



## Street Life Safety: A Study on Risk Perceptions and Experiences of Violence in School Adolescents in the Valencian Community (Spain)

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### Abstract

The aim of our research is to know statistically prevalence and types of aggressive behaviour against school, but in public spaces (on the way from home to school/college, and college/school to home), while there is own voice to the school (victims and perpetrators) with what we understand we study the problem from a new perspective.

The sample is representative of the Valencia of the total school population in this community among adolescents between 11 and 16 years.

The analysis of the results was carried out at various levels of analysis: on a first level, statistical techniques have been used with traditional indicators (means, percentages, etc.). To allow description and comparison groups. The second level has worked with multivariate techniques that try to show the relationships between the variables that influence and shape the reality studied, and allow progress in the "explanation" and even "prediction" characteristics of this type of study.

From the analyzed results are obtained profiles of the victim, offender and observers in the open, what kind of behaviours intimidating are used in the passage from home to school and school-house, victimization, perception of safety on the journey from home to the center school and protection strategies are implemented to prevent violence.

### Keywords

School violence, Public, Teens, Profiles aggressor, Victim, Intervention strategies

### Introduction

Aggression is considered a common adaptive, intentional and purposeful natural behaviour in the animal world [1]. It is considered to be a normal behaviour in adverse circumstances and aimed at the survival of the individual and the species, under the limits of self-control. The violence, on the other hand, is understood as a negative, excessive, inappropriate and destructive behaviour.

The aggressiveness is influenced by specific biological and environmental factors, and is expressed in a premeditated or impulsive way. Is based on a number of factors [2]: (a) Endogenous: biological (nervous and endocrine system) and psychological (emotions and cognitions); and (b) Exogenous: situational (atmospheric, food, drugs, context) and social (isolation, restricted space, disorganization, values, lack of resources). Biological ag-

gression is determined by the activity of the cortical and subcortical, involving neurotransmitters and hormones centers. In terms of context, the aggression is activated by negative affect and cognitions. Following the model of social learning [3,4] aggressiveness could be instigated by models that exhibit certain aggressive behaviours by

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aversive stimuli (attack, frustration), by incentives (admiration, positive reinforcement), instructions (orders) and held by external stimuli (reward-punishment) and vicarious experiences.

In this paper, we present a research within the framework of a European Research Project (DAPHNE) CE-03119150000 focused on peer violence (adolescents between ages 11-16) in public spaces, analyzing the factors that have impact social and situational in the field of violence.

In the past two decades, there have been numerous studies in the field of peer violence during the period of adolescence, and focused almost all of them in schools. We define violence as the intentional use of physical force or power either threatened or it effective against oneself, another person or a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death or psychological injury, disorders development or violates privacy and the right to health and life of the population [5]. The English term bullying (bully from the word bull) refers to a phenomenon that occurs in our classrooms with the following characteristics [6,7]: a) Includes behaviours of various types (teasing, threats, intimidation, physical assaults, systematic isolation, insults); b) These behaviours are not specific but are repeated; c) The victim is involved in a situation of psychological, physical or social helplessness, by decreasing their self esteem, their staff and their initiative triggered by the performance of his or her attackers security, the absence or insufficient support outside, and the retention time of this social situation; d) These situations are maintained due to ignorance and passivity of the people around the aggressors and victims without intervening directly.

We are witnessing in recent decades a growing concern with the issue of school violence, a problem that affects the development of teaching and affects also the relationship between teachers and students [8] with negative consequences for aggressor and victims [9].

In our country, school violence has become one of the main problems of Secondary Education [6,10] being identified by teachers as the biggest problem, which it considers most affected to coexistence in classrooms [11]. In the field of school violence numerous studies have been developed analyzing school violence in the school environment, and its impact on teachers. We highlight some research has been conducted with the aim of developing questionnaires to assess violent behaviour among students/students and students/teacher, all centered in education, as the "Assessment Questionnaire peer violence at school and leisure" (Ceveo) [12] "Survey on peer abuse" [13] or the Questionnaire coping

strategies of school violence [14] and finally include the school Violence Questionnaire (CUVE) Álvarez, et al. [15]. However, most of the studies have been developed within the space and the walls of the school. We emphasize a research done by experts from different countries of the European Union [16] "EU Street Violence: Youth Groups and Violence in Public Spaces" in which policies and strategies are analyzed to eradicate violence in public spaces. More specifically, it focuses on increasing safety and reducing violence in the cities, especially from violent youth gangs and whose presence in cities creates a sense of insecurity among the population.

The family has been the subject of study and analysis too. So Cava, Murgui and Musitu [8] analyze the influence of family communication and parental assessment of school as determinants of violent behaviour in adolescents in the school environment variables.

All the research so far focused on the school environment, and the prevention of violence in schools confirms that most of the problems of school violence and indiscipline are difficult to solve (if not impossible) from school only, and that needs answers from a broader spectrum in which other actors involved, the whole context of neighbourhood and other professionals [17]. As we have said, we have researched for decades the problem of school violence, but there are just few studies that analyzed, specifically, school violence in public spaces. The aim of our research is to know within the relational context between psychopathology and violence, the profiles of the victim, offender and observers in open spaces, consider what type of intimidating behaviours are used in the journey from home to school and of the school to house, and the perception of safety with teens, on the way from home to school and protection strategies, that they consider that they should be put in place to prevent violence.

Is analyzed from the perspective of the students, the motivation behind these behaviours to know the reality, then assess whether they are problems that can arise in the context of the classroom, knowing the profiles of perpetrators, victims and bystanders of these behaviour, etc. To design, if necessary, proposals for improvement.

## Method

### Sample

The sample is representative of the Valencian Community of total school population in this community among adolescents between 11 and 16 people. In order to get the proper understanding and to provide information to an acceptable level of error (less than 3%) in both overall performance and in terms of segmentation variables, it was deemed advisable to work with a sample of 1,000 individuals ensuring a global level, a maximum

**Table 1:** Distribution of the Sample by Sex, Titularity of the Center and Provinces.

	Sample	Sex		Province		
	Total	Male	Female	Alicante	Castellón	Valencia
	1.092	555	537	313	152	626
<b>Públic</b>	50.0	52.0	47.9	9.0+	3.4	2.0-
<b>Concerted</b>	45.8	43.6	48.1	38.7-	18.5-	56.0+
<b>Private</b>	4.2	4.4	4.0	15.9	11.4	18.4

error of less than  $\pm 2.5 + 3\%$ , with a confidence level of 95.5%, equivalent to 2 sigma, considering the components of the population variance  $p = q = 50\%$ . The type of sample used is stratified. Stratification was performed according to sex education level, age (11-16 years) and type of school they attended school (public, private or private funded by the state). For each habitat, has considered the existing number of private, public and private funded by the state schools, proportionally dividing the number of children informants in each age interval considered the number of schools of each type. In summary, the number of sample units (1,000) has been allocated proportionately based on sex, age, province and type of school. Thus the sampling distribution is: Alicante (27.9%) of the total sample, Castellón (14%) and Valencia (57.4%). By gender, 50.8% of the sample were boys and 49.2% girls.

Regarding the ownership of the schools, 50% were public centers, 45.8% were private schools and 4.2% private centers with state funding (Table 1).

## Tools

In the research design we have considered both quantitative and qualitative methodology. In the quantitative part of the research, a questionnaire ad hoc was designed to meet the objectives of this study, given the lack of measuring tools and to adapt to the idiosyncrasies of the countries participating in the project. Information search and implementation of the above objectives has pointed out, a quantitative methodology involved in its implementation the following steps: a) Preparation of the measuring tool (questionnaire); b) Development of a technical sheet: population characteristics and sampling; c) Fieldwork: application, timing and pass; d) Statistical treatment of the data.

Further research was complemented by a qualitative methodology, working with students some different dynamic groups through the focus-group technique.

## Tool: Questionnaire

Initially, and based on the objectives of this work were carried out dynamic group with children and teachers from the segment studied (11-16 years), which allowed to profile "Structured questionnaire", the instrument collection of information. The variables and observation units were structured around the different research objectives.

As a criterion for the development of the questionnaire were taken into account the following basic parameters: a) Have explicit motivations; b) They are children (11-16 years): therefore have to ask from different angles; c) The questionnaire has to be broader than mere research interests while ensuring that not too long; d) Has been to use a colloquial and simple language, and references to situations of ordinary life; e) Situations, where possible, must be customized more so than in the questionnaires for adults, especially when switching on the on-line mode as is the case; f) At all times has scrupulously complied with the ethical regulations surveying children (presence/process or parent/guardian authorization, privacy, etc.).

The development and final closure of the questionnaire was conducted after the entry pass pilot, 5% of the conventional filling surveys conducted in different types of schools (public, private and private funded by the state) in the city of Valencia, in order to detect the adequacy of the questionnaire to the study objectives to check the length, the understanding of toys, consistency of the questionnaire and its filters, consistency of responses and ensure that we operated in the same symbolic universe.

## Procedure

The leaders and interviewers (teachers) from each school were trained to pass the questionnaire. The type of survey was on-line, always ensuring the privacy of the response. The pass of the questionnaire was held in the same school.

Given the exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and predictive nature of the study, both techniques of information processing with classical statistical indicators (averages, percentages, etc.), and multivariate techniques have revealed the relationships between variables are used to influences and shapes the reality studied.

We understand that, generally speaking, the best way to avoid bias or, at least a preliminary, way of trying to control its effect is to become aware of its existence and potential impact. Regarding the use of quantitative methodology and the use of questionnaires, it is essential to use techniques derived rigorous random sampling, as performed in this research. In the review of methodological bias that can occur with the use of questionnaires

**Table 2:** Profiles Offender/Victim/Observers.

	Total	Gender		Age (Years)						Sig
		M	W	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Hitting/Kicking/Spitting/Other form of physical violence	24.4	26.8+	21.8-	24.1	20.5	20.0	26.9	24.2	30.4	-
Insulting because of a disability/Special needs	23.8	22.8	24.9	14.9	20.7	23.5	25.8	27.3	30.6	-
Racist comments or Jokes	27.8	29	26.6	14.7	19.6	25.6	27.6	39.0	40.6	-
Comment or Threatening graffiti	5.5	6.1	4.9	1.2	5.4	5.0	4.3	6.6	10.4	-
Stealing, Hiding or Damaging possessions	9.4	10.7-	8	3.8	6.7	8.4	13.2	6.2	17.8	-
Spreading stories that hurt someone	21.2	17.0-	25.6+	9.7	17.0	22.4	23.5	23.3	31.5	-
Ignore, Despise	27	24.3-	29.8+	27.5	20.2	26.5	29.9	26.0	31.6	-
Bullying by phone or text message	5.3	4.2	6.5	3.7	4.2	4.7	6.2	6.4	6.9	--

\*P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01.

in interviews, since they are subject to symbolic interpretation process, we insist that our work is done within the same symbolic space. In any case, the quantitative methodology is mandatory how we have done through explanation of all methodological components. Universe and sample type, form pilot, conditions under which conducts surveys, etc., so that the idea of do the study again can be at all possible times.

### Data analysis

The analysis of the results has been carried out at several levels of analysis, in order to give effect to the objectives. At one level, have used statistical techniques with classical measures (means, percentages, etc..) to allow the description and comparison groups. At a second level, we have worked with multivariate techniques that attempt to reveal the relationship between the variables that influence and shape the reality studied, and allow progress in the "explanation" and even "prediction" characteristics of this type of study.

### Results

#### Violence in open spaces and psychopathology of offender/victim/observers

The profile of the perpetrator and type of violence perpetrated, is a function of sex, so in the case of boys, use more physical violence (7.5%) than girls (4.3%), and in the case of girls use indirect violence by spreading stories that harm other (8.7%) compared with 4.8% of boys. In our study, a greater percentage of offenders preferably enrolled in public school.

The profile obtained from our study is the victim girl is in a higher percentage (6.6%) as opposed to boys (6.4%), 11-years-old, and further schooled in private schools (9.2%) versus public (7.9%).

The profile of the observer is an important fact because it accounts for exposure to violence that our teenagers are. He asked them if they've seen situations of violence in the way of school or college or back home. The boys, more than girls, have been observers of behaviours such

as hitting, kicking, spitting or some form of physical violence by 26.8% versus the 21.8% girls, racist comments or jokes 29% versus 26.6%. The girls have been observers of behaviours such as insulting because of a disability or special needs by 24.9% compared to 22.8% in boys; ignore someone, despise by 29.8% compared to 24.3% for boys. Spreading stories that hurt someone 25.6% girls vs. 17% of boys (Table 2).

#### Open spaces and victimization

Most of the boys and girls perceive that certain mates are victimized because: a) Are weak (48.9%); b) Are seen different (43.6%); c) Racism (36.1%); d) Are alone (29.3%); e) Because they are bad company (20.2%); f) Because they have a disability (18.7%); g) Sexual orientation (16.3%); h) Bother people (13.5%); i) From drinking alcohol, using drugs, smoking (11.3%) and j) Because they deserve (3.8%).

Significant differences by age, and children under 11 years believe that the traits that make become a victim of abuse is that they are rich (13.9+%), going to dangerous places (14.5+%), and drinking alcohol, using drugs and smoking (17.6+%); at twelve, practically consider the same thing adding going with bad company (+29.7%). However, older give prominence to the difference (53.8+ to 51.7+ fifteen and sixteen), because they are weak (58.8+ to 55.7+ fifteen and sixteen) and sexual orientation (22.6+) at fifteen (Table 3).

#### Bullying and security on the route from home to school

Faced with the question of whether they have felt intimidated, they have attacked or robbed or been hurt way to school/college, it is noteworthy that the vast majority of both boys (86.7%) and girls (89%) will answer that never, they have attacked or robbed on the way home. For ages we found no significant differences in this variable. However, you should take the percentage of boys (0.3%) and girls (1.5%) who have always felt intimidated and sometimes/as, stolen or been attacked. Overall, 6.5% have the perception of having been tampered with (always, of-

**Table 3:** Victimization.

Why do you think that some people are Harassed, Attacked, Stolen or Damaged more than others?								
	Total	Age (Years)						Sig
		11	12	13	14	15	16	
	1092	181	183	183	185	179	183	-
They look different	43.6	35.6-	36.6-	39.3	44.8	53.8+	51.7+	**
Are rich	6.2	13.9+	8.0	2.8	4.1	5.4	2.8	*
Are poor	6.9	10.1	7.3	8.5	6.0	4.7	5.0	-
Bother people	13.5	16.1	13.7	17.0	8.8	14.0	11.6	-
They deserve	3.8	2.3	1.8	7.0+	1.6	6.5	3.6	*
Go to dangerous places	9.3	14.5+	14.0+	7.5	8.8	6.2	4.5-	**
Go with bad companies	20.2	24.7	29.7+	14.5-	22.1	16.6	13.7-	-
For they have drinking alcohol, Using drugs, Smoking	11.3	17.6+	20.0+	8.4	6.2-	10.7	5.0-	-
Are alone	29.3	21.8-	27.0	30.9	32.0	32.8	31.5	-
Are weak	48.9	41.2-	42.4	47.7	47.4	58.8+	55.7+	**
Racism	36.1	22.2-	33.8	44.2+	40.3	39.8	36.1	*
Because they have a disability	18.7	19.0	19.4	24.4+	13.7	22.0	14.1	-
Because their sexual orientation	16.3	10.7	12.2	16.4	16.0	22.6+	19.7	-
Other	14.5	8.8-	16.9	15.2	12.8	16.9	16.1	-

\*P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01.

**Table 4:** Bullying and Security on the route from home to school.

Have you felt intimidated/are you have been Attacked, Robbed or been hurt way to school/college?						
	Total	Gender		Province		
		Hombre	Mujer	Alicante	Castellón	Valencia
Always	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.2	-	0.6
Often	0.4	-	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.2
Sometimes	5.7	6.1	5.4	4.5	7.9	5.8
Never	87.8	86.7	89	88.8	90.5	86.7
(Always + Often)	0.8	0.3	1.3	0.9	0.5	0.8
Have you felt intimidated/have been attacked/robbed or been hurt by going to home?						
Always	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.2	-	0.5
Often	0.3	0.3	0.2	-	-	0.5
Sometimes	7.6	7.2	8.1	7.9	6.8	7.7
Never	85.8	85.9	85.7	86.2	90.5	84.5
(Always + Often)	0.6	0.4	0.8	0.2	-	0.9

ten, sometimes). Also on the way back home from school is worrying the fact that sometimes have felt intimidated or attacked 7.2% of boys and 8.1% of girls. By provinces, no significant differences are noted (Table 4).

### Reducing violence in situations of outdoor spaces

Among the intervention strategies proposed by teens surveyed, a majority in both boys and girls against the assertiveness training in cyber tutoring. At the social level is very low index of boys/girls who know that there are resources for help and call or visit any page antibullying. They have sought some form of help, only 2.30% (1.8% call, visit an anti bullying web 0.5); versus 47.3% who did not. 31.4% which has never happened; 12.0% think that was why no call/no call wanted; 13.1% did not know any anti bullying websites and did not know they could call for help by 2.2%. We found significant differences between the boys on a percentage (14.2+) consider that they did not have to call, or telling anyone (Table 5).

**Table 5:** Strategies for reduce violence in situations of outdoor spaces.

	Total	Gender	
		Man	Woman
	1.09	555	537
From School Context			
Cyber tutoring	24.1	22.3	25.9
Assertiveness training	63.5	64.9	62.2
Don't know/no answer	16.5	17.2	15.7
From Social Context			
I called for help	1.8	2.1	1.5
I visited a web against bullying	0.5	0.5	0.6
I have not done this	47.3	46.5	48.1
I did not know I could call for help	2.2	1.6	2.9
I did not know there were webs against bullying	13.1	13.8	12.5
I did not have to call/not want to call	12.0	14.2+	9.7-
It has not happened	31.4	30.7	32.1

## Discussion

This study provides a profile of attacker who uses physical violence, preferably male and enrolled in public schools. Most research in the field of school context, pointing agree that bullying is a predominantly male problem: the boys are usually more often than girls, bullies [18] Ortega and Mora-Merchan [14] conclude that more boys assaulted at school than girls. Psychopathological personality traits that would make the aggressor would aggressiveness and strong impulsivity, lack of empathy, little anger, hardly reflective or hyperactive, deficits in social skills and conflict resolution. In addition, the attacker usually has four basic needs [19]: the need for leadership (to be seen and to get attention); need to feel superior (have a huge desire to be stronger and more powerful than the other); need to feel different (aggressors a reputation and identity in a particular peer group around them and, finally, the need to fill an emotional gap (the attackers require new sensations and experiences that they create and manage being the center of attention).

The victim profile is preferably female, sometimes provocative-victim may be using indirect violence by spreading stories that may impair other and schooled in private centers. The psychopathological profile of the victim would be: insecure personality, low self esteem, high anxiety, weak, submissive, introverted, shy, immaturity and added possibility of psychiatric disorders. These profiles are in line with those obtained in other studies such as Cerezo [20] and the UNICEF [21].

As forms of abuse using either gender as in our study, the results presented in other studies [2,22] show that boys tend to use more often than the girls direct physical assault and damage to property of others peers, while girls are opting for more subtle forms of aggression and indirect as intimidation, manipulation and social isolation; Finally, boys and girls alike use verbal aggression as name-calling or to ridicule [7,23,24].

The most common forms of abuse observed by both boys and girls are hitting, hitting, spitting, comment, ignore someone who also appear in previous studies as common forms of violence. Most perceive to be victimized because they are weak, and in some trait that makes them look different race, weakness, disability, sexual orientation, etc. This is more significant as the kids grow older.

Our research provides significant information in relation to the perceived safety of the boys and girls between 11 and 16 years on the journey from home to school and vice versa. Overall 6.5% have the perception of having been tampered with (always, often, sometimes). Also on the way back home from school is worrying the fact that

sometimes have felt intimidated or attacked 7.2% of boys and 8.1% of girls. As for the reactions highlights flee, do nothing or seek help from an adult or friend. It is significant that neither the police nor the teacher are figures that help or have a problem of violence or intimidation.

Regarding protection strategies the most commitment to training in social skills and assertiveness also noteworthy is the lack of knowledge of our teens about the existing resources (web pages against bullying, help-lines, etc.).

We conclude from the data of our research and according to Zabala [17], the sense of security that does not occur only in the school setting, but you have to work with areas defined as "undefined public spaces" as to the responsibility their vigilance (teacher, police, etc.) and we need a comprehensive approach to community and prevention of violence in the classroom context and surrounding environment through the involvement of various community classes. In this line include community initiatives, as proposed by experts from UNESCO [25], which concludes that to reduce violence in schools should strengthen relationships between school and community, promoting initiatives such as security patrols volunteers and community representatives parents. Yanira [26] proposed the "Core Family Education" as a proposed community work to prevent violence in school, the family and the neighbourhood, interacting both families that make up the school community with the district to which they belong. In our country, there are initiatives to end violence in schools [27] within the school, such as: quality circles, conflict mediation, peer support, assertiveness and developing victim empathy for aggressors. But include those that take place outside school such as the initiative of "policing" or "safe neighbourhood" in which a police officer, known by the students, is integrated into the areas near schools and collaborates safety thereof. Besides this initiative can strengthen surveillance to prevent diseases related to drug trafficking activities.

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