

Victimization among Chilean boys, girls and adolescents in schools

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to analyze the prevalence of the dimensions that characterize violence and victimization, typifying their manifestations on the basis of the observer/victim role, multidimensionality and context. Through an inferential-comparative process with data from the First National Survey of Poly-victimization among Boys, Girls and Adolescents (2017), the transversal victimization and high-level exposure reported by BGA, especially regarding Common Crimes and Indirect Victimization, both at school and in the neighborhood, are exposed. Manifestations that make violence a complex, recurrent and ubiquitous phenomenon, whose approach demands the multidimensionality of agents and perspectives that involve family, neighborhood and school in the search for effective solutions.

Key words: poly-victimization, violence in schools, personal development, school community, childhood.

Resumen: El objetivo de este artículo es analizar las prevalencias de las dimensiones que caracterizan a la violencia y victimización, tipificando sus manifestaciones sobre la base del rol observador/víctima, multidimensionalidad y contexto. Mediante un proceso inferencial-comparativo con datos de la Primera Encuesta Nacional de Polivictimización entre Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes (2017), se expone la transversalidad de la victimización y el alto nivel de exposición reportado por niños, niñas y adolescentes (NNA), especialmente respecto a *delitos comunes* y *victimización indirecta*, tanto en la escuela como en el barrio. Manifestaciones que hacen de la violencia un fenómeno complejo, recurrente y ubicuo, cuyo abordaje demanda la multidimensionalidad de agentes y perspectivas que involucren a la familia, el barrio y la escuela en la búsqueda de soluciones efectivas.

Palabras clave: polivictimización, violencia en la escuela, desarrollo personal, comunidad escolar, infancia.



Introduction

Violence, victimization and insecurity have become common themes in political discourse and public concern, having as a meeting point the public policy agenda that each government and ministry has proposed over the last two decades. The coverage and analysis of these phenomena is of interest to police and penal institutions, citizen organizations and research centers, which warn about the increase in the levels of commission of some crimes and their witnessing, reporting levels of associated violence that shock public opinion and lead to the urgency of preventing exposure (Tocornal *et al.*, 2014; Fundación Paz Ciudadana, 2015).

The media's treatment of crime and victimization is not encouraging either. Television, radio and social media are active producers of criminal fiction, and after their aseptic interest to reveal and disseminate news, nurture the imaginary, ideas and prejudices among citizens regarding the potential of being victims at any place or time.

As in other countries all around the world, in Chile, the culture of victimization or the idea that, at some point and no matter how or where, one is vulnerable, has been strongly installed (Pitch, 2009). Victims and perpetrators travel the television grid and the Internet, becoming part of social life (Focás, 2013). In this sense, institutions and media have concerted a paradoxical interest, where at the same time that they collect this insecurity, process it and try to reduce it, they also spread it throughout multiple sectors, making it a seemingly ubiquitous phenomenon among the citizenry.

Violence and victimization among children

Despite what most people think, the media and social concern for the physical and psychological well-being of children is a relatively recent phenomenon. Until recently, some analyses of violence, delinquency and victimization argued that the root cause of delinquency, riots and vandalism in cities was the lack of control and containment of young people, especially poor and marginalized youths, who had grown up in poverty and neglect, with a disdain for honest work and lacking a father figure to guide them (Beyer and Vergara, 2006).

Only a couple of decades ago, and as strange as it may seem from a modern point of view, young people dragged a social and judicial perception of suspicion, being constant actors in the reports of aggressive crimes, alcohol and drug use, use of weapons, school dropouts and gang culture (Valdivieso,

1999). The way in which they were evaluated and treated, in particular by the instances of social control (police, teachers, family), was marked by a tutelary approach that arrogated to itself the responsibility for their correction. Even in the name of protecting them, young people were continually thrown into the web of surveillance-intervention constituted by police stations, schools, courts of justice and reformatories (Salmerón, 2011).

However, despite the lapidary nature of these diagnoses, a more “human” perspective in the understanding and management of the young population began to gain strength in the mid-twentieth century, especially after the establishment of welfare states and their search for vital minimums for the population (Bergalli and Rivera, 2007). Under the argument of protecting their physical, psychological and sexual well-being, children and adolescents were progressively considered victims of their environment and living conditions, with institutional measures that appealed to support these groups through assistance and therapy.

Despite this discursive-practical shift, surveillance, evaluation and research networks on children and adolescents expanded. As Gonzalez (2014), for the case of Spain, and Howell *et al.* (2015) for the United States, the interest in poor, vulnerable and potentially victimized youth increased substantially, as did the mechanisms and networks to capture them, examine their behavior and correct them.

Currently, school and neighborhood communities are intersected by different initiatives for the timely identification of violence and victimization among children. Tutors, fathers and mothers have been consulted and included in the management of schools in order to extend the benefits of a good school climate to the home and vice versa, since the first socialization is crucial for the acquisition and exercise of relational patterns. With this, efforts have multiplied to monitor and keep young people under control, regulating their behavior through joint actions between institutions at different social levels (Esposito, 2010; Byung-Chul, 2014).

Suddenly, the school, the neighborhood and the family became places of constant evaluation and focus of attention for public and social policy on youth. Some research and studies unveiled that victimization and its sequelae were multifactorial and multidimensional (Valdenegro and Calderón-Flández, 2016), and not only attributable to poverty, low social capital and insufficient networks. Thus understood, violence and vulnerability were cross-cutting and multifaceted, which made it necessary to update their conception and legislative treatment towards and among children and adolescents. It was no longer just robberies, thefts or physical attacks, but also

verbal abuse at home, insults at school, threats of harm in the neighborhood, exposure to shootings and drug dealing in the streets, and so on.

School as a place of conflict

Of all the places, the school was the ideal place to launch a series of initiatives that would make clear the concern for the welfare of children and adolescents. Thanks to the centralized functioning of the education system, reforms were initiated in 2009 and 2011 to evaluate school coexistence climates, particularly its dimensions of safety, respect and organization, so the ripple effect reached the farthest corners of the national territory (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2017).

In a short period of time, schools began to publish and share with their communities the coexistence protocols and anti-violence school rules, as part of a strong commitment to the personal and social development of students. Situated in a context of growing sensitivity to crime and victimization, the school tried to be an active part of the solutions, functioning as a communication terminal between national plans and local adjustments to stop what seemed to be an epidemic: violence (Tijmes, 2012).

Multiple research findings warned that the school was far from being that harmonious place where students should only be concerned with learning and sharing (Samper-García *et al.*, 2015; Pérez-Archundia and Gutiérrez-Méndez, 2016). Conflicts such as fights, theft, social isolation practices, insults and threats, which together constitute the hard core of school violence, and bullying. In research it was found that in extreme cases all this can lead to students –systematic victims of these acts– presenting sequelae in their self-esteem, low social skills or suicidal ideations (Horna, 2017; Silva *et al.*, 2017).

Regarding the context, there was a kind of obsession with the vulnerable sectors which, although justified at the beginning by the focused attention they required, became practically the context in which the violence itself manifested. Comparative studies proliferated showing public schools and those serving sectors of low economic and cultural resources as paradigmatic examples of rampant violence, with aggressions being the order of the day and a naturalization of violence (Tijmes, 2012; Salgado, 2012; Castañeda, 2018). To this was added the fear of managers and teachers, who often declared themselves unable to act, which contrasted with the opinion of some students who saw their teachers as authoritarian and strict figures (Tovar *et al.*, 2016).

Among all this, surely the least controversial argument was that victimization, whether at school, in the neighborhood or at home, constituted a risk to learning, personal development and school trajectories. Of course, this was also part of the discussion, although it was often more the basis for saying that children required more intervention rather than comprehensive measures for their care. Although the multisectoral plans appear to have a high degree of complexity and interconnection between different actors, the focus on showcasing products rather than engaging in specialized attention processes overshadowed the efforts. In other words, it was often more important to ensure that there was a coexistence protocol or plan than to offer children and adolescents a safe space for cordial coexistence.

To this we must add the practices of segregation and school segmentation throughout the educational system, which justified thinking that those schools without entry barriers or requirements to be part of the institution were just a step away from becoming places dominated by the anarchy of a group that was still viewed with distrust. However, this was how the understanding of violence and victimization among children and adolescents progressed; on the one hand, they were seen as a group in opposition to social norms, *ad portas* of chaos and the commission of crimes, and on the other, as vulnerable and voiceless people, who would have the misfortune of living in conditions of poverty, inhabiting problematic neighborhoods and having been forced to drop out of school at an early age.

This helps to understand the heterogeneous context in which surveys such as the Polyvictimization at School (EPV) appear and are applied. Thus, using the data collected by the EPV among children and adolescents at the national level regarding victimization at school, in the neighborhood and in the family, the objective of this article is to describe the different forms that violence and vulnerability take on in this group; to analyze the events that most affect the daily lives of children and adolescents, defining profiles and distinguishing them by sociodemographic and some structural attributes. The results place special emphasis on the school as a context of victimization, while highlighting the different positions of observer or direct victim embodied by children and adolescents.

Methodology

Design

This article was prepared from a quantitative methodological perspective. Percentages, indices and measures of central tendency ($\bar{x}$, SD) are used to describe the victimization status reported by children and adolescents between 7th grade and 3rd grade in Chile. Using secondary data sources (DB), several dimensions and indicators related to victimization are analyzed, which have differentiated impacts on the student population according to attributes such as gender, age, educational cycle or type of school attended. The DBs correspond to 2017 and new measurements are projected for 2021 and 2025, so the cross-sectional nature of our results may be strengthened with the availability of more recent information.

Sample description

The EPV was applied to 19,867 students from 7th grade to 3rd grade belonging to a total of 699 schools. With national representation, it covers the different types of school administration and includes the various regions of the country. The sampling was stratified probabilistic, tri-stage, according to establishment > classes > students.

Instrument

The data correspond to the First National Survey of Polyvictimization in Children and Adolescents (EPV-NNA) of 2017, commissioned by Subsecretaría de Prevención del Delito and Consejo Nacional de Infancia to two technical agencies belonging to the University of Chile: Dirección de Estudios Sociales (DESUC) and the Social Studies of Crime Program.

The questionnaire applied corresponds to a local adaptation of the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ), developed by Hamby *et al.* (2005), which was designed to provide the research with a more comprehensive instrument for the investigation of the different types of victimization affecting children and adolescents. The JVQ has been mostly applied in the United States, although its international experiences have demonstrated consistency and validity, having adaptations in countries such as Spain (Pereda *et al.*, 2014), Canada (Cyr *et al.*, 2013) and the United Kingdom (Radford *et al.*, 2013).

For the Chilean case, 30 of the 34 original indicators were used and two items related to violence on the Internet were added, which were finally organized into six dimensions: Common Crimes (7), Caregivers (4), Peers (5), Sexual (7), Indirect (7) and Digital (2). The aim was to report both direct and indirect victimizations using accessible language, especially with respect to complex events such as psychological or sexual abuse. The questionnaire was self-administered with the assistance of a facilitator and has a sampling error of ± 0.7 .

Procedure

The analysis of the results of the EPV is divided into several areas. First, we explore the variables that structure the different dimensions with which victimization among children and adolescents is measured, analyzing them disaggregated by area: 1) Common crimes, 2) Caregivers, 3) Peers, 4) Sexual, 5) Indirect and 6) Digital.

Subsequently, on the basis of the 32 items that define the victimization typologies, two additive indexes were established according to whether the events refer to the last year or to life. With the information provided by these indexes, four polyvictim profiles were constructed, using the percentile rank metric and thresholds.

The first method, recommended by Hamby *et al.* (2005) for EPV analysis, classifies as polyvictimization at the 90th or 92nd percentile of the distribution of victimizations, either during the lifetime or in the last year, respectively. The second method is used in more recent experiences, such as that of Cyr *et al.* (2013) and Pereda *et al.* (2014), and is based on the principle of accumulation of experiences, establishing as a cut-off point the threshold of five victimizations for both periods.

The various victimization events are then typified according to the role of observer or victim, segmenting the prevalences detected on the basis of attributes such as age, gender and some physical or intellectual difficulty. With the aim of problematizing the experiences of victimization at school, a hierarchy is established of those situations with the highest incidence reported in this area, distinguishing between municipal education contexts and those with high vulnerability indexes (IVE).

The EPV results were processed according to a complex sample design, determining a weighting for students [wgt_alu], strata control [var_strat] and clusters [var_unit]; this design seeks to reflect the original structure of the population to be represented.

Results

Exposure to victimization events among children and adolescents is a cross-cutting and multidimensional fact. This is indicated by the prevalence rates and averages for each of the six dimensions that make up the VPE. In general, almost all of those who participated reported having experienced some episode of victimization during their lifetime, that is, 92.6%; although this figure dropped to 79.9% in the case of the last year, it is still very worrying. On average, children and adolescents report 6.99 (0.059) victimizations during their lifetime and 3.78 (0.038) during the last year.

As shown in Table 1¹, each dimension of the VPE indicates that children and adolescents have been exposed to vulnerability to different degrees, with Indirect victimization (83.3%), Common crimes (77.0%) and Aggression by peers or siblings (61.5%) being the most prevalent situations in their lives. The standardized means per dimension range from 0.226 to 0.409, referring to risks of sexual connotation and episodes of indirect violence, respectively.

As for the last year, the preponderance of the aforementioned dimensions is reiterated, although the prevalence rates decrease markedly in the ratio of the time frame.

The distance of the prevalences observed between the dimensions according to the reference period consulted expresses the high sensitivity of the scale at the time of dimensioning victimization. In view of this, standardized indexes are presented in order to make the dimensions comparable. Likewise, the items with the highest recurrence during the last year are included.

Regarding Common crimes –dimension where 51% of children and adolescents declare themselves victims in one of the seven items–, we found that the most relevant events are physical attacks without the use of weapons (28.5%) and robbery without the use of force (20.4%), both with a recurrence of at least three times in the last year.

Regarding victimization by caregivers –where one out of three children (34.8%) report infringement in one of the four items of the dimension–, a high incidence is also observed, with a value at the scale level that even exceeds that exhibited by the dimension Common Crimes (0.354 *versus* 0.278, respectively). Of the children who have been abused in the last year due to situations of negligence (82.2%) or mistreatment by caregivers (63.4%) have been abused on at least three occasions.

1 All tables and the graph can be found in the Annex at the end of this article (Editor's note).

Although sexual violations are comparatively less frequent, they are still a cause for concern given the nature of the items involved. Prevalence rates range from 26.4% to 16.7%, depending on the time range reported. A total of 7.9% of children and adolescents reported having had consensual sexual relations with someone over 18 years of age; of this percentage, 77.1% had had sexual relations at least three times in the last year.

There is a set of events that constitute an imminent risk for children and adolescents, even though they do not directly suffer from this situation of vulnerability. The indirect victimization dimension is intended to reflect this exposure, which, given the deteriorated coexistence in some schools and neighborhoods, shows a high prevalence.

A high proportion of children and adolescents report having witnessed a situation of abuse or violence during their lifetime, and one in three (32.2%) have done so during the last 12 months. The situations that stand out the most are: witnessing shootings, drug use and sales, gang fights (45.3%) and discrimination based on race, skin color, disability or sexual orientation (42.9%); events that also show high and significant recurrences.

The Digital victimization dimension is part of the adaptation of the instrument to the local context and reports low levels of incidence, with proportions of exposure ranging between 32.3% and 20.9%, depending on the time period analyzed. A total of 14.1% reported having been the object of rumors or harassment on the Internet, while 11.8% of children and adolescents reported having felt uncomfortable receiving questions with sexual connotations on some digital platform.

This general overview provided by the analysis of the dimensions can be deepened on the basis of each indicator that makes up the EPV. After all, polyvictimization as such becomes meaningful depending on the number of victimizations reported by the top 10% or 8% of the cumulative distribution of events, either during the lifetime or the last year, respectively.

Figure 1 shows how victimization decreases rapidly as occurrences accumulate. Among those who responded that they had experienced some victimization during their lifetime, 90.8% had been victimized between one and 14 times; in the case of the last year, 93.2% of children and adolescents reported having experienced between one and nine victimizations.

Given that the methodology sets victimization on the basis of a population percentile range, meaning 10% higher in the distribution of victimizations during life and 8% for the last 12 months, in the Chilean case, polyvictimized children would be those who during life have experienced at least 15 events, while in the last year this typology is configured from 11.

This implies having experienced about half (46.8%) or one third (34.3%) of the 32 events that make up the EPV during one's lifetime or the last year, respectively.

Given the lack of sensitivity of the percentile rank for classifying polyvictimization, a threshold segmentation criterion has been used as a complement. Thus, polyvictimization is no longer defined on the basis of distribution, but according to the number of events. Polyvictimization is established by thresholds based on the notification of five events, generating subdivisions of low (between five and six indicators) and high (seven or more indicators) polyvictimization. In general terms, polyvictimization during the last year represents 40.9% of children and adolescents, and 23.7% are positioned above the seven indicators.

To further characterize polyvictimization among children and adolescents, Table 2 shows the most representative indicators, comparing the general figures with those groups considered at risk: adolescents, women and those suffering from some permanent and/or long-term condition.

According to this table, the preponderant role among children and adolescents would be that of observers of violence, a typology that is accompanied by that of aggressors and victims in the analysis of school conflict (Chamorro, 2018), and expresses the exposure or witnessing of dangerous events as a manifestation of the conflictive context where they live or study. A total of 45.3% report having witnessed episodes of shootings, alcohol and drug consumption or fights between people or gangs, while 42.9% have witnessed discrimination. These figures tend to be significantly higher in the comparison profiles: women, adolescents and students with some partial or permanent condition ($p < 0.01$).

The second group of indicators refers to the role of victims and involves situations that directly jeopardize the psychological and physical safety of children and adolescents, with statistically significant differences between the comparison groups ($p < 0.01$). Among these seven indicators, physical attack without the use of weapons (28.5%), robbery without the use of force (20.4%) and physical attacks or beatings by other children (14.8%) stand out. These indicators are of particular concern because, regardless of the subjectivity or beliefs of the victims, they are events that threaten the stability of the educational community, the effectiveness of its dialogic mechanisms for conflict resolution and its image of security in the eyes of the public.

Regarding the comparison profiles, among adolescents over 15 years of age, the most frequently repeated was the perception of abandonment or verbal aggression from a close adult (29.3%); among females, it was physical

attack (31.8%); and for those who reported a permanent and/or long-term condition, both victimizations were reported in similar proportions (37.3% and 35.3%, respectively). Regarding the three indicators that directly involve peers as aggressors, whether by hitting, threats of physical harm or insults/exclusion, we found that the most vulnerable group is those who manifest some permanent and/or long-term condition ($\geq 20.0\%$).

Based on these results, and because of the educational context in which the EPV is carried out, the question clearly emerges as to what are the characteristics of school-related victimization. Table 3 shows the most recurrent events of vulnerability in the school environment, distinguishing them according to structural attributes. At a general level, nine of the 32 indicators that make up the EPV register prevalences above 50% within the school environment, characterizing the coexistence climates among the participating schools.

In the Chilean school context, episodes of both verbal and physical violence are evidenced, going through experiences of social exclusion, coercion and aggressions of various kinds. Specifically, during the last year, the most common victimization episodes were discomfort due to insults or exclusion by other children (91.9%), being forced to do things they did not want to do (79.4%) and receiving blows, attacks or threats due to some personal characteristic (78.0%).

When asked about the frequency with which they faced victimization situations, children and adolescents reported having experienced or observed discrimination on more than one occasion per month (51.0%), beatings, attacks or threats based on personal characteristics (38.5%) and discomfort due to insults or exclusion (35.4%). In terms of the structural attributes of the educational units, we found no significant differences. Victimization is evidenced as a phenomenon present in multiple educational communities, exhibiting homogeneous prevalence among the different types of school administration and levels of student vulnerability with which the institutions must work.

The analysis of the EPV exposes the multidimensionality of the vulnerability faced by some children and adolescents in their school, community and family environments. The predominance of events related to direct physical harm, such as beatings, attacks or robbery, which, despite not involving the use of weapons or similar objects, are detrimental to the personal and collective well-being of educational communities, is a cause for concern.

Discussion

The application of instruments such as the EPV responds to the growing public interest in the experiences of victimization and perception of insecurity among citizens. Of course, the educational system is not exempt from efforts to prevent and punish violence in its different manifestations, especially due to the social and formative responsibility of the school.

In general terms, we observed that very few children reported not having been exposed to some type of physical or verbal aggression in their school, neighborhood or family environment during their lifetime or in the last year. However, they were no strangers to witnessing acts of discrimination, fights or robberies in the places where they live on a daily basis. This first approach, which is broad and refers to the dimensions that make up the EPV, reveals a ubiquitous risk or vulnerability, where the discussion on the state of victimization among children and adolescents is complemented by a concern for knowing which events pose the greatest danger to these groups.

Of the extensive group of indicators included in the survey, those related to direct violence and physical harm, such as attacks by another group of children or robbery, stand out. Even though these events may not involve the use of objects or weapons, we are talking about a type of violence that involves contact, struggle, resistance and disputes, all of which affect the personal and social development of young people. While the bodily or physical traces of this type of aggression may not last over time, the psychological traces of the event, the feeling of vulnerability, do, which negatively impact self-image, self-concept and feeling of security (Massenzana, 2017).

It should be noted that our results are consistent with those presented by other investigations that used and/or adapted the EPV in latitudes as distant as Spain (Pereda *et al.*, 2014), China (Chan *et al.*, 2013) or Pakistan (Bashir and Dasti, 2015). As in the local context, these studies highlight two general characteristics of how victimization among children and adolescents behaves. First, that the diversification of dimensions is useful for understanding victimization as a condition of life rather than an isolated event, especially for those who are part of a vulnerable population (whether by age, economic capital or networks). The second is that due to the position and perception of the young population, there is no line that separates physical, psychological, verbal or sexual aggressions, that is, children and adolescents are recipients of a multidimensional violence that mixes and crosses different dimensions (Pinto-Cortez *et al.*, 2017). In short, victimization may become part of the daily life of some groups and simultaneously affect their physical, psychological and/or sexual development.

Regarding the dimensions as such that are part of the EPV, for the Chilean case, common crimes are repeated, particularly during the last year, and the witnessing of risk events, prevalent when asking about life. Also relevant is the vulnerability perceived or experienced by Caregivers and Peers during life or the last 12 months, because although the figures are not so high, they report exposure to risk in two of the most intimate groups of social and affective relationships: family and friends/close friends. Childhood and adolescence are characterized by the need for support and tools that caregivers can provide, in addition to the models and behaviors that are exercised among reference groups, these four types of victimization would hinder the task of mitigating, controlling and correcting events of violence or harm towards the young population.

Perhaps one of the most frequent consequences of prolonged exposure to violence among young people is the naturalization or desensitization to the reception, exercise or witnessing of violence. There are several arguments for this assertion, among which stand out, including the future appreciation of violence as a legitimate means for personal, collective or neighborhood defense, especially in contexts where there is organized crime or gang culture (Castaño and Loaiza, 2018). The symbolic aspect of violence unfolds more easily among desensitized groups, who are not only used to experiencing it, but come to justify its manifestation as part of where they live and how they understand how life is conducted (Galán, 2018). Finally, in some cases, this naturalization of violence can lead to the perception of violence as a means to climb the leadership ladder between groups, which progressively reduces the effectiveness of measures aimed at pacifying and/or protecting young people.

However, to be fair, there is a problematic relationship between the vision of children and adolescents as victims of common crimes, as shown by official instruments such as the EPV, and that linked to the socio-media treatment of this group in relation to the commission of crimes. In Chile, as is the case in many countries, there are not only problems in defining what it is to be a victim –hence the sensitivity of the instrument to typify this condition– but also in knowing what is the appropriate assessment of young people. Crime victimization and witnessing of violence among these groups contrasts sharply with the blame they receive from broad sectors.

Newspapers, radio programs and television reports often involve young people in crime, drugs and resistance to the common rules of peaceful coexistence. For some time now, it has become common to see in the media the stories of victims and experts warning the community about the precociousness of those who steal or assault, both in public and residential

spaces. Young people have been systematically targeted as delinquents, alluding to their decline in values and discipline, or that by seeking easy alternatives to escape poverty they make crime, drugs and weapons a way of life (Loeber *et al.*, 2011; Castaño and Loaiza, 2018).

Beyond the arguments that may be put forward to support or refute this type of discussion, it is necessary to add a bit of socio-territorial perspective to all this, in order to broaden the criteria for the formation of a judgment. Despite the ubiquity of crime and violence reported at the national level by the EPV, their frequency and intensity correlate –in the judgment of several investigations– with the availability of economic and social resources of the families that inhabit a territory, neighborhood or sector of cities (Burgess, 2009; Trucco and Inostroza, 2017). In public perception and in that of crime prevention institutions and programs, there is a tacit relationship between periphery and greater exposure to victimization by robbery, theft or street fights. Although with exaggerations by the media, these places tend to become ghettos defined by crime, segregation and poverty (Ortega, 2014), all of which makes it difficult to break the cycles of violence and vulnerability among the young population.

Thus understood, the relationship between EPV indicators and possible solutions becomes more complicated when we add the characteristics of these territorial contexts. While some children and adolescents may be living in the limbo of victim-victimizers, official figures consider them to be at risk, and at the same time they are targeted, symbolically or in the media, as perpetrators of similar acts. According to the EPV, common crimes are the greatest threat to children and adolescents: robberies, assaults and threats; meanwhile, for the police institution, young people are the main perpetrators of crimes classified as having a greater social connotation, in other words, robberies, assaults or thefts (Kessler and Dimarco, 2013; Fundación Paz Ciudadana, 2015). In other words, children and adolescents would be victims and perpetrators of robberies, thefts and attacks, which, instead of being something favorable for the proper understanding and approach to the problem, regularly becomes evidence for their stigmatization and linkage to crime (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2017).

Turning to the other dimensions of the EPV, we find that the indicators of sexual victimization reach a comparatively low magnitude; nevertheless, they constitute a worrisome situation given the criminal nature of these events. As we have seen, around two out of 10 children (16.7%) reported having been exposed to sexual practices or harassment during the last 12 months, and a significant proportion of them reported having experienced

this more than once a month. Unlike other international studies (Pereda and Forns, 2007; Chan *et al.*, 2013), where the question regarding consensual sexual practices with persons over 18 years of age was omitted or substituted by the inquiry of child sexual abuse, the Chilean case shows that it is an event of scarce occurrence, but of high intensity among those who report it.

The social and political attention given to sexual violence during the last decade, especially against women and children, has led to an increase in mechanisms and resources aimed at its prevention, reduction and punishment. Due to the scandals widely disseminated by the media, which exposed the violation or abuse of children and adolescents in our country -among which sexual abuse linked to the Catholic Church or child protection institutions- social and judicial concern for sexual rights among children and adolescents increased.

To continue with one of the main objectives of the EPV –the profiling by percentile rank of polyvictimization among children–, we found that for the Chilean case this is typified from 14 indicators during life and 10 for the last year, which is similar to what is exhibited in countries such as the United Kingdom (Radford *et al.*, 2013) and the United States (Finkelhor *et al.*, 2011). With respect to polyvictimization by thresholds, we detected high differences with other studies. For example, using the criterion of five or more indicators as the basis of the polyvictim profile, Chile reports 40.9% of children under this condition, while studies in Finland and Canada show figures that do not exceed 10% (Ellonen and Salmi, 2011; Cyr *et al.*, 2013).

This highlights the cultural traits of victimization among children and adolescents, a phenomenon of international concern, but with local safeguards that require adaptability in action measures. In addition to the universal needs of the child and adolescent population, such as protection, care, affection and support, we must include those that give meaning to the particular life of the groups, such as their involvement with indigenous cultural traits, their involvement in community or neighborhood activities or their appreciation of religious practices. Although polyvictims represent the crudest side of violence as a condition of life, it is no less important to remember that damage or harm to the child and adolescent population leaves traces in their human, academic or intellectual potential, especially among those who already see their resources limited due to the context of inequality and poverty where they grow up (de Castro *et al.*, 2013).

In this regard, the Chilean case is of concern not only because multiple violations or polyvictimization during childhood and/or adolescence puts the present and future well-being and development of children and

adolescents at risk (Chen *et al.*, 2010; Acosta *et al.*, 2017), but also because of the associated morbidity characteristics of violence. Those who witness shootings, robberies or fights may also be victims of these crimes; moreover, those who are victims of physical attacks and violence by caregivers or peers are also likely to be victims of insults, disqualifications, mockery and isolation. The multidimensional analysis of victimization provides a glimpse of these problems, revealing that such events do not only take place on public roads as the social imaginary suggests, but also at school and at home (Finkelhor *et al.*, 2007).

In specific terms, the first three most reported victimization situations correspond to the exposure or witnessing of shootings, discrimination and unarmed physical attacks (Table 2). As other research findings indicate (Contreras *et al.*, 2016; León *et al.*, 2019), it is easier to report observed violence than experienced violence, especially at school and at home, as these are vulnerable groups: adolescents, women and those with special educational needs. With this we can affirm that the preponderant role among children and adolescents would be that of observers of violence, a typology that is accompanied by that of aggressors and victims in the analysis of school conflict (Chamorro, 2018).

In the second group of the most recurrent indicators during the last year, where children and adolescents play the role of direct victims, there are repeated incidents that put their personal and physical safety at risk. While the first set of indicators allows for alternative courses of action, such as seeking help, fleeing or intervening (Cano and Vargas, 2018; Pacheco, 2018), in the second set, peaceful reaction is hindered. These situations are of particular concern because, regardless of the subjectivity or belief of some victims who dismiss the aggressions, they imply a risk for the entire educational community. In addition to feeding the cycle of aggressions, passivity in the face of these events denotes inability in institutions and professional teams to install and manage adequate coexistence climates, giving room for practices such as bullying and school harassment to endure (García, 2010; Barcaccia *et al.*, 2017).

The third and final part of the results was devoted to the analysis of the context in which victimization occurs. Just as it is not the same to be the victim of an attack or robbery as it is to witness insults or scribbling, it is not the same to suffer victimization in the neighborhood or at home as it is at school. In the latter there are, or should be available, professionals dedicated to the educational and social support of children and adolescents, since the school is a space for protection and integral development. However, due to

the nature of the violence reported and the prolonged permanence in the school environment, the school is the most likely setting for conflict and victimization among children.

Thus, recurrent events such as theft without the use of force, vandalism of personal objects and beatings or threats by other children tend to be located in the school and, with some exceptions, do not even indicate significant differences in terms of structural attributes such as dependency and the level of socioeconomic vulnerability of the establishment. Although some research tends to locate the facts or perception of violence particularly in public schools and vulnerable sectors (Guerra *et al.*, 2012; Tijmes, 2012; González and Bassaletti, 2016), the absence of statistically significant differences in our case would be explained by the high sensitivity and low discrimination capacity of the VPE.

Finally, the data reinforce the premise of organizing multisectoral and multidimensional measures to reduce the acts of violence and victimization that children and adolescents may experience or witness. It is not only a matter of preventing them from suffering bodily harm, but especially of preventing psychological harm during stages that are crucial for the development of future citizens (Hamby *et al.*, 2005). Safety at school is only one aspect when considering measures, since, as we have seen, the relationship with caregivers and peers at home or in the neighborhood also affects child and adolescent well-being. One of the main challenges in this area is to ensure that victimization and insecurity do not become part of everyday life and the way we relate to each other as members of a society, but rather as a problem that needs to be diagnosed and addressed with the appropriate instruments and programs.

Conclusions

Victimization among children and adolescents is an event of social interest whose implications go beyond the personal sphere and become part of the public policy agenda. Its effects not only have repercussions on the present and future development of victims and perpetrators, but also threaten democratic coexistence and conflict resolution. Since the school, the neighborhood and the family are primary spaces for socialization, the timely identification of victimization events facilitates early action, protecting both children and the community that houses them.

Although the victimization experiences reported by the EPV are varied in typology, magnitude and prevalence among children, some of their manifestations are as or more important than their observed recurrence. Thus, for example, even when sexual aggression reports a comparatively low incidence among children, it is a high-impact traumatic situation that generates insecurity and distrust. Similarly, assaults by caregivers are a cause for concern, since the victims may come to naturalize violence and its use as a conflict resolution mechanism. Finally, the ubiquity of victimization reports raises the question of violence as a feature present in multiple relationships, whether in the school, the neighborhood, or the family, which carries the risk of modeling violence or victimization as inherent to the culture.

The findings of this work point to the implementation of multisectoral measures that bring together resources and actors around the treatment of victimization as a complex phenomenon. Personal and social growth, a key element of the new educational quality measurement frameworks, requires ensuring spaces free of aggression and violence, reinforcing educational policies for their prevention, management and referral, strengthening the relationships between the school, the family and the neighborhood.

Limitations

One of the main limitations of this study is the way in which victimization among children and adolescents is estimated in the EPV. Although the 32 indicators of which it is composed show a broad thematic coverage, its binomial expression of presence/absence exhibits little discriminative capacity. The scale assigns equal scores to items regardless of their nature, and does not record the recurrence of their manifestation in the metric estimation. Thus, witnessing has the same value as being a direct victim; insults count the same as sexual aggression; likewise, no differences are established between events that occur once a year and those that occur more frequently.

Given the value of the information contained in the EPV and its population validity, it would be of interest to improve the classification and sensitivity indexes of the scale by grading the items on the basis of their nature, intensity and recurrence.

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Annex

Table 1

Descriptive data (mean) and percentages of occurrence by dimension of the Youth Victimization Questionnaire according to time of the event

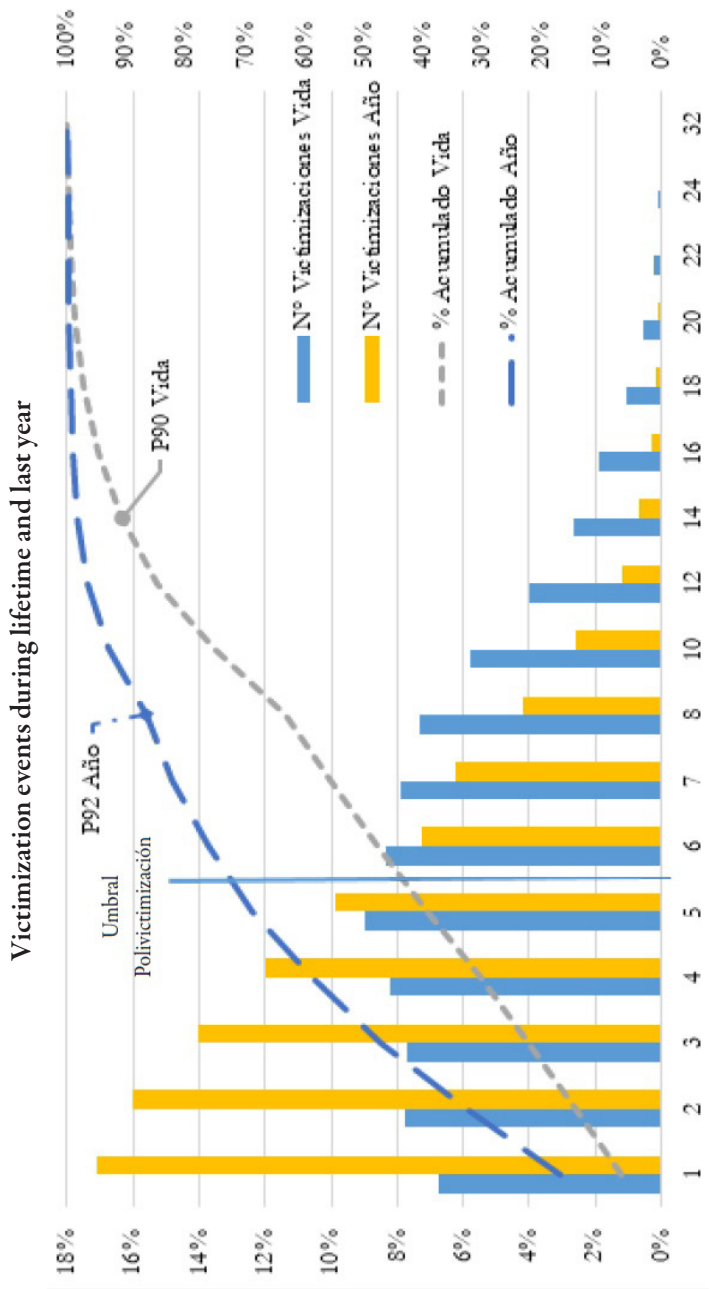
	Throughout life	Last year	
Dimensions	%	%	Fx
Common crimes [% (x)]	77,0 (,373)	51,0 (,278)	
- Theft without use of force	-	20,4	46,0
- Destruction of personal property	-	18,3	57,9
- Physical attack without the use of weapons	-	28,5	68,1
Committed by caregivers [% (x)]	51,8 (,399)	34,8 (,354)	
- Insults, cruel comments, or detachment	-	28,4	82,2
- Physical harm by a close adult	-	12,8	63,4

Performed by peers [% (x)]	61,5 (,354)	28,4 (,291)	
- Physical attacks by another child	-	14,8	53,1
- Insults, bullying or isolation from other children	-	14,1	80,5
Sexual [% (x)]	26,4 (,226)	16,7 (,186)	
- Consensual sexual practices with adults	-	7,9	77,1
- Sexual conduct on the person or body	-	6,1	66,4
Indirect [% (x)]	83,3 (,409)	32,2 (,311)	
- Witness to shootings, microtrafficking and/or gang fights	-	45,3	87,1
- Witnessing discrimination	-	42,9	87,7
- Witnessing an intentional physical attack without the use of a weapon	-	31,7	66,0
Digitals^a [%]	32,3	20,9	
- Harassment or malicious rumors on the Internet	24,1	14,1	77,7
- Sexual questions or chats that make you feel uncomfortable	17,7	11,8	70,3

Notes: ^aThere are only two indicators in the dimension, so only their relative frequency is reported; Fx= occurrence of the event more than twice in the last year, represented as a percentage; (x)= standardized mean of the indicators that make up the dimension; the items with the highest recurrence are represented.

Source: Own elaboration with data from Primera Encuesta Nacional de Polivictimización (2017).

Graph 1



Source: Own elaboration with data from Primera Encuesta Nacional de Polivictimización (2017).

Table 2
Indicators delimiting polyvictimization during the last year (%)

		General	16 years and over ^a	Woman	Permanent condition ^b
Observers					
1.	Witnesses to shootings, alcohol and drug use, or fights between people or gangs	45,3	53,1**	46,6*	49,9**
2.	Witness to discrimination based on race, color, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristic.	42,9	46,8**	40,1**	46,7**
3.	Witness to physical attack without the use of weapons or other objects	31,7	36,5**	33,3**	34,4*
Víctims					
4.	Physical attack without a weapon or other object	28,5	24,0**	31,8**	35,3**
5.	Discomfort due to insults, cruel sayings or lack of affection from a close adult	28,4	29,3**	18,5**	37,3**
6.	Robbery without use of force	20,4	22,0**	18,0**	26,4**
7.	Damage to personal items	18,3	14,1**	20,1**	24,4**
8.	Beatings or physical attacks by other children	14,8	11,3**	17,9**	19,4**
9.	Amenazas de daño físico por parte de otros NNA	14,7	14,5*	14,5	22,9**
10.	Fear or discomfort due to insults or exclusion of other children (cold shoulder)	14,1	10,4**	9,0**	21,6**
11.	Someone has annoyed you, harassed you or spread rumors on the Internet	14,1	13,1*	10,5**	20,4**

Notes: ^aDifferences between groups were calculated with the x2 test using categorical data;
^bChildren with permanent and/or long-term conditions are those with physical, speech, intellectual, hearing, or visual impairments. * $P < 0.05$ and ** $P < 0.01$.

Source: Own elaboration with data from Primera Encuesta Nacional de Polivictimización (2017).

Table 3

Victimization in the last year in the school environment according to structural attributes (%)

		At school			
		%	> Once a month	Municipal ^a	High IVE
1.	Discomfort due to insults or exclusion of other children	91,9	35,4	91,7	91,5
2.	Imposition to do things not wanted	79,4	27,8	78,6	81,4
3.	Received blows, attacks or threats due to any personal characteristic	78,0	38,5	78,0	78,4
4.	Damage to personal items	72,7	12,9	71,4	71,3*
5.	A child has beaten or physically attacked	66,3	18,1	67,0	67,9*
6.	Received physical attacks without a weapon or other object	63,7	24,5	64,8	65,2
7.	Robbery without use of force	60,6	10,7	63,7*	67,6**
8.	Received blows or physical attacks from another group of children	57,1	22,7	60,4	57,2
9.	Received threats of physical harm	49,1	11,6	52,5	51,2
10.	Witnessed discrimination	45,7	51,0	52,4**	50,9**

Notes: ^aDifferences between groups were calculated with the x2 test using categorical data.
*P<0.05 and **P<0.01.

Source: Own elaboration with data from Primera Encuesta Nacional de Polivictimización (2017).

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