Charting a path to healthy coexistence: a comparative study on bullying and the teaching of values in secular and religious schools

Trazando un camino hacia la convivencia saludable: un estudio comparativo sobre el bullying y la enseñanza de valores en escuelas laicas y religiosas

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Abstract

Bullying, or bullying, is conceptualized by Echeverri and Vargas (2018) as the deliberate and systematic violence of one or more students towards another, generating an imbalance of power. The study, which approached 104 sixth-grade students in private and public schools, used a comparison design with an instrument of 49 variables, 5 of them signalized, and analyzed with Statistica. The main objective was to examine the relationship between bullying and the teaching of values in secular and religious schools. The results highlighted the importance of parental responsibility in social cohesion, as well as the need to address socio-emotional development and self-knowledge to prevent bullying. The promotion of a healthy coexistence between parents contributed to the academic efficiency and emotional management of the students. The recognition of individual qualities boosted self-esteem, reducing levels of violence in the classroom. The intervention proposal suggests the creation of a model that integrates mandatory socio-emotional subjects, strengthening the prevention of bullying and promoting a safe and positive educational environment. This research offers a valuable contribution to the field by highlighting crucial factors for school coexistence and proposing practical strategies for the continuous improvement of the education system.

Bullying, Secular education, Religious values

Resumen

El bullying, o acoso escolar, conceptualizado por Echeverri y Vargas (2018) como la violencia deliberada y sistemática de uno o más estudiantes hacia otro, generando un desequilibrio de poder. El estudio, que abordó a 104 estudiantes de nivel primaria en colegios privados y públicos, empleó un diseño de comparación con un instrumento de 49 variables, 5 de ellas signalíticas, analizado con Statistica. El objetivo central fue examinar la relación entre el bullying y la enseñanza de valores en escuelas laicas y religiosas. Los resultados destacaron la importancia de la responsabilidad parental en la cohesión social, así como la necesidad de abordar el desarrollo socioemocional y autoconocimiento para prevenir el acoso escolar. La promoción de una convivencia saludable entre padres contribuyó a la eficiencia académica y al manejo emocional de los estudiantes. El reconocimiento de las cualidades individuales potenció la autoestima, reduciendo los niveles de violencia en las aulas. La propuesta de intervención sugiere la creación de un modelo que integre materias socioemocionales obligatorias, fortaleciendo la prevención del acoso escolar y promoviendo un ambiente educativo seguro y positivo. Esta investigación ofrece una valiosa contribución al campo al destacar factores cruciales para la convivencia escolar y proponer estrategias prácticas para la mejora continua del sistema educativo.

Bullying, Educación laica, Valores religiosos

Introduction

In the current Mexican panorama, violence emerges as an issue of utmost relevance and urgent need to be addressed. The insecurity that permeates the country's daily life has given rise to growing levels of concern, manifesting a problem that is progressively expanding.

Within this context, school bullying, known as bullying, has emerged as a tangible expression of violence in the educational sphere. The definition proposed by Echeverri and Vargas (2018) underlines its deliberate and systematic nature, generating an imbalance of power between one or more students. This phenomenon has gained notoriety in educational conversations, suggesting that it could constitute a significant barrier to learning and skills development during formative stages.

Specialists in this field have directed their efforts towards the eradication of this practice at all levels of education, giving way to an approach focused on the promotion of values as a means of fostering healthy coexistence among peers.

It is essential to contextualise the problems and issues that characterise individuals at different stages of their lives, with adolescence being a crucial period for personal development. In this study, special attention will be given to this stage, recognising its importance in the development of individuals.

The general objective of this work focuses on exploring the relationship between bullying and the teaching of values in primary school students, both in public and private education.

The theoretical importance of this research lies in the integration of specialised literature linking bullying and values. From a methodological perspective, the value of this work is based on the use of a research instrument that will generate key information to understand these phenomena in a deeper way.

Theoretical framework

In the current context of Mexico, violence presents itself as an issue of utmost relevance and urgent need to be addressed.

The growing daily insecurity in the country has generated widespread concern, aggravated by pandemic circumstances that affect not only nationally, but also globally. In this scenario, school harassment, translated as bullying, emerges as a specific expression of violence in the educational sphere.

According to the definition of Echeverri and Vargas (2018), bullying is configured as an act of deliberate and systematic violence, carried out by one or more students towards another, generating an imbalance of power. This practice has gained relevance in educational discourse, being considered a potential barrier to learning and skills development in learners.

School violence, according to Jaramillo (2018) and the United Nations (2019), encompasses a wide range of aggressive physical or psychological acts, which can occur both in and out of school, including cyberspace. Factors such as mental disorders, phobias and exposure to violence in the family environment contribute to the manifestation of aggressive behaviours in students (Flores, 2017; Toledo et al., 2018).

The study of school violence has led to the identification of different explanatory theories, from genetic to signal-activation (Parra et al., 1992). The family emerges as a crucial factor, with the family micro-system being an important source of violence (Díaz-Aguado, 2006). However, prolonged exposure to violence can lead to a binary perception of the world, where the roles of aggressor and aggressed become dominant (Díaz-Aguado, 2006).

The term "coexistence problems", proposed by Bizcocho & Bizcocho (2003), offers a broader and more positive perspective to address school violence, including interpersonal conflicts and verbal aggression. The importance of values in mitigating these problems is highlighted as a crucial approach.

The teaching of values becomes a fundamental tool to promote healthy coexistence among peers. Quintanilla & Salinas (2017) stress that values act as mediators in social interaction, being essential for personal development. Individual perception of what is good or bad is organised into scales of preference, influencing the formation of personality and interpersonal relationships (Tierno, 1994; Martínez, 2016).

Adolescence, a vital stage identified by Papalia (1985) and Arias (2013) in three periods, is presented as a critical time in which adolescents experience significant physical and psychological changes. The family environment, affective relationships and social acceptance play a crucial role in their emotional and social development.

During this period, emotional autonomy, emotional relationships, social acceptance and the search for identity are essential for healthy adolescent development (Rice, 2000). However, the pressure to conform to stereotypes and the influence of the environment can generate emotional conflicts and negatively affect interpersonal relationships.

In conclusion, the relationship between bullying, values and development during adolescence is a complex and multidimensional field. Addressing these issues requires not only prevention and intervention strategies, but also a holistic approach that considers the teaching of values as a key tool to foster a more positive coexistence.

Methodology to be developed

This study adopts a comparative and differential design, addressing both the target population and several significant variables.

The operational structure of the study focuses on the formulation of a research approach, the design of a working methodology and the operationalisation of the results in order to propose effective interventions.

The population under study comprises primary school students from both public and private institutions with a focus on theological values.

The methodological design is based on a comparative approach, with a sample of 104 primary school students, equally distributed between public schools (52) and public schools (52). The research instrument consists of 49 variables, of which 5 are signalistic. The information was processed qualitatively and quantitatively using Statistica.

The research instrument is characterised by three specific steps that detail the instructions for its application. It is emphasised that responses should be recorded on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represents the absence of the attribute and 10 indicates its maximum presence. Furthermore, it is stressed that there are no right or wrong answers, and it is instructed that there should be no unanswered questions.

The instrument, composed of 49 questions, is divided into two sections: 26 questions address the topic of bullying, while the remaining 23 focus on contrasting values. Each question has an adjacent blank space for the answer on the mentioned scale.

For relative objectification, specific statistical software will be used. Statistics will be used for characterisation, SPSS will provide the correlation of variables, and Excel will be used for the creation of graphs representing data, means and percentages. This comprehensive methodological approach ensures a thorough analysis of the data collected and an accurate interpretation of the results obtained.

Results

In order to provide an explanation of the research axes on bullying and values, which constitute the phenomenon of study, analyses of relative frequencies obtained through the application of the research instrument were carried out. This was carried out using different statistical programs with the purpose of characterizing both the population and the phenomenon of study, through the analysis of frequencies, percentages, correlations and comparisons.

It is important to note that, for the development of parametric statistics, we chose to apply the law of large numbers. This choice was based on the significance found in the correlation between means and medians, in order to increase the levels of confidence in the explanations provided.

Frequencies and percentages

The results of the statistical processing of frequencies and percentages for the variables Sex, Age, Number of siblings, Religion, Sport and Bullying, which make up the phenomenon under study, are presented below.

Variable sex

The analysis reveals that of the 104 students surveyed in the sixth grade of primary school, 46 belong to the female sex, representing 44.23% of the total population. On the other hand, the male sex is composed of 58 subjects, representing 55.76% of the population.

Age

It is observed that 26 students are 12 years old, constituting 25% of the sample, while 77 subjects are 11 years old, representing 74%.

Number of siblings

Of the students surveyed, 7 have no siblings, representing 6.73% of the total population. In contrast, 97 students have siblings, representing 93.26%. It is suggested that the extrapolation with the highest degree of confidence will be for those students who do have siblings.

Religion

In relation to religion, 1 student belongs to the Jehovah's Witnesses, representing 0.96% of the total population, while 83 students practice the Catholic religion, constituting 79.8%.

Sport

It is observed that 29 students do not practice sport, representing 27.88%. On the other hand, 75 subjects practice sport, representing 72.11%.

Bullying

Regarding the variable Bullying, 45 students have been victims, representing 43.26% of the population, while 59 subjects have not suffered Bullying, representing 56.73%.

Characterisation

The main results of the 49 variables that make up the study phenomenon, divided into 26 on bullying and 23 on values, are presented below. Regarding the statistics that centre, scatter and confirm normality, it is observed that most of the variables are predictors of the population ($z >= 1.96$), with a confidence level of 95%.

Regarding the mean (x), it is noted that certain variables show high values, indicating that students in a healthy family environment can perform better in school dynamics and in their interpersonal relationships.

In the C.V statistic, it is observed that most of the variables are characterised as a group of opinion with equal characteristics ($CV \leq 51$). In addition, the means of means are analysed to identify the variables that are in the low values of the scale (0 to 3), suggesting that the selected population is immersed in a conflictive environment, which complicates the development and coexistence in their interpersonal relationships within the classrooms.

Correlation

The correlation reading was carried out through Pearson's processing, corresponding to parametric statistics. A significance level of $P=0.001$ was used, equivalent to a correlation of $r=0.37$.

It was observed that when the subject trusts his parents to talk about a problem, he achieves an attitude ($r = 0.56$) of security ($r = 0.46$), allowing him to develop self-esteem ($r = 0.44$), which favours dialogue with his peers. It can be inferred that the solidification of society is based on parental responsibility.

By sharing moments of recreation as a family, the subjects acquire an attitude ($r= 0.56$) of security ($r= 0.45$), which allows them to show their feelings ($r= 0.43$), motivating them to interact ($r= 0.42$) through dialogue ($r= 0.40$), strengthening their self-esteem ($r=0.36$) and self-confidence ($r=0.36$). At the same time, it generates an attitude of respect ($r= 0.35$) towards the rules ($r= 0.34$) in their school community, collaborating ($r= 0.34$) in the creation of an atmosphere of freedom ($r= 0.33$). It can be inferred that coexistence within the family environment is fundamental for the development of the individual.

When students trust their teacher, they can turn to him/her for solutions to any problem ($r= 0.38$) in the classroom, helping to generate an atmosphere of harmony ($r= 0.37$), which motivates them to have a collaborative attitude ($r= 0.33$) ($r= 0.32$).

It can be inferred that the teacher is a key element in creating a good classroom climate that helps the integral development of the pupil.

If the parents of the subjects live together in harmony, they generate that their children have confidence (r= 0.50) in themselves and in their environment, which allows them to develop communication skills (r= 0.40) within their school environment, achieving compliance with the rules (r= 0.35) and being collaborative (r= 0.35) with their classmates. It can be inferred that healthy coexistence between parents enhances academic efficiency and the management of students' emotions.

When the subjects manage to have communication in their family environment, they show trust (r= 0.54), respect (r=0.48) and a collaborative attitude (r= 0.45) (r= 0.37), which favours dialogue (r= 0.37) for the fulfilment of the rules (r= 0.36), generating feelings (r= 0.33) that help their self-esteem (r= 0.32). It is inferred that communication is an essential skill for the strengthening of a responsible society.

It is observed that when the subjects comply with the rules, they acquire a collaborative attitude (r=0.58) that generates trust (r=0.43) and kindness, allowing them to live together in harmony (r=0.32). It can therefore be inferred that respect for laws and norms generates responsible and committed citizens.

If students feel motivated, they show security (r=0.63), self-esteem (r=0.61) and interact (r= 0.47) in class, strengthening dialogue so that they can express their feelings (r= 0.42) and recognise their qualities (r= 0.40), providing freedom (r= 0.37) to live together in harmony (r= 0.33) in the classroom. It can be inferred that an optimal classroom environment creates successful and emotionally healthy students.

When the subjects feel secure in their environment, they manage to act with freedom (r= 0.56), which generates self-esteem (r= 0.47) and helps them to recognise their qualities (r= 0.46), to relate in harmony (r= 0.41) and to solve problems through dialogue (r= 0.34). It is inferred that when students express what they feel through what they like, they reduce violent attitudes and develop more freely.

If the subjects have the ability to express what they feel, it helps to create an atmosphere of fraternity (r= 0.47) that allows them to feel free (r= 0.45) to carry out activities, putting into practice their qualities (r= 0.39) for interaction (r= 0.38) and dialogue (r=0.36), strengthening their self-esteem. It can be inferred that if the school places special emphasis on the emotional health of the students, they will be able to develop in a healthy environment that strengthens their performance in their academic activities.

Students feel free in a harmonious environment (r= 0.44), which allows them to interact (r=0.41), making use of their qualities (r=0.41), and respecting (r=0.35) others. It can be inferred that the recognition of the students' qualities boosts their self-esteem, giving them the freedom to innovate and thus reduce the levels of violence in the classroom.

Comparison

A comparative analysis of the variables that make up the study phenomenon will be carried out by means of a T-test processing for independent samples applied to 104 subjects in the STATISTICA programme. The analysis focuses on the comparison between the results of surveys carried out in public and private institutions, with a probability level of P=0.0005.

Variable Violence

In the violence variable, it is observed that the students of the private institution present more aggressive attitudes (4.58) than the students of the public school (2.33). It is inferred that the fact of taking subjects with religious values does not influence the behaviour of the students.

Variable fear

In the fear variable, it is observed that the students of the private institution have felt insecure (2.50) when going to school, in contrast to the students of the public school (0.54). It can be inferred that, despite the care provided by teachers in a private institution with religious values, children feel some fear from their peers.

Variable belittling

In the variable belittling, it is observed that the students in the private institution feel less (3.50) than their peers compared to the students in the public school (1.35). It is inferred that, in institutions with religious values, students have good emotional health.

In the reading of the dominance variable, it is observed that students in the private institution have been forced to do things they do not want to do (2.19) compared to students in the public school (0.27). It is inferred that students in private institutions with religious values tend to have more authoritarian attitudes.

In the self-esteem variable, we read that students in the public school feel comfortable with their physical appearance (6.85) compared to students in the private institution (6.85). It is inferred that pupils in a public and secular institution have good self-esteem which enables them to develop positive socialisation skills.

Acknowledgements

Conclusions

In conclusion, when analysing the frequencies and percentages, it stands out that the male sex predominates in the student sample. In terms of characterisation, it is evident that those students who come from a healthy family environment show a better performance both in school dynamics and in their interpersonal relationships.

In the correlation analysis, the transcendence of parental responsibility in the solidification of society is underlined, as well as the crucial importance of family coexistence for the integral development of the individual. In addition, the fundamental role of the teacher in creating a conducive environment within the classroom that contributes to the integral development of the pupil is highlighted. Communication skills emerge as an indispensable pillar for strengthening a responsible society, while respect for laws and norms is revealed as a determining factor in the formation of responsible and committed citizens.

In the field of education, it is concluded that an optimal classroom environment not only favours academic success, but also promotes the emotional health of students. Furthermore, the recognition of individual qualities emerges as a catalyst for enhancing students' self-esteem, giving them the freedom to innovate and ultimately contributing to the reduction of violence in the classroom.

Comparing the results, it appears that taking subjects with religious values does not significantly affect students' behaviour, while, paradoxically, despite the care provided by teachers in private institutions with religious values, children experience a certain amount of fear from their peers. Furthermore, it is observed that students from institutions with religious values exhibit good emotional health, although they tend to display more authoritarian attitudes. In contrast, students from public and secular institutions exhibit positive self-esteem, which facilitates the development of socialisation skills.

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