EDUHEM 2018
VIII International conference on intercultural education and International conference on transcultural health: THE VALUE OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH FOR A GLOBAL, TRANSCULTURAL WORLD

ETHNIC GROUPS AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ECUADOR

Miguel Ángel Posso Yépez (a)*, Mayra Verónica León Ron (a), Mairett Yuri Rodríguez Balza (a), Henry Cadena Povea (a)
*Corresponding author

(a) Universidad Técnica del Norte, Av.17 de Julio 5-21, Ibarra, Ecuador.
*Email: maposso@utn.edu.ec

Abstract

Physical violence in the families of high school-aged adolescents in Latin America and throughout the world is a problem that affects the future of the student. Imbabura is a multicultural province in Ecuador in which several ethnic groups coexist. The general objective of this study is to determine the correlation that exists between self-defined ethnic identification and the physical violence that students of three public schools suffer. This is a transversal, quantitative study, of correlational scope. The target population was 227 students in their tenth year of basic education, known as the third year of high school in Ecuador (15 years of age, on average) in the 2017-2018 school year. A census was taken using a survey, and the statistic used for the correlation is Cramer's Coefficient. There was a significant statistical relationship between ethnic groups and physical family violence (p-value of 0.018). Afro-Ecuadorians reported more sadness, anger, and desire to react or flee; more than 95% of the students self-defined as indigenous or mestizo (mixed-ethnicity) said that the aggression is normal or for their own good; only 21.7% of Afro-Ecuadorians indicated knowledge that this violence is against the law. It was concluded that the Afro-Ecuadorian ethnic group reported greater physical family violence as well as associated feelings—primarily sadness, anger, and desire to react.

1. Introduction

1.1. Definition of the Correlational Study Variables

The concept of identity is complex and dynamic. In psychology, it can be understood as a reference to the distinctiveness of an individual, to the way in which a person identifies himself with personal traits or in reference to others (Northoff & Heinzel, 2003). In anthropology, identity is understood as a sense of belonging to a community, to a specific reference group, which is evaluated by the subject himself (Van Meijl, 2008).

It is important to consider the definitions of violence given by recognized multilateral organizations. The World Health Organization defines violence as the deliberate use of physical force or power, whether in a threatening or effective manner, against oneself, another person, group, or community, which causes or has a high probability of causing injury, death, psychological damage, developmental disorders, or deprivation (WHO, 2007). The Pan American Health Organization, since 1993, recognized violence as a major public health problem, considering it not only violates human rights, but also affects the health of the victims (PAHO, 2012).

1.2. Similar Studies

Considering the absence of studies that relate adolescent ethnic self-definition with family violence, a brief analysis of each of these two variables is presented separately:

The theory of the development of ethnic identity in adolescence posed by Phinney (1989) reflects a process characterized by the search for identity, where the need arises to relate the perception of oneself to the identity imposed by the family and the place where one lives (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006). It is important to understand that adolescents of diverse ethnic origins identify with their own ethnic groups, an occurrence associated with an increase of psychosocial well-being, that is, a better quality of relationships established with their environment, favoring a healthy personality development. This also prevents the appearance of problematic behaviors; a low level of identification with the culture of origin is associated with antisocial behaviors and psychological problems (Jiménez, Pérez, & Bustamante, 2017). The same author expresses that the process of forming ethnic identity is dynamic, and therefore, social behaviors change over time. The results of most studies show the link between ethnic identity and social behavior at a particular time, due to the transversal design that normally occurs in research. Few longitudinal studies exist that allow the analysis of changes in ethnic identity development over time, the factors involved, and the relationships that arise, observing the changes in social behaviors, especially if adolescents are inserted into intervention programs.

Violence in general is characterized as a public health problem, due to the physical and psychological consequences it has on victims. We should understand family violence as a type of interpersonal violence that translates into actions towards the people with whom one lives and exchanges affections, dreams, plans, and a physical space. Family violence can be classified as physical, psychological, or sexual. From another angle, Koller & De Antoni (2004) argue that violence is any act or omission that can interrupt, impede, or retard the healthy development of human beings.

Several international studies that aim to highlight the consequences of indirect exposure to family violence in adolescents—a topic little studied in Latin America—share the following type of results.

In a study conducted with teenagers from China, it was established that indirect exposure to violence in school and family contexts is associated with emotional problems (Ho & Cheung, 2010). Other research, carried out in the United States, showed that exposure to indirect violence in the family, at school, or in the community was related to both internalization and externalization disorders (such as depression and aggression, respectively). The same study also confirmed that exposure to violence in the family and at school has a more negative impact on the development of adolescents than exposure to violence in the community (Mrug & Windle, 2010).

In another study, concerning adolescents in the United States, it was found that exposure to direct and indirect violence is related with an increased risk of runaway, school truancy, teenage pregnancy, suicide, and problems with the law (Haynie, Petts, Maimon, & Piquero, 2009).

In southern Brazil, it was confirmed that 90.2% of adolescents in a sample had been victims in at least one episode of direct violence, and 91.6% in at least one episode of indirect violence; the two forms of exposure correlated positively with drug use and conflicts with the police (Benetti, Schwartz, Soares, Macarena, & Patussi, 2014). Dapieve & Dalbosco (2016), in their research on exposure to violence, mention that national and international studies have shown the high exposure to violence during adolescence.

1.3. Generalities of the Area of Study

Ecuador, like all countries, is multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. According to the last census conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC, 2016), of the 16.39 million inhabitants, 71.99% define themselves as mestizos (mixed ethnicity), 7.4% as montubios that mainly live in the countryside of the Amazon region, 7.2% as Afro-Ecuadorians, 7% as indigenous, and 0.4% as other ethnic groups. In the province of Imbabura, of the 400,359 inhabitants, 65.7% identify themselves as mestizos, 25.8% as indigenous, 5.4% as Afro-Ecuadorians, 2.7% as whites, 0.3% as montubios, and 0.1% as other ethnic groups. The majority of the Ecuadorian population identifies itself as a *mestizo*, although there are some who prefer to adhere to a white/European cultural legacy, principally in large cities. There are also people of mixed African and Amerindian ancestry, as well as diverse small groups of immigrants from other countries. The province of Imbabura is composed of six cantons: Ibarra, Otavalo, Cotacachi, Antonio Ante, Urcuquí, and Pimampiro.

2. Problem Statement

The process of developing ethnic identity in adolescence is dynamic and complex. It implies a concrete and experiential relationship between a person and his sociocultural context, generating feelings of belonging and causing personal and relational changes that affect behavioral, cognitive, and affective contexts (Jiménez, Pérez, & Bustamante, 2017).

It is evident that adolescents, both men and women, experience great changes, both physically and psychologically, which mark their future. This stage of transit through adolescence can be more or less traumatic. In this period, the most important characteristics of personality and the fundamental skills and abilities to face the following stages of life are developed. Consequentially, a problem that arises during this time, if not addressed, can remain and if not addressed, may remain or become worse (Saldaña, 2001).

Adolescents meet daily with a number of violent behaviors that stem from their own homes, where in many cases they or some member of the family are physically attacked, threatened, and insulted, even presenting psychological abuse and sexual assault. These types of behavior are known as family violence, a phenomenon that occurs worldwide, in which women and children are the most vulnerable groups (Diaz & Jiménez, 2003).

Unfortunately, considering this very sensitive issue, there are no specific studies that correlate the ethnic self-definition of adolescents with the physical family violence that they suffer in their homes. As a result, the problem posed for the present study is to verify if the mentioned correlation exists.

3. Research Questions

Is there a corelation between self-defined ethnic identity and physical family violence among tenth grade students?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the correlation that exists between self-defined ethnic identity and family violence suffered by tenth grade students at three public high schools in the province of Imbabura, Ecuador.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Type of Study

The present study is a mixed, quantitative, cross-sectional test, with correlational and descriptive scope.

5.2. Participants

The target population of the study was 227 students in the tenth year of basic education, known as the third year of high school (15 years of age, on average) in the 2017-2018 school year. Three public high schools in the province of Imbabura were selected—two in the canton Otavalo and one in the Ibarra canton.

5.3. Data Collection

The authors prepared and applied a survey, previously validated by six experts in the area and tested by users, through the application of the pilot survey.

5.4. Procedure

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, Science, and Technology at Universidad Técnica del Norte (UTN). The three public schools were selected because of the convenience to the researchers. With the authorization of the principals of each school, four students from UTN were trained in January 2018 for the application of the survey. After explaining the objective of

the survey to the participants, they were asked to sign consent forms voluntarily. The data was collected in approximately 30 minutes in the high school classrooms.

5.5. Data Analysis

The data was tabulated and processed in the statistical software SPSS, version 22.0. The statistical and descriptive analyzes were carried out based on the posed research question. The only student self-defined as white was excluded from the analysis, because a single unit of analysis would be unrepresentative. The statistic used to determine the correlation between the variables of self-defined ethnic identity and physical family violence is Cramer's C Coefficient, which is a measurement of the degree of association or relationship between two series of attributes or nominal variables, assuming a level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. This coefficient has a maximum value of one and C will be equal to zero when the variables or attributes are independent (Siegel & Castellan, 1995).

6. Findings

The survey was applied to 227 tenth grade students—150 of the male and 77 female. Of the men surveyed, 34.23% define themselves as *mestizos*, 44.97% as indigenous, and 20.81% as Afro-Ecuadorians. Of the women surveyed, 23.38% define themselves as *mestizas*, 55.84% as indigenous, and 20.78% as Afro-Ecuadorians. Although family violence is present in most countries and among the students of many types of educational centers, the prevalence rates differ for each country (Pérez, Fuentes, Gazquez, & López, 2011). It is important to understand that self-identification with the culture of origin can function as a diminishing factor for maladaptive behaviors (Jiménez, Pérez & Bustamante, 21017). Consequently, empirical evidence has shown that ethnic identity is not static—it is subject to change over time (Hallett, Want, Chandler, Koopman, & Flores, 2008).

The subjects who responded that they live with their parents (65%) also do so with siblings or other family members, if they have them. A worrisome fact is that a very high percentage (26.5%) live only with the mother, implying single or separated mothers. The family context is a scenario in which conflicts can develop around various topics and in which the more interrelation a person experiences, the greater the possibility of conflicts will be, considering how the family unites different ways of thinking, feeling and acting, and exposing differences in worldviews (Adriana & Lozano, 2017). Aggression is more frequent in single-parent and divorced families (Espinosa & Clemente, 2008).

The only statistically significant relationship was found between self-defined ethnic identity and slapping (p-value = 0.0000). It can be noted in Table 1 that Afro-Ecuadorians reported being slapped the most, followed by those self-identified as indigenous.

Although the relationship between the rest of the acts of physical violence and ethnic self-definition is not significant, it can be observed that Afro-Ecuadorians reported higher frequency of being kicked, pulled by the ears, and pushed. *Mestizos* mentioned higher frequency of being punched, pinched, and pulled by the hair. Those self-identified as indigenous reported higher frequency in being hit with objects. The rest of the acts of physical violence were those least reported among the three ethnic groups. It is important to highlight that, of the students who reported physical family violence, 12.7% declared that these actions left visible marks on the body. Domestic violence exists in all social classes and causes serious family

264

disintegration, often causing loss of respect and violating fundamental rights, especially those of children (Cepeda, Moncada, & Vivia, 2007). In terms of development, recent studies have identified adolescence as a period of greater vulnerability when exposed to violence (Waiselfsz, 2014).

Table 01. Correlation between Self-Defined Ethnic Identity and Physical Violence

Ethnic Self-Definition						Cramer	p-value
		Mestizo (%)	Indigenous (%)	Afro-Ecuadorian (%)	Total (%)		
Slapping	Yes	36.2	29.1	**63.8**	38.5	0.274	0.000*
	No	63.8	70.9	36.2	61.5		
Kicking	Yes	13.0	9.1	**14.9**	11.5	0.076	0.517 ns
	No	87.0	90.9	85.1	88.5		
Punching	Yes	**11.6**	6.4	6.4	8.0	0.089	0.410 ns
	No	88.4	93.6	93.6	92.0		
Pinching	Yes	**21.7**	16.4	19.1	18.6	0.060	0.663 ns
	No	78.3	83.6	80.9	81.4		
Hair-Pulling	Yes	**17.4**	11.8	17.0	14.6	0.077	0.513 ns
	No	82.6	88.2	83.0	85.4		
Ear-Pulling	Yes	33.8	39.1	**44.7**	38.7	0.079	0.497 ns
	No	66.2	60.9	55.3	61.3		
Pushing	Yes	15.9	12.7	**17.0**	14.6	0.053	0.730 ns
	No	84.1	87.3	83.0	85.4		
Hitting with Objects	Yes	26.1	**31.8**	19,1	27.4	0.110	0.253 ns
	No	73.9	68.2	80.9	72.6		

Note: ns: The association between the variables is not significant; * Significant Association p-value $<\alpha = 0.05$

A worrisome fact that shows what little influence and confidence that students who have suffered family violence have is that practically no student had disclosed episodes of violence to the Department of Student Counseling (DECE); 36.5% mentioned that they do not inform anyone of what happened; 30.5% say they report violence to another family member. Friends of the victim play an important role in support: 26.4% preferentially confide in friends about physical aggression. It is also worrisome that only 1.5% said they confide in the teacher, which shows what little trust that the teacher earns with the students. Finally, 6.9% mentioned that they confide in other people.

A striking fact is that students who are assaulted perceive that the acts of physical violence are "for their own good"; 34% state that it is normal for someone in the family to physically attack them, and only 8.4% expressed awareness that a physical aggression, even within the family, is illegal. We should keep in mind that children immersed in a violent environment can learn to live with and tolerate these behaviors, coming to assume them as normal in a relationship, allowing them to be carried out in their future

relationships (Tenorio, 2011). The importance of developing a positive self-perception to prevent aggressive behaviors and problems like anxiety, depression, and loneliness in adolescents justifies special attention to all stages of childhood and adolescent development (Penado & Rodicio, 2017).

When students were asked about what they consider to be the main reason why they are subject to actions of physical violence within the family, the majority (55.7%) said that it is due to bad behavior; 27.1% did not know the reason why they are subjected to this aggression. It is interesting that the students consider the physical aggression as having a direct relationship with their low grades in school; 1.5% considered the reason to be the authoritarianism of the aggressor, and finally, 1% noted the consumption of prohibited substances by the aggressor.

Grouping the acts of physical violence according to their brutality (minor: pinching, pulling hair, pushing, and pulling ears; severe: slapping, kicking, punching, and hitting with objects), both kinds of violence were experienced by the group sampled.

A significant relationship was found between ethnic self-definition (Cramer = 0.184, p-value = 0.018); although the association is low (since Cramer's value is closest to 0), those self-defined as indigenous reporting a higher frequency of severe physical violence (41.82%), and Afro-Ecuadorians both (severe and minor, with 44.68%).

Tabulating independently each of the feelings, after experiencing some type of physical family violence, students manifested mostly feeling sadness in 46.5%, anger in 42.9%, desire to react in 36.7%, and in smaller proportions, the feelings of loneliness, desire to escape, confusion, and disappointment. In these results, it is worrisome that 7.5% of the victims feel like taking their own lives. When the diverse contexts and forms of violence (physical, negligent, psychological, and sexual) are analyzed, the research results can be presented differently between age groups and sexes (Dapieve & Dalbosco, 2016). The consequences of family violence have an incalculable cost of pain and personal suffering for the victims, deterioration of quality of life, loss of years of life, disturbances in physical, psychological, social, and economic integrity. In addition, it leaves physical injuries, deteriorates family relationships, and decreases the social participation of the victims (Lea, 2002).

7. Conclusion

Family violence is evident in the three ethnic groups tested (mestizo, indigenous, and Afro-Ecuadorian). It is worrisome that the student counselling departments at the high schools studied do not have the capacity to react or intervene, considering the victims' failure to report acts of violence. Students who suffer aggression do not tend to confide in their teachers or school authorities. Unfortunately, this type of violence is often recurrent and leaves both physical and psychological scars that may negatively affect the behavior of adolescents, their quality of life, or have fatal outcomes.

Finally, the group of Afro-Ecuadorian students is the one that manifests having experienced greater acts of severe and minor physical family violence, expressing associated feelings of sadness, anger, and desire to react, while those self-defined as indigenous suffer mainly severe physical violence.

References

Adriana, D. L., & Lozano, J. (2017). Transformando conflictos en familias del suroriente de barranquilla: una experiencia desde la investigación acción participación. *Psicologia & Sociedade*, 29 (1), 1-9.

Benetti, S., Schwartz, C., Soares, G., Macarena, F., & Patussi, M. (2014). Psychosocial adolescent psychosocial adjustment in Brazil – perception of parenting style, stressful events and violence. *nternational Journal of Psychological Research*, 7 (1), 40-48.

Cepeda, E., Moncada, E., & Vivia, Á. (2007). Violencia familiar que afecta a estudiantes de educación básica y medfia en Bogotá. *Salud Pública*, 516-528.

Dapieve, N., & Dalbosco, D. (2016). Prevalência de exposição à violência direta e indireta Um estudo com adolescentes de escolas públicas. *Acta Colombiana de Psicología*, 101-111.

Diaz, Á., & Jiménez, R. (2003). Violencia intrafamiliar. *Gaceta Médica de México*, 351-352.

Espinosa, P., & Clemente, A. (2008). Entrenamiento en perspectiva social y mejoras cognitivo-conductuales en menores con problemas de conducta. *Actas y textos elaborados a partir del XIII Congreso de Sociología en Castilla la Mancha*, 170-182.

French, S., Seidman, E., Allen, L., & Aber, J. (2006). The development of ethnic identity during adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 1-10.

Hallett, D., Want, S., Chandler, M., Koopman, L., & Flores, J. G. (2008). Identity in flux: Ethnic self-identification and school attrition in Canadian Aboriginal youth. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 62-75.

Haynie, D., Petts, R., Maimon, D., & Piquero, A. (2009). Exposure to violence in adolescence and precocious role exits. *Journal Youth Adolescence*, 269-286.

Ho, M. Y., & Cheung, F. (2010). The differential effects of forms and settings of exposure to violence on adolescents´ adjustment. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1039-1337.

INEC. (2016). *Boletín Oficial de Estadísiticas y Censos.* Quito, Ecuador: INEC.

Jiménez, R., Pérez, L., & Bustamante, G. (2017). Identidad étnica y conductas sociales en adolescentes indígenas mapuche sancionados por la Ley de Responsabilidad Penal Adolescente en regiones del sur de Chile. *Universitas Psychologica*, *16*(1), 135-156..

Koller, S., & De Antoni, C. (2004). Violência Intrafamiliar: Uma visão ecológica. *Ecologia do desenvolvimento humano: Pesquisa e intervenção no Brasil*, 293-310.

Lea, G. (2002). Violencia Conyugal y salud pública. *La Ventana*, 236-248.

Northoff, G., & Heinzel, A. (2003). The self in philosophy, neuroscience and psychiatry: An epistemic approach. *The self in neuroscience and psychiatry, Cambridge University Press*,1, 40-55.

PAHO, (2012). *Informe anual sobre la violencia de género.* Buenos Aires.

Penado, M., & Rodicio, M. (2017). Análisis del autoconcepto de las víctimas de violencia de género entre adolescentes. *Suma Psicológica*, *24*(2), 107-114.

Phinney, J. S. (1989). Stages of ethnic identity development in minority group adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, *9*(1-2), 34-49.

Pérez, M., Fuentes, J., Álvarez, M., Gazquez, J., & López, M. (2011). Violencia Escolar y rendimiento académico: aplicación de realidad auamentada. *European Journal of Investigation in Health,Education and Psychology*, 1(2), 71-84.

Saldaña, C. (2001). *Detección y prevención en el aula de los problemas del adolescente.* Madrid: Pirámida.

Siegel, S., & Castellan, N. (1995). *Estadísitica no paramétrica aplicada a las ciencias de la conducta.* México: Trillas.

Tenorio, M. F. (2011). Adolescencia, pareja y violencia familiar. *Temática Psicológica*, *7*(1), 25-32.

Van Meijl, T. (2008). Culture and identity in anthropology: Reflections on "unity" and "uncertaintly" in the dialogical self. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 3, 165-190.

WHO. (2007). *World Health Organization*. Recuperado el 7 de marzo de 2018, de http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/introduction.

Waiselfsz, J. (2014). *Homicídios e juventude no Brasil*. Juventude VIVA - Mapa da violência.