



Relationship between School Violence, Sportspersonship and Personal and Social Responsibility in Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the levels of sportspersonship, everyday school violence and personal and social responsibility in primary and secondary school students. The sample was comprised of 672 students (382 boys and 290 girls) between the ages of 12 and 16 ($M \pm SD = 13.99 \pm 1.75$) at 16 schools in the region of Murcia, Spain. The participants were in the 6th grade of primary education and the 3rd year of compulsory secondary education. They completed the Spanish version of the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientations Scale to measure this variable; the Questionnaire on Everyday School Violence; and the Spanish translation of the Personal and Social Responsibility Questionnaire to measure this variable. The results indicated medium-high levels of sportspersonship, low rates of violence suffered compared to violence observed, the latter with medium-high variables, and high levels of responsibility, with higher values in social responsibility. Positive and significant relationships were found between the five dimensions of sportspersonship and the two dimensions of responsibility. On the other hand, the violence suffered and violence observed dimensions correlated negatively and significantly with the five dimensions of sportspersonship and the two dimensions of responsibility. This suggests that that pedagogical models geared towards education in values such as responsibility or sportspersonship should be implemented in order to reduce school violence.

Keywords: education in values, physical education, bullying, peaceful coexistence at schoolcolar

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Introduction

School violence is currently considered to be one of the most important challenges that the educational system must deal with internationally (Gázquez et al., 2009). According to the Ombudsman's report ([Defensor del Pueblo], 2007) on the situation of secondary schools in Spain, the number of students who state that they have observed different types of violence ranges between 49% and 55.8%. In this sense, the predominant violent behaviour is verbal aggression (insults, using offensive nicknames, badmouthing someone), followed in descending order by threats and blackmail (22.7%), social exclusion (22.5%), direct physical aggression (14.2%), theft (10.5%), material damage (7.2%) and finally sexual harassment, perceived by 1.3% of the respondents.

In an attempt to palliate the negative consequences of school violence on victims, many efforts and initiatives have been implemented nationally and internationally in the course of the last decade to foster peaceful coexistence and the social integration of students in the classroom (Ortega, 2010), given that the experience of suffering from peer violence is associated with negative consequences in personal, social and school adaptation (Beale, 2001), while observed violence is also an important factor because of its implications on mental health and school adaptation (Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Furthermore, high levels of school violence, both suffered and observed, have been associated with lower satisfaction with body self-image (Gómez-Mármol et al., 2017). In this sense, most of these studies and initiatives have focused primarily on schoolchildren in their last years of primary and secondary school, although more recently, studies have also been conducted on this kind of behaviour at younger ages (Albadalejo et al., 2013).

In recent years, some studies have used physical activity and sports as a tool to improve schoolchildren's values and reduce the levels of school violence (Prat et al., 2019; Fernández-Gavira et al., 2018; Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2013). In this way, fostering certain values such as personal and social responsibility or sportspersonship through the practice of physical activity seems to lead to a reduction in the levels of school violence (Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2013). This practice of physical activity at school focuses on physical education classes, although other proposals prove that interdisciplinary work tends to produce better learnings (Egea et al., 2017).

Regardless of the number of areas involved, lessons in values learned in the educational environment are known to have repercussions beyond it, i.e. in

schoolchildren's everyday lives (Sánchez-Alcaraz & Gómez-Mármol, 2014). Furthermore, the development of certain values has been associated with the development of prosocial behaviours; for example, level of sportspersonship has been associated with level of responsibility (Gómez-Mármol et al., 2014) and with a reduction in violent episodes (Sánchez-Alcaraz, 2014). The objective of this study is to determine the levels of sportspersonship, everyday school violence and personal and social responsibility in students and their differences according to sex and educational level, as well as to analyse the possible correlations among the variables.

Methodology

Design

This research is an empirical study using a quantitative methodology, more specifically a descriptive study of populations based on transversal surveys (Montero & León, 2007).

Participants

The sample was comprised of 672 students between the ages of 12 and 16 ($M \pm SD = 13.99 \pm 1.75$); 382 were boys with a mean age of 13.90 ± 1.79 , and 290 were girls with a mean age of 14.13 ± 1.69 . The students were in the 6th grade of primary school and the 3rd year of compulsory secondary school at six schools in the Region of Murcia, Spain. The sample was accessed by incidental non-probabilistic sampling. The administration of each school and the participants' legal guardians signed an informed consent which stated the conditions of the research, including information such as the fact that participation was voluntary, that the data collected would be processed anonymously and that the survey would neither positively nor negatively affect the mark in any class. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Murcia.

Instruments

Personal and social responsibility

The Spanish translation (Escartí, Gutiérrez, & Pascual, 2011) of the Personal and Social Responsibility Questionnaire (Li et al., 2008) was used to measure the participants' personal and social responsibility. It is comprised of 14 items divided into two factors with seven

items each one: personal responsibility (“I want to improve”, $\alpha = .67$) and social responsibility (“I respect others”, $\alpha = .82$). The participants had to respond on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *totally disagree* to (6) *totally agree*.

Sportpersonship

To measure the level of sportpersonship, the Spanish version of the Multidimensional Sportpersonship Orientations Scale (Martín-Albo et al., 2006) was used, a translation from the English version by Vallerand et al. (1997). This scale is comprised of 25 items organised into five factors with the following introductory phrase: “Which of the following expressions do you think is part of sportpersonship?”. A Likert scale with five alternatives, from (1) *totally disagree* to (5) *totally agree*, was used to respond to the factors: personal commitment to sports practice (“I try to participate in all the activities”, $\alpha = .51$), social conventions (“congratulating your opponent for having played well”, $\alpha = .78$), respect for rules, judges and referees (“respecting the referee even if they are wrong”, $\alpha = .67$), respect for opponents (“rectifying an unfair situation for the opponent”, $\alpha = .62$) and negative perspective (“making excuses for a bad game”, $\alpha = .58$).

School violence

From the 102 items on the California School Climate and Safety Survey (CSCSS) by Rosenblatt and Furlong (1997), Fernández-Baena et al. (2011) chose 14 conceptually appropriate items to evaluate school violence among peers, divided into two factors: violence suffered (“I’ve been punched or kicked”, $\alpha = .84$) and violence observed (“students get into fights”, $\alpha = .84$). They were scored on a Likert scale with five alternatives, from (1) *never* to (5) *always*.

Procedure

The schools were chosen according to the regional divisions of the Teacher and Resource Centres (TRC) in the Autonomous Community of Murcia. Two schools within the region of each TRC participated, one primary school and one secondary school, which were chosen by means of intentional non-probabilistic sampling. Furthermore, the schools were chosen to ensure that they were from areas with similar socioeconomic levels. After the consent of the families and the schools had been secured, the students completed (during the class in which the teacher was the group tutor) the questionnaires on personal and social responsibility,

everyday school violence and sportpersonship. While the questionnaire was being administered, in addition to the tutor, at least one member of the research team was present in the classroom to guarantee anonymity of responses. The participants, who had no time limit to answer the questionnaires, completed them in approximately 30 minutes, and there were no reports of any completion problems.

Statistical Analysis

First of all, the descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) of the sportpersonship, school violence and responsibility variables were calculated for the sample as a whole and for the independent variable categories (sex and educational level). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and χ^2 tests were subsequently performed to check the normality of the data distribution, and the differences between the groups by sex and educational level were analysed using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test. Finally, the correlations among all the dependent variables being studied were calculated using the Spearman Rank test, with significance set at 95%. The results were analysed using the IBM SPSS 21.0 statistical software in its version for Macintosh.

Results

Table 1 presents the level of school violence, sportpersonship and personal and social responsibility for the sample as a whole and broken down by gender. In relation to the sample as a whole, higher levels of violence observed were found than violence suffered, while among all the sportpersonship dimensions, the highest levels were found in commitment to practice and the lowest in respect for the opponent. Furthermore, in terms of responsibility, social responsibility was higher than personal responsibility. On the other hand, and when differences were examined by gender, the data pertaining to school violence showed that boys suffer and observe more violence than girls, although these differences were only significant for the dimension of violence suffered. In terms of levels of sportpersonship, boys showed significantly higher levels in the dimensions of social conventions and respect for the opponent and significantly lower levels in negative perspective of sportpersonship compared to girls. Finally, with regard to responsibility, boys showed higher levels of personal responsibility than girls, the differences being significant.

Table 1*Results of the level of school violence, sportpersonship, personal and social responsibility according to gender*

	Total <i>M ± SD</i>	Boys <i>M ± SD</i>	Girls <i>M ± SD</i>	Sig. (<i>p</i>)
School violence				
Violence suffered	1.57 ± 0.65	1.66 ± 0.70	1.46 ± 0.57	.000**
Violence observed	2.25 ± 0.90	2.25 ± 0.94	2.24 ± 0.86	.823
Sportpersonship				
Commitment to practice	4.40 ± 0.62	4.40 ± 0.67	4.38 ± 0.55	.061
Social conventions	4.34 ± 0.80	4.38 ± 0.80	4.29 ± 0.80	.018*
Respect for rules and referees	4.36 ± 0.67	4.35 ± 0.71	4.37 ± 0.63	.689
Respect for the opponent	3.45 ± 0.98	3.51 ± 1.01	3.36 ± 0.94	.033*
Negative perspective	3.64 ± 0.99	3.51 ± 0.99	3.80 ± 0.96	.000**
Responsibility				
Personal responsibility	5.02 ± 0.77	5.11 ± 0.78	4.91 ± 0.75	.000**
Social responsibility	5.24 ± 0.71	5.22 ± 0.75	5.27 ± 0.65	.793

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 2 shows the results on the level of school violence, sportpersonship and personal and social responsibility according to educational level. With regard to the results found in everyday school violence, there were higher levels of violence in compulsory secondary school than in primary school, in both violence suffered and observed, although these differences were only significant for the violence suffered dimension. In terms of sportpersonship, significantly higher values were found in primary school students than in secondary students in all sportpersonship dimensions except negative perspective. In terms of responsibility, higher values were found in primary than in secondary school, and these values were significant in both personal responsibility and social responsibility.

Finally, Table 3 analyses the relationships among the different variables studied. In this sense, the responsibility dimensions correlated positively and significantly with each other, as did the dimensions of violence suffered and observed and the dimensions of sportpersonship, with the exception of negative perspective. Conversely, the dimensions of violence suffered and observed correlated negatively and significantly with the five dimensions of sportpersonship and the two dimensions of responsibility. Furthermore, positive and significant relationships were found between the five dimensions of sportpersonship and the two dimensions of responsibility.

Table 2*Results of the level of school violence, sportpersonship, personal and social responsibility according to educational level.*

	Primary <i>M ± SD</i>	Secondary <i>M ± SD</i>	Sig. (<i>p</i>)
School violence			
Violence suffered	1.41 ± 0.45	1.74 ± 0.80	.000**
Violence observed	2.19 ± 0.98	2.27 ± 0.87	.150
Sportpersonship			
Commitment to practice	1.41 ± 0.45	4.37 ± 0.61	.028*
Social conventions	2.19 ± 0.98	4.27 ± 0.81	.005**
Respect for rules and referees	4.36 ± 0.67	4.27 ± 0.64	.000**
Respect for the opponent	3.45 ± 0.98	3.28 ± 0.98	.000**
Negative perspective	3.64 ± 0.99	3.69 ± 0.92	.648
Responsibility			
Personal responsibility	5.14 ± 0.74	4.92 ± 0.73	.000**
Social responsibility	5.32 ± 0.78	5.17 ± 0.61	.000**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 3
Correlations between sportspersonship, school violence and responsibility

		CP	CS	RRA	RO	PN	VS	VO	RS	RP
Commitment to practice (CP)	Correlation coefficient	1.00	.262**	.254**	.229**	.012	-.036	-.067	.263**	.333**
	Sig. (Bilateral)	–	.000	.000	.000	.771	.365	.089	.000	.000
Social conventions (SC)	Correlation coefficient	–	1.000	.401**	.308**	.184**	-.099*	-.112**	.299**	.304**
	Sig. (Bilateral)	–	–	.000	.000	.000	.012	.005	.000	.000
Respect for rules and referees (RRR)	Correlation coefficient	–	–	1.000	.329**	.184**	-.098*	-.118**	.338**	.241**
	Sig. (Bilateral)	–	–	–	.000	.000	.013	.003	.000	.000
Respect for the opponent (RO)	Correlation coefficient	–	–	–	1.000	-.111**	.003	-.086*	.247**	.170**
	Sig. (Bilateral)	–	–	–	–	.005	.939	.029	.000	.000
Negative perspective (NP)	Correlation coefficient	–	–	–	–	1.000	-.130**	-.081*	.123**	.101*
	Sig. (Bilateral)	–	–	–	–	–	.001	.041	.002	.011
Violence suffered (VS)	Correlation coefficient	–	–	–	–	–	1.000	.449**	-.164**	-.036
	Sig. (Bilateral)	–	–	–	–	–	–	.000	.000	.363
Violence observed (VO)	Correlation coefficient	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.000	-.227**	-.071
	Sig. (Bilateral)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.000	.071
Social responsibility (SR)	Correlation coefficient	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.000	.493**
	Sig. (Bilateral)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.000
Personal responsibility (PR)	Correlation coefficient	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.000
	Sig. (Bilateral)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to ascertain the levels of sportpersonship, everyday school violence and personal and social responsibility in primary and compulsory secondary school students, as well as the possible correlations among these variables. Generally speaking, the analysis of the levels of sportpersonship yielded high values in the factors of commitment to practice, social conventions and respect for the rules, and medium values in the dimensions of respect for the opponent and negative sportpersonship, quite similar to the findings of the studies conducted with athletes by Gómez-Mármol et al. (2011) and Vallerand et al. (1997). On the other hand, the values of violence observed by the students were higher than the values of violence suffered at school, with medium values in violence observed, while violence suffered presented lower values. These figures coincide with the studies by Fernández-Baena et al. (2011) and Gómez-Mármol et al. (2017), who analysed levels of violence in schoolchildren. The results related to responsibility showed high values in the dimensions of personal and social responsibility, and were also greater than the values of social responsibility versus personal responsibility, which tallies with the findings of similar studies (Gutiérrez et al., 2011; Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2013).

The comparison between the sexes in the sportpersonship variable showed that females were less sportpersonship-oriented than males, given that the former valued respect for the opponent, commitment to practice and social conventions less, while they were more likely to accept certain behaviours regarded as unsportspersonlike. Although these results match those of Sánchez-Alcaraz et al. (2018), they contradict those of Gutiérrez and Pilsa (2006) in their study with athletes, where they found higher levels of sportpersonship among females. This lack of consensus on the issue, proposed as a future research avenue in the study by Sánchez-Alcaraz et al. (2018), may be due to cultural or social factors which may not have been considered. The results in school violence showed higher rates in males, which were significant for violence suffered, matching the studies by Fernández-Baena et al. (2011) and Martínez-Monteagudo et al. (2011), who found lower levels of school violence in females. This greater involvement by males in episodes of school violence can be explained, according to Espelage and Swearer (2010), by their physical strength, which is positively associated with engaging in violent behaviour. In terms of the responsibility variable, girls showed higher levels of social responsibility, although the differences were not significant, while boys showed significantly higher

levels in terms of personal responsibility, which concurs with other similar studies (Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2013). These results may be due to the fact that males at these ages engage in more regular physical activity and participate more in these activities than their female counterparts, who engage in more sedentary activities (Cano et al., 2011), which therefore do not work on aspects related to socialisation and peaceful coexistence among peers. These situations may explain why male schoolchildren showed higher levels of sportpersonship and personal responsibility.

On the other hand, the influence of educational level on sportpersonship, everyday school violence and responsibility was also studied. Generally speaking, the best results were found in the primary school students, i.e. younger students. The transition from primary to secondary school often entails a change of school, which contributes to the need to create a new circle of friends as part of the socialisation process. Adolescents sometimes participate in episodes of school violence to be admitted into a given group (Tejero et al., 2009), as a need for social recognition. Specifically, for the sportpersonship variable, the results according to the participants' educational level showed significant differences in favour of primary school students in the dimensions of commitment to practice, social conventions, respect for the rules and respect for the opponent, in line with the studies by Gutiérrez and Pilsa (2006) in a sample of young athletes; in these studies, the older students showed lower sportpersonship than the younger ones. These results are quite similar to those of Stuart and Ebbeck (1995), who asserted that older players perceived that their milieu approved anti-sportspersonlike behaviours, given that they presented less mature reasons when taking a moral decision, and were more frequently categorised as those who engaged in unsportspersonlike behaviours by coaches. Many authors also note a gradual increase in aggressiveness and violent and antisocial behaviours from primary to secondary school, until the ages of 15 to 16 approximately, when impulsiveness diminishes and values and norms are internalised (Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2014). According to Gómez-Mármol et al. (2014), these ages are characterised by major changes in personality and in the habits of engaging in physical-sports activity (dropping out of sports at these ages is fairly common, and is even more accentuated in girls).

The results of this study showed lower levels of violence observed and suffered among primary school students, confirming the findings of other studies on school violence, where higher levels of violence observed and suffered were found in older students (González-Pérez, 2007). In this sense, Zambrano (2017) stresses the key

role of schoolchildren's milieu, especially the family, in introducing violence, primarily determined by issues related to socioeconomic and cultural level. On the other hand, in the responsibility variable, the results indicated statistically significant higher levels of personal and social responsibility in primary school students, which confirms the suitability of administering the MRPS to students ages 6 to 13 (Escartí et al., 2010). The reasons for these results may be the fact that primary school students present higher levels of physical activity than secondary school students, when higher levels of sedentary activities are recorded (Cano et al., 2011), reducing the opportunity to keep working on prosocial behaviours and peaceful coexistence among peers in favour of more passive activities.

The relationship between the different study variables was also examined, with a significant negative correlation found between the two dimensions of violence, suffered and observed, and the five dimensions of sportspersonship and the two dimensions of responsibility. With regard to these results, we could assert that the practice of sport does not generate violence in students; on the contrary, positive and significant relationships were found between the five dimensions of sportspersonship and the dimensions of responsibility, matching the results of García et al. (2012). Thus, an improvement in the values of responsibility could have positive repercussions on the values of sportspersonship and lower levels of violence without the need for a separate action plan for each of these variables.

This study has several limitations that should be borne in mind when interpreting the results. First of all, the data collection was based on quantitative research techniques through the use of questionnaires. Although these instruments presented adequate levels of reliability and validity, they are based on the participating students' subjective perceptions, not on objective values. Furthermore, only the sociodemographic values related to the students' gender and age were examined, and future studies should consider other variables, such as socioeconomic and educational levels, as crucial in the research.

Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, and with regard to the objectives, we may conclude that while violence does exist in classrooms, the levels are not high, whereas the values reached in positive variables such as sportspersonship and responsibility did present a high degree of development. However, generally speaking, the students in compulsory secondary school had lower scores in all

three variables analysed, which could be looked upon considered as a fresh call to conduct intervention programmes with them. In terms of gender, boys presented more developed degrees of sportspersonship and responsibility, although they also suffer from more violence. Finally, the positive correlation between both values and the negative correlation with levels of violence enable us to observe that these intervention programmes focusing on just one of the variables may also influence the other ones. In terms of new research avenues stemming from this study, attention should be drawn to the analysis of the influence of the socialisation process during school age on the formation of personality (reflecting a higher or lower development of values such as responsibility or sportspersonship), as well as to the degree of prediction that can be achieved by variables such as socioeconomic and/or sociocultural level. Finally, we would suggest the performance of studies based on interventions at schools that seek to develop values to mitigate school violence, ultimately reducing social conflict (Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2019).

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