




Article

The Association between Violent Behavior, Academic Performance, and Physical Activity According to Gender in Scholars

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Abstract: Background: Aggressive behaviors have increased in a worrying way all over the world, and this has been one more reason to be able to investigate what happens in schools. Its presence has been increasing in recent decades and, therefore, this issue has been approached from different points of view of society. The aim of this study was to analyze and establish the indices of aggressive behaviors and their possible association with gender, academic achievement, and the Physical Activity (PA) in schoolchildren aged 10–12 in Granada (Spain). Methods: Its design is descriptive and cross-sectional, the sample is 320 students, an ad-hoc questionnaire was used to establish socio-demographic variables, violent behavior (measured with the scale of violent behaviors), gender, academic performance, and PA. Results: The results showed that schoolchildren with higher levels of violent behaviors have been in the reactive and relational reactive manifest dimension, males are more assiduous to practice PA than females, and these were characterized by greater manifest and relational aggressiveness. However, they present higher average values in violent behaviors than they do if academic performance is taken into account. Conclusions: The main recommendation is the need to study, in greater depth, the active sports population in order to try to know the cause of these results.

Keywords: violent behaviors; physical activity; academic achievement; children

1. Introduction

Today, the incidence of bullying violence in schools has grown worryingly since the first Olweus's research [1] with adolescents. Spain's researchers show that cases have grown gradually, with bullying occurring in more than 50% of schools [2–4]. In Arias' study [5], he points out that violence increases in different world societies, marking the United States and Latin America, where they point out more than 5.4 million violent crimes compared to 115,000 in Spain, placing it in one of the countries with fewer crimes but seeing an increasing trend.

With regard to school violence, there is a consensus to define it as any intentional conduct by means of which harm is caused to another person within the school or in any other activity organized by the school, which may be exercised or suffered by any member of the educational community [6]. Today, not only does this take place in person, but cyber-bullying also appears as another element to be considered. In fact, the study and development of violence in infants and adolescents are topics of priority interest in the scientific context [7–10].

The scientific literature in this field focuses on studies and research on so-called aggressors and victims [11–13], where victims are commonly characterized by passive and submissive behaviors,

while aggressors/victims tend to exhibit more hostile behaviors in response to the victimization they suffer [14]. Among the types of violent behavior studied in schoolchildren, the most frequent is verbal violence (threats, insults, intimidation, scorn, offenses, and grievances), followed by contempt or neglect of a partner. In addition to this, the most prevalent behaviors are direct and physical aggressions forcing others to commit aggressions (hitting and blackmailing) [15,16]. Along these lines, several researchers [17–19] analyze violent behaviors in minors and define manifest aggressiveness as that which generates a direct confrontation between the aggressor and his victim and triggers a process of physical interaction. Likewise, relational aggression is defined as that which occurs in an indirect manner and which generates a social isolation of the victim with his peers [20]. In this way, as it is not only the one that causes the most damage, but also the one that presents the greatest frequency, its detection is very complicated. These two types of behavior can present subtypes such as pure, i.e., aggression for pleasure or amusement, reactive—as a response to an action—or the instruments used to achieve something in particular [18,21]. In the face of this type of action, victims may react differently, showing submissive or defiant behaviors, which may lead to aggressive or violent behaviors [22].

In reference to this kind of scenario, the importance of taking measures to try to alleviate situations that may trigger some type of aggression or victimization is highlighted. Action to reduce situations of stress and anxiety caused by harassment and increase capacities to deal with problematic situations is what is sought [23,24]. Physical activity is a primordial means that appears as a response to this question, as a transmitter of values, and that can help in prevention and treatment [25,26]. The physical, biological, mental, social, and therapeutic benefits of regular physical activity (PA) are numerous [27,28]. PA promotes the learning of rules, the ability to stop excessive impulses, increases and develops motor skills, favors the growth of muscles and bones, and increases and improves mood, school performance, and health. Physical activity and sports are essential for the maintenance of quality of life and health in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood [29].

This research reports novel data on the level of physical activity in terms of violent behavior and on how the practice of physical activity affects the various dimensions of this test (academic, social, emotional, family, and physical), as well as possible associations with academic performance, in a province where no such studies have been detected in the last decade, so we could consider it a pioneer in the subject.

In relation to the literature reviewed, this research proposed the following objectives:

- To determine the level of violent behaviors, academic performance, and level of physical activity in schoolchildren from 10 to 12 years old.
- To verify the existing correspondence between gender parameters, academic performance, and physical activity with the levels of violent behaviors.

Two hypotheses were also derived. On the one hand, a high level of physical activity would be associated with low violent behavior. On the other hand, there will be significant differences in academic performance and violent behavior according to gender and the practice of physical activity in the family environment.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Subjects and Design

A cross-sectional and non-experimental study was carried out using a single measurement within a single group. The sample consisted of a total of 320 schoolchildren who attended fifth and sixth year of primary education in the city of Granada, with a homogeneous distribution according to sex, representing 48.1% ($n = 154$) for males and 51.9% ($n = 166$) for females. Convenience sampling was used to recruit the participants, with only school children in the third cycle of their primary education who belonged to 6 public and 2 subsidised educational centers in the province being invited to participate. The age of the participants was between 10 and 13 years of age ($M = 11.25$ years; $DT = 0.53$).

2.2. Measures

The instruments employed in the research are shown. Given that the study sample is composed of scholars from Granada, we proceeded to analyze the psychometric properties of the instrument, observing good adjustment index as well as the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha). In addition, it is important to highlight that no instrument suffered changes in items or changes in its dimensions, since the validated version of the scale was used.

The first instrument used is a Socio-demographic questionnaire which includes gender, academic performance, referring to the number of outstanding and notables in the last quarter. In order to do this, the number of subjects (9) taken during a quarter was taken into account and a range of grades was achieved: 0–3, low performance, 4–6, medium performance, and 7–9, high performance; and level of Physical Activity with the option of whether to practice or not, using a record sheet for it, where schoolboy was urged to mark the option of Yes as, long as, they carried out physical activity outside the school center with a frequency of 3 h per week, and No if he did not, as well as whether or not the activity was federated.

The second instrument was the School Violent Behavior Scale, where items evaluate, with a response range of 1 to 4 (never, rarely, often, and always), two types of violent behavior in the school context: On the one hand, manifest aggression (MA) or direct aggression, in its pure, reactive, and instrumental forms; on the other hand, relational or indirect aggression (RA), also in its pure, reactive, and instrumental forms. They present a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.824$ for items that measure manifest aggressiveness and $\alpha = 0.722$ for relational aggressiveness issues, very similar to $\alpha = 0.088$ and $\alpha = 0.081$, for both subscales.

2.3. Procedure

Firstly, collaboration of the schools and participants was requested through information packs developed by the department of Didactics of Musical, Plastic, and Bodily Expression of the University of Granada. Subsequently, the instruments described were applied in those centers that agreed to participate in the study, and more specifically, in the schoolchildren who obtained the informed consent of their legal representatives. The process was carried out during school hours, always under the supervision of a tutor and the researchers in order to ensure the correct completion of the questionnaires. The anonymity of all information provided during the data collection was guaranteed at all times and participants were informed that the data would only be used for research purposes. Members of the research team responsible for administering the questionnaires were present at all times throughout the data collection, in order to resolve any doubts. Nevertheless, no issues or abnormalities were reported.

The whole process was carried out without incidents, thanking all those involved for their collaboration. For this study, the participants' right to confidentiality was taken into account and the informed consent of their legal representatives was obtained. Likewise, a total of 20 questionnaires were eliminated as they were badly completed. Finally, the teachers, counsellors, and those in charge were thanked for their collaboration and informed of the sending of a report in the near future on the data obtained, respecting their confidentiality. Further, the Ethics Committee of the University of Granada approved the study (462/CEIH/2017) and ethical principles established by the Declaration of Helsinki for research were followed.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

Descriptive analysis was carried out using the software IBM® SPSS Statistics 22.0. Normality of the data was tested using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests, and it was observed that the values followed a normal trend, so parametric tests were used. Then, the description of all the variables present in the study was established (Violent behaviors, Physical Activity, Academic Performance, and Gender) by using means, typical deviation, and for comparative analysis, the contingency tables and

T de Student were used and to establish the statistical differences between the variables object of the study, The Pearson Chi-square test was used, and the level of significance was set at 0.05.

3. Results

In the present research, which includes a sample of 320 primary school students, it was determined that the female sex was the one with the highest representation (51.9%; $n = 166$), followed by the male sex (48.1%; $n = 154$). In terms of academic performance, the high and medium levels presented homogeneous frequencies respectively (25%; $n = 80$ and 30.6% $n = 98$) compared to low performance with the higher frequencies (44.4%; $n = 142$). According to the practice of physical activity, 70.6% ($n = 226$) of schoolchildren did practice sports more than 3 h outside the school, compared to 29.4% ($n = 94$). In addition to this, only 45% ($n = 114$) of those surveyed are federated in some sport discipline compared to 55% ($n = 176$) who are not, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis.

Gender			Academic Achievement		
		%			%
Male	$n = 154$	48.1	High	$n = 80$	25
Female	$n = 166$	51.9	Medium	$n = 98$	30.6
			Low	$n = 142$	44.4
Total	$n = 320$		Total	$n = 320$	
Physical Activity >3 h			Federated		
		%			%
Yes	$n = 226$	70.6	Yes	$n = 114$	45
No	$n = 94$	29.4	No	$n = 176$	55
Total	$n = 320$		Total	$n = 320$	

When we analyzed the levels of violence in schoolchildren in Table 2, the highest scores were found in the dimensions of Reactive Relational Aggression (1.60 ± 0.589) and Reactive Manifest Aggression (1.41 ± 0.579). The lowest scores were for Pure Manifest and Relational Aggression (1.32 ± 0.527 ; 0.509), Instrumental Relational Aggression (1.29 ± 0.519), and the lowest for Instrumental Manifest Aggression (1.23 ± 0.528).

Table 2. Violent behaviors levels; SD, standard deviation.

	M	SD
Pure manifest aggression	1.32	0.527
Reactive manifest aggression	1.41	0.579
Instrumental manifest aggression	1.23	0.528
Pure relational aggression	1.32	0.509
Reactive relational aggression	1.60	0.586
Instrumental relational aggression	1.29	0.519

Table 3 shows differences by gender in academic performance, physical activity, and whether or not it was federated. The results showed that the female sex presented homogeneous percentages in low performance (49.3%; $n = 70$ vs. 50.7%; $n = 72$), higher values in favor of females in average performance (55.1%; $n = 54$ vs. 49.9%; $n = 54$), and equal frequencies in terms of high performance (50%; $n = 40$).

In terms of physical activity, the differences stand out in males, who are the most active in sports, with 74% ($n = 114$) compared to 67.5% ($n = 112$) females. Likewise, the results show that the masculine gender has a greater tendency to be federated in some sport discipline 56.9% ($n = 82$) compared to the feminine presenting 43.05% ($n = 62$).

Table 3. Gender Differences.

	Gender and Academic Achievement			Gender and >3 h PA			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Low	49.3% (n = 70)	50.7% (n = 72)	n = 142	Yes	74% (n = 114)	67.5% (n = 112)	n = 226
Medium	49.9% (n = 44)	55.1% (n = 54)	n = 98	No	26% (n = 40)	32.5% (n = 54)	n = 94
High	50% (n = 40)	50% (n = 40)	n = 80	Total	48.1% (n = 154)	51.9% (n = 166)	
Federated According to Gender							
	Male		Female		Total		
Yes	56.9% (n = 82)		43.05% (n = 62)		100% (n = 144)		
No	40.91% (n = 72)		59.09% (n = 104)		100% (n = 176)		

Analyzing the levels of violent behavior and gender, the results showed statistically significant differences ($p \leq 0.001$ **) in the dimensions of reactive manifest aggression and reactive relational aggression thus, in the following table (Table 4), we observed how males obtained higher numbers with manifest and relational aggressiveness than females. As for the other dimensions, no statistically significant differences were found. The statistical results derived from the variable violent behaviors in relation to physical activity determined statistically significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) in all dimensions of manifest aggression as relational with the exception of pure relational aggression. Finally, regarding violent behaviors in relation to academic performance, statistically significant differences were found ($p \geq 0.05$) in the dimension of pure manifested aggression where an average performance presented higher mean scores as well as in the category of pure relational and instrumental relational.

Table 4. Violent behavior levels according to gender, academic performance, and physical activity; SD, Standard Deviation.

	Male		Female		F	χ^2
	M (SD)	M (SD)	F	χ^2		
Pure manifest aggression	1.27 (0.358)	1.37 (0.643)	2.579	0.109		
Reactive manifest aggression	1.49 (0.566)	1.33 (0.581)	6.627	0.010 **		
Instrumental manifest aggression	1.19 (0.469)	1.27 (0.577)	1.820	0.178		
Pure relational aggression	1.37 (0.537)	1.27 (0.479)	3.464	0.064		
Reactive relational aggression	1.70 (0.668)	1.51 (0.483)	8.523	0.004 **		
Instrumental relational aggression	1.35 (0.597)	1.24 (0.430)	3.407	0.066		
PA > 3H						
	Yes		No		F	χ^2
	M (SD)	M (SD)	F	χ^2		
Pure manifest aggression	1.37 (0.572)	1.21 (0.377)	6.126	0.014 **		
Reactive manifest aggression	1.48 (0.636)	1.22 (0.348)	14.535	0.000 **		
Instrumental manifest aggression	1.28 (0.602)	1.12 (0.250)	5.966	0.015 **		
Pure relational aggression	1.35 (0.564)	1.25 (0.336)	2.896	0.090		
Reactive relational aggression	1.66 (0.559)	1.46 (0.532)	7.527	0.006 **		
Instrumental relational aggression	1.36 (0.571)	1.14 (0.318)	12.233	0.001 **		
Academic Achievement						
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	F	χ^2	
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)			
Pure manifest aggression	1.27 (0.409)	1.44 (0.710)	1.26 (0.418)	3.978	0.020 **	
Reactive manifest aggression	1.39 (0.561)	1.48 (0.648)	1.35 (0.515)	1.238	0.291	
Instrumental manifest aggression	1.20 (0.489)	1.33 (0.639)	1.18 (0.424)	2.601	0.076	
Pure relational aggression	1.33 (0.567)	1.40 (0.483)	1.21 (0.407)	3.162	0.044 **	
Reactive relational aggression	1.64 (0.595)	1.60 (0.560)	1.54 (0.605)	0.699	0.498	
Instrumental relational aggression	1.30 (0.573)	1.38 (0.544)	1.17 (0.338)	3.787	0.024 **	

$p \leq 0.001$ **.

Finally, regarding violent behaviors in relation to academic performance, statistically significant differences were found ($p \geq 0.05$) in the dimension of pure manifested aggression where an

average performance presented higher mean scores as well as in the category of pure relational and instrumental relational.

4. Discussion

In this research, the relationship between a series of variables of academic performance, gender, and physical activity and aggressive behavior has been analysed. In this sense, some studies of a similar nature at the national and international levels stand out [8,30,31].

In the first place, it should be noted that this study presented homogeneous values in terms of gender, while the majority of the participants presented medium and high performance compared to low performance. More than half of the schoolchildren indicated that they practiced sports for more than 3 h outside the school, with only 4 out of every 10 subjects being federated in some sporting discipline. With regard to violent behavior, similar values were shown between Manifest and pure relational aggressiveness, while in cases of reactive relational aggression and reactive manifest aggression, they showed a higher average tendency than the other variants. These data agree with those reported in their studies [16], with the relational being one of the least visible, which may have very negative consequences on the subject's psychosocial adjustment and may lead to manifest violence [23,32,33]. Likewise, the reactive dimension, characterized by the action–reaction between aggressor and victim, was the most valued by schoolchildren. These data confirm that these behaviors are beginning to be seen in populations of this age [34].

Focusing on the differences by gender, it was observed that in the academic performance, the subjects presented differences between both sexes to emphasize that the males presented lower values as the low performance (0–3 notables and/or outstanding) and medium (3–6 notables and/or outstanding) in comparison to females and similar in the high performance variable (6–9 notables and/or outstanding). The differences in school performance according to gender have been the subject of numerous studies [35]; the results obtained agree with studies that reveal that boys obtain lower grades than them, confirming that, with the exception of physical education and health, women outperform men in all subjects [36]. This may be due to the differences between the two, since girls have greater ease in Language, Literature, Biology, Geology, Plastic, and Visual Education, while boys only stand out in Mathematics, Physical Education, and Technology [37,38].

The regular practice of physical activity was more frequent among males, with lower scores in girls, this may be due to the fact that in most Western environments, the practice of sports is a concept more linked to the masculine gender than to the feminine, producing a premature abandonment of adolescent girls and women [39,40]. Following this line, with respect to the variable to be federated, it has been determined that the male sex is more prone to practice federated sports with respect to girls. This finding supports several studies [41,42].

Among the subjects, violent behaviors among males were more prominent, pointing to the male as the main aggressor, while girls tend to be victims of aggressions and sometimes victims-provocation [43,44]. In addition, several studies highlight that boys are directly involved in violent behaviors [45,46]. Likewise, when analyzing the relationship between physical activity and violent behaviors, the subjects that practiced more regularly physical activity presented high values in manifest and relational aggressiveness. It is understood that this can be produced because the schoolchildren who practice more sports begin to compete, lose and for them this is frustrating, they worry about proving to be the best and all of this produces a relationship between result and aggression, transferring that competitiveness to social life without wanting it. [47,48]. Finally, with regard to violent behavior and academic performance, statistically significant differences were found, showing that those students with average performance present higher average values in the dimension of pure relational aggression; that is, that in an indirect manner they can provoke aggressive situations without having contact with the victim with simple comments or for taking pride in front of other classmates for their grades [20,49].

Faced with this problem, it is considered vital to develop psycho-educational intervention and prevention programs that reduce violent behavior in the classroom, creating better social climates where

cooperation and interrelationships between peers is the solution [31,50]. Likewise, the development of social-emotional skills in children in order to reduce the rates of aggression is important. To do this, use sports practice avoiding situations that create violent behavior, taking care of its use since a bad approach can act as a risk factor.

It is important to acknowledge the main limitations of this study. The present research is limited by its descriptive cross-sectional design, which precludes conclusions on causality or directionality from being made. In addition, another limitation is that the amount of the sample could be larger and cover more stages to check for possible differences. For this reason, it would also be interesting to examine other age groups such as, younger schoolchildren or university students. Secondly, other interacting variables should be examined such as the wider social context or the individual's educational level. In summary, the results of the present study support the use of School Violent Behavior Scale as a valid and reliable measure of violent behavior towards sport in youth populations. In addition, physical activity has been measured by means of a question that does not belong to an instrument that is validated and as future perspectives, the interest in using validated instruments such as the IPAQ or another scale of physical activity stands out.

5. Conclusions

This research establishes two main conclusions:

- Seven out of ten schoolchildren practice more than 3 h of physical activity outside the school and a little more than half are federated in some sporting discipline, likewise the levels of violent behavior show high scores in the dimensions of manifest aggression and reactive relational aggression, the latter being an intentional damage to the person's social relational, feelings of acceptance, and inclusion in a group.
- Within the levels of violent behavior, the reactive manifest dimension in both sexes stands out in a general way, that is to say in an open or hidden way. In addition, depending on the gender, males have a greater tendency towards the direct or manifest category that defines the type of violence with or without contact with the victim.
- Schoolchildren who did more than 3 h of extracurricular physical activity had higher averages in all dimensions of violent behavior. The regular practice of physical activity was more frequent among males and they were characterized by greater reactive manifest aggressiveness and reactive relational.
- An average academic performance presented higher scores in aggressive behaviors versus low or high performance in all dimensions except the relational reactive dimension.

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