection or abuse by some peers, at least once a week, during the three months prior to collection of information. 54.8% of the students assaulted are women; the remaining 45.2% are men. In relation to school bullying perpetrated through virtual means, a prevalence of 5% was identified, being in this case more affected men (57.9%) than women (42.1%).

Making the distinction by school grade levels, it is observed that in grade 11° there is no report of students (who are) victims of school bullying, while grade 8° presents the highest peak of reported cases, represented in 25.8% of identified victims. For the phenomenon of school bullying carried out by virtual means, grades 6°, 7° and 9° are those with the lowest number of victims (one case each); in the same way, in the attacks through virtual means, grade 8 is the one with the highest number of victims identified, 26.3%.

In addition, it was found that the victims (58.1% personal aggression and 26.3% through virtual means) refer that these are perpetrated in a greater extent by groups of students, although a distinction is made by gender according to the type of bullying, since in the case of school students, reference is made mainly to groups of boys (38.7%); and for the case of school bullying through virtual means, the groups of boys and girls (26.3%) are reported. Table 2 presents in detail the information found on the prevalence of school bullying by gender, grade and typology of aggressors.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of school bullying (personal and virtual) by gender, school grade and type of offender(s).

Category	School bullying (physical or psychological) Percentage	School bullying (virtual means) Percentage
Total	8.1	5
Sex		
Female	54.8	42.1
Male	45.2	57.9
School grade	12.9	15.8
4°	22.6	15.8
5°	9.7	5.3
6°	12.9	5.3
7°	25.8	26.3
8°	3.2	5.3
9°	12.9	15.8
10°	0	10.5
11°		
Type of aggressor	3.2	0
Girl	19.4	10.5
Boy	6.5	2.6
Group of girls	38.7	13.2
Group of boys	12.9	26.3
Group of boys and girls	19.4	47.4
Ns/Nr*		

*He/she doesn't know/doesn't answer

Source: self-made

When investigating the situations of aggression by presenting students with options of response with a possibility of multiple responses on the types of violence that occur in state educational institutions in Bucaramanga, the main type of aggression was found to be verbal (hurtful words), representing 61.3% of students identified as victims of personal bullying; followed by nicknames (58.1%), understood as negative qualifications made towards a student, and slanders or false accusations that are raised against an individual (54.8%). In addition, more than half of the students (58.1%) who reported being victims of school bullying refer that these situations occur in the classroom, followed by street scenarios near to school (45.2%), and the school playground (25.8%).

Table 3 presents data on the main behaviors of response to situations of aggression, reported by students who are victims; it can be identified that most of them tend to ignore the episodes that often happen to them (83.9%); at the same time that teachers are the main support for (those) students, since they are the ones who are most informed about this type of situation (35.5%), and those who most intervene in them (41.9 %).

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of responses reported by victims of school bullying about the context in which the aggressions occur

Category	Percentage of affected students
Type of aggression	38.7
Physical aggression	22.6
Robbery	61.3
Verbal aggression	58.1
Nicknames	54.8
Slanders	12.9
Threats	9.7
Social rejection	12.9
Damage of personal use objects	
Place of aggression	58.1
Classroom	25.8
Playground	16.1
School yard	45.2
Street	6.5
School restrooms	6.5
Coffee shop	
Answer to the aggression	83.9
Ignoring the situation	38.7
Crying	35.5
Asking the aggressor to stop doing it	22.6
Attempting of doing the same to the aggressor	
Persons to whom the situation has been communicated	25.8
Friends	22.6
Parents	35.5
Teachers	
Persons who intervene	16.1
Nobody	29
Friends	19.4
Parents	41.9
Teachers	

Source: self-made

In the meantime, it was established that 6.5% of the surveyed students reported that they had physically or psychologically attacked one of their classmates, at least once a week. On the other hand, in relation to school bullying practiced through virtual means, it was found that of the 5% of the sample that reports being victim of school bullying through virtual means, 36.8% report having been attacked by means of their mobile phone, 31.6% through the internet, and the remaining 31.6% were attacked by both media (mobile phone and internet).

Students who are victims of school bullying through virtual means report that their main response to aggression is crying (57.9%), while those who are personally attacked report that they ignore the situation (83.9% %); in addition, a difference is observed in relation to the people to whom the situation is communicated; as the students who are personally attacked report that they communicate the situation to their teachers (41.9%), victims of virtual bullying do so to their teachers (friends) (68.4%).

Table 4. Frequency and percentage of the means used in virtual bullying, and responses of the victims.

Category	Percentage of affected students
Device/mean used for aggression	
Mobile phone	36.8
Internet	31.6
Both of them	31.6
Answer to the aggression	
Ignoring the situation	
Crying	26.3
Asking the aggressor to stop doing it	57.9
Attempting of doing the same to the	10.5
aggressor	10.5
Persons to whom the situation has been	
communicated	68.4
Friends	10.5
Parents	10.5
Teachers	10.5
Ns/Nr*	

*He/she doesn't know/doesn't answer

Source: self-made

Regarding the students who reported that attacked one of their peers at least once a week using a mobile phone, internet or both, it was obtained a prevalence of 2.1%. It was also found that 9.2% of the total sample of students reported that at some point in the school year, when data collection was carried out (year 2013), they were afraid to attend the educational institution to which they belong because of the bullying that occurs in it.

Discussion of results

The present study analyzed the prevalence of school bullying occurring in a personal or virtual way among the students of state educational institutions of the city of Bucaramanga-Colombia, taking into account the differential occurrence between genders and school grades, and identifying the context in which these situations of aggression are present.

School bullying has been considered a universal phenomenon (Oliveros, Figueroa, Mayorga, Cano, Quispe, & Barrientos, 2008) due to its prevalence in several countries of the world in which it has been studied; however, numerous studies indicate quantitative and qualitative differences between latitudes (Oliveros, & Barrientos, 2007; Oliveros, Figueroa, Mayorga, Cano, Quispe, & Barrientos, 2008). The study of school bullying is important because of the negative and long-term consequences of its presence in an educational institution, both for the attacked students and the aggressors (Oliveros, Figueroa, Mayorga, Cano, Quispe, & Barrientos, 2008; et al., 2012).

Educational institutions, as socializing entities (they are), require formal knowledge on school bullying adjusted to their context, and they need to generate normative and pedagogical tools that allow them to take action against this phenomenon and effectively prevent it (Kamen et al., 2012), besides reinforcing family involvement, as it has been reported that 25% of the parents who are aware of physical or verbal aggressions against their children downplay the required protective measures and therefore do not act (Serrano & Iborra, 2005).

The results of the present study suggest that 8.1% of students in state educational institutions in Bucaramanga were intimidated, rejected or physically or psychologically mistreated by some of their classmates at least once a week, during the three months prior to the collection of information, with women accounting for the highest proportion of those affected with 54.8% and a difference of 9.6 percentage points above men, who represent 45.2%. This prevalence dropped to 5% when students who have been bullied, rejected or mistreated via internet or mobile phone are taken into account, and there wasn't any noticeable difference among the means used for aggression (mobile phone = 36.8 %, Internet = 31.6%, both = 31.6%), a finding congruent with similar studies (Avilés, 2009a, Buelga, Cava, & Musitu, 2010). In this case, men had the highest proportion of the victims (57.9%), being 15.8 percentage points higher than the attacked women (42.1%), a finding consistent with previous results in the literature (Avilés, 2009b)

The methodological differences used by the various studies in different countries complicate the comparison of the prevalence of school bullying identified in the present study, due, for example, to the duration considered in each investigation to determine its prevalence and the instruments used in the collection of information; however, in the educational institutions studied in Bucaramanga, there is a lower prevalence than in countries such as Peru, Mexico and Brazil (Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública, 2006; Moura, Cruz & Quevedo, 2011; Oliveros, Figueroa, Mayorga, Cano, Quispe & Barrientos, 2008), as well as in studies performed in Colombia (Paredes, Álvarez, Lega & Vernon, 2008; Uribe, Orcasita & Aguillon, 2012), although it is larger than the values found out in Spain (Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009).

In addition, it is possible to observe that the results found here concerning gender affectation coincide with those evidenced in the literature, in which it is said that the aggressions that occur in a personal way are more

common in women than in men (Avilés, 2009b; Buelga, Cava, & Musitu, 2010). In contrast, they are contrary to data from studies that report that aggressions are primarily caused by a single individual rather than by groups, as it was observed in this research (Oliveros, Figueroa, Mayorga, Cano, Quispe & Barrientos, 2008; Paredes, Alvarez, Lega & Vernon, 2008).

In relation to the type of aggression, the findings in the present study are congruent with the ones of similar studies reporting that verbal aggression (61.3%) and nicknames (58.1%) are the more common types of aggression reported by victims (Moura, Cruz & Quevedo, 2011, Oliveros, Figueroa, Mayorga, Cano, Quispe & Barrientos, 2008), and in which it is pointed out that the classroom is the place of more frequent occurrence (58.1%) for situations of aggression (Paredes, Álvarez, Lega & Vernon, 2008).

In addition, 83.9% of victims of personal aggression and 26.3% by virtual means react by ignoring the attacks they face; 38.7% for personal aggression and 57.9% for virtual means react by crying, which is consistent with findings from studies reported in the literature (Moreno, 2007). 68.4% of victims of virtual aggression report what happens to their friends; in the case of personal attacks, **35.5%** of the victims report the situation to their teachers, possibly because this type of bullying occurs more frequently in the classroom, where the teacher as a figure of authority has the possibility to intervene, as indicated by **41.9%** of students who were victims of school bullying.

Likewise, there are differences in the possibilities of support perceived by the student victim of school bullying, according to the way in which the situations of aggression occur (personally or by virtual means); although it is necessary to delve into the study of these differential characteristics, to determine relevant details on the subject.

Concerning the difference in courses for the prevalence of bullying, the present study indicates that in 8° grade there is a high number of students who are victims of intimidation, rejection or personal mistreatment, whether inflicted personally (25.8%) or through virtual means (26.3%): in personal bullying, there was an increase in the number of victims from grades 6° to 8° (sixth = 9.7%, seventh = 12.9%, eighth = 28.8), the latter being the one with the highest peak. In addition, there is a high number of victims in grade 5° (22.6), which corresponds to the last year of primary education in Colombia. In the last three academic levels of secondary education (9° = 3.2%, 10° = 12.9%, 11° = 0%), there is no identified upward or downward trend in the results, although it is observed that grade 10° presents the highest level (12.9%) among them.

In the case of school bullying carried out through virtual means, it is evident that the number of victims in the two grades of basic education taken into account (4° = 15.8%, 5° = 15.8%) is the same; in 6° and 7° grades, it was also observed the same number of victims (5.3%), with a notable increase in grade 8° (26.3); while in the last three school grades (9° = 5.3%, 10° = 15.8%, 11° = 10.5%), 10° is the one with the highest prevalence. The results above, found at a descriptive level, would suppose the need to offer greater interest to the programs of coexistence in the 8° grade, for the two types of school bullying (personal and virtual); however, prevention and intervention of school bullying must permeate the entire educational institution.

On the other hand, it is noted that 9.2% of the sample (n = 1776) reported having felt fear of attending school, being this figure 1.1% higher than that of students who are personally attacked, and 4.2% higher than that of student victims of bullying through virtual means, which indicates that in state institutions of Bucaramanga, more students than those who are attacked feel intimidated by school bullying, although they are not direct victims, as evidenced in other studies (Chaux, 2012; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009).

Conclusions

In conclusion, it is necessary to point out that cooperation among the different actors of the educational community is fundamental for the development of programs and policies for prevention and intervention on school bullying. Training in values and citizenship at home strengthens the coping capacity and the social skills of the students; educational centers should be concerned with generating an organizational culture of their own, establishing civic and moral values that frame the social relations within the institution; And the state should seek a proactive attitude of support for the educational community of which it is a part (Santos, 2006).

Finally, it is important that the results of this research should be interpreted with caution due to its cross-sectional nature: a longitudinal study would strengthen the approaches made here. Also, taking into account that the information collection process was done through self-report, the responses could present biases (García & Gracia, 2009); however, this research

is a considerable contribution on the knowledge of school bullying, and it stresses the importance of continuing to study the phenomenon, considering additional aspects such as the involvement of parents and the characteristics of educational institutions, as prevention of school bullying should consider the formal knowledge of the entire educational community about this phenomenon (Moura, Cruz, & Quevedo, 2011).

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